



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT INTRODUCES CONNECTED COMMUNITIES ORDINANCE
TO BOLSTER ECONOMIC RECOVERY THROUGH EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT
NEAR TRANSIT**

Bold plan will create jobs, support local businesses, and foster healthy, vibrant neighborhoods by creating predictable standards for equitable development, especially near transit

CHICAGO — Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot introduced to City Council today a new measure to improve the City's zoning code and create jobs by removing barriers and catalyzing investment in walkable and vibrant neighborhoods with affordable housing options near transit. The Connected Communities Ordinance, drafted in partnership with Elevated Chicago and over 80 civic and community stakeholders, will create more connected and equitable communities around Chicago's vast public transit options, which includes the nation's second largest public transit system, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA).

"In order to realize my administration's vision for an equitable city, we must redress and improve the ways we invest in our neighborhoods," said Mayor Lightfoot. "By introducing the Connected Communities Ordinance, I hope to facilitate developments that are accessible to all residents and catalytic for the surrounding community. I look forward to working with City Council to pass this measure and bolster our equitable economy."

Every Chicagoan deserves to live in a safe, walkable, and vibrant community connected to transit, yet the wealthier parts of the city have benefited the most from Chicago's transit-oriented development (TOD) policy. A 2020 analysis of developments that accessed TOD incentives between 2016 and 2019 reveals that 90% of TOD projects were constructed on the North Side, Northwest Side, in Downtown and around the West Loop. A key goal of the Connected Communities Ordinance is facilitating more investment near transit on the South and West sides of the City while preventing displacement and promoting affordable housing options in transit-rich communities on the North and Northwest sides.



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"The future of development near transit maximizes housing affordability and accessibility while improving pedestrian safety and connects people to the jobs and resources they need to thrive," said DOH Commissioner Marisa Novara. "Through the Connected Communities Ordinance, we are strengthening our commitment to development near transit that prioritizes people, safety and affordability, and is a big step toward more equitable outcomes by race and income across the city."

From October 2021 to March 2022, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) engaged people who live near high-frequency transit routes in communities facing disinvestment and displacement pressures, youth leaders, and the City's Disability Advisory Committee to identify the ways that ETOD can impact health and race equity across the city. This process affirmed that policies like the Connected Communities Ordinance that center equity and community participation will likely increase community vibrancy and housing opportunity, improve pedestrian safety, promote the use of active transportation modes, increase climate resilience, and foster social cohesion. The ETOD Health & Racial Equity Impact Assessment report is available at www.chi.gov/etod.

"This is a great example of what it can look like to integrate racial equity tools into our city processes and policies," said Chief Equity Office Candace Moore. "It is only through intentionally changing the way we do business as a city that we will create equitable results that can be sustained."

"Quite simply, our assessment shows that equitable Transit Oriented Development is good for the health of people and neighborhoods," said Dr. Allison Arwady, CDPH Commissioner. "With this Ordinance, the city will take an important step to address Chicago's persistent life expectancy gap by intentionally designing policy to promote community health and racial equity."

"By increasing opportunities for developers to build more affordable and transit-served housing throughout the City, residents will have more affordable options that support their personal and family needs," said DPD Commissioner Maurice Cox.

By expanding TOD incentives more equitably across the City and removing barriers preventing construction of pedestrian-friendly, dense development around transit lines and high-frequency and strategic bus routes, the Connected Communities Ordinance will support economic growth in all transit-rich neighborhoods. The ordinance will also improve street safety and sidewalks to promote more walking, rolling, and biking, as well as increase affordable and accessible housing options near transit so that more Chicagoans can benefit from transit access.



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“Connecting communities is a core value in our City’s Strategic Plan for Transportation,” said CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi. “This Ordinance will help us advance this work by increasing density and opportunity near transit stations so that more Chicagoans have easier and better access to transit in walkable neighborhoods.”

The Connected Communities Ordinance is the result of over two years of collaboration with community and civic groups that developed the City’s first-ever Equitable Transit-Oriented Policy Plan (ETOD), which was unanimously adopted by Chicago Plan Commission in June 2021.

“We applaud Mayor Lightfoot’s proposed Connected Communities ordinance, which addresses an opportunity to extend the TOD benefits to a broader segment of bus service,” said CTA President Dorval R. Carter, Jr. “One the most valuable benefits of public transit -- beyond the actual services -- is the economic impact it can have on the communities it serves. Chicago’s public transit system works as a network of both bus and rail services, with a little more than half of our annual ridership on the bus side. Because the bus network reaches throughout the city, making more bus corridors eligible means a more equitable distribution of the benefits of transit-oriented development is possible. We look forward to seeing the positive impacts this ordinance will bring to the communities served by our comprehensive bus network.”

“The Connected Communities ordinance reflects the collaboration of dozens of organizations and government agencies since 2020,” said Roberto Requejo, executive director of Elevated Chicago. “Community leaders are advancing ETOD projects across the city, from Garfield Park and Washington Heights, to Logan Square and Edgewater. These developments are holistic responses to the converging crises affecting our communities, specifically racial injustices, an enduring pandemic, worsening climate challenges, and a volatile economy.”

“The Elevated Chicago coalition is calling for ETOD to be the norm in how to develop Chicago, not the exception,” said Requejo. “For that, we need an ordinance that makes ETOD easier, faster, and more responsive to community needs.”

The Connected Communities Ordinance leverages development near transit to connect Chicagoans to the resources and amenities they need — from jobs and schools to services and more. As Chicago is a city of diverse neighborhoods, the Connected Communities Ordinance will address the unique needs of individual communities:



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- In high-cost and gentrifying neighborhoods, the ordinance strengthens affordability requirements and incentives, reduces barriers to more moderate-cost housing, and protects naturally occurring lower-cost housing from deconversion.
- In lower and moderate-cost neighborhoods, the ordinance brings more equity to where existing TOD incentives apply and lowers barriers to creating more bold community investments.
- In all neighborhoods, the ordinance encourages more sustainable, equitable development and welcoming streets so that every Chicagoan — whether walking, riding a bicycle, rolling a wheelchair, or driving a car — can participate in the economic and cultural life of our great city.

The Connected Communities Ordinance is part of Mayor Lightfoot’s commitment to the creation and preservation of affordable housing, especially on the South and West Sides of the City, and around transit. Last month, the Mayor attended the grand opening of the Lucy Gonzalez Parsons Apartments in the Logan Square neighborhood. Formerly the Emmett Street Apartments, the development was built on an underutilized City-owned parking lot, steps from the Blue Line and will provide 100 one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments to households at or below 60% of the area median income (AMI). In October 2021, the City partnered with Elevated Chicago to select 11 community-driven projects to participate in the inaugural ETOD Pilot Program and receive micro-grant funding and access to technical assistance. In December 2021, the City announced the largest investment in affordable housing — \$1 billion in 24 developments in 20 different communities, thanks in part to the Chicago Recovery Plan. Of the selected awardees, 18 are transit-oriented developments, 12 of which will be on the South and West sides, where development around transit has lagged behind development on the North Side.

For more information on the Connected Communities Ordinance, the HREIA report, and the City’s ETOD Policy Plan, please visit chi.gov/etod.

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