

# Chicago: Alley capital of the world

Chicago, it turns out, has the largest network of alleys in the nation and, almost certainly, in the world. We learned this after calls to dozens of U.S. cities showed none with anywhere near Chicago's 1,900 miles. No single authority keeps comprehensive international statistics about alleys, but the scholars, urban planners and other experts we consulted knew of no

other city anywhere with as many. This chart compares four U.S. cities with extensive alley networks. (Not included are New York, which has relatively few alleys, and Los Angeles, which didn't provide a map of its 800 miles of alleys.) The distinctive alley patterns reflect the development trends in each city.

## CHICAGO

Population: 2,719,290  
 Area: 228 square miles  
 Incorporated: 1837  
 Miles of alleys: 1,900

## DALLAS

Population: 1,193,433  
 Area: 342 square miles  
 Incorporated: 1856  
 Miles of alleys: 1,363

## INDIANAPOLIS

Population: 766,094  
 Area: 396 square miles  
 Incorporated: 1847  
 Alley miles: 231

## PHOENIX

Population: 1,331,391  
 Area: 514 square miles  
 Incorporated: 1881  
 Alley miles: 600

5 MILES

5 MILES

5 MILES

5 MILES

DETAIL  
AREAS  
BELOW

Chicago's original city plan in 1830 included alleys through every block, a pattern that continues. Today, well over 90 percent of the city's blocks are bisected by alleys.

Dallas is made of several smaller towns, each with an urban center. Its alley system is spread around in patches, corresponding to the former towns.

As Indianapolis grew, the city annexed newer neighborhoods that did not have alleys. Alleys in the central core resemble those in Chicago.

Like Indianapolis, Phoenix annexed outlying communities. Some had curving, circular alleys in contrast to the straight alleys in the older section.



Sources: Chicago Department of Business and Information Services; Dallas Department of Public Works and Transportation; Indianapolis Mapping and Geographic Infrastructure System; Phoenix Information Technology and Planning Departments; Michael David Martin, Iowa State University; Owen Dwyer, University of Indianapolis