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The Other Magnificent Mile: the Development of Howard Street and its Effects on the Growth of the Rogers Park Neighborhood

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THE OTHER MAGNIFICENT MILE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOWARD STREET AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE GROWTH OF THE ROGERS PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

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Today, in the midst of Chicago's grand design of gentrification, one entering the northern border of the city from suburban Evanston will undoubtedly cross Howard Street. A part of the city that has recently been considered a North Side ghetto, the former Howard Street District is currently having enormous amounts of money being pumped into its Renaissance. It is now being promoted as Chicago's "Gateway," with new stores, new housing opportunities, new entertainment facilities, new mall complexes, and, most importantly, a new wealth. Yet, few realize that this is merely a redevelopment of a once lively and important area. In the time period between 1915 and 1955, Howard Street was one of Chicago's most vibrant "red-light" districts, as well as one of the most commercially powerful streets in the entire city. People came from all over the North Side and from the developing suburbs in an effort to enjoy this district's commercial opportunities and night-life. Sadly, however, there is a complete lack of scholarly literature looking back at Howard Street's development and its importance in the growth of Northern Chicago. As a result, using a plethora of newspapers and interviews from the Chicago Historical Society, as well as the Rogers Park Historical Society, my research paper is on the Howard Street District's importance to the development of the Rogers Park community, as well as its role as perhaps the single most important street on the entire North Side of Chicago in the years between 1915 and 1955.