

Big Value in Chicago Bronzeville Neighborhood

By [Laurie Borman](#) Mar 10th 2010 @ 9:00AM



Mel Monroe/Welcome Inn Manor B&B

Chicago's [Bronzeville](#) neighborhood prepped for its biggest influx of residents since the post Civil-War Great Black Migration when the city [bid last year for the 2016 Olympics](#). Rio de Janeiro won the bid, but that just makes Bronzeville an even better housing value.

Once the only Chicago neighborhood where African Americans could reside, it was the home of Louis Armstrong, poet [Gwendolyn Brooks](#), and founder of the Negro Baseball League [Andrew "Rube" Foster](#). Currently on the market for \$995,000 at 3619 S. King Drive: a four-bedroom 1890s brownstone owned by [Etta Moten Barnett](#), the inspiration for Bess in Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess." (Listed by [Bronzeville Properties LLC](#).) Gracious mansions, townhomes, condos, and rental apartments make up the diverse housing stock here.

Mel Monroe, 55, owner of the [Welcome Manor Inn B&B](#), has lived in neighborhoods all over Chicago since he arrived in 1991, but he likes the beautiful architecture and extensive African-American history Bronzeville offers. While he says the number of restaurants and other business services could be expanded, he enjoys easy access to South Loop and Hyde Park dining and shops.

It's home to the prestigious [Illinois Institute of Technology](#), [Shimer College](#), and is close to [McCormick Place](#) and U.S. Cellular Field, home of the [Chicago White Sox](#). Plans are underway to build low-rise townhomes and single family homes as well as retail along State St. where the 28 high-rises of the former [Robert Taylor Homes](#) housing project stood.

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Monroe's Top Five Reasons for Living in Chicago's Bronzeville:

1. More space and style for the money. Though he's lived in the South Loop, River North, Lincoln Park, and the West Loop, Monroe says he settled in Bronzeville with his wife, Angela Higgenbotham, because he could get a spacious, stately brick home with six bedrooms for far less than any other neighborhood in town.
2. Close to the Loop. A 15-minute drive up State St. brings residents to downtown businesses, shops, and transportation hubs.
3. Ample, free on-street parking. "We have very few metered spots," Monroe says. Street parking in most city neighborhoods means pay parking, and sometimes at high rates of \$2 for 20 minutes.

4. Walking distance to Lake Michigan. It's a 12- to 15-minute walk for Monroe to the parks and paths of Lake Michigan.
5. Easy highway access. "You're just five minutes' drive to I-55, I-94, I-90," Monroe says.

According to the [Chicago Tribune](#):

- Prices range from \$35,000 to nearly \$1 million, with historic brownstones and greystones near Lake Michigan fetching higher prices.
- Many homes average \$150,000 to \$250,000.