

# **"The Heart of Hyde Park:" A Preliminary Analysis of the Relationship between Hyde Park Small Businesses and the University of Chicago**

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"Heart of Hyde Park: Stories of Small Businesses", Project Led by Lisa Raj Singh; Paul Douglas Institute, University of Chicago

*Small businesses are an integral component of their community – a role that has become increasingly impacted by external forces from the pandemic to gentrification of neighborhoods. Literature examining Chicago's Hyde Park is virtually non-existent. This student project seeks to illuminate the role of small businesses in our community through a research paper and film. Interweaving the voices of small business owners with student survey responses, we provide an introduction into the small business community of Hyde Park and their nuanced relationship with the University of Chicago.*

## **Introduction**

Small businesses are an integral component of their local community, contributing to not only the economic but the social fabric of their neighborhood. There is very little literature centered on Chicago's Hyde Park, a neighborhood rich in history and culture located on the South Side of Chicago. Hyde Park is also the location of the University of Chicago, a world-renowned academic institution. These two identities, spatially overlapping, are held in tension with one another – reflected within the dynamics of business frequentization. What little literature exists examines Hyde Park through the lens of the university, as compared to the university through the lens of Hyde Park. This perspective thus privileges the university gaze and indeed, there is no literature (to our knowledge and preliminary research) exploring the identity of Hyde Park as a community and more specifically, the role of small businesses within this localized context.

We student researchers acknowledge the inseparability of our project from the university gaze. At the same time, this project aims to provide a preliminary form of redress within the university student context in a form that privileges voices in the Hyde Park community instead of

our own. Our objective is to investigate the engagement between university students and local businesses across two mediums: a preliminary ethnographic paper (the piece in question) and a film, which will be projected to members of the student and local communities here in Hyde Park.

The paper predominantly features the results of two surveys: one administered to university students through flyers, and another administered door-to-door to small business owners. The paper interweaves anecdotes, background literature, and our findings from an analysis of the surveys. We hope to provide a comprehensive, ethnographically rich perspective on a topic currently invisible in academic literature, and in doing so, contribute to a more collaborative, vibrant connection between the university and the local community.

The second part of this larger project is a documentary: a culmination of the stories of eight small business owners and perspectives of four community leaders who shed light on the role of small businesses, the value of Hyde Park, and the nuanced and complex relationship between the University of Chicago and Hyde Park small businesses. This film serves as observational research, acting solely as a medium through which the voices of our interviewees are amplified. It is to be screened on May 8th, at Doc Films, University of Chicago to students, professors and community members alike alongside a Q&A panel of the featured small business owners. For the purposes of this paper, the interviews will exist exclusive to the film, where the findings of this paper informed the nature of the interviewees when interviewing for the film.

## **Literature Review**

### *The Role of Small Businesses in Communities*

Current literature examines the role of small businesses in a series of interactions: sustainability and urban development, post-COVID economic recovery, tax policies, and gentrification, among others. A prevailing theme across these varied fields of literature from economics to sociology is the integral function that small businesses play in their communities.

Small businesses serve an integral function in the economic activity of their area. First, they foster local economic interdependence by hiring and employing community members while also relying on local suppliers (Fitzgerald & Muske, 2016; Carmona, 2015). Moreover, small businesses, which may be in close geographical proximity within a certain area, can foster a

close-knit network between owners and frequenters – neighbors shop from their neighbors. In generating revenue in this manner, tax dollars are maintained in the local area. Research has shown that 68 out of 100 dollars spent at a local business is kept within the community, compared to just 43 out of 100 dollars when spending at a large corporation (Talen, 174). With the existence of small businesses and the frequentization of them by community members, taxes paid can be reinvested in community schools, infrastructure, and other community issues. In this sense, small businesses are pivotal to economic growth and development of their communities.

Besides economic benefits to the community, small businesses can also shape the identity of the community. The owners of small businesses are likely to be local residents and possess a more personal stake in the welfare of the community than a large, national corporation – thus, they are more likely to become involved in local issues. Significantly, small businesses can serve a collective, gathering space for residents within the community. It is not uncommon for small businesses to host fundraisers for local charities, get involved with local causes, host block parties, etc. In this sense, small businesses can become involved in the decision-making and community-building projects within the local area.

Moreover, small businesses are not only integral in fostering a communal identity of the neighborhood, but also in maintaining the cultural identity of the neighborhood itself. A National Community Reinvestment Coalition report served ten Black owned businesses in historically Black neighborhoods in Washington D.C and Baltimore and found that they all felt that their businesses' role in these communities upheld Black culture in their respective communities. In providing a gathering space and celebrating Black culture, these businesses became important mediators in maintaining the cultural identity of their neighborhoods.

Small businesses are important economically and culturally, serving as an important part of the foundations of communities. They provide a place to get services, but also as a place to gather and celebrate. In communities that are predominantly people of color, they moreover serve as important cultural institutions. And yet, recent realities pose active threats to the livelihood of these small businesses. A survey of more than 5,800 small businesses found that 43% of the sampled businesses were forced to temporarily close, almost all overwhelmingly in response to COVID-19, resulting in severe financial fragility to many (Bartik et al, 2020). Moreover, as current socio-economic conditions exacerbated by the pandemic continue to

worsen, simultaneous processes of gentrification and displacement accelerate as well, shaping neighborhoods and the small businesses at the heart of them.

### *Gentrification and Small Businesses*

Gentrification – which for this purpose, shall be defined as the influx of investment occurring at a rapid enough rate where locals find it difficult to keep up with burgeoning rent and quality of life costs – has become much more pervasive in the 2000s compared to the immediate decades before (Freedman & Cai, 2015). Gentrification, driven by a multitude of factors, has been associated with political and cultural displacement (Hyra, 2015). The perceived impact of gentrification on small businesses and gentrification is fraught and contentious from a number of academic lenses. Examining microdata on three neighborhoods in New York City, one paper concluded that while the displacement of small businesses is “no more prevalent” in gentrifying neighborhoods when compared to non-gentrifying neighborhoods, the spaces left empty by vacated small businesses linger more in gentrified neighborhoods (Meltzer, 2016). Moreover, gentrifying neighborhoods attract new services fulfilled by chain businesses for a newer, higher-income population. This paper aptly titled, “Threat or Opportunity” approached this pivotal relationship from an economic lens, performing a cost-benefit analysis – one that doesn’t answer the question of what happened to the original population, or who can benefit from these more expensive services.

From an economic lens, some small businesses have benefitted from gentrification. Specifically, the increased economic activity that comes with gentrification can lead to increased economic activity in the area, as higher-income individuals move in and bring more disposable income with them. This can create more demand for local goods and services, which can translate into higher revenues for small businesses. Improved infrastructure and public service begets investment in local infrastructure and public services, such as improved transportation, streetscapes, and public spaces. These improvements can make the area more attractive for both customers and business owners, potentially boosting foot traffic and sales for small businesses. Gentrification can also create opportunities for new small businesses to enter the market, as higher-income residents may demand different goods and services than the previous population. This can lead to a more diverse local economy and new entrepreneurial opportunities.

But gentrification can also bring about rising rents and property values. As the area becomes more attractive to higher-income individuals, property values and rents can increase significantly. This can put financial pressure on small business owners, who may struggle to keep up with the rising costs and face displacement. Centrally for many small business owners, gentrification can lead to a loss of cultural identity in the community, as long-standing businesses are replaced by new ones catering to the tastes and preferences of the gentrifying population. This can erode the social fabric of the community and diminish the sense of place that makes Hyde Park unique. Furthermore, competition from chain stores and franchises can attract larger chain stores and franchises to the area, which can outcompete small businesses in terms of pricing and convenience. This can lead to the closure of small, local businesses that have been pillars of the community for decades.

The impact of gentrification on small businesses is perceived from a number of lenses with varying conclusions within literature. Research papers, specifically, are designed to seek sources from within the academic community as reliable background information. And yet, an examination of this relationship in this manner privileges the voices of academia. These resounding voices come from outside these communities, and moreover, outside of the places they seek to speak for. This paper does not seek to explore the complexities of community gentrification, but rather, place it in context from the perspective of small businesses. In this manner, we hope to privilege the voices of those within the community, the voices at the center of this discussion that have been left absent in the field of academia.

## **A Brief History of the Hyde Park Neighborhood in Chicago**

### *Pre-1890s Hyde Park*

And now we arrive at the space in which we exist: the historic neighborhood of Hyde Park, located on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois. What is known as Hyde Park today rests on the land of the Council of Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi nations. After the Indian Removal Act of 1830 forcibly displaced these Indigenous nations from this land, American lawyer and real estate speculator Paul Cornell purchased 300 acres in 1853 ([Hyde Park Historical Society](#)).

The construction of Hyde Park itself, named after the park in London England, was a business venture of Cornell (the brother of Cornell University's founder). He envisioned Hyde Park Township as an exclusionary resort for those seeking an escape from the city. After setting aside some land for the Illinois Central Railroad to allow for urban transportation, he built a hotel known as the Hyde Park House, for wealthy Chicago residents, located on what is now 51st and Lake Avenue. The Hyde Park Herald described the hotel as “facing north toward fashionable Kenwood” with the “increasingly commercial district of Hyde Park” to its South ([Hyde Park Herald](#)). Hyde Park Township, considered a suburb of Chicago at the time, became a residential community, facilitated through the investment of wealthy businessmen, known as the “captains of industry.” After the Great Chicago Fire in 1871, they built large, ornate estate homes in Kenwood ([Hyde Park Herald](#)). In this sense, entrepreneurship and Hyde Park have gone hand in hand since its early beginnings.

### *1890s Hyde Park*

Hyde Park as a space cultivating opportunity truly began to take off in the late 1890s, when the rapidly urbanizing industrial city of Chicago annexed the township. Furthered by the World Fair and the birth of the University of Chicago during this time, Hyde Park Township entered a period of great art, architecture, innovation, and growth.

First, after winning the rights to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, Chicago chose to build the grounds in Hyde Park. The exposition site earned the moniker the “White City” due to the dignified neoclassical buildings designed by architect Daniel Burnham ([Newberry Library](#)). The Midway Plaisance held numerous attractions, including the world's first Ferris wheel. The Palace of Fine Arts from the exposition is more recognizable today as the Museum of Science and Industry. With the Exposition came new buildings, residents, businesses, and the world's spotlight on Hyde Park. These would go on to serve as the true foundation of Hyde Park's business community ([Encyclopedia of Chicago](#)).

Second, the University of Chicago, an academic institution modeled after German universities, was founded through the investments of John D. Rockefeller and local philanthropists in 1890 ([Hyde Park Historical Society](#)). These investments carry an insidious origin: Steven A. Douglas, a slave owner, generated a founding endowment valued today at \$1.2 million. In the words of the African American Intellectual History Society, “the University of

Chicago owes its entire presence to its past with slavery.” ([African American Intellectual History Society](#)). This weighted and little-known origin story, steeped in racial violence, is essential contextualization in the divisive history between the university and the local community, and by extension, the student community and the local businesses.

Between the revenue generated by the university and the dearth of architectural marvels generated by the World’s Exposition, Hyde Park gained a reputation as a space for artistic and economic animation. Indeed, an art colony, or an organic congregation of artists, formed on 57th Street and Stony Island in a building originally part of the White City. Hyde Park hosted home-grown and foreign-born artists, including painter Gertrude Abercrombie, novelist Sherwood Anderson, poet Carl Sandburg, and German-American conductor Theodore Tomas. Frank Lloyd Wright also built his famous Robie House at 58th and Woodlawn in this era ([Encyclopedia of Chicago, Hyde Park Historical Society](#)). These would set a legacy for the appreciation of the vibrant art scene in Hyde Park today.

### *1920s-1950s Hyde Park*

The Great Depression prompted a series of economic, social, and demographic shifts that would redefine Hyde Park in 1929. The Great Migration led to a great influx of Black residents from the South seeking economic opportunities in Chicago, which in turn led to the “white exodus” from the Hyde Park community ([Hyde Park Historical Society](#)). While for decades after UChicago’s founding, most residents were upper-middle or upper-class white people, an influx of Black residents into the area diversified Hyde Park. The University of Chicago reacted unfavorably, seeking to “maintain the color line” through neighborhood “improvement associations” ([Chicago Maroon, Gamino, 2014](#)). The Chicago Maroon reports that “from 1933 to 1947, the University spent more than \$110,000 on ‘community interests,’ more than \$83,000 of which went towards the protection of restrictive covenants,” which prevented selling and renting to non-white people. The Chicago Defender, an African-American newspaper, referred to the covenants as “the University of Chicago Agreement to get rid of Negroes” ([Chicago Maroon, Harris, 2017](#)).

In the early 1950s, after a drop in student applications, Chancellor Lawrence Kimpton and the school administration blamed declining student enrollment on the decaying reputation of Hyde Park, citing high crime rates and poor local housing conditions ([Journal, The Sociological](#)

Quarterly). Needing new tools, urban renewal became segregation's new form. The 1949 American Housing Act empowered local governments to use eminent domain to purchase and raze impoverished neighborhoods. In 1957, Chancellor Kimpton coordinated with other universities to lobby for changes in the Housing Act that gave eminent domain authority to universities. These efforts resulted in Section 112, a University-sponsored amendment to the Act passed by Congress (African American Historical Society).

In the coming decades, Section 112 would be one of the University's most-effective tools in shaping Hyde Park. In essence, Section 112 afforded eminent domain powers to private universities. UChicago could now work with the City of Chicago to purchase and clear land, all subsidized by the federal government, which covered two-thirds of the total expenses (Vanderbilt Law Review). The University, working alongside the South East Chicago Commission (SECC), used these tools to respond to Hyde Park's racial transition. The SECC cleared what it deemed enclaves of "blight" and did its best to prevent "white flight," or a mass exodus of white residents. In his book, Making the Second Ghetto, Chicago Historian Arnold R. Hirsch characterized UChicago's interest in maintaining a "predominantly white and economically upgraded community" (157).

### *1950s-present Hyde Park*

By 1958, the city had approved a Hyde Park-Kenwood renewal plan, covering East 47th Street to East 59th Street over an 855-acre territory. In an effort to create a "compatible home" for the University, these plans were pushed through the Chicago City Council. The redevelopment plans demolished 193 acres (Literary Yard), displaced 30,000 people (South Side Weekly), and pushed out bars, jazz clubs, and other businesses (Hyde Park Herald). Under these plans, the thriving business scene – and community space cultivated within that – experienced almost irrevocable disruption, with effects still visible today. While 41 acres were added to the UChicago campus, Hyde Park's Black population would fall by 40 percent over the next 10 years (The Chicago Maroon, Gamino, 2014).

While it appeared that the neighborhood had become a business investment for the best interests of the university, some scholars do not entirely agree. According to Dr. David Belden's 2017 doctorate dissertation for DePaul University, "the construction of Kenwood High School together with urban renewal efforts within the Hyde Park-Kenwood neighborhoods support the



idea of an integrated community.” The intentions of the University of Chicago and its administration were not necessarily intended to damage Hyde Park, and the school made public attempts to revitalize and uplift surrounding communities. Competing, dynamic forces of white flight and gentrification meant Hyde Park remained a relatively integrated neighborhood compared to the rest of Chicago. Though divisions remained, Bolger insisted that within the context of a highly segregated city, “Hyde Park is undeniably more diverse than other areas” (Student Economic Review).

In 1988, the University closed its adult trauma center; the hospital was bleeding money, losing millions of dollars a year treating patients without health insurance (NPR). Protests in the 2000s pushed the school to reopen a Level 1 adult trauma center on campus, primarily serving the Hyde Park community. Community activism was cited as a driving force for the opening of the new trauma center and contributed to a paradigm shift in the University’s goals. Rather than trying to impose the University’s vision on Hyde Park, there were now forces within school administration focusing on benefiting the community itself (New Yorker).

The planning and construction of the Barack Obama Presidential Center in nearby Jackson Park around 2015 prompted local residents to advocate for a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA). A CBA would legally require the Obama Foundation to guarantee jobs to local residents and would prevent the displacement of thousands of working-class Black people that live there. In 2020, the Chicago City Council ratified a CBA that included swaths of protection for local residents (Chicago Lawyer’s Committee for Civil Rights).

Today, Hyde Park is a diverse, integrated, and thriving community, but its relationship with UChicago remains contentious. Data from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) placed Hyde Park’s population at just under 30,000 people, 47% of whom were white, 24.4% of whom were Black, 14.2% of whom were Asian, and 7.% of whom were Hispanic. Still, UChicago’s presence and activities in Hyde Park continue to be scrutinized, criticized, and audited by community activists, including but not limited to initiatives such as the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) and calls for UChicago to provide reparations for the community around it. The University’s flagship program for small businesses, run through the Commercial Real Estate Operations (CREO) department, has publicly tried to support and grow Hyde Park businesses.

UChicago students are well-acquainted with the shops and restaurants of 53rd Street, 57th Street, and Harper Avenue. While the University continues to invest in Hyde Park (including a \$250 million dollar project for Harper Court), it must still reckon with its complicated relationship and history with the neighborhood.

### *Hyde Park: Neighborhood Identity and Demographics*

Today, residents will describe Hyde Park as a diverse, lively neighborhood with a strong appreciation for art. The population of Hyde Park, according to Social Explorer, is 28,801 people. The demographics are 47% non-Hispanic White, 24.4% African American, 7.5% Hispanic, 14.2% Asian, and 6.9% Other/multiple races. The median age of Hyde Park residents is 30 years old with the 20-34 age group having the largest share at 40%. Housing in Hyde Park comes out to 30% occupied by families and 70% not occupied by families. The size of Hyde Park comes out to 1.58 square miles or 1011.2 acres, having a population density of 18,276 people per square mile or 28.4 people per acre. In summary, Hyde Park has a diverse, young, independent population in close proximity to each other.

Echoing the anecdotes of residents, Hyde Park has a walkability score of 100 on the CMAP, a factor perhaps in tandem with the somewhat limited public transportation. There is no CTA station in the neighborhood. The nearest stations are Cottage Grove, south of the Midway, and Garfield Station, both on the Green Line. However, the Metra runs down the middle of the neighborhood with three stations: 51st/53rd St. (Hyde Park), 55th-56th-57th St., and 59th St. U of Chicago. Moreover, there are 6 CTA bus routes through Hyde Park: the 2, 6, 15, 28, 55, and 59. In this sense, the transportation system in Hyde Park favors residents alongside commuters, reflecting large patterns of economic activity.

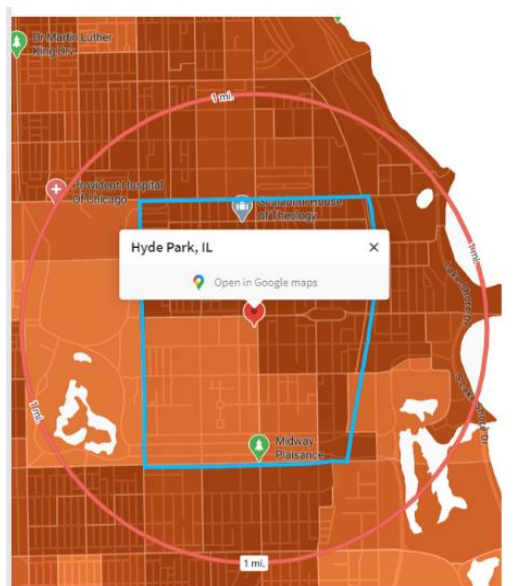


Figure 1. Map of Hyde Park, Social Explorer

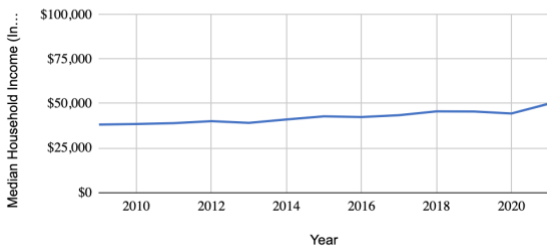
Hyde Park is geographically bounded by Washington Park to the east, the lake to the west, and the Midway Plaisance to the south. The northern boundary of Hyde Park can be porous and often contentious, as there is a strong sense of shared culture between Hyde Park and the southern part of the Kenwood neighborhood. Southern Kenwood, located to the west of the Metra tracks, is characterized by larger houses and continued high-rise buildings. For instance, the Obama House and the Hyde Park Center are both located in southern Kenwood, and residential listings for Hyde Park are often also listed for Kenwood. Moreover, there are some residents who have grown up in southern Kenwood that claim to have grown up in Hyde Park, despite their location outside Hyde Park's mapped boundaries.

Hyde Park can be divided into four subregions. The first subregion would be characterized by the University of Chicago, encompassing south Hyde Park. Bounded by the campus boundaries, this distinction also envelops Midway Plaisance, which is surrounded by majority university-owned buildings on both sides. The next subregion would be the residential area, consisting of small three-story buildings, single-family housing, and some high-rise buildings. In this manner, one can see the boundary between the university and the local community, with the former gradually encroaching upon the latter as the university continues to obtain property and expand past its borders.

Finally, the third and fourth subregions reflect the commercial area of Hyde Park, visited by university students, local residents and tourists alike. The third includes a commercial area on 55th, but is mostly defined by high-rise apartments and hotels. This block includes national establishments, such as Target and CVS, along with Vue53, also known as "V-House," a building with a high concentration of university students. Finally, there is a commercial district split across three different areas; the largest one being concentrated on 53rd St, with two smaller areas being 55th St and 57th St. The commercial area on 53rd street is not only the largest in Hyde Park, but some would consider it the downtown area of Chicago's larger South Side. As described by the South East Chicago Commission (SECC), a non-profit organization that facilitates and supports the economic development in the Southeast lakefront neighborhoods, describes Hyde Park as a neighborhood in transition from the old to the new – a place currently in evolution.

Median Household Income (In Inflation Adjusted Dollars) 2009-2021

Source: Social Explorer



Average Household Income (In Inflation Adjusted Dollars)

Source: Social Explorer

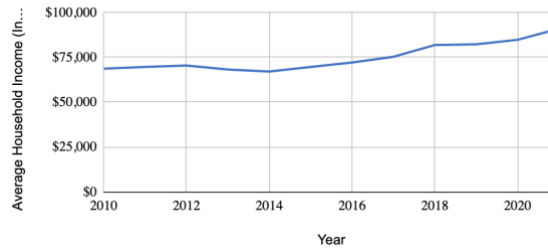
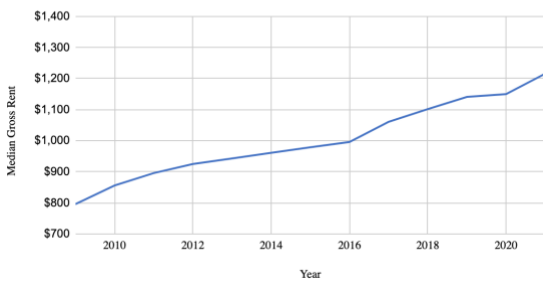


Figure 2. Median and Average Household Income, 2009-2021

Median Gross Rent, 2009-2021

Source: Social Explorer



Average Gross Rent, 2009-2021

Source: Social Explorer

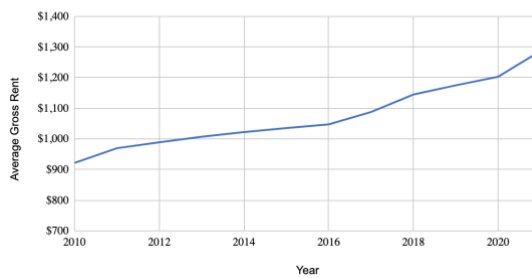


Figure 3. Median and Average Gross Rent, 2009-2021

To understand the demographic shifts in the Hyde Park neighborhood, we turned to the data available on Social Explorer, a web-based mapping and data visualization tool. From Social Explorer, we charted these demographic shifts in the recent decade. Demographic shifts illustrate that the Black population has decreased, from 53.3% in 2009 to 43.2% in 2021, while White and Asian populations have grown by 3% each in the same time period. Moreover, the visualizations in Figure 2 and 3 illustrate a growing tension between income and rent. Figure 1 illustrates the trend in household income over a twelve year period, with median household income experiencing an 31% increase from \$38,164 in 2009 to \$49,906 in 2021. Strikingly in that same period, the median gross rent increased 52% from \$796 in 2009 to \$1216 in 2021, as seen in Figure 2. If income rates remain modestly steady against a backdrop of a rapidly increasing real estate landscape, we think it's apt to return again to the definition of gentrification.

## Data Collection

### *Student Engagement Hyde Park Survey*

To understand UChicago student engagement with Hyde Park, we designed a survey (see Appendix, Figure A) that asked about the frequency and nature of visits to downtown Hyde Park (53rd and 55th streets) marketed towards university students. There were three sections total: the questionnaire itself, an opportunity to submit name and email to opt into the \$25 gift-card incentive, and our consent form. The questionnaire was composed of 9 questions. First, we wanted to understand student frequentization of the business district in Hyde Park. For questions on the frequency of visits, respondents had the opportunity to select one out of many options. For questions on the reason behind visits, respondents had the opportunity to select many options, reflecting the varied nature of student visits to downtown Hyde Park. We also inquired about the particular establishments that students visited, which were later categorized into small businesses, local Chicago-land businesses and national chain corporations in our analysis. Finally, we wanted to understand the factors that students perceived as barriers to their engagement with Hyde Park downtown.

We distributed this survey in two ways. First, we generated a QR code and placed it on varied poster designs (see Appendix, Figure B). All the poster designs emphasized the brevity of the survey and the gift-card incentive. We placed 250 flyers in high-visibility areas on UChicago campus, such as Reynolds Club, the Regenstein Library, Kent Hall, Saieh Hall, Cobb Hall, Swift Hall, Hinds Laboratory, Harper Memorial Library, in addition to outdoor telephone poles around campus. Second, we emailed Recognized Student Organizations (RSO) listed on Blueprint, our school's student organization website, requesting that they send it to their listhost. We provided the chance to win a \$25 gift card, which will be awarded to two randomly selected respondents. We have received 267 responses as of Tuesday, April 4, 2023, 5:43 pm, after which the form no longer accepted responses.

### *Small Business Survey*

To understand Hyde Park small businesses, we designed a survey asking about the establishment of their business in the neighborhood and their engagement (if at all) with UChicago students (Appendix, Figure C). The survey can be broken down into two parts: the

profile of the business profile and their customer base in consideration to the university institution as a consumer and to the university community as individual consumers.

Significantly, this survey was designed to be more open-ended, as we sought to understand each business's personal narrative within Hyde Park (as compared to gauging general trends among the student population).

Our distribution method reflects this purpose. With the student engagement survey, it was relatively simple to distribute it among university students: posting flyers around the centralized location of campus, utilizing our networks within the community, and restricting the form to any student with a UChicago domain email. By contrast, there were very few social networks between university students and small business owners outside of a customer-owner relationship. Moreover, we thought it would be best to distribute the survey in a manner that included in-person interaction between us as researchers and business owners as respondents, which also helped to facilitate connections for the film portion of our project.

Primarily, we went door-to-door to non-chain businesses on 57th, and asked if they were willing to take a quick survey. We visited these establishments in the afternoons over the course of two weekends to maximize low foot traffic. We considered expanding to 53rd and 55th St, but decided to limit our surveying to a singular commercial district in Hyde Park. We received 7 responses from small businesses: five restaurants and two retail stores. These survey responses took their shape within the context of extensive conversations we had with representatives of these small businesses. At restaurants, we spent an average of five minutes chatting with one employee that had the time to answer questions. At other establishments, the owner tended to be present in the store at the time we frequented, cultivating longer, deeper conversations that could last fifteen minutes.

## Data Analysis

### *Student Engagement Hyde Park Survey*

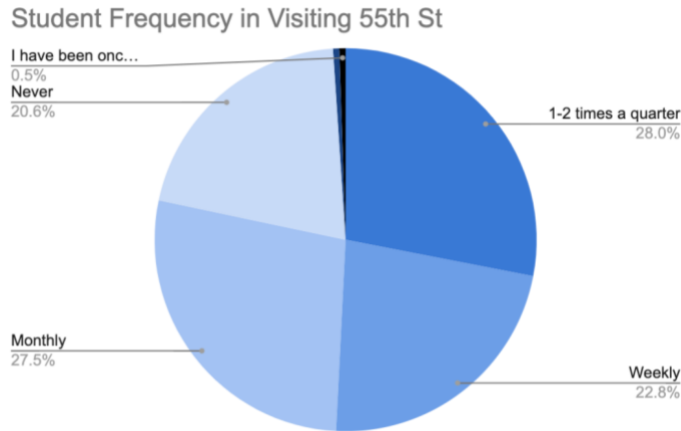


Figure 4. Student Frequency in Visiting 55th St

From our survey, we found that 28% of students visit Downtown Hyde Park (55th Street) one or two times per quarter, 27.5% of students monthly, 22.8% of students weekly, and 20.6% of students never. These results illustrate a somewhat even distribution among these designated time categories, the majority of which reflect lower rates of frequentization to 55th St. Significantly, we were most surprised to see that 1 in 5 surveyed students had never visited downtown Hyde Park on 55th Street, which is located a mere 9 minute walk away from the main quadrangle on UChicago’s campus. These results are consistent with the notion that the university operates as an insulated “bubble” within the larger neighborhood of Hyde Park.



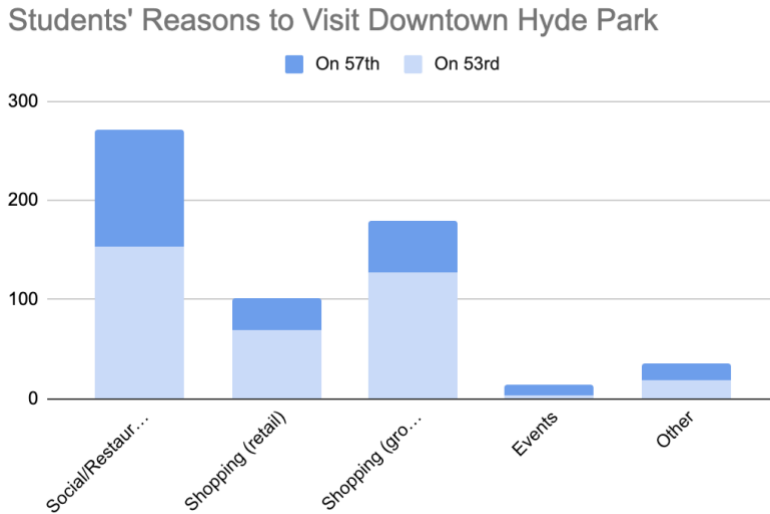


Figure 5. Students' Reasons to Visit Downtown Hyde Park

We found that students' reasons to visit downtown Hyde Park were predominantly social/restaurant, shopping (groceries) and shopping (retail). Moreover, our results demonstrate that there are differential results for each category based on location. Students appear to frequent 53rd and 57th Street equally for social/restaurant motivations. It is important to note here that social motivations refer to social engagement within the student community, such as with friends. By contrast, students appear to shop for groceries more on 53rd Street when compared to 57th – which is an unsurprising result given further analysis revealing that students tend to shop at Target and CVS (two national corporations), both located on 53rd Street. Students also appear to favor 53rd for shopping retail as well. Significantly, there appears to be very low student frequentation for events, which would involve engagement between the student community and the Hyde Park residential community. Thus, our results suggest that student motivation for visiting downtown Hyde Park is driven by internal economic and social factors, less so by external community engagement.

### Students' Frequentization of Downtown Hyde Park, by Business Category

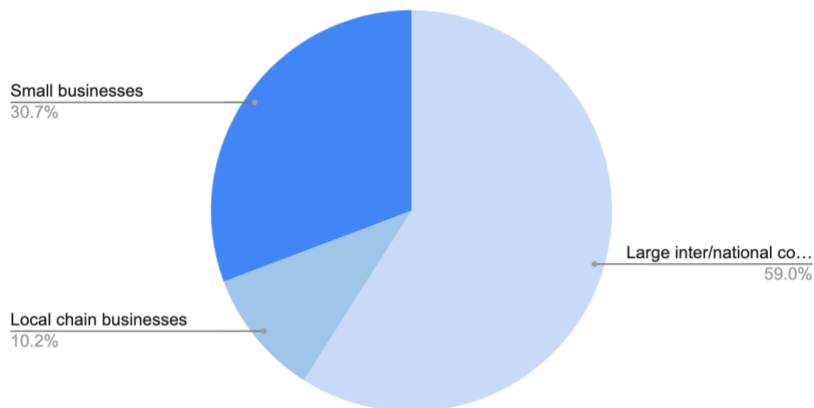


Figure 6. Students' Business Scene in Downtown Hyde Park, by Business Category

This initial conclusion is further supported by our analysis of student frequentation of downtown Hyde Park broken down by business category. We separated our data into large international and national corporations (ex. McDonald's, Nando's, CVS, etc), local chain businesses (Giordano's, Strings Ramen), and small businesses specific to Hyde Park. We found the business scene is dominated by large international corporations at 59% majority. Interestingly, 30% of businesses visited by students are small businesses. When we examine the actual frequency of visits, it is clear that large businesses loom with a very large magnitude over all other categories (differing from what this figure may suggest).

Indeed, when we break down these numbers by individual businesses, a much more accurate picture of student engagement with the business scene emerges. Although the previous graph would seem to posit that small businesses are a second majority in the business scene frequented by students, in reality, student frequentization of Target and CVS is approximately 3 times higher than any small businesses. Thus, while the total profile of the business scene may have a more even distribution among large corporations, local chain businesses, and small businesses, examining the density of the frequentization reveals key insight in the businesses visited the most. Large corporations not only dominate the category of businesses frequented, but also the actual regularity of student visits themselves by nearly triple the amount to small businesses.

Students' Frequentization of Downtown Hyde Park, by Individual Business

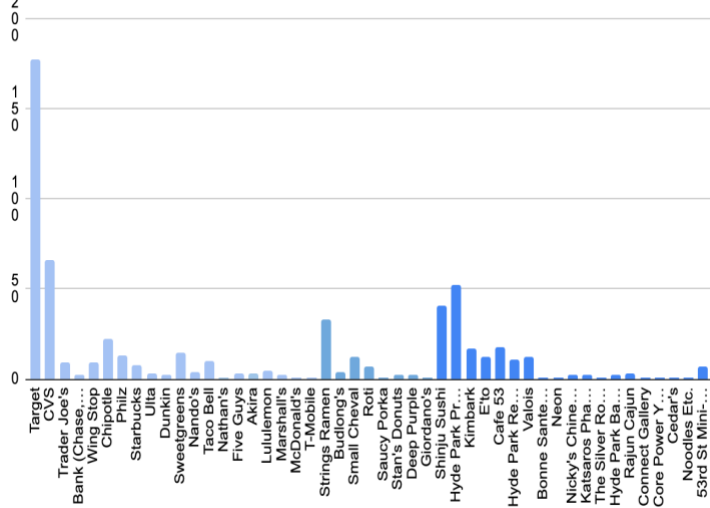


Figure 7. Students' Frequentization of Downtown Hyde Park, by Individual Business

Moreover, dissecting the small business category itself sheds insight. As the graph above suggests, students visit Shinju Sushi and Hyde Park Produce with the most frequency, with Kimbark, E'to, Cafe 53, Hyde Park Records, and Valois trailing behind. These results are consistent with Figure 1, where student motivation for going to Downtown Hyde Park is driven by shopping for groceries and eating at restaurants.

Students' Perceived Barriers to Visiting Downtown Hyde Park More Frequently

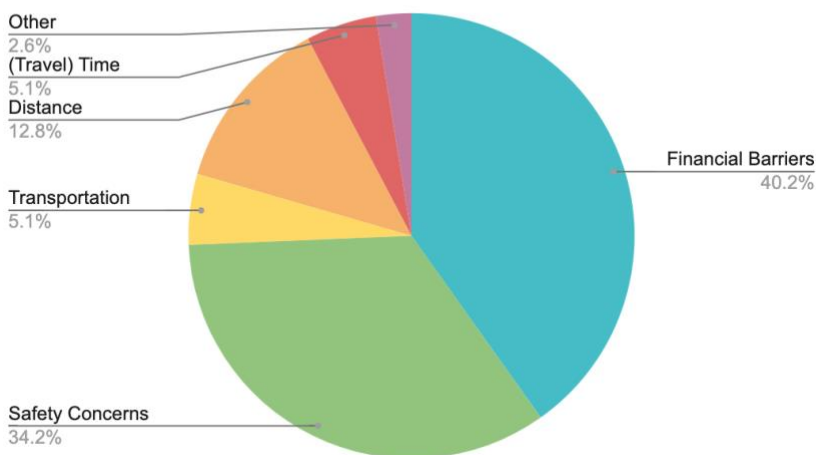


Figure 8. Students' Perceived Barriers to Visiting Downtown Hyde Park More Frequently

Finally, our survey reveals important trends in the barriers students perceive to visiting downtown Hyde Park. The largest perceived barrier is financial, which is an unsurprising result given the financial constraints of a college student. Many, if not the vast majority, of students at the University of Chicago are full-time students, which would complicate their ability to hold a full-time position. Therefore, many students do not have a consistent means of income, barring part-time jobs, savings, parental allowance, etc.

The second largest perceived barrier is safety concerns. While financial barriers might be considered an internal (individual to a person) reflection of personal finances and perhaps an external reflection of current prices, safety concerns would typically be considered an external reflection of perceived public circumstances in a certain location. In this case, our reported 34.2% (or roughly 3 out of 10) of students concerned over a perceived threat to their safety correlates with a larger attitude permeating from the University that Hyde Park is an allegedly unsafe neighborhood – a perception that influences both economic student engagement (i.e. frequentization of small businesses) and social and community-oriented student engagement. From advertisements in student dining halls to frequent updates on Outlook, the conversation about safety is never far from discourse about Hyde Park.

In conclusion, our results illustrate a theme emerging across these visualizations: a majority of students surveyed will frequent a small number of businesses (generally large national corporations) with high frequency. The small businesses more familiar to students are generally restaurants and grocery stores. The main barriers to students' frequency of visits to businesses in Hyde Park are financial and safety concerns, followed by distance. These perceptions are consistent with larger attitudes apparent in the UChicago student community towards the neighborhood UChicago resides in.

#### *Hyde Park Small Business Survey*

On longevity, the small businesses we talked to varied in their duration here in Hyde Park. The majority of these businesses had been here in Hyde Park for quite a long time: the record store for 10 years, two restaurants and the boutique store for roughly 20-30 years, and two restaurants for 62 and 73 years, respectively. Our exception was a seafood restaurant that opened up just a year ago.

In our conversations with shop owners, many cited the culture in Hyde Park as a large motivation for their business, both contemporary and historical. For the boutique store owner, the Hyde Park community was the first community that welcomed her from North Carolina when she first came to Chicago decades ago. She spoke warmly of the community as her family, with several of her friends popping in and out of her store to say hello as we conversed with her. The culture in Hyde Park is still a current motivator. The new seafood restaurant, owned by a mother-son duo, cited the flourishing reputation of Hyde Park in the South Side as a driving motivator to set up shop. The employees at the record store – who witnessed the block transform right outside the window – told us about “the magic of community” that the record store embodied. They described the record store as a Narnia in Hyde Park, the perfect place for those who crave culture and education.

In regards to their relationship with UChicago, we differentiated this category into the university as an institution and the student community at the university. 5 out of 7 of these businesses characterized their relationship with UChicago as an institution as overwhelmingly positive, with 1 business characterizing their relationship as neutral and another characterizing their relationship as overwhelmingly negative. When asked to elaborate on this, the businesses pointed to partnerships with the institution in the form of catering and sponsorships as a reason for their positive relationship. The business that has a negative perception with the university cited an incident with an individual affiliated with the university, who acted aggressively when their order was allegedly messed up.

In regards to their relationship with the student community at the university, there was a general positive perspective: 2 businesses described their relationship as neutral, 1 business described their relationship as positive, and 4 described their relationship as overwhelmingly positive. These businesses characterized their student customers as, “respectful,” “looking to have a good time” and “no negative energy.” Interesting to examine along with these impressions are the businesses’ engagement with a student consumer audience. When we mentioned that we were university students, some businesses mentioned a student discount (which for one business, is a decision made by a new owner who took over), with one business even hanging postcards made by students from all over the world on their walls. In contrast, other businesses described that their main audience was the residential Hyde Park community and either did not cater to university students or had little (but positive) engagement with

university students. In this sense, we observed the demarcation of a consumer audience between student and resident communities.

Finally, every single business we talked to explained a desire for community engagement facilitated by the university. One restaurant described that there is no real, tangible space for community between their business and the university community, with their engagement limited to catering orders. The boutique shop owner described a fashion show at the Hyde Park festival a couple years ago, saying that she was looking forward to re-engaging Hyde Park community events that had been disrupted by the pandemic. She would love to host her fashion show again, suggesting that students could be her models as well. The seafood restaurants' owner joked that he would love to have every single student come in, all the time, every day.

**Sources:**

# Appendix

Figure A. Student Engagement Hyde Park Survey Design

Section 1 of 3

## Student Hyde Park Engagement Survey

Thanks for filling this out! Please enter your email for a chance to win one of two \$25 gift cards

How often do you visit 53rd street?

Multiple choice

- Daily
- 1-2 times a week
- 1-2 times a month
- 1-2 times a quarter
- Never
- Other...
- Add option

Required

Why do you visit 53rd Street? \*

- Social/Restaurants
- Shopping (retail)
- Shopping (groceries)
- Events
- Other...



What are some stores you frequent on 53rd Street? If none, state "None". \*

Short answer text

How often do you visit non-campus buildings on 55th street? \*

- Weekly
- Monthly
- 1-2 times a quarter
- Never
- Other...

Why do you visit 55th St?

- Social/Restaurants
- Shopping (retail)
- Shopping (groceries)
- Events
- Other...

How much do you spend when you go off campus? (estimate) \*

- \$0-10
- \$10-20
- \$20-30
- \$30-40
- \$40-50
- \$50+

Do you feel like there are any barriers that prevent you from visiting 53rd/55th/57th more frequently? \*

Yes

No

---

If you stated yes, what barriers?

Financial Barriers

Safety Concerns

Other...

---

Do you want to be entered for a chance to win a gift card? \*

Yes

No

---

**Section 2 of 3**

Hyde Park Engagement Survey ✕ ⋮

Description (optional)

---

**Name \***

Short answer text

---

**Email \***

Short answer text

---

**Section 3 of 3**

Consent Form ✕ ⋮

Please take a look at our consent form for this survey.

---

[The linked document has terms of regulations and permissions for this survey, if you consent, please press yes.](#) \*

Yes

No

Figure B. Student Engagement Hyde Park Survey Flyer Designs



Figure C. Small Business Survey Design

## Small Business Survey

---

Hello! Thank you so much for taking our survey! Our team is focused on an ethnography of Hyde Park businesses and we want your opinion!

---

Tell us about you! What is your business name/what do you specialize in? \*

Short answer text

---

How long have you been in Hyde Park? \*

Short answer text

---

What drew you to Hyde Park? \*

- Financial Opportunity
- Rent/Property Reasons
- History in Hyde Park
- Culture in Hyde Park
- Other...

How would you characterize your relationship with UChicago? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Overwhelmingly Negative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Overwhelmingly Positive

Would you like to elaborate?

Short answer text  
\_\_\_\_\_

How would you characterize your relationship with UChicago students? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Overwhelmingly negative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Overwhelmingly positive

Would you like to elaborate?

Long answer text  
\_\_\_\_\_