

TIMELINE HISTORICAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Metropolitan Planning Council

URBAN
INSTITUTE

1923 - FIRST ZONING ORDINANCE

- The mayor created a Zoning Commission to study the possibility of establishing laws to regulate land use in Illinois cities. The 22 member Commission was tasked with writing the zoning ordinance and preparing the corresponding maps.¹
- City Council adopted the city's first zoning ordinance on April 6th, 1923 encompassing 20 pages of text and two maps, one for use districts and one for volume districts.¹
- Established four use districts: including residential, apartment, manufacturing, and five volume districts expanding concentrically from the central business district.¹
- Gave the Buildings Commissioner the responsibility of administering and implementing the ordinance.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

- Constitutionality of zoning upheld at federal level by the Supreme Court in the *Euclid* decision. The court upheld exclusionary elements of Euclid's zoning code such as prohibition of apartments in low density areas with the majority decision describing them as "*mere parasites*".³
- Illinois repeals Gaskin Law and passage of new state legislation enables adoption of zoning policies by municipalities leading to eventual adoption of Chicago's first zoning ordinance
- Chicago Real Estate Board and other business owners feared level of power given to the proposed zoning commission and excessive government intervention in the private market
- Migration of southern Black residents to Chicago and inclusion of Charles Duke, a prominent Black developer, on the Zoning Commission
- The new zoning ordinance represents a shift from overt discriminatory policies such as restrictive covenants to more opaque deliberate or indirectly discriminatory zoning policy¹

WHO HELD POWER:	WHO WAS BURDENED:	WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">City officials and appointees to the Zoning Commission (8 aldermen, 5 cabinet members, Chairman of Chicago Building Commission, and 8 private citizens)¹Commercial landowners and existing homeownersPowerful non-government organizations such as the Chicago Real Estate Board in partnership with business ownersWhite led groups successfully organized to block the passage of amendments that would allow for apartments affordable to Black residents¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Black residents, both 'northern' born with family ties to Chicago and to a greater extent 'southern' born first generation migrants from the southern United States¹Other minority and immigrant populationsBlack homeowners in areas zoned for higher density development²Renters and low income residentsBlack led groups unsuccessfully organize to prevent the passage of amendments that expanded industrial uses in their neighborhoods¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Created Zoning Board of Appeals to allow for individual appeals and avoid future litigation¹Analysis shows evidence of an early form of "exclusionary" zoning that was applied to black neighborhoods²Higher black population meant a neighborhood was 27% more likely to be zoned higher density and 8% more likely to include manufacturing uses²Created insular <i>higher density</i> Black neighborhoods and set precedents for ongoing discriminatory zoning policiesDensity and industrial uses initiate reduction in property values for Black homeowners and increase detrimental effects on residents health^{1,2}

¹ Politics of Place: A History of Zoning in Chicago, Joseph P. Schwieterman and Dana M. Caspall

² Race, Ethnicity, and Discriminatory Zoning, Allison Shertzer, Tate Twinam, and Randall P. Walsh

³ Arbitrary Lines, M. Nolan Grey

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1970S - DOWNZONING:

- In the early 1970's residents and community organizations in neighborhoods located along the Lake shore north of downtown began to pressure council members and in turn the Plan Commissioner, Mayor, and City Council to curb high density development allowed under the existing zoning ordinance.^{1,3}
- Residents and officials feared that high density residential development was leading to the destruction of neighborhood character and historic building stock, overloading local services, and increasing traffic and parking congestion.¹
- A sweeping amendment was passed in 1971 affecting all zones of R-4 or higher strengthened parking requirements, limited the number of efficiency units allowed in multi-unit buildings, and introduced new side yard requirements.¹

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

- The 1957 Zoning Ordinance re-write allowed for high density development along most of Chicago's lake shore leading to unprecedented proliferation of new high rise and low rise development. New development primarily took the form of residential towers and four-plus-ones replacing existing housing stock.¹
- Following the civil rights revolution of the 1960s, throughout the 1970s, community groups in the wealthy neighborhoods advocated for downzoning residential buildings throughout Chicago to prevent market forces from providing new affordable units in their neighborhoods.³
- Neighborhood groups argued against luxury high-rises and how they interfered with their area's community character, but the focus of campaigns were often targeted at modestly priced rental units that appealed to working-class and low-income residents. The proliferation of four-plus-ones were viewed by wealthy neighborhood associations as 'blighting time bombs', bringing in transient populations.^{1,3}

WHO HELD POWER:	WHO WAS BURDENED:	WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing individual homeowners in wealthy, majority white communities whose net worth was tied directly to the value of their homes ^{3,4}• Council representatives, Plan Commissioners, Mayor, Chairman of Zoning Board of Appeals, and other city agency staff ^{1,2}• Majority White neighborhood organizations e.g. South East Lake View Neighbors, Lincoln Park Conservation Association¹• Developers and landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real estate groups, developers, architects, and landowners believed downzoning was overly restrictive, unduly limited property rights, and increased development costs¹• Existing low-income residents and renters in downzoned communities are displaced as housing costs increase, an externality of downzoning ^{2,3}• 'Missing' constituency of possible future residents consisting of new homeowners, low income residents, and renters. Because downzoning was pre-emptive, lower income and often minority residents are effectively priced out of downzoned communities ^{2,3}	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empowered community organizations, raised awareness of the role of council members in zoning, and broadened grassroots support for new controls on development ¹• The 14 current wards with majority white populations have aggressively used downzonings, comprising 55% of all downzonings since 1970 ²• In low-poverty census tracts where downzoning and landmarking have been used, affordable units have declined by an average of 46%. Comparatively, less affluent census tracts that have not downzoned or landmarked significant areas have had, on average, only a 3% decline in affordability.²

¹ Politics of Place: A History of Zoning in Chicago, Joseph P. Schwieterman and Dana M. Caspall

² A City Fragmented: How Race, Power, and Aldermanic Prerogative Shape Chicago's Neighborhoods, CAFHA, 2021

³ Chicago's History of Zoning Against Affordable Housing, Progressive City

⁴ Arbitrary Lines, M. Nolan Grey