Chicago zones for open space and parking.
Why not affordable housing?

As the city rewrites a zoning code that’s almost half a century old, it must take into account one of the most pressing issues affecting Chicago today: the lack of safe, decent, affordable housing. Other cities have used the zoning code to create thousands of new homes for residents. Chicago can too.

The city doesn’t hesitate when it comes to reforming public schools, attracting new business, or expanding O’Hare. But when it comes to working families in Chicago, the city’s missing a major opportunity: the chance to make Chicago’s neighborhoods affordable through inclusionary zoning.

Children, workers, and seniors all need safe, decent homes they can afford. Join us at upcoming neighborhood zoning meetings to let the Zoning Commission know:
Affordable housing is a zoning issue.

Near Northwest Side
Tuesday, August 6, 6:30-8:00 pm
Humboldt Park Field House
1400 North Sacramento

Near Southwest Side
Wednesday, August 14, 6:30-8:00 pm
Comiskey Park Conference and Learning Center, 333 West 35th Street

Far North Side
Tuesday, August 20, 6:30-8:00 pm
Loyola University, Crown Center Auditorium
1001 West Loyola Ave.


For more information contact Chicago Rehab Network, 312/663-3936.
Housing Fact Sheet

Fact 1. Unlike some other cities across the country, Chicago currently has no requirements that new housing be affordable. In recent years home prices and rents have skyrocketed out of the reach of many working Chicagoans. According to the Chicago Association of Realtors, the median sale price of townhomes and condos jumped 65% in the last five years from $148,000 to $238,500.

Fact 2. In Montgomery County, Maryland, an inclusionary zoning ordinance has been in place since 1974, resulting in the construction of more than 10,000 affordable units in mixed-income developments. If Chicago had a similar inclusionary zoning ordinance over the last 25 years, more than 19,000 affordable units would have been built across the city.

Fact 3. The median rent for a 2-bedroom apartment is $891. To afford that unit–using HUD’s definition of affordable housing costing less than 30% of income–a person such as a single parent with 2 children, would have to work 133 hours a week at the minimum wage of $5.15/hr. Conversely, if they only work 40 hours a week, they would need to earn a wage $17.13/hr.

Fact 4. Although the City estimates that it costs between $5,000-$10,000 to construct each parking space in a new development, they are proposing raising parking requirements by 50% to 100% in many new developments. At the same time that the City balks at mandatory set-asides for affordable housing, it is raising mandatory set-aside for car parking. This will add an additional cost burden to new construction and rehabilitation projects, making it even harder to create affordable housing.

Fact 5. Approximately 166,000 persons–including an alarmingly high proportion of families with small children–experience homelessness in the Chicago region. In the City, requests for emergency shelter were up 22% in 2001 over the previous year. Requests by families were up 35%.

Fact 6. Zoning represents one of the primary obstacles to developing more affordable housing in Chicago. As spot down-zoning is restricting the future development of multifamily rental housing, aldermen are often approving zoning changes and exceptions for politically connected developers of high-end housing.