Community Area #11
Jefferson Park

Population: 23,649
Number of Structures: 7,126
Avg. Date of Construction: 1939

Significant Structures: 16

Source: 1990 Census, Harris File, CHRS

(Dots show approximate, rather than specific, locations of significant structures.)
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This community area is bordered on the north by Cook County forest preserves and by the North Branch of the Chicago River. The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad borders the area on the east, and Milwaukee and Elston avenues—which follow early Indian trails—traverse the community area diagonally.

The Chicago and North Western Railway has provided a longstanding commuter link between the community and downtown Chicago, while the Kennedy Expressway—and the associated CTA rapid transit line—are more recent additions to the community area's transportation options.

John Kinzie Clark, who arrived in the early 1830s, was one of the first settlers in Jefferson Park. More settlers arrived following the completion in 1844 of the Northwest Plank Road (now Milwaukee Avenue) and the construction of a post office (demolished) in 1845. In 1850, local farmers voted to form the Township of Jefferson, named for Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States. The township, which was platted in 1855 and subdivided in 1868 and 1870, was incorporated as a village in 1872.

Although most early development was concentrated in the southeastern corner of the community area, one of the area's oldest buildings, an Italianate-style residence at 5947 N. Manton (c.1870), is located in the northern section of the community area. A railroad station on the Chicago and North Western line opened in the 1880s, and families seeking a
tranquil refuge from the hurly-burly of Chicago began to settle in Jefferson Park. Nonetheless, farming remained an economic mainstay of the area for years after its 1889 annexation by Chicago.

The extension of streetcar lines to Jefferson Park in the mid-1890s spelled the end of its suburban isolation. In 1894, the Milwaukee Avenue streetcar line reached Lawrence Avenue, the area's southern boundary; streetcars along Lawrence extended to Milwaukee two years later. Two Queen Anne-style residences, which were built in the 1890s, survive at 5237 W. Argyle and 5521 W. Higgins.

The community experienced a real estate boom in the 1920s, typified by the residence at 6017 N. Menard (1927). An early gas station at 5536 N. Elston (1928), still retains its picturesque Spanish Revival-style tower. The Jefferson Park fieldhouse, 5445 W. Higgins, was built in 1930.

Although predominantly residential, Jefferson Park also had developed industrial districts within its boundaries by 1930, notably along the Chicago and North Western railroad tracks.

The opening of the Kennedy Expressway in 1960 profoundly affected Jefferson Park, making it easily accessible by car from both downtown and the suburbs.

The focus of the Chicago Historic Resources Survey was on buildings erected prior to 1940. Buildings and developments erected after that date generally are not included in the inventory.
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An 1890 map of Chicago's Northwest Side. The heavy black line represents the Chicago city limits at the time. Subdivisions along railroad lines extending from downtown Chicago into the surrounding countryside are separated by large sections of undeveloped land. The Jefferson Park neighborhood radiates out from the intersections of Lawrence, Milwaukee, and Higgins avenues.

Survey information for this community area was accurate at the time it was first surveyed in April 1985. For an explanation of column headings, see page III-1.