

The Mellow Chicago Bike Map

The Reader's guide to the lowest-stress bike routes in the city

By JOHN GREENFIELD

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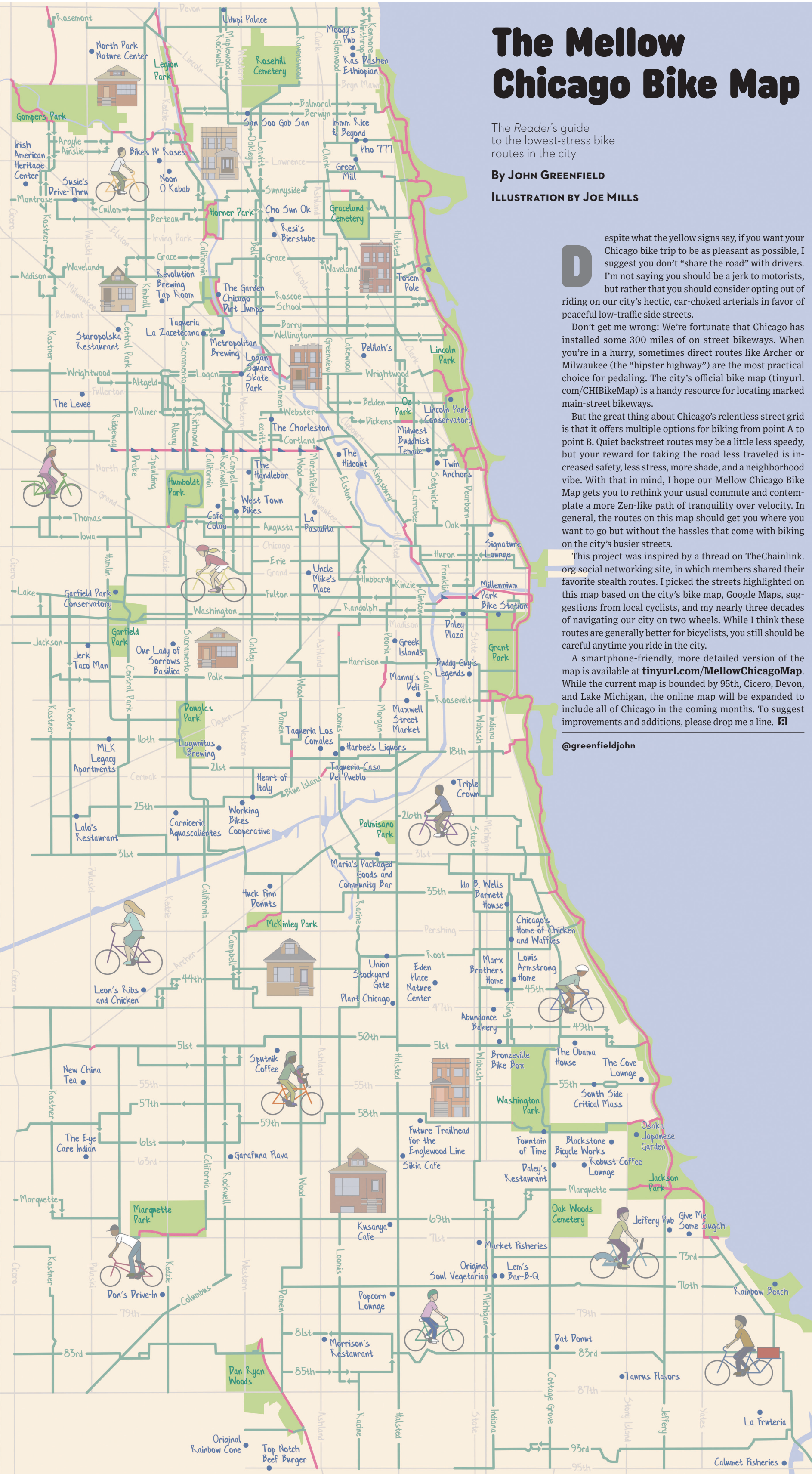
Despite what the yellow signs say, if you want your Chicago bike trip to be as pleasant as possible, I suggest you don't "share the road" with drivers. I'm not saying you should be a jerk to motorists, but rather that you should consider opting out of riding on our city's hectic, car-choked arterials in favor of peaceful low-traffic side streets.

Don't get me wrong: We're fortunate that Chicago has installed some 300 miles of on-street bikeways. When you're in a hurry, sometimes direct routes like Archer or Milwaukee (the "hipster highway") are the most practical choice for pedaling. The city's official bike map (tinyurl.com/CHIBikeMap) is a handy resource for locating marked main-street bikeways.

But the great thing about Chicago's relentless street grid is that it offers multiple options for biking from point A to point B. Quiet backstreet routes may be a little less speedy, but your reward for taking the road less traveled is increased safety, less stress, more shade, and a neighborhood vibe. With that in mind, I hope our Mellow Chicago Bike Map gets you to rethink your usual commute and contemplate a more Zen-like path of tranquility over velocity. In general, the routes on this map should get you where you want to go but without the hassles that come with biking on the city's busier streets.

This project was inspired by a thread on TheChainlink.org social networking site, in which members shared their favorite stealth routes. I picked the streets highlighted on this map based on the city's bike map, Google Maps, suggestions from local cyclists, and my nearly three decades of navigating our city on two wheels. While I think these routes are generally better for bicyclists, you still should be careful anytime you ride in the city.

A smartphone-friendly, more detailed version of the map is available at tinyurl.com/MellowChicagoMap. While the current map is bounded by 95th, Cicero, Devon, and Lake Michigan, the online map will be expanded to include all of Chicago in the coming months. To suggest improvements and additions, please drop me a line. [@greenfieldjohn](https://twitter.com/greenfieldjohn)



Key

- On-Street Bike Routes
- Off-Street Bike Routes
- Major Streets
- Parks
- Points of Interest
- Access Ramps

Village Cycle Center

The Bike Experts

1337 N. Wells St
(312)751-2488

Mon.-Fri: 10am- 9pm
Sat.- Sun: 10am- 6pm