

Glossary

Affordable Requirements Ordinance (ARO)

This law requires certain market-rate multifamily developments to include a set-aside of affordable units. The most recent iteration, passed in 2021, is in Section 2-44-085 of the Municipal Code.

Community Preservation Areas

Areas at risk of or experiencing housing cost-related displacement of low-income residents, as defined by the ARO. Community Preservation Areas are defined in 2-44-085-B, and a map is available at Chicago.gov/ARO. By law, this map will be updated every two to five years.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

This concept determines the amount of buildable square footage on a given lot, based on the size of the lot and the FAR designated by the lot's zoning classification. The amount of buildable square feet is [the lot's size in square feet] times [the lot's allowable FAR]. For example, a 10,000 square foot lot in a zoning classification with a designated FAR of 3.0 could accommodate a building of up to 30,000 square feet of floor area.

Inclusionary Areas

Areas with low amounts of affordable rental housing, as defined by the ARO in Section 2-44-085-B. A map is available at Chicago.gov/ARO. By law, this map will be updated every two to five years.

Minimum Lot Area (MLA) per unit

This concept determines the number of residential units that can be built on a given lot, based on the size of the lot and the MLA per unit designated by the lot's zoning classification. The number of allowed units is [the lot's size in square feet] divided by [the lot's MLA per unit]. For example, a 40,000 square foot lot in a zoning classification with a designated MLA per unit of 400 could accommodate a building with up to 100 apartments.

Off-street parking requirements

The Zoning Code requires that most developments include dedicated room for cars to be stored off of public streets. These requirements are described in Section 17-10-0200 of the Municipal Code. For example, in most instances, residential developments are required to build one parking space for every residential unit on the property. However, these requirements can pose logistical and financial challenges to development, especially affordable development, and studies have shown that most off-street parking is utilized at rates significantly lower than current requirements, especially near transit. As a result, since 2013, the City's TOD ordinances have allowed for less parking in Transit-Served Locations.

Pedestrian street designation

A set of design guidelines that can be applied by City Council to any street with B or C zoning classifications in order to promote a safer and more attractive public and private realm for people on foot, in mobility devices such as wheelchairs, and on bikes. The guidelines make it more difficult to build curb cuts, prohibit street-facing surface parking lots, and require sidewalk-facing doors, along with other provisions. These guidelines are found in Section 17-3-0500 of the Municipal Code.

TOD/TSL Area

A Transit-Oriented Development or Transit-Served Location area.