

outside the box

Chicago chef Alsonye Ugbebor shares her recommendations for spending a day in the reenergized neighborhood of Bronzeville.



WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE

Here's what you should know about this historic neighborhood.

LOCATION

31st to 51st Street
(take the CTA Green Line)

HOW IT STARTED

Bronzeville, once known as the Black Metropolis, served as a hub of commerce and industry for decades during the 20th century. This South Side enclave was home to families moving north during the Great Migration.

HOW IT'S GOING

Community-led initiatives like Urban Juncture's Build Bronzeville are sparking an exciting revitalization focused on local entrepreneurs, neighborhood reinvestment and shared public spaces.

THE HIGHLIGHT

Boxville is Chicago's first marketplace housed in repurposed shipping containers. Part small-business accelerator, part public square for the Bronzeville community, Boxville currently supports 11 Black-owned businesses.

WHO YOU MIGHT KNOW

Bronzeville has been home to famous residents like Nat King Cole, Katherine Dunham, Joe Louis, Gwendolyn Brooks and Bessie Coleman. Look for some of their plaques on the Bronzeville Walk of Fame.



GET TO KNOW

ALSONYE
UGBEBOR

Daughter of a Polish mother and Nigerian father. Left a banking career to attend culinary school. Goes by Chef Lulu. Probably has almonds in her purse.

I opened my restaurant, A.O. Tacos (known for birria!), in Bronzeville's Boxville development in 2020—after I lost 200 pounds by meal prepping and exercising. Boxville is a shipping container marketplace that incubates and supports Black businesses. I grew up on Chicago's South Side and attended high school in Bronzeville, so I have some long-standing favorites in the neighborhood.

GRAB A BITE

One of my all-time favorite restaurants is **Pearl's Place**. It was a staple of my childhood,

and I still go there to get my soul-food fix. I love **Truth Italian's** French toast flight and jerk chicken Alfredo omelet. The owner is a young Black woman as well. Then there's **Friistyle**, which started at Boxville. If you go there, you have to order the jerk salmon frites. They have this dill sauce on top—it's so good. I could probably eat it every day. **Ain't She Sweet Cafe** has wraps and sandwiches, but the tomato bisque soup

is unreal. I've been eating it for years, trying to identify the ingredients so I can re-create it at home.

HAVE A DRINK

Renaissance Bronzeville is a lounge-y bar. That's my spot. Good drinks, good vibes. I'll get an amaretto sour. They have a reggae night and sometimes live music. For coffee, **Sip and Savor** is one of my favorites, and they have two locations in Bronzeville. I go there often for an Americano. Next to me at Boxville is **Southside Grinds**; the owner, Ebony, is amazing. The Sugar Mama Latte—brown sugar, cinnamon—is so, so good. I usually ask for it super strong to get me through the day.

SHOP AROUND

If I need something cute and fun to wear, **Bronzeville Boutique by Lady Mocha** never fails me. At **Da Book Joint** at Boxville, all the books are by Black authors. I get my son a lot of books there. Boxville is also the home of **Last Lap Cornerstore**, which has everything you need to get started running. I used to go to **Little Black Pearl** quite a bit when I was younger. It's an art gallery, and they have programs for teens.