

Chicago Geography

Essential Question: What role has geography played in Chicago's rise as a major U.S. city?

Chicago, Illinois is the 3rd largest city in the United States. Chicago is located in the

Northeast corner of Illinois and is on the southwestern coast of Lake Michigan.

Geographically, Chicago and the surrounding area is relatively flat. This is because thousands of years ago, the area was covered by a glacier and later was a prehistoric lake.

Chicago's location has been a major contributor to its growth and success over the years. Chicago is centrally located in the United States and serves as a transportation hub for roadways, railroads, and boats.



Famous Chicago Landmarks

Millennium Park- Cloud Gate (The Bean), Crown Fountain

Wrigley Field- Home of the Chicago Cubs

Michigan Avenue- "Magnificent Mile", Shopping Restaurants

Willis Tower- Skydeck

John Hancock- 360 Chicago Observation Deck

Grant Park- Buckingham Fountain

Navy Pier- Ferris Wheel, Shopping, Restaurants

Robie House- Frank Lloyd Wright

Tribune Tower- On Michigan Avenue- Collection of famous building fragments

Wrigley Building- On Michigan Avenue at the Chicago River

The Water Tower- Survived the Great Chicago Fire

The Museum Campus- Shedd Aquarium, Field Museum, Adler Planetarium, Soldier Field

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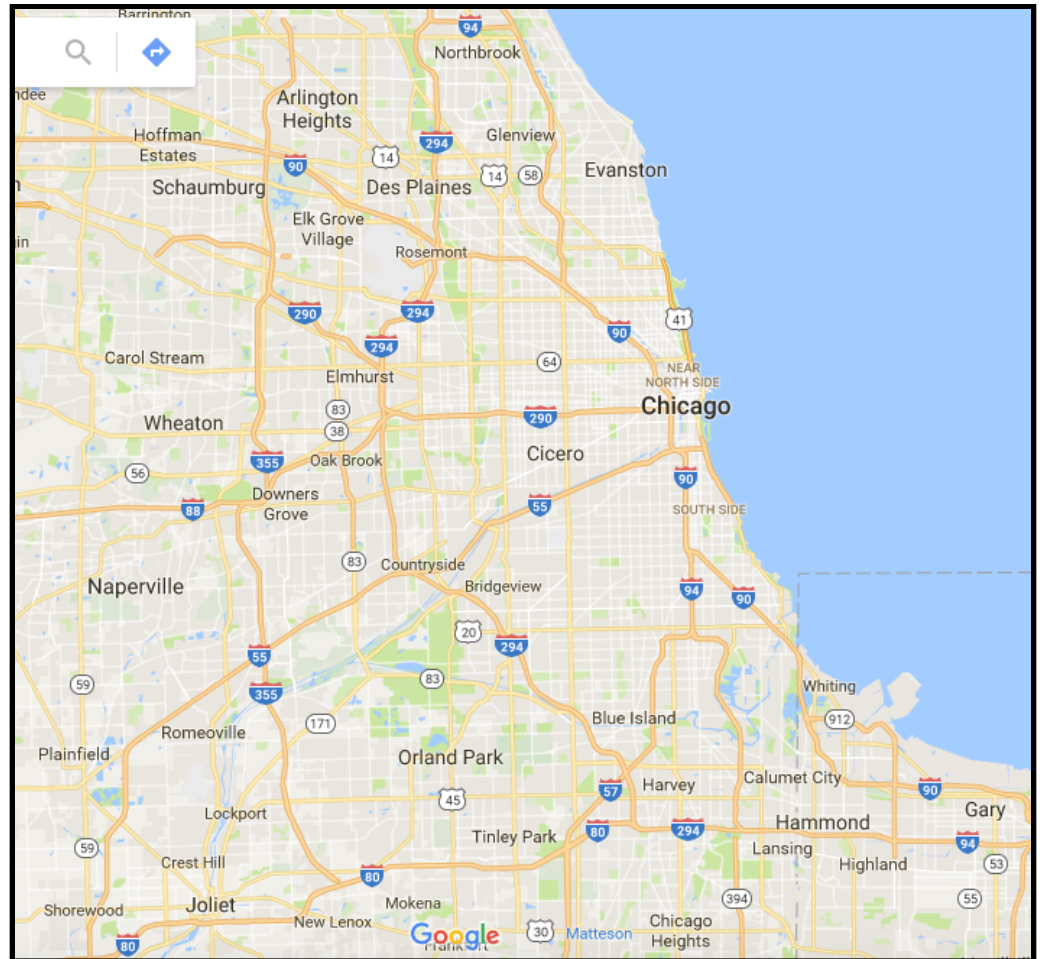
Chicago Suburbs

Chicago's Population is roughly 2.7 million people. The Chicagoland area, however, which includes Chicago and its surrounding suburbs has roughly 10 million people. The largest Suburbs are listed out below:

Over 200,000 People
Aurora

Over 100,000 People
Joliet
Elgin
Naperville

Over 50,000 People
Arlington Heights
Berwyn
Bolingbrook
Cicero
Des Plaines
Evanston
Mount Prospect
Oak Park
Orland Park
Palatine
Schaumburg
Skokie
Tinley Park
Waukegan
Wheaton



Illinois Counties that Make Up the Chicagoland Area

The city of Chicago is located in Cook County, the most populated county in Illinois. Of the roughly 10 million people who live in the Chicagoland area, over 5 million live in Cook County. The suburbs surrounding Chicago are located in the following counties: Cook County, DuPage County, Lake County, Will County, Kankakee County, McHenry County, Kane County, Kendall County, Grundy County.



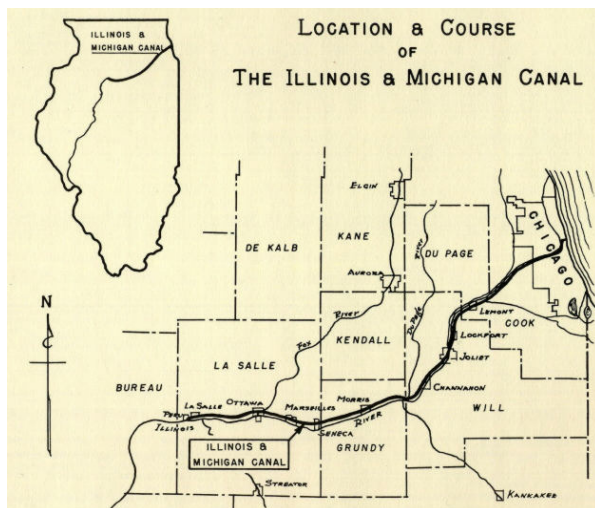
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The Waterways of Chicago

Chicago is strategically located on the southwest shores of Lake Michigan. Boats can travel from the Atlantic Ocean into the Great Lakes, using the St. Lawrence Seaway. A series of rivers and canals running through Chicago then connect Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River. This makes Chicago a major shipping hub in the center of our country.

The earliest explorers of the area traveled down from the Great Lakes into the Chicago River. They then traveled by land to the Des Plaines River. The Des Plaines River connects to the Illinois River, which flows into the Mississippi.

In 1848, the Illinois and Michigan Canal (I&M Canal) was built. This man made canal connected the Chicago River to the Des Plaines River. This was the first time boats could travel directly from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River. The I&M Canal has been replaced by an entire system of modern canals called the Chicago Waterway System.



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The Influence of Railroads

Chicago is the most important railroad center in North America. More lines of track radiate in more directions from Chicago than from any other city. Chicago has long been the most important interchange point for freight traffic between the nation's major railroads and it is the hub of Amtrak, the intercity rail passenger system. Chicago ranks second (behind New York City) in terms of the volume of commuter rail passengers carried each day.

The first railroad in Chicago was the Galena & Chicago Union, which was chartered in 1836 to build tracks to the lead mines at Galena in northwestern Illinois. The first tracks were laid in 1848. Other railroads soon completed lines of track linking Chicago with the wheat fields of northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. Later lines connected the city with Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, New Orleans, St. Louis, Kansas City, Omaha, and St. Paul. Railroads were especially important as haulers of grain and livestock, which helped Chicago gain a primary role in the grain marketing and meatpacking industries. Chicago also became a center for the manufacture of freight cars, passenger cars and, later diesel locomotives.

Freight moving across the country is still funneled through the railroad yards of Chicago, where it is classified and then transferred to the yards of other railroads. Although the nation's railroads now have been merged into just a few large systems, Chicago remains the hub where the tracks of one company end and those of another begin.

Until the 1960s the Chicago Loop contained six major railroad terminals for intercity rail passenger traffic. Passengers traveling between the East and West Coasts often had half a day to spend in Chicago between trains and took advantage of the time by sightseeing. Journalists sometimes met trains arriving from New York or Los Angeles to spot the celebrities. The decline of intercity rail passenger travel brought about by the advent of jet airlines led to the decline of the passenger train and the eventual consolidation of remaining services under Amtrak in 1971.

Hundreds of thousands of Chicago-area residents still commute to the Loop by train each day, now under the auspices of Metra, the publicly owned regional rail transportation authority.

