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The Heart of Uptown
I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Investigation

Beginning in the early 1900's, a concern with the development of sub-areas of cities and towns was apparent. Analysts recognised that cities such as Chicago were composed of various neighborhoods possessing their own particular populations and histories. Chicagoans, in general, did and still do manifest a concern for neighborhoods through a developed network of local organisations and attachments to their specific communities. But this pride in peculiar neighborhoods is often balanced against the violent social and geographical changes that other neighborhoods have encountered.

The Heart of Uptown community is the subject of this historical investigation. This neighborhood is the scene of an intense disintegration that many urban areas are presently facing. The purpose of this paper is to identify and understand the reasons that have led to the "death of a neighborhood". In essence, the reasons for the non-existence of the societally-valued stable middle-class community are sought. The nature of this investigation is conducive to detailed historical analysis because the evolution of a community does not occur in a decade or even a couple of decades.
It is submitted that the decay of the Heart of Uptown community is a direct function of its historical development. The neighborhood's present situation cannot legitimately be explained by a cursory analysis of events of the last several years. While events occur somewhat episodically to contemporary residents and observers of areas such as the Heart of Uptown, such developments can be seen as part of a logical and rational whole to the historian. One event or set of events can plainly be understood as leading to others when observed in this manner.

This historical perspective is extremely important when neighborhoods are observed. It is possible to understand the factors leading to a given situation. Responsibilities can be attached to important "actors" for their roles in making a neighborhood. The recognition of a specific community does make a difference. If public and private policy-makers (those who control the fate of areas such as the Heart of Uptown) are made to understand the development of a community over time, they may recognise the applicability or predestination to failure that their actions may have.

Therefore, several questions must be answered in the course of this investigation. First how did this Heart of Uptown community develop? Who was responsible for its early course? Who lived there? Who owned land? Or more directly: why did this community follow the road that it did and why is Uptown an area whose future appears dark and uncertain?
These questions can only be answered through an extensive historical analysis. Several areas that form the basis for this discussion are the historical ownership of land in the Heart, major institutional growth and exists, demographic data, and finally the perceptions of those that observed the history of Uptown as it happened.

**Summary of Present Conditions**

While the history of the Heart of Uptown started in the late nineteenth century, the actual story of the area begins in 1879. Without recognition of its present conditions, the Heart and its subsequent history may seem unjustified for an extensive examination.

The Heart of Uptown is by all standards a deteriorating community. This neighborhood has some of the highest unemployment in the city. Nearly 60% of the people depend solely upon some form of public aid for their income. In addition, a large segment of the remaining population of nearly 50,000 works in unstable temporary or day labor jobs for their incomes. These wages are only slightly higher than those afforded by public aid.

Housing is fast becoming dangerous due to neglect and fire (very often arson-related). Over the past ten years, several thousand housing units have been demolished by property owners. Health care is seriously inadequate in comparison to normal city standards. Death rates due to
alcoholism, tuberculosis, heart disease, and accidents are substantially higher in every category.

The population of the Heart resembles the inert ingredients of a pot that didn't melt. Southern white immigrants, blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are scattered throughout the area. This residence is not a peaceful one as youth gangs, the Ku Klux Klan, rampant prostitution and widespread drug addiction painfully and violently coexist. The crime rates within the area are exceedingly high based on official statistics. While police squad cars patrol the area like prison guards, much crime goes unreported.

This portrait is purposely vague. In-depth statistics and descriptions can be found in sociological analyses. Suffice it to say that Uptown is the archetype of the decaying community. It is not an inner city ghetto neighborhood though. The Heart of Uptown stands in the midst of the wealth and splendor of high-rise apartment buildings and higher than average incomes. It exists as its own world with its own rules and participants.

In daily life, pockets of poverty such as the Heart of Uptown are easily recognized. They are the neighborhoods that most people want to get out of when driving through the city. By shutting ones eyes, such communities will hopefully disappear. Yet, it is obvious that Uptown and other neighborhoods like it will not go away, and in fact, will become more persistent with the passage of time.
Scope of the Study

Before embarking on this investigation, a justification for the scope of time and geographical area included is necessary. Such decisions to include the time period and area were not made in an arbitrary manner.

First, the area to be studied is located in the north-eastern part of Chicago near the shores of Lake Michigan. Several blocks to the west of the Lake, the Heart of Uptown has its eastern boundary at Clarendon Avenue. The western boundary is located at Clark Street, about ten blocks from Clarendon. On the south edge, Irving Park Road and Lawrence Avenue on the north divide the area from the surrounding neighborhoods.

There are several reasons for choosing these boundaries. First, these boundaries represent a grouping of census tracts that have historically been different from the surrounding ones. These differences have been illustrated in comparisons of residential populations, length of residency, and rental versus owned property, with the nearby blocks. The geographically defined area called the Heart of Uptown has reflected major differences as this paper will try to point out.

Another reason for choosing this definition is the fact that historical accounts through oral histories and interviews have shown that residents and observers of this part
of Chicago have perceived fundamental dissimilarities between the Heart of Uptown and neighboring areas. Such perceptions were seen as early as 1940:

It may be noted that Uptown wasn't completely homogeneous in so far as it appeared to contain a sub area which differed markedly from adjoining blocks. In view of this apparent heterogeneity descriptive measures of the whole area may not have unquestionable validity.

Primary accounts will show that these differences were indeed realized many years before 1940.

Thirdly, the definition of the area in the preceding manner reflects a need to narrow normally accepted boundaries to more workable and realistic proportions. Bodies such as the Chicago Community Inventory and the Chicago Department of Development and Planning have in the past defined the area known as Uptown as a significantly larger area. Yet, these guidelines have been outmoded by the realization that the Heart of Uptown represents a specific community that is not consistent with the more expansive definition.

Thus, the definition of the Heart of Uptown in a more historically and statistically accurate manner is implicitly a goal of this investigation. These geographical and perceptual differences must be acknowledged, if true historical perspective is to be maintained.

In terms of the period to be examined, there is a reasonably obvious explanation. The 1860's is the period of
the first settlement near the area to be known as the Heart of Uptown. The study will progress to the present situation so that the idea of historical context can be projected to its logical conclusion.
FOOTNOTES

II. THE FIRST YEARS

A Changing City

The history of this Chicago neighborhood began in the mid-nineteenth century. At this time, there was no grid street pattern, no settlement or roots of the problems that Uptown currently faces. The Heart was little more than a swamp area that was occupied by farmers and truck gardeners.¹ Not unlike the other surrounding parcels of land several miles north of the Chicago city limits, Uptown was relatively untouched by settlement.

In contrast to this sedate picture, the city of Chicago was not so quiet during the period of the 1850's. The southern and western sides of the city were rapidly expanding due to a great flood of European immigrants who added to the permanent and transient population.² These new foreign immigrants, plus new arrivals from the eastern United States settled almost exclusively in these parts of the city where access to commerce, industry, and housing was easiest. Not until the early 1860's did people choose to sporadically settle in the near north areas. Thus, even with a noticeable influx of residents, the North Side and the Heart of Uptown
in particular, growth was restricted to the already established areas of Chicago.

There are several reasons for the comparatively slow growth of the northern area that would later be officially incorporated into the city. The problem of getting across the Chicago River due to a lack of bridges precluded northern movement. The territory of Chicago was thus cut into two pieces.

In addition, Chicago had an east-west axis rather than a north-south residential and commercial axis at this time. Lake Street was that "great street" and State Street was still a mud path. Residences and businesses therefore concentrated in these more western and southern areas due to their early settlement and accessibility. There was little in the way of conveyances to get people to these more distant destinations of the north.

The inability to move north due to the lack of transportation was the single-most important factor in limiting the development of settlement in areas such as the Heart of Uptown. There was a major implication of the existence of unsettled land just north of the city limits. There was still much undeveloped land to be bought and sold. Land was, and still is, a very attractive commodity for visionaries in search of good investments. The desire to escape the noise and odors of streets lacking sewers had stimulated
imagination of land buyers as to even greater migration in the future.  

While many areas of the city were growing at a rapid rate due to the influx of new residents and the overflow from existing residents, the Heart of Uptown lacked the gradual entrances that provided the bases for settlement that these other areas enjoyed. Uptown was also devoid of the benefit of time that these expanding areas had in maintaining a steady rate of population influx. The longer this period of non-settlement lasted, the more likely that Uptown would either be massively settled or ignored altogether. The former course was almost a sure thing as Chicago was not about to stop growing.

The Development of Lakeview—The Prelude to Later Activity

While the city of Chicago had not expanded very far northward during the 1840's and the 1850's, the city itself was surrounded by numerous small towns and townships that would be annexed in the 1890's. Although such towns were legally separate from Chicago, they were very close to the city in terms of employment and commerce for their residents. This connection existed in that these suburbs were really founded as "bedroom communities". Chicago provided the resources for income, entertainment, and trade. These suburbs were most often populated by those of some affluence
who wanted to escape the problems of Chicago as an intensive urban area.

One of these smaller towns, Lakeview, was the future location of the Heart of Uptown. Like many of these towns, and Uptown itself, Lakeview was developed by some dominant Chicago business interests who wanted a quiet suburban life, while still retaining the needed ties to Chicago.4

One of the earliest symbols of the development of the North Side occurred in July, 1854. The opening of the Lakeview House on Graceland Street (Later Irving Park Road) was envisioned as the nucleus for even greater settlement. The hotel quickly fulfilled the intentions of its early benefactors. Consistent with their hopes, the area in the immediate vicinity of the hotel was developed in the form of residences by the latest well-to-do Chicago interests who were being crowded out of the older, established inner city.5 Yet, Uptown was neglected as a point of settlement during this period. Land even during this latter period was still quite inexpensive.6

There was nothing such as Lakeview House in Uptown to encourage new residents to come to the Heart. The area south and west of Uptown was the first to house sizable numbers of inflowing populations. There, the development of the North Side seemed to run along at quite a rapid rate and soon the land was being bought and sold.7 Most of the
new residents found themselves owning quite extensive tracts of land in this vicinity. Such ownership opened up the way for "healthy" subdivision and lucrative speculation. The value of the newly acquired land was enhanced by improvements such as the construction of a plank road to the city via Green Bay Road (later Clark Street). Such improvements paved the way for increasing numbers to find their way north to these more fledgling settlements.

During the years of the late 1850's and early 1860's the South Side of Chicago evolved due to its relatively easy access to downtown areas and established settlements. By the same token, north "suburban" growth would gain momentum after 1868. The source of such growth would often be the location of institutions in an area that would promote outlying employment and commercial opportunities. Transportation and construction would also enlarge to meet these expanding markets. Uptown lacked such institutions and accompanying land sales. The impetus to move north was restricted to the areas west of Uptown. With the Lake often several feet deep in the future location of the Heart, Uptown remained a swamp, literally and figuratively. Time continued to pass Uptown by as a site for expansion.

The First Major Institutions to Promote Growth

The significance of a development such as Lakeview House lay in its role as an anchor for additional settlement.
Individuals often lacked the resources to attract other settlers or establish sources of employment and trade. Institutions such as Lakeview House guided by various types of interest groups provided these resources and opportunities. Such "anchors" acted as the first pioneers whose resources and attractiveness could draw more followers than any individual could. If the Heart of Uptown could get pioneers such as these, people would almost certainly follow. Speculation and subdivision in land would then be made profitable for large and small investors alike. By the early 1870's, the Heart of Uptown gained some institutional bases that contributed to the feasibility of transactions in land. Such exchanges would signal lucrative commercial development.

One major community institution that encouraged subdivision was established in the early 1870's. The relocation of the United States Marine Hospital to the lakefront between Graceland and Sulzer (later Montrose Street) Streets had an immediate impact on the Heart. The Marine Hospital had formerly been located on Michigan Avenue, but the problems of housing victims of a cholera epidemic in more intensively settled areas, along with the inexpensiveness of the land close to the lake made this acreage a perfect site.

Prior to the hospital's occupancy the land lay undeveloped and uninhabited. The site of the new hospital was purchased in 1867 under authority of an act of Congress of
May, 1864 for the sum of ten thousand dollars.\textsuperscript{11} The site as purchased consisted of four lots comprising about eight acres located immediately on the shore of Lake Michigan. The hospital itself was first opened for patients on November 17, 1873. Throughout the period of its early operation, the greater majority of patients at the station had been seamen of the Great Lakes merchant marine.\textsuperscript{12}

The operation of the hospital drew residents to opportunities for work and companion residential development. The scale of the occupancy of the Heart of Uptown was still small. The location of the hospital was explicitly designed for a sparsely populated outlying area. But, implicitly the location of the hospital in the vicinity would bring more intensive growth and population.

Another major institutional development in Uptown was the incorporation in 1861 of the Graceland Cemetery Company. Located in the south western area of the Heart of Uptown, the founding of Graceland Cemetery was in pursuance to the general demand for more extramural internments.\textsuperscript{13} The project was undertaken by some well-known Chicago elites. With the need to move the Lincoln Park Cemetery because of its close proximity to the expanding Near North Side, the site in the area was deemed proper and likely profitable:

After a careful inspection of the ground, Mr. William Saunders (a landscape gardener) expressed that so beautiful a tract, at such a convenient distance from the city, and so admirably
adapted to Cemetery purposes had not been previously so appropriated. He declared it without qualification to be possessed of every requisite for a beautiful rural cemetery.\textsuperscript{14}

It was this rural aspect that became so important to the Heart of Uptown community of the future. With the purchase of one hundred twenty-five inexpensive acres in a previously unsettled area, many thought that Chicago would never advance to its front gates. The cemetery was thus touted early on as one of the few institutionalized "recreation" areas in the ever expanding northern region. In addition to its beautiful greenery the cemetery would be the final resting place for such Chicago notables as Potter Palmer and Marshall Field. Their elaborate monuments would be visible to the public who visited this elite burial ground. Should the area near the cemetery be settled, the chance to sell off non-used land for profit did exist.

Even in the late 1860's transit connections were being improved to meet the demand of people who wished to visit this new preserve. A plank road was located directly in front of the entrance to the cemetery. Also the trolley cars passed within two miles of Graceland. New railway lines would ultimately change the development of Uptown. At this time though, the North Chicago Railway extended to Belmont. It was recognized that it would soon go further north.\textsuperscript{15}
The cemetery itself provided a conveyance from the railway terminus to the cemetery so that visitors could have daily access to the grounds. The promotions for the cemetery emphasized the advantages of the "rural" location:

The cemetery is situated at a convenient distance, five miles, by carriage (over an excellent gravel road) and yet sufficiently remote from the city never to be encroached upon, no matter what be the prosperity of Chicago.

Inherent in these expanding transit connections was the fact that such innovations would bring settlement that had the ironic potential of destroying the rural idyll.

The construction of the United States Marine Hospital and Graceland Cemetery were the two most important early bases in Uptown. They provided employment and recreational opportunities. The nature of each institution brought many people into Uptown either as residents or visitors via their transportation innovations and residential construction.

Exceeding their short-range importance, the long-range implications of Graceland and the hospital cannot be ignored. With each new institutional development in the Heart of Uptown area, there was bound to be new settlement. Many wood frame houses were the first developments in the pre-Chicago Fire North Side. Lacking a sense of permanence did not take away from the first steps that such constructions signified.

Consequently, those who had money to invest in new housing or property found at least three anchors including
the advent of better transit connections to assist them in their roles as private actors. Inevitably, commercial opportunities would arise. The larger role of these early institutions was thus of providing the needed base for the takeoff of gradual growth for the Heart of Uptown. The purchase of large tracts of land was more feasible with such institutional developments.

The Chicago Fire and the Growth of the North Side

Despite these early institutional developments, there were still several prerequisites to be fulfilled if Uptown was to experience any future maturation as a neighborhood. There would have to be a reason for greater numbers and crossections of the Chicago population to come north. There would also have to be a means to get these numbers to new settlements. Finally, there had to be buildings built and commercial development on a more intensive scale.

During the 1870's, the future of the Heart of Uptown became less clouded. The scales tipped toward the course of development for this burgeoning district. As was stated previously, the southern and western areas of Chicago enjoyed a more rapid growth due to their early transportation advances and the neutralization of the problem of frequent river crossings.

In 1871, an event of regional and nationwide importance occurred in Chicago. While the Chicago Fire effected the
whole nation, its importance was also felt in the more local areas of Chicago and the surrounding region. The Fire ultimately destroyed large tracts of occupied residential and commercial land between the downtown area and the Near North and West sides. With this destruction, the whole shape of the city changed.

The axis of the city changed to a north-south basis, partially due to the post-fire activities of business leaders who located their establishments on State Street. These same leaders also made Lake Shore Drive the city's new elite district, replacing Lake Street and Prairie Avenue, by moving their residences to the attractive lakefront area. Many others followed these elites by moving northeast as well. More basically, Uptown and other semi-populated areas held opportunities to those who were forced north due to the path of the Fire.

A more far-reaching result of the Fire was to bring the forces of residential movement away from the city's commercial center.\textsuperscript{18} For Uptown, the implications of this exodus were particularly significant. Rapidly, business replaced housing in the previously burnt-out central districts. The increasing popularity of the notion of the bedroom suburb compounded with improvements to existing transport modes, gave impetus to a new wave of residents to the newly settled areas such as Uptown.
The settlement of the Heart was definitely taking on a particular shape by the mid-1870's. While much of the land remained vacant, certain portions of the area gained more intensive settlements. Post-fire maps revealed that near the Lake along Sheridan road, single family dwellings made of stone and concrete exuded a feeling of more permanent residence. Isolated homes of this type were also found to the west where streets such as Beacon and Dover would later be grided.

People occupying these homes were members of an upper middle and upper class economic and social strata. The bedroom suburb ran parallel to their roles within central area businesses after the Fire. These first true residents of the Heart owned their homes and property.

Consistent with the fact that these residents were of some means, the scale of residential construction in the immediate post-fire period was relatively small. The massive influx of residents that might have been expected from the Fire was precluded by several factors.

First, the majority of such potential residents did not have the resources to build their own homes. Secondly, the lack of extensive settlement could be attributed to a large degree to the lack of efficient transportation that could connect Uptown to the commercial and recreational opportunities of Chicago's rebuilding Downtown and Near North
side. Such transportation developments had to be massive enough to accommodate potential residents. Thirdly, larger land holders who still lived in the area did not subdivide their holdings because there were few settlers.

There can be no question that transportation improvements were a major factor in building of Uptown. Areas west of the Heart such as Ravenswood were well served by rail and trolley connections. Consequently, these neighborhoods became the home of outlying commercial and residential centers. Also immigrant clusters of Germans and Swedes existed to provide stable cores of population.

The End of the First Period of Growth

It was at this post-fire period that the Heart of Uptown experienced its first true development. Its role as a bedroom suburb was paved by institutional developments and the repercussions of the migrations to Chicago and the Fire of 1871.

Residential and commercial construction was slow and gradual affording a fairly stable lifestyle to those who could build in this new area. Based on the idea that the city would never expand to the new incorporated, but sparsely populated northern edge of the town of Lakeview, residents could feel comfortable in this suburban life.

Such comfort was not to prevail for long as these residents would realize. The advent of a transportation
revolution, combined with ever increasing migrations into Uptown would obliterate the suburban vision within the next fifteen years.

By the mid-1880's Uptown was at its peak as a true middle-class residential community. The problem was that this suburb was built on the brink of a population and geographical expansion that Chicago had not previously seen. This stable community was actually based in the midst of flux. With the later changes, Uptown was to move from this phase that can be considered in retrospect little more than transitional. Thus, when the calming influence of a fairly well-to-do population was needed in the early 1900's the only elites in the area were those buried in Graceland cemetery. They could not be of much help.
FOOTNOTES


2 Homer Hoyt, One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), p. 98.

3 Ibid., p. 116.


5 Ibid., p. 209.

6 Hoyt, One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago, p. 107.

7 Andreas, History of Cook County, p. 209.

8 Ibid., p. 209.

9 Ibid., p. 209.


12 Ibid., p. 6.
13 Andreas, History of Cook County, p. 720.


15 Ibid., p. 6.

16 Ibid., p. 6.

17 Ibid., p. 10.

18 Hoyt, One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago, p. 101.
III. TRANSIT CONNECTIONS AND THE GROWTH OF UPTOWN

The Promise of New Conveyances

As the early 1880's progressed Uptown's future as a bedroom suburb was hindered by several important developments. In general, foreign migration to the Near West and South Sides of Chicago intensified the already crowded inner city tenement areas. With this intensification, more permanent residents of these areas were pushed to areas near Uptown. More and better transit connections to the less settled North Side areas allowed a greater influx of population. It was these transportation improvements that would almost immediately spur the boom in speculation and construction in the area to be known as the Heart of Uptown.

The growth of transit was felt all over the city. Without the existence of automobiles and street systems, it was the horse-drawn trolleys and steam "dummies" that were charge with answering the metropolitan transportation needs. Such conveyances served the major Uptown area street of Evanston Avenue (later Broadway) and Green Bay Road. By 1889, street cars were coming from the Diversey Limits Barn north to Irving Park Road.
With advances in accessibility to new areas due to transportation, residential development was certain. Paralleling the growth in street transportation, residential construction in Uptown gained momentum in the western sections.

The power of transportation innovations could not be underestimated. These modest advances had already brought increased one and two-flat building in the Heart. Land was more intensively occupied, but still retaining a distinctly suburban character.

**New Mobility on a Massive Scale**

Private corporations chartered by the city of Chicago handled the transportation revolution. Through a rapid expansion, three elevated lines were operational in Chicago by 1895. The South Side, the Metropolitan and the Lake Street Elevateds were all reshaping the areas they served. Residential and commercial developments were encouraged by the accessibility and mobility afforded by the "el".

While the town of Lakeview had been annexed by the city of Chicago in 1890, this area was conspicuously unserved by the elevated. But, this lack of large scale transportation was not an absolute by any means.

The Northwestern Elevated line was in the planning stage during the 1890's. As planned, this line was to run directly through the Heart of Uptown. This was an important step because this area had never been able to support modest
transportation facilities due to a lack of passengers. Conversely, these early conveyances were not major enough in their scale to give rise to the needed settlement.

Knowledge of the development of the new elevated line brought the major subdivision of the Heart area. This was due to a very large degree to the rise in land values that would ultimately follow, as well as the tremendous rise in potential residents. 1894-1900 saw much of this unoccupied, but owned area being divided up among smaller owners of land. The details of this situation can be seen after the "L" actually was completed.

With the promotion of the Northwestern Elevated started in 1894, the process of residential development was imminent. Between 1894-1897, three years of actual construction occurred from the southern terminus at Addison. But, financial difficulties for the next year and one half brought a hiatus in actual construction. These financial difficulties followed chiefly from the fact that in building a line into new territory of this kind, the expenses for operation at first were apt to be greater than the receipts.

In 1900 the Northwestern "L" was completed to the terminus at Wilson Avenue. Several years later, the line would be extended to Howard Street.

Prior to the extension of the "L" to Wilson Avenue, there had been no major or commercial construction in the
Heart. Yet, when the trains began to run from downtown, new residents were brought to the area. From Addison Street through Wilson Avenue, slightly more than 50% of the vacant land, which accounted for 83.5% of the total area was settled during the 1895-1905 period. Settlement around the five stations in this region increased from an average of 16.47% at the beginning of the elevated period to 58.16% at the end of the period. This more than tripling of settlement reflected the previous lack of an effective transit mode this far north.\(^2\) Building construction continued at a rapid pace, and almost all vacant land was filled between 1905-14.

There is no question that the El started the building boom in the Heart of Uptown. A rapid increase in the land values in the district east of Clark Street resulted in the later construction of multiple apartment buildings, apartment hotels, and hotels. Many young single people and young married couples could be attracted to this section because of its excellent transportation facilities and desirable location.\(^3\) Additionally, the El line terminal at Wilson and Broadway created a natural shopping center which would compete with the Loop stores further south.

Rather sparsely populated before the coming of the elevated, the area saw a multiplication of its settlements and the creation of a completely new community around the
Wilson Avenue terminus. It is not surprising that more people clustered around the "L" station in such an outlying area rather than build homes and apartments several blocks from them.

By 1900, Uptown was obviously being molded by a new episode of its development. With the elevated and the ease of settlement which it spurred, the days as a bedroom suburb were ended. Not only was the area legally a part of the larger city, income and transportation were no longer barriers to the entry of people of moderate means. The groundwork was laid for a new Heart of Uptown community by the new ease of mobility created by the trains.

The implications of the extension of the elevated to Uptown are numerous. Their magnitude is revealed in the fact that Uptown, after the trains came, is almost totally dominated by these repercussions. The selling of land, the entrance of new populations, and the exits of older groups is conditioned by the freedom of movement that the Northwestern Elevated promoted. Uptown's role expanded due to the el. Such expansion made Uptown little more than a "boom town" as the process logically continued.
FOOTNOTES


3Ibid., p. 33.

4Ibid., p. 84.

5Ibid., p. 103.
IV. THE SELLING OF THE HEART OF UPTOWN
1894-1910

Introduction

The completion of the Elevated to Wilson Avenue is obviously an event whose effects cannot be understated. The increase in land values and flow of new residents into the area caused serious repercussions for existing residents and conditions. Yet, the extension of the "L" alone is not fully responsible for Uptown's new course that was marked by residential and commercial intensification. If the trains came to Wilson Avenue and the ownership and usage of the property remained the same, little change in the face of Uptown would have occurred. But, the course of landholding did change during this period, and the new owners of land decided what new shape Uptown would take through their actions. Building, renting, demolishing of homes or apartments on their property conditioned the type of residents and businesses that would live in and serve the Heart of Uptown.

The Process of the First Major Subdivision

The two largest tracts in Uptown, Sheridan Park and Surrenden, were owned by "larger operators". Graceland Cemetery had originally been chartered 125 acres for its
use as cemetery land. Not all of this land was occupied and by 1894 most of it had been sold to smaller investors who built in the eastern section of the Heart area. William Deering, a well known industrialist had purchased the Surrenden section in the western portion of the Heart in 1894. He subdivided it until it was all sold off in 1900.¹

With their subdivisions, Deering and the Graceland Cemetery Company started a cycle of residential and commercial ownership that directly commanded the future of the Heart of Uptown. A pattern of stability and persistence of land ownership might be expected if these institutional land owners sold their acreage to buyers who would live in their own buildings. Such newer dwellings might logically be single or two-family dwellings that would be perfectly consistent with the aims of the pre-existing residents.

The course leading to the continuation of a middle and upper income outlying neighborhood was prevented by the apparent goals of the two large landholders. The cemetery and Deering had sold their tracts to investors who saw the lucrative possibilities offered by the transportation innovations. The common bond between these investors and institutions such as Graceland was not a gradual, regulated development. It was more likely the wish to derive profits from the construction of multiple family dwellings that allowed land to be sold at high prices.
In essence, the land was quickly bought up by individual area businessmen, professionals and smaller real estate speculators. In the minority of the purchasers were people who planned to live in the neighborhood. The arrival of speculators and other investors was documented in the tract books of the Cook County Recorder of Deeds. Single and double lots were sold to these various buyers. Some had their pictures in the elite directories while others were moving to that goal.

Before proceeding, it is important to fully understand the goals of the parties in these property transactions. Deering and the cemetery company sold individual tracts not to other large institutions, but to privatistic owners who would pursue their own courses of development for the area.

It seems that by 1894, Deering and Graceland never had property ownership or management on their minds. As fire insurance maps of the area show, the only structures on the land prior to subdivision were small frame houses, rather than anything signaling permanent development. This activity was occurring in the western edge of the district where owners had built their own homes. Deering, owner of the Deering Harvester Company (later International Harvester), had not made Uptown his first solid investment by any means. With revenues from the harvester company, the money to spend was plentiful. He had already gotten a very good return
from the subdivision of the Douglas Park area to the west. Thus, it is not unreasonable to see his Uptown investment in the same vein.

These large investors made their money by selling to those who would pay for their own little parcels in a newly settled area. The smaller landowners did construct many one and two-family dwellings. Yet this period of unintensive residential structures was only transitory for the majority of the district. While to the west of Broadway on streets such as Beacon or Dover homes of more well-to-do people were built and have persisted, the majority of the small owners did not remain so planted in the area.

Yet, the arrival of the Elevated and the ability to move farther north and west gave birth to new options for these individual owners. Because the property values rose dynamically with the accessibility that the construction of the "L" brought, individual owners could enjoy a similar profit potential to that of the larger investors such as Deering.

Thus, starting in about 1905, the rational decision of the landowners was to either take advantage of the potential flow of new residents or sell to operators who would pay them handsomely to gain the opportunity. The way to reap the benefits was to either convert existing residences through the creation of smaller units (via the erection of
new walls and elimination of extra rooms), or by demolishing older frame residences and putting up larger 3-story buildings with 10 or 20 apartments. In this way, residences were available to those who would be transients (younger singles and couples) and would enjoy the attractiveness of a highly-promoted new area in which they could be the new urban pioneers.

A new cycle of residential ownership originated with the results of the transportation extension in Uptown. The established owners took themselves to other parts of the North Side and more remote suburbs rather than become a part of this new area. Their replacements shared little of the bedroom suburb vision as they commenced their own absentee ownerships.

These owners watched their developments from a distance. Few allowed themselves the option of seeing Uptown's daily growth. A pattern of construction and residence was well underway by 1910. The heart of Uptown was quickly becoming known as "the place" to be for investors and residents alike. Controlled growth was never again an index of Uptown.

Instead, Uptown embarked on a course guided by investment profits that resulted in the development of the leading residential and commercial district outside of the Loop. Essentially, the neighborhood had its true origins in a situation marked by violent change rather than stability.
Construction of a New Uptown

The trend toward conversion and new construction was amply illustrated by 1905. In the eastern parts of Uptown near Broadway and the recently vacated area of Sheridan Road, speculators constructed the new residences for Uptown. Gradually apartment houses were built, one of the first being constructed by P. D. Middlekauff in 1900 at the southeast corner of Kenmore and Lawrence. In 1904, Frank Buerkly built a 25-apartment building at Lawrence Avenue and Sheridan Road.4

By 1916, the newspapers were filled with announcements about the sale of parcels of land and the construction of these more populous apartment buildings. At this time those who stood to profit saw the values of this type of development. Typical was this illustration seen in the local "booster" newspaper:

James A. Bidderman is erecting twon handsome apartment buildings at 906-10 and 920-34 Sunnyside which will be known as the Cliffwood and Brentwood Court apartment buildings—each has thirty apartments of four and five rooms.5

But, what must be emphasized here is the nature of this owners. The Biddermans and the Middlekaufs were not Chicago elites. They were conspicuously absent from the elite directories that were still being published. They were more attuned to the upper-middle class. This money combined with the use of a mortgage could be the source of much new
income. Others were 'all scale speculators who were satisfied with the ownership of two or three parcels of land near their home, which still may have been in or near Uptown. Thus, their decisions to proceed with ownership were rational ones made individually, but with very similar aims in most cases.

By about 1915, the Heart of Uptown had already passed through its own little golden age of community. With the arrival of the speculative operators things did change. To make a good profit even better many of these operators consolidated their interests in Uptown by buying more property despite the high land values. At this time the larger interests were firmly entrenched in Uptown. Agencies as large as Baird and Warner opened branch offices in the area to supervise the purchase and management of their structures. With the rental of one, and two room and kitchenette apartments, all of the real estate interests were capable of profiting from a greatly increased residential capacity.

**Who Came to This New Uptown and Why**

By 1910, Uptown had a population in the corresponding census tracts of 14,992. Admittedly, this is a very large number of residents since the first subdivision. But, in 1920 these same tracts that overlaid the Heart of Uptown the population had risen to 30,325 residents. This increase of over one hundred percent in just ten years is
indicative of the booming growth that Uptown experienced. The greater majority of these residents or about 65% were 21-44 years old. In 1910, when other communities were gaining larger proportions of foreign born immigrants, the Heart of Uptown had only about 10% of the residents born outside of the country. Thus, even at this period when immigrants should have been settling, Uptown had no clusters of Swedish or German immigrants in the way the communities of Andersonville or Ravenswood did.

By 1920 then, Uptown had experienced a massive growth in its population. One of the reasons for the massive influx of population into Uptown was of course the new transportation that the E1 had afforded. But, more importantly there was a great promotion effort to make Uptown the leading outlying business and residential community in the city.

The speculators and land owners did make their profit as their dwellings absorbed the numbers that "took the elevated" to Uptown. Young marrieds and singles coming from small towns or from the older parts of the city chose this new area as a place for their proverbial "first house." With the arrival, the district gained a reputation that served these new members of a transient population well. The new and potential residents could not help but be affected by the publicity for the area.
These larger operators promoted the area with a verve. An example of this promotion was undertaken by the Northwestern Elevated Company as early as 1908. Their pamphlet, *Where and How to Go*, attempted to impress upon the potential residents the possibilities of residence in the "Wilson Avenue District." The railroad advertised the ease with which their service could take one to any recreational or commercial destination:

Is there any person in Chicago who doesn't number one of two friends in Sheridan or Buena Park or in Ravenswood or along the North Shore. The Northwestern "L" and its unsurpassed express service is at your command whenever you call upon your friends. In many instances, these same friends found their homes after a ride on the Northwestern way.12

The road and its investors gave ample reasons to come to areas like Uptown. Particularly emphasized was the chance for almost any potential to be realized.

The purchasers of homes are numbered by the thousands and the renters of apartments by the ten thousands in district contiguous to the Wilson Avenue route. Homes suitable for persons of any and all means are available. Opportunities for investment appear on all hands, and the express is running daily to whiz the seeker to his goal.13

A man could live and prosper in Uptown no matter what his status. The builders and contractors also made sure to supply a pitch for investment:

Being practical builders and having been engaged in this line of work in Chicago for many years, our methods rid you of all the worry and waste of time that building usually entails, as
we can take charge of every detail of work besides saving you money on the little expenses which in the end form a very considerable item. Furthermore, through specializing in building in this territory as we do, we can through the volume of our work in this territory and the distribution of facilities at our disposal give you the very lowest of figures consistent with first class work and material.14

It is fairly easy to see the types of goals that were perceived as important by those whose business it was to serve them. Yet, while all this "selling" seems like a great example of American ingenuity and resourcefulness, there would be severe implications of building an area in this way. The boom could not last forever; indeed it didn't last very long.

The product of this promotional attitude was new construction, as well as demolition of older units. In 1920, as a result, slightly less than 10% of the units were owned homes.15

**Concomitant Commercial Growth in Uptown**

It took several years, but by the mid 1920's the entrepreneurs understood the market that existed in the new Uptown. Commercial land values rose with residential values due to the potential market that was arriving there. Because of these high values, the small neighborhood stores never could take root in the Wilson Avenue shopping area. The nature of the residents demanded recreational and commercial
entities to meet their needs, not those of a stable middle-class community. The recognized societal values exhibited by the "ma and pa store" and the neighborhood theater were not to be enjoyed in Uptown.

The type of stores that opened in the area by the early 1920's were there to serve this more transient clientele:

There were always shops on Sheridan Road it is true, but one did not think of who owned them—they were just shops. Today there are branches of nationally known concerns; Betty Wales, O'Connor and Goldberg, Lyon and Healy and many others.16

Establishments not oriented to simply a small neighborhood were constructed to be consistent with their potential patronage:

The unceasing miracle of Wilson Avenue, is to me the increase in the number of its restaurants; there were always some, but never so many or such large ones, like the Automat and the Otrio Cafeteria.17

The intensive residential situation that has been exposed had violated the pristine concepts of the "nice," outlying community.

It was in opposition to stability that by the 1920's the area assumed the role as a city-wide entertainment and commercial district. People who were not from the Uptown area became familiar sights to the residents. The district not only became an attraction for all residents of the North Side but for the city in general. Outside of the central
business district of the Loop, the Heart of Uptown was the leading and most intensive commercial and entertainment district in the city.

Movie theaters constructed during this period drew many people into the Wilson Avenue District. Uptown and the surrounding area had ten theaters by 1926. Yet such theaters were not of the small nickelodeon variety. The corner at Lawrence and Broadway Avenues was the home of the Uptown theater which was, and still is the largest movie theater in the city with 4027 seats. The Riviera and Wilson theaters were located within two blocks of the Uptown. These theaters proved to be a great attraction to the city as a whole. In 1926, the Heart of Uptown ranked second only to the Loop in theater seating capacity.18

Another manifestation of Uptown as a recreational center was its role as home to the dance hall craze of the late 1920's and 1930's. There had been some smaller dance halls in the Heart area. Arcadia Gardens and others were well patronized, but to match Uptown's mushrooming growth, another larger facility was built to siphon patrons into the area.

The Karsas brothers, who had already enjoyed great successes with their first ballroom, the Trianon on the South Side, developed the Aragon Ballroom near Lawrence and Broadway. Along with the Trianon, the Aragon was known as one of America's most beautiful ballrooms.
Merrymakers were almost magnetically drawn from all over the city to Uptown to enjoy the live sounds of Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey, Guy Lombardo, Lawrence Walk, and Dick Jurgensen, among others.\textsuperscript{19} The Aragon was built in 1929 at a cost of $1,750,000. It was built to resemble a Moorish palace, at once more vulgar and more romantic than the Trianon's classical beauty.\textsuperscript{20} The ballroom became a Chicago landmark, as the smaller, older ballrooms were unable to command the top bands or the radio time of the Karsas ballrooms and many were forced out of business.

While the Aragon was in operation as a ballroom, it drew total crowds of fifty million.\textsuperscript{21} The success of the ballroom and its later death due to disinterest and delapidation is symptomatic of the type of entertainment district that Uptown would become.

The movie theaters and dance halls were not the only sources of city-wide amusement in the Heart of Uptown. Bowling alleys and billiard halls were well represented.\textsuperscript{22} Cabarets were also quite numerous:

The Uptown area and the near north side and the Lincoln Park sections of the city included a relatively high number of cabarets, although there were many establishments with music and dancing these sections which were not included in the license book at the City Clerk's office.\textsuperscript{23}

By the late 1920's Uptown had made a 180 degree change in direction from its origins as a bedroom suburb. Uptown
was the leading outlying entertainment and commercial center in the city. The large movie theaters, the Aragon, and the billiard halls are only a few examples of the extent to which Uptown had intensified. This commercial and entertainment growth is tremendously significant if the time span of its development is considered. From a relatively sparsely settled part of Lakeview before 1900, the Heart of Uptown mushroomed in only twenty-five years to the most patronized center in the city with the exception of the Loop.

This series of episodes of expansion lends support to the idea that Uptown was following a path particularly unfavorable for middle-class residential life. Uptown was a nice place to visit on a Saturday night, but for those of moderate means, living there was a different story. In comparison with the largely stable residential neighborhoods to the west such as Ravenswood and Albany Park, the Heart of Uptown had in these entertainment and business enterprises little in the way of permanence.

Thus, the lack of an ordered residential and commercial existence was an aspect of Uptown that had its seeds in the earliest historical development.
FOOTNOTES

1Cook County, Illinois, "Tract Books" (Recorder of Deeds, Continuous additions).


4"Uptown Was Only a Subdivision 37 Years Ago," Uptown News, 6 February 1931, p. 1.


6Tract Books.


13Ibid., p. 31.
14 Ibid., back page.


17 Ibid., #54, p. 34.


21 Ibid., p. 206.

22 Chicago Recreation Commission, Chicago Recreation Survey, p. 36

23 Ibid., p. 160.
V. THE BUBBLE STARTS TO BURST
1930-1940

Introduction

Uptown held numerous opportunities for those seeking diversions. There was another side to be considered. The question of whether Uptown could afford residential opportunities to match the thriving night life was answered in the form of many problems that prevented a sense of balance. These deficiencies ultimately forced the last elements of stability out of the Heart of Uptown. Their exit was facilitated by even more transportation improvements that allowed more "tasteful" communities to exist elsewhere.

The Recognition of the Lack of Open Space

An important characteristic of a stable neighborhood is often the amount of open space that it has to offer to its residents. During the City Beautiful Movement that occurred in the United States during the first decades of the 1900's, the lack of parks and open space was first noticed in Uptown. With quick development of the area as to the dominant purpose in the settlement of the Heart, little else was considered. 1908-1909 saw the erection of the one and only neighborhood-sized park in Uptown. Only
several lots in size, this park was a sad substitute for
the area needed.

A Parks Commission report of 1910 very early on
revealed the problem.

While the North Side district known as Lake
View (and Uptown) is comparatively new resi-
dence territory, it is growing in density at
a rapid rate. Block after block is being
built up solidly with apartment houses with-
out any saving grace in the way of breathing
spaces and recreation centers and the fact
that higher rents are paid in these areas than
in the west side tenement house wards doesn't
mitigate the fact and the effect of such den-
sity.¹

One step that can be perceived as an improvement in
this situation was the opening in July 1916 of the Clarendon
Avenue Beach and Beachhouse on the east side of the Heart
of Uptown. Because the beach was the first municipally
owned beach in the city, it attracted many people from all
over the city. Rather than mitigate against the problems
of overcrowding within the Heart of Uptown, the beach only
added to them. Thus, it did not serve this community in
any favorable manner in the need for more open space.

Contemporary residents noticed the lack of needed
parks and playgrounds, but there was not much that could be
done.² Parents were obviously reluctant to bring their
children up in such an area.

The Rise of Commercialized Vice in the Heart

Another corollary development to the mushrooming
growth of Uptown was the lack of children in the neighborhood.
This absence is attributable to the dominance of young adults in the area. The usual sense of stability associated with families and children was never apparent in the Heart of Uptown. Simply stated, responsible middle class parents apparently wanted a more relaxed and safe atmosphere for their children.

One thing that parents must have feared when contemplating a life in Uptown was the fact that Uptown by the mid-1920's had become a haven for prostitution on the North Side. Walter C. Reckless in his study, *Vice in Chicago*, (1933), examined this problem and submitted reasons for the dominance of vice in areas such as Uptown and the extent to which it determined the character of these areas. There was no question that his findings corroborated with those that had already been made public by agencies like the Chicago Recreation Commission in their massive survey completed during the first years of the Depression.

Reckless pointed to the usual centers of prostitution that existed in the "restricted districts" of Chicago's Near North and Downtown areas as important sources of vice in Chicago. Reckless also examined the new decentralized districts of vice. Earlier, this problem had been examined in 1910 by the Vice Commission of Chicago:

*New houses (of prostitution), especially in flat buildings, are being established in residential districts to an alarming extent. In fact there*
are more houses of this character in these sections than in the so-called restricted districts.\(^3\)

The explanation to Reckless lay in the character of an area like Uptown in residential terms. When more outlying areas of Chicago, like Uptown, began to develop as residential centers, large flat and apartment buildings were erected. With growth of these city business centers, these flats and apartments became havens for unorganized vice. The prostitutes themselves were not deep-rooted in the area, but they were able to do quite well on the trade from residential hotels and apartments as well as those who came into the area due to its reputation as an exciting entertainment district.

To support his theories, Reckless submitted data that showed the Heart to be highly liable to these illicit activities:

It so happens that in Chicago we find neighborhoods which are characterized by a preponderance of males and females, adults of both sexes and a shortage of children. Offhand, it seems that such areas show up with problems of sex, sex delinquency, and commercialized vice more so than areas which contain vigorous family-community life. The West Madison Street Hobo area, the lower North Side rooming house area and the Wilson Avenue furnished apartment area are cases in point.\(^4\)

Reckless also mentioned that in areas like Uptown, the high rates of vice resorts were located in tracts with the lowest percentages of immigrants. It will be seen that the
lack of a stable immigrant community did indeed hurt Uptown over the long term.

**The New Availability of Auto Usage**

In 1927, the Outer Drive was completed as far north as Foster Avenue. This new road for all intents and purposes linked Downtown with the burgeoning North Side along the Lakefront. It led into Sheridan Road and a driver could get from the northern city limits at Howard Street to Downtown Chicago via one continuous drive.

It seems that the effect of the Outer Drive on the Heart was like one that had occurred with the arrival of the "el" and its subsequent extension. The Outer Drive gave Uptown residents by the mid-1930's the opportunity to move Northward. Residential communities that were favorable to middle class lifestyles were accessible via the Outer Drive and other cross streets if one had a car. It seems that middle class residents would thus have this option if they cared to utilize it. The ability of the car to carry people almost wherever they wanted combined with the building of an expedient road allowed the necessary mobility.

**The Community Reaction to the Change**

With all the aspects of the building boom occurring in the Heart area at this time, the perceptions of the residents reveal some important facts. It was in retrospect that
most people saw the makings of a "nice community."

Residents had classified the area as a residential haven
with small homes and one and two family dwellings, with a
quiet commercial center.

Yet the tendency toward conversion and demolition of
these older buildings weighed heavily on the residents who
stayed in Uptown. Dr. Ainslie of the Argyle Community
Center capsulized the situation as his other fellow resi-
dents saw it:

When I first came to Wilson Avenue, it was a
lovely district; all residences, lovely homes... 
very little business district on Broadway. Good
apartment buildings were found among the homes
until 1910, although even by that time people
were moving out of the district because they felt
that it was beginning to deteriorate. By 1912
and 1913 cheaper apartment houses were being built
everywhere and many of the desirable people moved
farther north. 5

It was this type of common impression that held the at-
tention of the remaining residents in the late 1920's. Their
friends and neighbors had often left the neighborhood for
the same reason. It is these types of recollections that
are so much more persuasive than any set of numbers revealing
the actual decay that went on. The thoughts and impulses
that these people exhibited about the early decline of their
neighborhood as they saw it are tremendously important barom-
eters of the reasons for coming to and leaving Uptown. By
1920, change had overtaken their tolerance and many moved.
The attitudes of a former resident of Uptown in 1923 shows the effect of the growth of Uptown:

The home life of the people is a minus quantity. It was not so much a place to take one's family as a place to take one's date. On all sides old homes have been torn down; so widely had the contagion spread that even unchangeable Ravenswood on the other side of Clark Street has been infected.

The Experience of the Jews: An Example of Forced Transience

While areas near Uptown found themselves with great proportions of Germans, Swedes, and Poles in their populations, Uptown itself remained relatively free of such immigrants. Areas such as Ravenswood and Andersonville exemplify this claim by their large immigrant populations. The Heart of Uptown had relatively few foreign-born residents and its instability as a settlement must be seen as a major factor reason for this lack.

The major component of the Heart in terms of immigrants were Jews from Russia and other Eastern European countries. Many of these immigrants had made their first homes in the Maxwell Street area of the West Side. As many of these families were able to earn better incomes they were also able to move to better areas of the city. Uptown with its good reputation as a commercial district drew these newcomers to pursue potential income opportunities.

Ethnographic data has placed a very high proportion of the Jews living on the North Side as residents of the Uptown
community area. Yet studies done slightly after the period of residence had ended showed that the potential stabilizing element of immigrants lived near the Lake and north of Lawrence Avenue, thus outside of the boundaries of the embattled Heart area. Despite this concentration of Jews outside of the area, the composition within the area was large enough to permit the thriving of three Jewish congregations totaling about one thousand members. Thus, there were Jews living in the Heart but this was a small total compared to the potential.

By 1928, the migration to Uptown by Jews was seen to drop off:

Jews settle mostly between Sheridan Road and Lake...They really come from the West Side. The people are of good standing, having lots of money or pretending to have. A large percentage of them have business interests here...They come, too, for social reasons,...but more people came the first five years than are coming now...The Jewish merchants were pioneers here and came before the newer residents. A much better class of Jews came at first, the Ghetto Jews are coming now...The Jews are being forced out of Uptown district because of the rooming houses.

Thus from 1928, the substantial portion of Jews on the eastern side of Uptown was decreasing. The residence of Jews in this area seems transitional at best. By 1950, none of the three congregations was in existence according to Rosenthal's survey for the Young Man's Jewish council.

The reasons for this dramatic decline were observed in the study:
It appears now that during the past decades, changes have taken place which made the area no longer a desirable place for family residence. Many houses near Wilson and Lawrence Avenues have been converted into rooming houses and kitchenette apartments and this change seems to blight ever increasing areas within the district.

In essence, this ethnic population was never sufficiently rooted in Uptown to be a factor in stabilizing the community. Driven to areas such as Rogers Park, or suburbs like Skokie or Lincolnwood, these residents vacated Uptown for familiar reasons. The lack of a stable element assured that Uptown would soon face even more dire times ahead.

The Demographic Data to Support the Popular Perceptions

It is obvious that residents and observers of the Heart of Uptown were fairly certain that they were witnessing the decline of one of Chicago’s most vibrant communities. Such perceptions were actually the force that drove the residents to act, but any analysis must question whether their fears were actually founded by the true situation.

From 1930-1940 data on population, housing, and income supported the popular assertions. Censuses and housing surveys revealed the extent to which Uptown was embarking on a course that contrasted it with most other neighborhoods of the city.

The population was indeed very high for such a small geographical area. By 1940, the population had risen to
42,420 in the corresponding census tracts. This figure was somewhat higher than the 1930 figure of 38,309. The age of population remained youthful. Concentrations were particularly high in the 25-40 year old range. Children as in the 1920 data were almost uniformly absent. In 1930, children under eighteen constituted only five percent of the area's population. By 1940, slightly less than 10% were children. Family size was almost universally two or less persons thus confirming the dominance of young married couples.

During the 1930-40 period the usual fields for employment for both men and women were in the wholesale and retail trade, (i.e., clerks), domestic service work, and semi-professional office positions. Such occupations and their incomes cannot be considered stable due to their nature. More likely, these jobs were perceived as stepping stones on the way toward greater economic success.

Data dealing with the housing situation in Uptown also supported the popular perceptions. Contemporary residents had charged that the neighborhood was growing too fast due to conversions and constructions of multi-unit dwellings.

In 1930, the total dwelling units in the area numbered around 8500. Out of that figure only 500 were owned homes. Significantly, over 50% of those homes were located in the more stable blocks in the far west and far east sections of
Uptown. These streets are today the most middle-class based in all of the Heart of Uptown. Their influence, even during the 1930's was not significant enough to preserve residential order in Uptown.

The rental units had rents that were considered high. Yet $50-$75 per month shows that such units, regardless of the density, were much in demand. In 1934, a profile of housing revealed that nearly 76% of the dwelling units were classified as four or more family dwellings. Statements that the area was opulated with rooming houses and residential hotels are supported by this kind of data.

In 1940, the Chicago Plan Commission embarked on two major studies statistically defining the city and its component parts. Data collected about the Heart of Uptown pointed to the special conditions of Uptown. The number of single-family dwellings, median rental, owner occupancy and number of rooms per unit stayed fairly consistent with the 1930 and 1934 data.

Other categories of data were denoted and some important hints of Uptown's future path were revealed. Age of the residential structures within the Heart was quickly moving past maturation. In fact, there were no dwellings in the neighborhood that were constructed after 1914. The increased residential capacity that Uptown experienced by 1940 was largely due to the massive number of conversions in existing structures. Before 1940, landlords apparently felt that major maintenance was not required to attract tenants.
This assertion was borne out by data as well. That kitchenette apartments were running down the neighborhood was proven by statistics. In the more concentrated rooming house blocks in the center of Uptown, at least 40% of the buildings were in need of some form of major repair.

Such rooming houses were also dominant by 1940. Not only did such dwellings promote transient residence, they could in most cases be subdivided even further: Almost 60% of Uptown's central dwellings lacked individual plumbing facilities for each unit, indicating the dormitory-style arrangements of these apartments.

The spread of transient residence by 1940 was seen by the fact that the average period of residence in Uptown was most often not more than two years. There were at least three dwellings of this type on each block of the Heart of Uptown.

The percentage of vacancies in the Heart of Uptown had also grown by 1940. The vacancy rate of six to ten percent reflected dominant patterns of transience. Areas directly to the west of the Heart had vacancy rates of one to three percent. They were seemingly more stable than Uptown.

This data, while slightly boring as a whole is significant in explaining the 1930's and 1940's as a very serious point in Uptown's history. Data revealed here does in fact back up the claims of residents who saw neighborhood decline.
The consistency of these figures with earlier data also revealed the way Uptown's booming growth as a residential and commercial center had reached a peak by 1940.

But the combination of data and contemporary perceptions has further meaning. It is with the period of the pre-War Uptown community that the direction of the future Uptown started to become apparent. The trend toward disintegration, while hinted at as early as 1920, is confirmed at this time by short periods of residence, large numbers of apartments in need of major repair, and higher vacancy rates.

The possibilities that Uptown might make a resurgence into a stable middle-class community were limited. More likely was further disintegration as a result of residential decline and concomitant commercial exits.
FOOTNOTES


4 Ibid., p. 176.

5 Dr. Ainslie, "Recollections" Palmer, $52, p. 1-2.

6 Pollack, "Paper on Wilson Avenue District," Palmer $54, p. 34.

7 Peter Charnalis, "Excerpts from Interviews with Old Jewish Residents in the Uptown Area," Palmer, $30, p. 2.


11 Ibid., p. 6-7.
12 Sixteenth Census of the United States 1940, Population and Housing, p. 61.


14 Burgess and Newcomb, Census Data for Chicago 1930, p. 569.

15 Ibid., p. 569.

16 Charles S. Newcomb and Richard O. Lang, Census Data for the City of Chicago, 1934 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), p. 6
VI. THE FINAL "DEVELOPMENT" OF UPTOWN

By the late 1940's, the Heart of Uptown was almost utterly devoid of the elements who had attempted through their residence, albeit a brief one, to preserve any semblance of stability. It was even 1920, that many residents felt that their stay would be for a lost cause. The rooming houses and hotels had lost their more reputable clientele and were inhabited by even less stable clientele.

The arrival to the industrial north of Southern whites and blacks during World War II has been documented by sociologists and historians in great detail. With restrictions on foreign immigration, there was indeed a demand for domestic labor in industrial areas. The lure of the industrial north with rumors of its high paying jobs and exciting night life brought many migrants to cities like Chicago.

Consistent with the difficulties of maintaining apartments in a transient area and the threat of declining property values many individual landlords began to sell their property. The Recorder's tract books show that in about 1940 a new cycle of property ownership within the Uptown community was starting.
The individual landlords in the Heart of Uptown were affected by the flight of their usual clientele of singles and young marrieds. Landlords faced the threat of higher vacancy rates that would reduce their incomes from rent. The property values in this area marked as "deteriorating" were none too good. It would certainly not pay to construct new dwellings at this late date.

Many of these owners were not real estate barons. They were family men, or professionals who had steady jobs using their income from their property as a supplement. It was also expensive to maintain buildings that had reached residential maturity by 1930. Often their decaying dwellings led to the flight of their "better residents".

Yet, there was a very rational alternative to sinking with the Heart of Uptown. Instead of watching their instruments move to the suburbs, these owners and new ones who had the foresight could profit. There was apparently a realization by these landlords that while allowing their buildings to move further and further into delapidation, they could gain new tenants who would accept the conditions presented to them. Other landlords sold their property to owners who had started to consolidate their interests in Uptown.1

Many of these landlords revealed considerable rationality in their actions. With the demand in Chicago for labor for
wartime and post-war production. The new labor would have
to be housed somewhere. A Human Relations study by the
city recognized the situation:

A large proportion of buildings in the Central
Uptown area were originally six-apartment or
larger buildings containing five to seven room
units that have been converted into furnished
kitchenettes rented usually on a weekly basis.
These mass conversions of the older apartment
buildings caused the land to become crowded and
increase the population density to one of the
highest in the city overtaxing all community
facilities.  

Yet, these actions of consolidating were accomplished
over a period of nearly two decades. By 1950 there was
little doubt that a totally new population could be absorbed
in the Heart of Uptown.

In 1950, the Heart of Uptown contained over 20,220
dwelling units.  Nearly 40% of these lacked private baths.
While the rent was very similar to the 1940 data, the vacancy
rate had decreased from nine to only about 2.5%.  This new
rate indicated the gradual absorption of new residents in a
different residential cycle.

Thus, through a determination of their best interests,
the controlling forces in the Heart of Uptown were again
able to shape their community. They were able to take ad-
vantage of the void created by an exit of former residents
and make a bonanza through new residents.
The Southern Migration to Uptown

While urban areas such as Chicago were profiting due to wartime industrial production, Appalachia was facing a dire situation by 1950. Competition by northern and western coal producers had made such production in states such as Kentucky, West Virginia, and Tennessee very unprofitable. Mines and companion industries were often forced to close leaving rampant poverty and unemployment behind.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's the immigration from Appalachia was quite heavy. This type of rationalization seemed typical for most former southern residents.

Well, I'll tell you why I came here. Hit's just times got so hard there I just couldn't make a dime, you know. Nothin' a live on. Just had a work for my board that was all.5

Thus, starting in the 1920's but gaining full momentum by the 1940's, the migrants came to Chicago. Essentially a "push-pull" migration was started. There was a push in the crushing realization that home will mean only frustration, failure or stagnation; a pull in the lure of tempting opportunities in the urban industries.6

In essence, Chicago and cities like it, provided hopes for a better life. Unfortunately such hopes were often brutally destroyed by their entrance to the north:

They's a poor class of people that come to Chicago and come to different cities like Detroit, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles. They thought that when they got there that
they could just walk in and get a job of work that would pay 'em big money, but places like these slave labor markets hurt a lot of those people tryin' to make a decent livin' for their families.

Lured to Chicago by the hopes of increased incomes, Appalachians grouped together in several neighborhoods. Far and away the greatest concentration of southerners was in Uptown, the settlement in Uptown was conditioned by several factors, nearly all of which were controlled by the dominant land holding interests. First, these immigrants had to settle in areas where they could pay the rent. These economic determination was by no means a pleasant one:

Social disorganization is worsened by the fact that housing conditions are inadequate, overcrowded, and that in most cases they cannot rent suitable quarters because of their insufficient income, or because of discrimination in the part of some real estate operators. Some of the real estate firms in the city stated that they will either not do business with southern whites, or will admit them to rooming houses only.

With the consolidation of the landholding interest, Uptown was one place where migrants were accepted. Because of the density of occupancy that census data has already revealed, property ownership was lucrative even if the structures were in a developed state of decline. The new residents averaged fourteen months in the length of their stays in Chicago before returning home to the South.
The Final Stages of Decline

By 1960, Uptown had felt the effects of social, economic, and geographic disorganization that had its birth in the area's earliest development. It is not unfair to history to look at the neighborhoods present situation and describe it as the logical extension of the situation that existed in 1960.

The residence of the new southern population and a "hands off" policy by landowners brought some startling realizations by municipal authorities:

The 1960 census data indicate that there are 7,247 units lacking plumbing facilities. This relatively large number of units is evidence of the high degree of conversion which has occurred during the last twenty years. A comparison of the 1940 and 1960 U.S. Census of Housing reveals that the 11,507 dwelling units in 1940 had almost doubled by 1960 to 24,543 units.10

As the mid-1960's approached, the relationship between poor, transient residents and the landowners reached its logical conclusion. Consolidation of "slumholdings was virtually complete.11 Now ownership of these properties became unprofitable due to building code violations and the inability to collect rent. In many cases, buildings burned down from fires of "suspicious" origin or were inhabited by squatters. By this period conditions in Uptown were at a point where they could only worsen several more degrees.
FOOTNOTES

1 Tract Books of Cook County Recorder of Deeds.


4 Ibid., p. 3.

5 Todd Gitlin and Nanci Hollander, Uptown: Poor Whites in Chicago (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 120.

6 Ibid., p. 90.

7 Schloss, The Uptown Area, p. 10.

8 Ibid., p. 10.

9 Ibid., p. 11.

10 Department of Urban Renewal, Uptown Conservation Area Staff Report, Chicago: Department of Urban Renewal, 1966, p. 3.

11 Tract Book of Cook County Recorder of Deeds.
VII. CONCLUSION

Summary of Major Points

At the start of this investigation into the history of the Heart of Uptown community, there were many questions that needed answers. All of these questions led into the more fundamental problem of why did this neighborhood develop in the manner that it did. Recognising that this area went through several different cycles of development the course of Uptown's development is far less puzzling. It was found that Uptown had its origins as a bedroom suburb designed to suit the lifestyles of a middle to upper income group of residents. Due in large part to a lack of a developed means of transportation, their residence was marked by minor residential concentration and a sense of openness that a suburban life conveyed.

Unfortunately for these early settlers, their occupation in Uptown was rudely interrupted by the extension of the elevated trains to Wilson Avenue and intensive subdivision. Those that subdivided the area had invested their money in Uptown in the hope of lucrative profits as evidence by the promotions that the area was given. In addition, the Heart of Uptown became a commercial and entertainment center
that served its new younger population and the whole city as well. Unfortunately, this booming growth that had culminated in 1930 had some deleterious side effects that added to the ever-increasing instability of the area.

With the opening of other parts of the metropolitan area due to innovations such as the outer drive and other roads, Uptown ceased to be attractive to those in search of their first homes. The void created by the exits of many younger adults did not exist for long as the Heart of Uptown entered a new stage in its development.

Climaxed in the World War, the demand for labor by industrial north encouraged many migrants from the south to come to cities such as Chicago. By converting many residences even further, Uptown landowners could salvage a profit from the residence of the new urban poor.

Thus, in very succinct form, the story of the Heart of Uptown is revealed. But to stop with merely a history would be to ignore some of the major points implicit in the development of this community. These are some fundamental explanations needed to fully account for Uptown's history as a whole.

The Significance of the "Life" and "Death" of Uptown

While narrative and interpretations are explicit goals of the majority of this paper, analysis of information gained
is crucial to understanding the bases of the history of the Heart of Uptown.

From the material presented earlier, the Heart of Uptown's earliest development was an inescapable part of the reasons for this neighborhood's present situation. Change was a course that Uptown followed. Rarely did Uptown remain on a steady path for longer than a decade. After the transportation revolution came to Uptown, instability became a permanent component of the Heart of Uptown. Is there any wonder that such instability would produce gradual disintegration? Uptown was a community built and maintained by change, not permanence. But, the narrative easily detailed the existence of the state of flux. The responsibility for this condition is too important a question to be ignored.

The main thread that has run throughout this study is that a great majority of the developments, whether residential or commercial were profit-motivated. The intensive subdivision by landlords is the major example of this. Often, social consequences of their actions were not considered. The lack of parks, the intense residential-commercial conflict, and the short periods of residence by Uptown all revealed how stability was often submerged for profit.

The role of the landowners cannot be understated. Through the number of units they decided to rent, or own, the degree to which they maintained their units, and the type
of units they constructed, landlords throughout Uptown's history exercised a dominant role in the shape of the neighborhood. Illustrations of this point are easily found. By building large unit buildings, landlords encouraged transient, youthful residence and a commercial district to match. If owners kept their dwellings small, persistence of families might have been found as well as a more middle class-oriented shopping district.

It is important to realize that while the owners of property in Uptown have recently resorted to more diabolical means to profit from dwellings, it may not have always been this way. Landlords for most of Uptown's development behaved in a perfectly rational manner. Because the vast majority of property owners engaged in absentee-ownership, their attention was directed to the maintenance of income rather than to the daily problems that the neighborhood faced. They paid little attention to the problems stemming from their actions because their main concern was with their individual interests. Seemingly acting in concert, these owners embarked on many common actions to save their interests.

The cycles of Uptown's development were thus made of a relationship between the rational and understandable interests of the owners and the events which they and Uptown residents had little control over. The extension of the "L"
to Wilson Avenue, the linking of the Outer Drive past Uptown, and wartime labor needs all produced reactions by landlords.

The major implication from this type of relationship is that the residents of Uptown never really had a handle on the neighborhood’s development. The mixing of owner’s best interests and contemporary events left little room for people’s interests to be considered. The whole history of this neighborhood is full of events “beyond their control.”

Essentially, the history of the Heart of Uptown up until the present day is one determined by a dominant, most often non-resident population who saw land as an investment, rather than as an object for social consciousness. The day-to-day life in Uptown has most nearly been conditioned by the best interest of those in control.

This idea that land ownership was the dominant force in the way Uptown developed does not imply that residents were not factors. Residents of the Heart, just like the property owners, made their most rational decisions in deciding when to persist or exit. As long as people possessed options, their best interests could be attended to. Middle-class exits in the 1920’s and exits by younger segments of Uptown’s population in 1930’s and 1940’s epitomize the options they exercised.

By the 1930’s, though the entrance of a destitute population, who had few options, landlords gained more
control and leeway in their actions. They had a captive population of residents in their dwellings. While ownership of dwellings had indeed gone through several cycles, the interests of those in control were apparently the same.

The history of Uptown also reveals another important idea about the area's present fate. Uptown didn't necessarily have to follow the course it did. But the long-term historical revealed the extent to which the free ownership of property dominated Uptown and American culture in general. The problems inherent in the individual interest being placed over the community interest lay at the base of Uptown's problems historically.

In essence, Uptown represents the problems of this kind of attitude. Because of the priority of the individual and his interests, Uptown homes had a chance. Stable maintenance of neighborhoods is a community role. But, historical investigation shows that like many declining areas, Uptown never had community. Its construction as the preserve of the individual investor was a major factor in breeding an artificial community, indeed a community destined to failure through long years of instability.

The Role of Historical Perspective——
The Future of the Heart of Uptown

Another point mentioned at the outset of this paper was the fact that historical perspective can be important in
guiding the significant policy decisions that govern areas like the Heart of Uptown.

The notion of historical context permits one to venture into the future. Indeed, the options for the Heart of Uptown seem relatively dismal on all fronts. At present, this community has reached a nadir in its development. Put bluntly, things could not get much worse for the current residents of Uptown.

Accepting the dominant role of land ownership in shaping the Heart, policy must concentrate on the problems of speculation, slum operation, and over consolidation if this neighborhood is to more humanely house its residents. Policies such as the War on Poverty have failed to contend with the unregulated real estate industry that often leaves communities like Uptown in its wake.

In Uptown, it may be too late as even now plans are made public for the "urban renaissance." Those with shopping centers, condominiums, and highrise apartment dwellings, obliterating the community of people that resides in Uptown now. The problems of Uptown, will be those of neighborhoods west and north of the Heart if history is allowed to repeat itself.

Solutions to the problems of the historical decay of the Heart of Uptown have not been the goal of this paper. Yet, if the lesson of Uptown is to be understood, policies
must deal with history or be doomed to repeat it. In essence, any policies that seek to improve the status quo must deal with the questions of individual ownerships of the Heart of Uptown through regulation and monitoring as a first step in combination with other less "threatening policies."
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