

NY Times, December 21, 2008 - Mr. Obama's Neighborhood By MICHAEL Y. PARK

HYDE PARK hasn't gotten this much attention since 1893, when the Chicago World's Fair introduced the country to electricity and serial killers. But in recent weeks, this leafy, racially diverse neighborhood of stately town houses near the University of Chicago has become an overnight sensation, thanks to President-elect Barack Obama, who lives in a six-bedroom, Georgian-style house on South Greenwood Avenue.

Since Election Day, throngs of tourists, history buffs and proud Chicagoans have flocked to Hyde Park to see where the soon-to-be 44th president launched his political career. What they'll find is a compact grid of wide, tree-lined streets that are home to a friendly mix of wealthy African-American professionals and less-affluent professors who mingle easily at the neighborhood's wine shops, cash-checking places and university bookstores.



Among the newly minted attractions is the **Valois Cafeteria** (1518 East 53rd Street; 773-667-0647), a greasy, home-style diner tucked between a video store and health food shop, where elderly black men hold court at postage-stamp-sized tables. The President-elect's favorite — scrambled eggs, hash browns and sausage (or bacon if you insist) — has been renamed the Obama Breakfast, though he orders it "to go" now. Likewise, Mr. Obama won't be getting his \$21 haircuts anymore at the Hyde Park Hair Salon (5234 South Blackstone Avenue; 773-493-6028; www.hydeparkhairsalon.net), a bright barbershop decorated with posters of the Chicago Bears and the boxing legend Muhammad Ali, who used to live in the neighborhood.

A good place to experience Hyde Park's cross-cultural vibe is 57th Street. There are tweedy academics rummaging through the dusty shelves at **57th Street Books** (No. 1301; 773-684-1300; semcoop.booksense.com), and dapper African-American families sharing deep-dish pizzas at **Medici** on 57th (No. 1327; 773-667-7394; www.medicis7.com). Indeed, Malia and Sasha Obama have held pizza parties at this popular Italian restaurant; just refer to the menu, where new "Obama Eats Here" T-shirts are on sale for \$18.

Of course, there's more to Hyde Park than just Mr. Obama. At one end is the University of Chicago, an expansive emerald of neo-Gothic architecture and granite gargoyles. On the other, along the lakefront, is the palatial Museum of Science and Industry (57th Street and Lake Shore Drive; 773-684-1414; www.msichicago.org), a Beaux-Arts landmark with an exhibition on green homes until Jan. 4.

In between are a number of famous houses, including many of those fellow-traveling terrorists of old - for example, the Hynes-Berry House (5411 South Harper Avenue); next door to where Barack's old friends the Marti Nesbitt family used to live. About 10 blocks north is the fenced-off estate of Louis Farrakhan, the former Nation of Islam leader.

But the most prestigious address is now arguably 5046 South Greenwood Avenue, the handsome, red-brick house where the Obamas live. Don't bother trying to snap a photo. The Secret Service and Chicago police have erected a security zone several blocks wide around the home. Even Google has steered clear of the address; its panoramic Street View maps keep the house and large swaths of Hyde Park hidden.