

Understanding Zoning

Zoning is the basic tool by which cities regulate land use. Every block and parcel in a city like Chicago is “zoned” to reflect the current or preferred future land use, scale and look of buildings and neighborhoods. Zoning regulations determine what can be built where, and are used as a way for a municipality and its residents to articulate what they see as the future of a specific neighborhood.

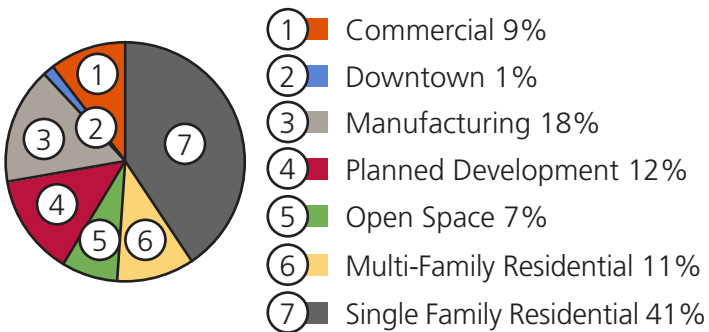
Zoning rules regulate all of the following issues, among others, for every parcel in the city:

- Land use (e.g., residential or commercial);
- Maximum building heights;
- Minimum parking requirements;
- Lot area per unit and floor area per lot; and
- Building setbacks from the street, from surrounding buildings and from rear alleys.

All land in Chicago is zoned; as such, developers wishing to build on a parcel either have the right to build following the pre-determined zoning (this is referred to “as of right”), or they can apply for a zoning change, which requires plan commission and city council approval, usually with the agreement of the local alderman.

Land use zoning in Chicago

- Of the city’s more than 230 square miles, about half is dedicated to housing alone.
- Between 10 and 20% of land is allowed to be used for mixed-use (housing and commercial) projects.

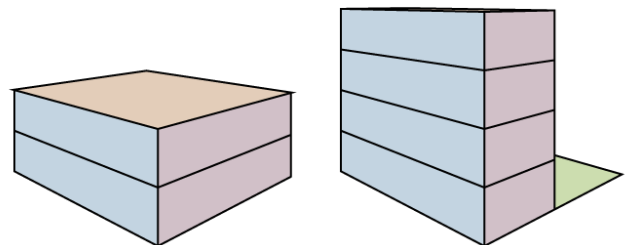


Source: City of Chicago, 2014

How Floor Area Ratio (FAR) works

- FAR is an important component of zoning, because it determines the amount of usable interior space that can be built per lot.

With a FAR of 2 on a 5,000 square-foot parcel of land, for example, either of the following buildings could be built:*

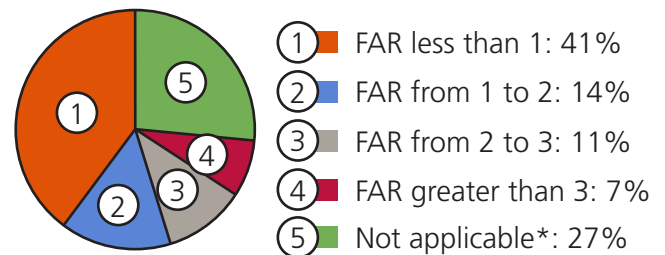


A 2-story building with 5,000-square foot floor plates.

A 4-story building with 2,500-square foot floor plates.

* Depending on building height rules.

FAR in Chicago



* Open space or Planned Development, where FAR is negotiated with city

Transit-oriented development (TOD)

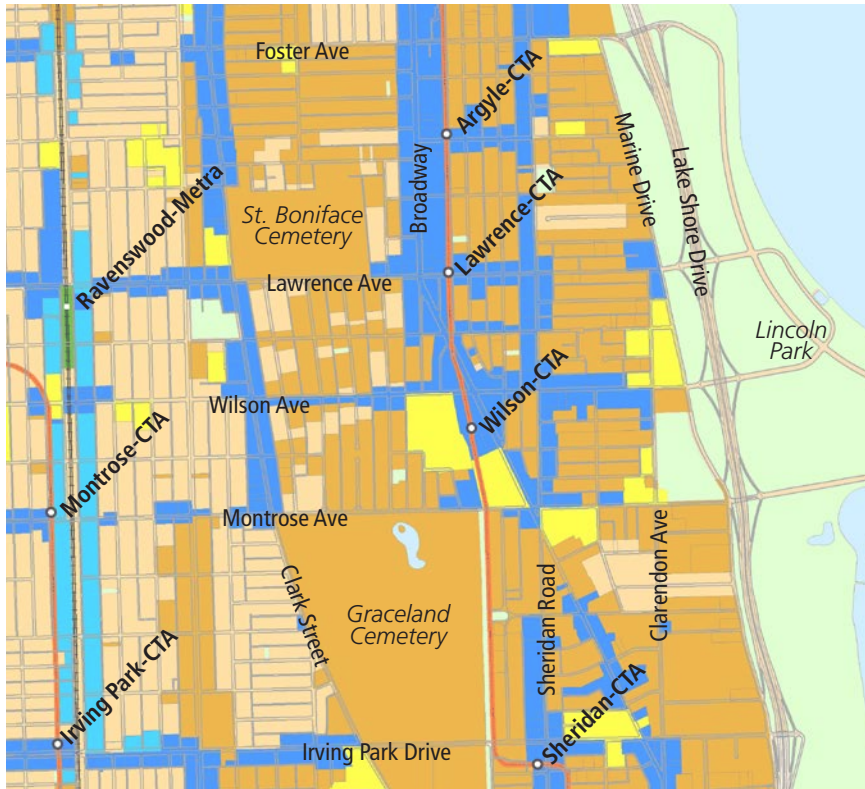
- The City of Chicago’s TOD Ordinance provides a density boost and lower parking requirements for buildings within 600 to 1,200 feet of rail stations.

Resources

MPC’s page on Chicago’s TOD Ordinance
[» metroplanning.org/tod-ordinance](http://metroplanning.org/tod-ordinance)

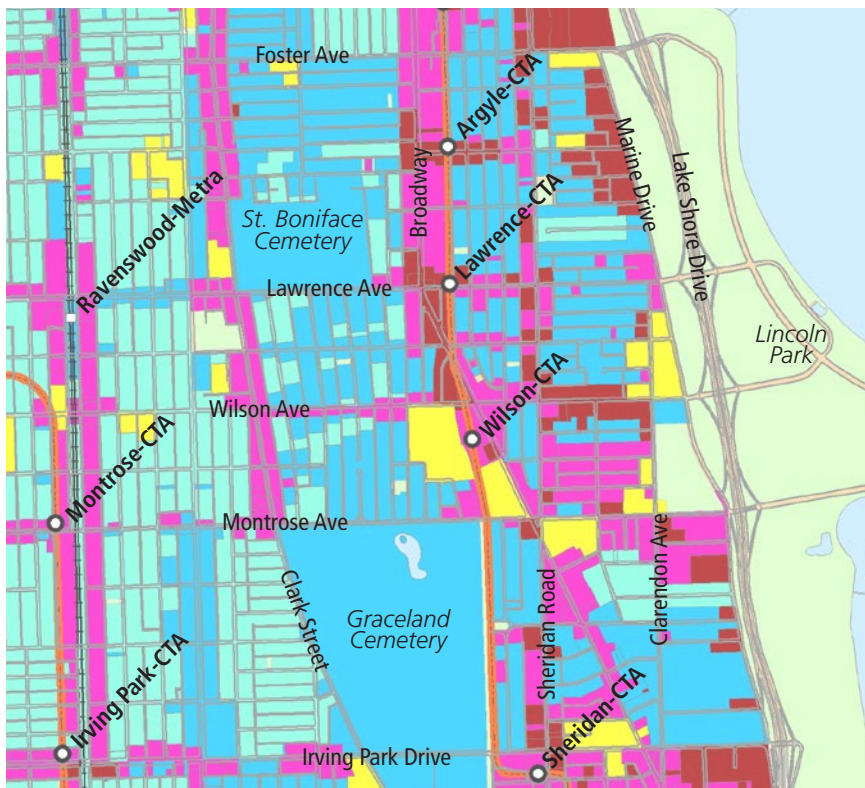
2nd City Zoning (zoning map and description)
[» secondcityzoning.org](http://secondcityzoning.org)

Zoning in Uptown



Zoning in Uptown

- Single Family Residential
Only single-family homes allowed.
RS zoning class
- Multi Family Residential
Only residential uses allowed.
RM, RT zoning classes
- Business or Commercial
Retail and businesses, with residential allowed above ground floor.
B1, B2, B3, C1, C2 zoning classes
- Manufacturing
Only manufacturing uses allowed.
M1, M2, M3 zoning classes
- Planned Development
Campus plans that are negotiated with the city.
PD zoning class
- Transportation
Land designed to protect transportation uses, such as areas under the L.



Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in Uptown

- FAR of 0.5 to 1
- FAR of 1 to 2
- FAR of 2 to 3
- FAR of 4 to 7
- Planned Development
FAR of PD depends on the FAR that the land had before it was approved by the city.