

# Connected Communities Ordinance

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The Connected Communities Ordinance is one of the largest reforms to the Chicago zoning code in decades, focused on promoting development that will help residents live more conveniently, affordably, and sustainably while spurring economic development across the city.

Passed by the City Council in July 2022, Connected Communities implemented many of the recommendations of the Equitable Transit-Oriented Development Policy Plan (ETOD Policy Plan). The ETOD Policy Plan was drafted through engagement with more than 80 community organizations and other stakeholders over 18 months and formally approved and adopted by the Chicago Plan Commission in June 2021.

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# Parking

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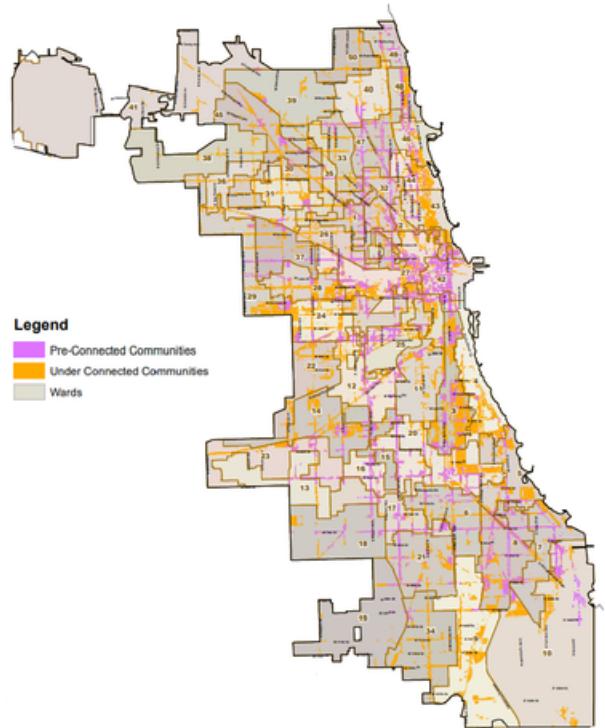
A key part of Chicago's Transit Oriented Development policy is flexibility on requirements for off-street parking. The Connected Communities ordinance made changes to the geographic and zoning eligibility for parking flexibility, how that flexibility can be used, and parking maximums.

## Geographic Eligibility

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Under the previous Transit Oriented Development ordinance, parking reductions were possible within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile of CTA or Metra rail stations, or  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile if located on a Pedestrian Street (an official designation given by the City Council); or  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile of a small number of major bus lines.

Connected Communities expands this geographic eligibility to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from all CTA or Metra rail stations, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from an expanded list of high-frequency bus lines, regardless of Pedestrian Street status.



## Zoning District Eligibility

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Under the previous TOD ordinance, parcels zoned B, C, D, or M were eligible for parking flexibility, meaning that developments in those zones could provide less off-street parking than would otherwise be required.

Connected Communities expands this to parcels zoned RM-5, RM-5.5, RM-6, RM-6.5, or PMD B subareas.

## Parking Relief for Affordable Housing Developments

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Parking mandates are completely eliminated for projects located within a TOD area if half or more of the dwelling units are assisted or affordable housing.

# Parking

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## Parking Amounts

Under the previous TOD ordinance, eligible developments could reduce required parking by 50%, with a 100% parking reduction possible through a Special Use permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Connected Communities also allows a 50% parking reduction by right and streamlines requests for larger reductions of up to 100% (in other words, no off-street parking) by requiring an administrative adjustment instead of a Special Use permit.

In addition, developments that would like to build more parking—that is, in the case of residential developments, more than 1 parking space for every 2 units—will also need an administrative adjustment to allow the additional spaces.

Finally, residential developments are no longer able to provide more than one parking space per unit even with an administrative adjustment.

Note: the parking cap only applies to residential developments in 1/2 mi of CTA rail and Metra, in parcels zoned B, C, and D.

### Example:

A developer is proposing a residential building with 30 dwelling units within a TOD area. Under Connected Communities, they begin with the ability to build 15 off-street parking spaces by right for a 50% reduction from the non-TOD requirement of 30 spaces. If the developer wants to build fewer parking spaces—as few as zero—they can apply for an administrative adjustment to do so.

Conversely, if the developer wants to build more than 15 off-street spaces, an administrative adjustment is also required. However, the administrative adjustment cannot allow more than 30 spaces.



# Density and Affordability

Connected Communities makes changes to existing Transit Oriented Development density bonuses and creates new bonuses.

**Geographic Eligibility:** The same expansion of geographic eligibility that applies to parking flexibility also applies to density bonuses.

## Density and Affordability in Dash-3 Zones

In B and C zones with a dash-3 density designation, the previous TOD ordinance allowed for a Minimum Lot Area (MLA) per unit reduction from 400 to 300 per dwelling unit; from 300 to 200 per efficiency unit; and from 200 to 135 per SRO unit. In addition, it allowed for Floor Area Ratio increases from 3.0 to 3.5, or up to 3.75 for projects that placed at least 50% of Affordable Requirements Ordinance units on-site, and up to 4.0 for projects that places 100% of ARO units on-site.

Connected Communities replaces this with the following table:

Proportion of ARO units on-site	MLA per dwelling unit	MLA per efficiency unit	MLA per SRO unit	FAR
50%	350	250	180	3.5
75%	325	225	160	3.75
100%	300	200	135	4.0

### Roof Element Height Calculations

Previously, buildings in B, C, and D districts could not take advantage of the rooftop features height allowance available in R districts.

Under Connected Communities, rooftop features such as stairway enclosures, elevator penthouses, pergolas, arbors, trellises, solar panels, or wind energy systems in R, B, C, and D districts may exceed height limits as long as they are set back a minimum of 20' in R districts and 15' in all other districts from the front and side building lines. The exact amount by which they may exceed height caps depends on the specific feature and building context.

### Legalizing Existing Residential Uses

Previously, the Zoning Administrator could approve an administrative adjustment to increase the allowed density of a residential building by one unit above the number of units originally included at construction if the owner could show evidence that the additional unit had been in use for at least 50 years. Under Connected Communities, this standard has been reduced to 20 years.

# "Parking Swap" Bonus

Connected Communities creates a new opportunity to add residential density to TOD-eligible parcels.

Any residential development in a TOD area, regardless of underlying zoning, that reduces its parking by more than 50% may also add bonus residential units through a “parking swap.”

Through this mechanism, for each residential parking space reduced compared to the baseline non-TOD requirement, the development may use an additional 350 square feet of floor area to provide additional units without counting against FAR or MLA caps.

To be eligible for this bonus, the development must also meet all of the following requirements:

- Achieve a mandatory planned development threshold
- Maximize minimum lot area density for efficiency units
- Maximize floor area ratio
- Provide a number of on-site affordable units that is equal to the minimum number of on-site units required by the ARO, plus the number of units added through the parking swap.

B or C District	Maximum Percentage of Efficiency Units	R District	Maximum Percentage of Efficiency Units	D District	Maximum Percentage of Efficiency Units
Dash-1	10%	RT-, -4.5, RM-5	20%	Dash-3	20%
Dash-1.5	15%	RM-5.5	25%	Dash-5	30%
Dash-2, -3	20%	RM-6	30%	Dash-7	40%
Dash-5	30%	RM-6.5	40%	Dash-10, -12, -16	50%

# "Parking Swap" Bonus

## Example:

A developer is proposing a 100-unit building, which requires a Planned Development process and is maximizing allowed FAR. Under the ARO, a 20-unit set-aside is required, of which 5 affordable units must be placed on site. Ignoring TOD benefits, the new development would be required to build 100 off-street parking spots.

The developer reduces their number of off-street parking spaces to 40 through the Planned Development process.

As a result, the development has lowered its parking by 60 spaces compared to the non-TOD requirement of 100 spaces. Under the parking swap, that means that the development may use the amount of floor area that would have been used for those 60 structured parking spaces for residential floor space instead, without counting against the project's FAR cap.

The developer decides to add 19 additional units using that floor space, bringing the total to 119. The addition of these units also changes the number of on-site required affordable units to 24 (5 + 19).

	No Parking Swap	Parking Swap
<b>Parking Spaces</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Additional units from parking swap</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Total number of units</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Affordable units required on-site</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Affordable units off-site or in-lieu</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>

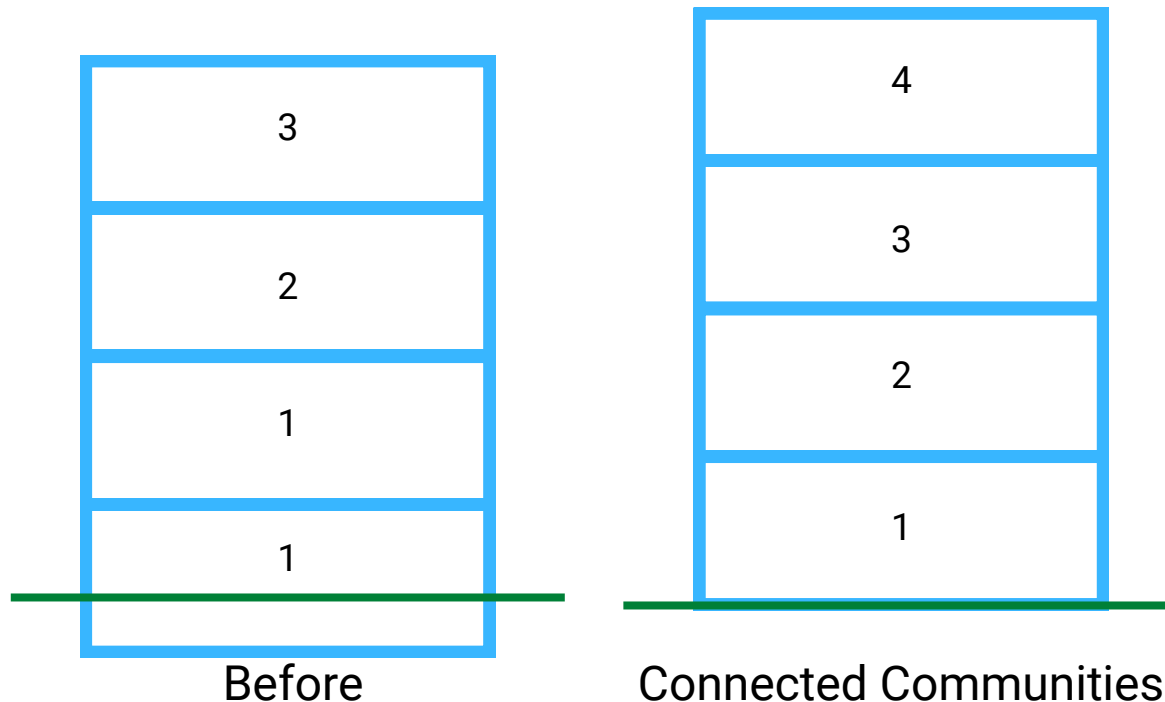
# Accessibility Zoning Bonus

In RS-3, RT-3.5, and RT-4 zones, Connected Communities creates a zoning incentive for developers to build units that are accessible to people with mobility-related disabilities.

Specifically, in these zones—regardless of whether or not they are located in a TOD-eligible area—ground floor Type A accessible units do not count against either Minimum Lot Area per unit calculations, or Floor Area Ratio calculations.

In addition, in RT-4 zones, developments in which at least 25% of the dwelling units are Type A accessible increase their allowed height from 38 feet to 42 feet.

Finally, developments that take advantage of the MLA per unit or FAR incentives above have parking flexibility, whether or not they are located in a TOD-eligible area. These developments' parking requirements will be one space per eight feet of lot frontage, regardless of the number of units on the property, except that the requirement cannot be more than one space per unit. In addition, every one accessible space counts as two spaces.



## Example:

A developer on an RT-4 parcel intends to build a three-flat. Under the previous code, she would have planned a three-story, three-unit building with a half-basement.

Under Connected Communities, the developer can plan a four-story building with one unit per floor, as long as the ground floor unit is Type A accessible. On a 25 foot lot, only three parking spaces are required. The developer builds four units with two parking spaces, which is possible because one of the parking spaces is accessible and therefore counts for two spaces.



## People-Friendly Design

Connected Communities includes new guidelines and requirements to promote safe public space for pedestrians and people in wheelchairs, bikes, scooters, or other mobility devices.

In addition, developments in B and C districts must follow the Pedestrian Street requirements of 17-3-0504 if they are within ½ mile of CTA or Metra rail stations. These requirements include elements such as facades that are within five feet of the sidewalk; significant coverage of transparent windows on the ground floor; primary entrances facing the street; and parking facilities, if any, that face the rear of the principal building. Note: Non-commercial ground floor uses are exempt from transparent window requirements.

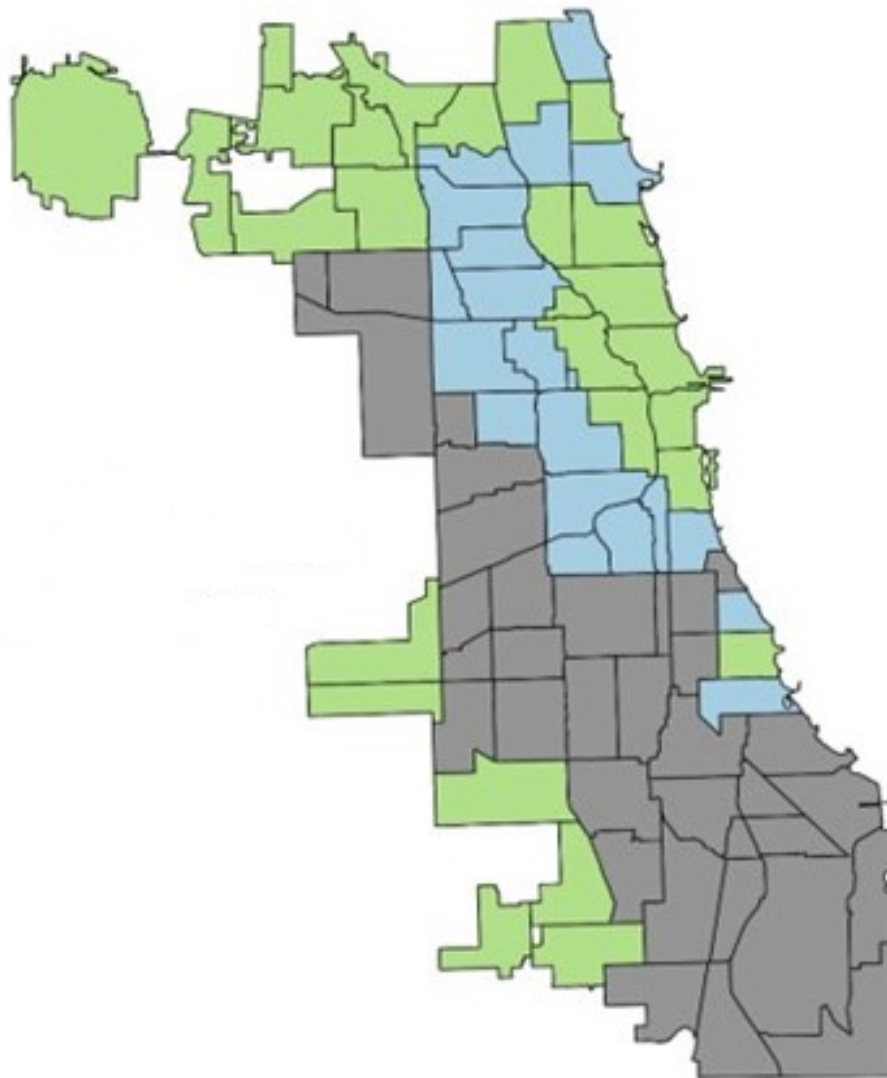
Uses prohibited by Section H of the Pedestrian Street guidelines, however, such as gas stations, are not prohibited by Connected Communities.

Developments must also comply with Transportation Demand Study and Management Plan rules when they are issued by the Chicago Department of Transportation in 2023.





# Inclusionary Application Zoning Process



 - eligible areas

In communities with low levels of affordability, Connected Communities creates a new mechanism to require a vote in the City Council Committee on Zoning, Landmarks, and Building Standards for certain residential zoning applications known as **“inclusionary applications.”**

Applications for buildings are eligible for this mechanism if:

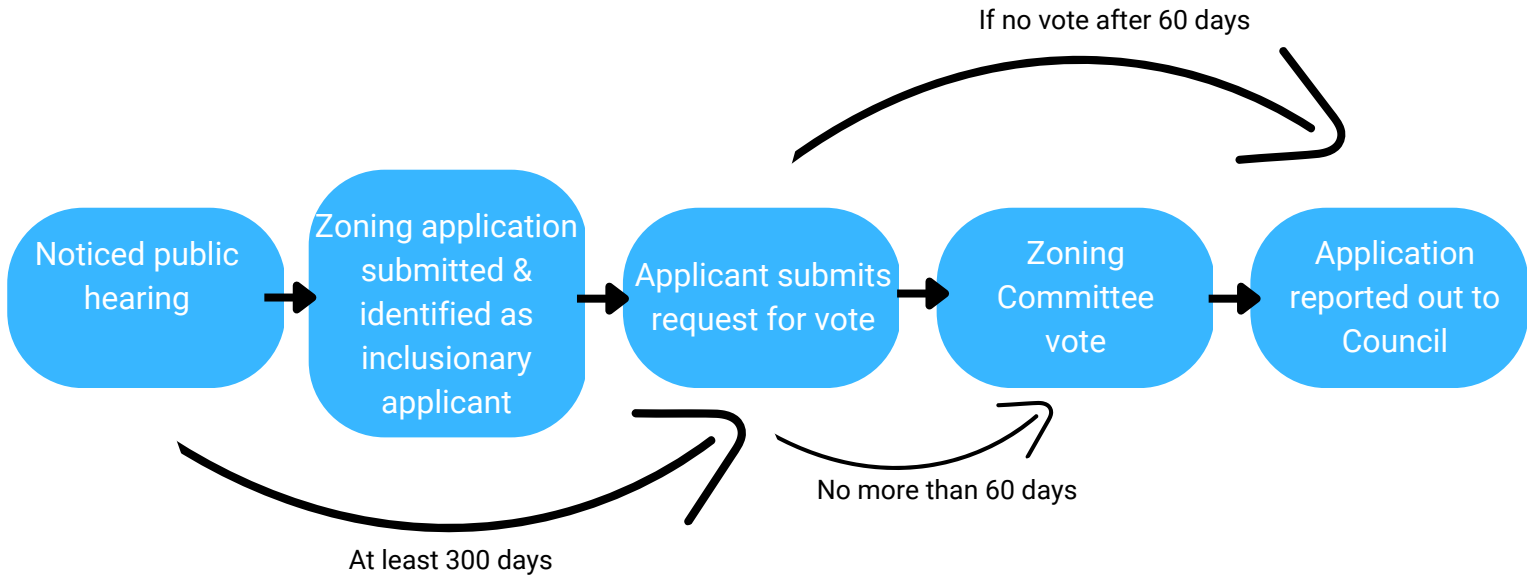
- at least 20% of dwelling units are legally restricted affordable,
- are located in a TOD area
- are in an "Inclusionary Area" as designated by the Affordable Requirements Ordinance

For these buildings, after a complete zoning application for the building has been submitted, if 300 days elapse and no vote has occurred, the applicant may submit written notification to the Chairperson of the Committee on Zoning, Landmarks, and Building Standards requesting a vote. Once the notification has been received, the Committee must vote on the proposal within 60 days. If no vote is taken, the proposal will be reported out to the full City Council at the next meeting with a “do-pass” recommendation.

In order to submit this notification, the applicant must also show that they have held at least one public meeting in the ward where the proposal is located to solicit community feedback. The meeting must be advertised at least two weeks before it is held, and the local alderman must be notified.

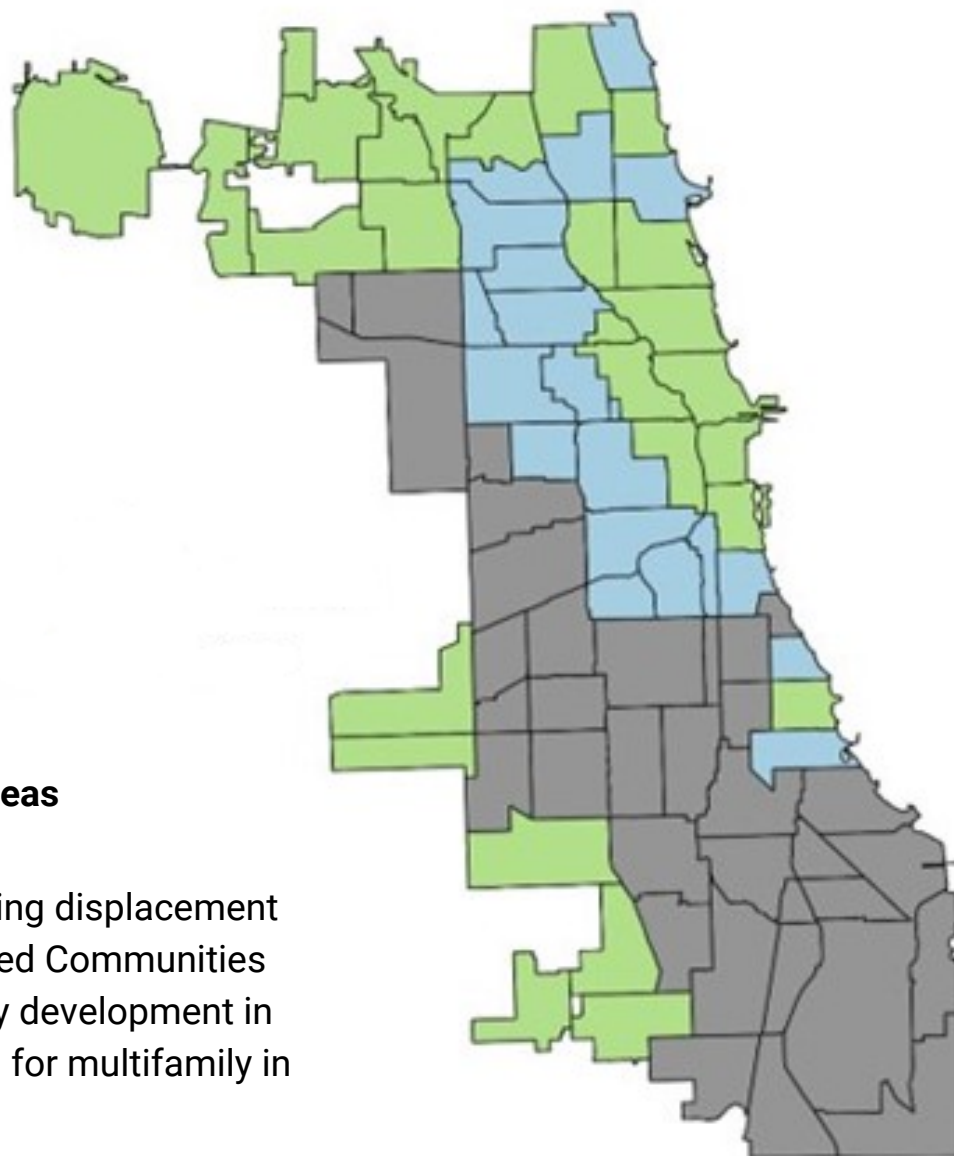
# Inclusionary Application Zoning Process

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Applicants that hold a properly noticed community meeting prior to submission of a complete zoning application may have said meeting count for this provision, if when initially filing the zoning application, the applicant identifies and qualifies as an inclusionary applicant.

# Addressing Deconversions



In communities facing displacement pressures, Connected Communities restricts low-density development in certain areas zoned for multifamily in TOD areas.

Specifically, detached houses are no longer a permitted use in RT, RM, B, and C districts in TOD locations in “Community Preservation Areas,” as designated by the Affordable Requirements Ordinance. In RM, B, and C districts in TOD locations in “Community Preservation Areas,” two-flats are no longer a permitted use.

This means that in order to establish a new single-family home, whether through the deconversion of an existing multifamily building or through new construction, in a TOD location in a “Community Preservation Area,” the lot must be rezoned to an RS designation. A similar rezoning to RS or RT must be approved in order to establish a new two-flat in RM, B, and C districts.

# Glossary

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## 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](http://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](http://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.