

**VIRTUAL L**

# Logan Square

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**S**itting at the intersection of Logan, Milwaukee and Kedzie, Logan Square inhabits a crossroads, both literally and culturally. Head out on Milwaukee and you'll find yourself in discount paradise, from the suspiciously low-priced clothing and music shops to the Discount Mega Mall, where vendors hawk everything from running shoes to Virgin Mary beach towels. Turn onto Kedzie or Logan, you'll head back in time along a tree-lined boulevard lined with 19th century grystone townhouses. The dominant flavor of the square is definitely Latin, and there are plenty of great places to grab a quick, cheap bite of south-of-the-border goodness. Or, if your taste is more Nordic, catch a service at Minnekirken, the only Norwegian language church in Chicago, located just west of the square.

**Place to be seen solo**

**COFFEE TALK, 2361 Kedzie, (773) 384-1779**

Looking for an intellectual pick-up? This tiny, artsy coffeehouse is a great place to be seen reading poetry or writing in your journal. Cozy couches in back offer a nook to cuddle up in, or you can put yourself on display at the counter seats in the red-curtained front window. The menu tends toward the typical — coffee drinks, teas, baked goods and a few salads and sandwiches — but the quality is good and the service is friendly. It's also a must-stop on the way to the L if you want a quick latte on the go.

**In-the-know spot**

**RINKY DINK, Inc., 3149 W Logan, (773) 395-2082, Bettyboopchicago.com**

Get your pop-culture freak on at this one-room kitsch emporium. With toys and tidbits from old faves like "The Simpsons," "The Munsters" and "The Muppets," there's a lot of plastic fun to be had here. However, the emphasis is definitely on girl power. Betty Boop and Hello Kitty dominate the tiny shop, and the slogan on a pair of boxer shorts in the window says it all: "Boys are stupid, throw rocks at them."

**Better than yoga**

**FIXTURE, 2506 N. California, (773) 227-4777 Shopfixture.com**

Just stepping inside this little bath and body shop is a soul-soothing experience. Here, you can buy everything to beautify your boudoir and your body, from lavender sheet spray to coconut candles encased in an authentic coconut shell, as well as lotions and jewelry. It's probably the preponderance of Burt's Bees body products that imbue the store with such a lovely scent. In any event, browsing the wares here easily equals the soothing of 30 minutes of yoga.

**Also check out**

**NO FRICTION, 2502 N. California, (773) 235-2757**

Check out this tiny storefront coffeehouse for bohemian grunge and a nice cup of joe. The menu includes the standard fare of sandwiches, smoothies and baked goods, but the real appeal is the sense of cozy community. A rickety bookshelf offers books, magazines, and local newspapers as well as a selection of board games. It's a welcoming invitation to start up a game of Othello or Yahtzee on one of the comfortable-as-home, mismatched kitchen tables that fill this small cafe.

**Dinner date destination**

**LULA CAFE, 2537 N. Kedzie, (773) 489-9554, Lulacafe.com**

If the culinary cutting-edge gets your sweetie's motor running, this is the ideal date spot. The Lula Cafe takes veggie dining to new high, with seasonal fusion cuisine

**SAFETY RATING:** There's lots of traffic, both in cars and on foot, in this neighborhood, so the going is pretty safe. Still, in the later hours, bringing a buddy is better.

**PANHANDLER RATING:** Once in a while you'll be hit up for spare change, but not on every corner.

served up in an airy postage stamp of a bistro. The decor is clean, spare and slightly retro, accented with charming details like leaded glass windows and a pressed-tin ceiling that evoke the architectural history of the neighborhood. And since Lula's offers dinner, lunch and a weekend brunch, this is good start for a night on the town, or a romantic eye-opener for the morning after.

**Cheap eats**

**EL CID, 2645 N. Kedzie, (773) 395-0505**

What's the best thing about El Cid? The fabulous food? The rock-bottom prices? The incredibly friendly and helpful service? The charming patio in the back? Take your pick. The dining room sets the tone for fiery fare with splashy orange and yellow walls accented with rainbow-colored serapes. The menu is extensive, with everything from tried-and-true carne asada tacos to exotic items like Coctel Vuelve a la Vida (oysters, octopus and shrimp in cocktail sauce). And don't be afraid to put out the fire; El Cid offers a full menu of beers, wines, sangria and margaritas.

**No wallet needed joint**

**WINDS CAFE, 2657 N. Kedzie, (773) 489-7478**

With a sign out front announcing that it's "family friendly," the Winds Cafe is a true neighborhood joint. Locals crowd the bar in front, even on weeknights, to watch the game on the bar's TV, play Golden Tee and listen to the well-stocked jukebox. The menu specializes in "American cuisine with a Caribbean flavor" — spaghetti, plantains, hot dogs and chuletas (Cuban seasoned pork chops) merrily coexist on the menu. The kitchen is out in the open for all to see, and there's a smaller dining room in the rear of the bar. The front room boasts a small stage for the occasional live music act, and Thursday is open mic night. Enjoy the talents of local musicians, freestylers and comedians with no cover..

**For the artiste**

**LOGAN THEATRE, 2646 Milwaukee, (773) 252-0627**

An old-style movie palace, this once-grand structure now holds four small screening rooms that run three or four showings a day. The movies are not quite first-run — theater features films that were in wide release a few months ago — but at \$3 a ticket, there is no better cinematic bargain. And while the screens are small, the projection and audio quality are more than satisfactory. The owners have also done a nice job retaining the old-school style of the building. The chasing lights on the marquee and rich retro fixtures in the lobby are a step into Hollywood's golden past.

**Best of the nighttime world**

**BOULEVARD CAFE, 3137 W. Logan, (773) 384-8600 Boulevardcafe.com**

Plush, plummy and oozing with art deco style, this lounge-style cafe has the kind of ambience that makes you think Ol' Blue Eyes may walk in the door any second. Settle into the slick, curved booths that line the walls and choose from an extensive menu of gourmet goodies, including a Middle Eastern sampler plate, top-notch steaks and Chicago's only "low-carb" menu. For the wallet-impaired, the cafe also offers nightly drink specials and cheap eats (brats and burgers) if you're lounging at the bar. Later in the evening, the joint really jumps with local bands and entertainment nearly every night, including a Sunday night "Dead Jam" and "Evil Karaoke" on Mondays.



**No Friction**



Photos by John J. Kim/Red Streak



**Fixture**