



10 great places to explore urban neighborhoods

Not long ago Americans were abandoning their cities. Now many of the nation's urban areas are booming with new restaurants, parks and condos. [Richard Florida](#), who studies urban trends, says much has changed in the last decade. "It was almost as if someone stepped on the accelerator," says the senior editor for *The Atlantic* magazine and a professor at the [University of Toronto](#). All these areas are great to visit, he says, offering a slice of local urban life. He shares up-and-coming neighborhoods with **Larry Bleiberg** for USA TODAY.



Tourism Toronto
Toronto's Queen West neighborhood is popular with artists, shoppers and visitors.

H Street Corridor NE

Washington

The nation's capital has been a hotspot for urban rebirth. "It's almost as if every time I visit, a new neighborhood becomes exciting," Florida says. For example, the H Street Corridor NE, one of Washington's earliest and busiest commercial districts, is now home to theater companies, popular restaurants, like Argonaut DC, and the HR-57 Center for the Preservation of Jazz and Blues. 202-789-7000; washington.org

- **PHOTOS: [10 great urban neighborhoods](#)**

Wynwood and Design District

Miami

Forget South Beach for a day and visit some less-obvious Miami hotspots. As galleries and boutiques have moved into converted low-rise warehouses, art and fashion has flourished. Chefs have also been drawn by cheap rents. "It's an artsy, urban side of fragmented Miami," Florida says. 800-933-8448; miamiandbeaches.com

- **MIAMI:** [Graffiti tours turn street art into attraction](#)
- **SIZZLE:** [Miami reinvents itself and turns up the heat](#)

Fremont District

Las Vegas

A world away from the glitz of the Strip, this downtown neighborhood has become home to hipsters, designers and, soon, workers of the online shoe giant Zappos.com, which will be headquartered here in the old [City Hall](#) building. "It's a fabulous area with great urban energy," Florida says. 702-892-0711; visitlasvegas.com

Lawrenceville

Pittsburgh

This former gritty, working-class neighborhood is now populated by professionals, artists and students. A design district hosts art festivals, and with more than 50 locally owned eateries, including some of the city's best ethnic restaurants, the area still remembers its roots. "It has not been completely overrun and gentrified," Florida says. 800-359-0758; visitpittsburgh.com

Chelsea

New York

Manhattan has no shortage of lively neighborhoods, but Florida is impressed with this [West Side](#) enclave. Its rehabbed warehouses are now home to some of the city's most interesting art galleries, which have been priced out of Soho. New hotels have flourished, fueled in part by the northern extension of the [High Line park](#), built on an abandoned elevated rail track. Visitors also find ethnic restaurants, delis and boutiques. "Chelsea is still a place that has authentic, unique independent shops," Florida says. "There are very few brand logos on the stores." 212-484-1200; nycgo.com

Wicker Park and Bucktown

Chicago

This Chicago neighborhood northwest of the Loop developed in the 1870s and has some of the best Victorian architecture in the city. Recently, it has found new life with trendy restaurants, bars, coffee shops, galleries and boutiques. Shoppers come for everything from cutting-edge couture to antiques. "It has gone through great updating with young people moving in," Florida says. "It's an example of how Chicago has reinvented itself." 773-384-2672; explorechicago.org

South Lake Union

Seattle

Tech start-ups have helped revitalize this once-derelict neighborhood, soon to be home to the headquarters of Amazon.com and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. "This is what the new urban creative economy looks like," Florida says. Visitors find tons of sustainable buildings and restaurants like Skillet diner and the wine bar Bottlehouse, featuring pours from [Pacific Northwest](#) vineyards. The neighborhood's summer block party includes a grilling competition and outdoor movie screening. 206-342-5900; discoverslu.com

Queen West

Toronto

The western edge of this major traffic artery now boasts an array of restaurants, bars and shops. Visitors come for music venues, including the [Drake Hotel](#) and the Gladstone, which turns its first floor tavern into a weekly "Art Bar," where artists and designers mingle. Florida, who lives in Toronto, says the neighborhood is full of surprises. "It keeps getting more interesting the farther west you go." 800-499-2514; seetorontonow.com

West 7th

Fort Worth, Texas

With new restaurants, specialty retailers and design stores, West 7th is one of Fort Worth's most vibrant areas. Located just a few blocks from the city's museum-packed cultural district, the area attracts students, empty-nesters and young families, alike. A favorite stop is Brownstone restaurant, opened by [Top Chef](#) alumnus Casey Thompson. 817-336-8791; fortworth.com

Corktown

Detroit

Motor City may have hit hard times, but it still has some bright spots. Corktown, the city's oldest neighborhood, is on the rise, attracting artists, musicians and professionals. "People live there for a fraction of what they would pay in New York or Washington," Florida says. "It has interesting shops and young people starting studios and music venues." Visitors come from far and wide just to try famed Slows Bar-B-Q. 800-338-7648; visitdetroit.com