

# Top Urban Neighborhoods

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Call it an urban suburb--a big-city next-door neighbor that has rejected high-rise development and highways and maintained a small-town feel without the nightmarish commute of the average bedroom community. Need proof? Park Slope is closer to downtown Manhattan than most parts of Manhattan.

Other calling cards: low population density, high-income residents, and high-priced homes.

In Pictures: America's Top Urban Enclaves

On the East Coast, these urban suburbs are neighborhoods within larger cities. Chestnut Hill is close to downtown Philadelphia, but has cobblestone streets, stately homes and upscale shops and galleries.

"Many of the homes in Chestnut Hill are free-standing, often historic, single-family homes," says Steve DiFrancesco, an agent at Hunter Reed in Philadelphia. "Because there are few multi-family townhouses or apartments, it has a small-town feel."

The same goes for Park Slope and Chicago's Lincoln Park. They may feel disconnected from the city, but their denizens still report to the big-city mayor and send their kids to the cities' school systems.

Rich Residents

Out west, urban suburbs are generally fully independent cities within the larger metropolitan area. They maintain their own schools and police forces and elect their own mayors and city governments. Such places include Piedmont , which lies within Oakland, Calif.; West University Place, which falls within the greater Houston metro, and Beverly Hills, which calls Los Angeles home. By all measures, they are completely autonomous areas surrounded by the big city.

They are also enclaves of wealth.

In Piedmont, the per capita income is \$70,000, compared to \$22,000 in neighboring Oakland. Likewise, in West University Place, the per capita income is \$69,000, compared to \$20,000 in Houston.

"Originally [West University Place] was designed for people who didn't want to pay high taxes," says Marlene Rhoden, an agent at Martha Turner Properties in Houston. "Taxes are the same now, but people like the closeness of [West University Place] and the feel of walking around. It's not very far from downtown and is very highly prized."

### Significant Spots

Historic districts like many of those on our list often stand the best chance of developing into urban suburbs.

"The one way that neighborhood character is maintained is if areas have been designated landmarks or if the type of architecture in a particular neighborhood is protected in some way," says Deborah Fischer, a broker at Koenig & Strey in Chicago. Here, strict zoning laws in the outlying suburbs force citywide expansion, which can make it difficult for Chicago's urban neighborhoods to maintain their character. "That way, new construction builds on the neighborhood character, rather than trying to change it."

Chicago is immediately surrounded by numerous small upscale suburbs like Lake Forest, but within the city limits, Lincoln Park, which abuts Lake Michigan, is the best example of an urban suburb. It features views of the lake, as well as the city's famous rowing canals and spacious parks.

Further east, Boston's Beacon Hill is one of the city's oldest neighborhoods and has been able to maintain its small-town colonial feel through the centuries thanks in part to its landmarked status. It has hosted notable Bostonians from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to John F. Kennedy. Filled with red brick Federal townhouses whose stoops are lit up at night with gaslight street lanterns, the area is often referred to as though it were its own town.

"These are neighborhoods with lawns and maintained streetscapes," says Fischer. "And the resulting lesser density that I associate with the suburbs."

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