

Untangling Zoning Impacts and Promoting Equity Through Reform

July 24, 2024
10 am – 11:30 am

*Audience Panel Questions
MPC Review and Strategy*

Metropolitan **Planning Council**
Building **Equity** in the Built Environment



MPC and Urban Institute’s Zoning and Land Use Assessment and Recommendations initiative reviews the impact of Chicago’s zoning and land use on equity, sustainability, and public health and considers how those outcomes differ by neighborhoods. The research focuses on seven outcomes that were co-created by project advisors: Affordable housing, Business corridors, Pollution exposure, Public transit hubs, Productive land use, Groceries and healthcare availability, and Climate change mitigation and adaptation.

MPC’s appreciates all of the questions received from audience members as part of the July 24 “Untangling Zoning Impacts and Promoting Equity Through Reform” panel discussion. The panel did not get to hear and answer all of the questions that were provided and many that were collected require thoughtful consideration. MPC has categorized the received questions in one of the seven topic areas they correspond to as part of the organization’s assessment. MPC further delineated the questions into two categories: *Directly related to research*; *Indirectly related to research*.

As part of the research on each outcome, MPC and the Urban Institute will make every effort to address the question through its review of the data—some will remain unanswerable given the number of different factors, beyond zoning and land use, that are related to the question. The project team will start sharing the research more publicly in 2025. Below is how we sorted the questions. Please reach out to Debbie Liu at dliu@metroplanning.org if you would like additional information about the overall initiative.

Affordable Housing <i>Diverse and affordable housing options (subsidized, affordable, workforce/middle, market, luxury) are available in every neighborhood including for the job insecure and unhoused populations</i>	
Directly related to research	Indirectly related to research
How can zoning reform make housing costs more affordable for renters?	Can other policies that affect the housing market be considered in tandem with zoning reform, such as the appraisal system, building codes, and rent control?
In communities that are seeing more demand for housing, how can zoning support residential development without displacement?	How can we address the tension between making housing affordable by maintaining and increasing housing supply, and property owners' interest in supply scarcity to increase property and rental value?
How can zoning counteract longstanding practices that make housing less affordable and inequitable across the city? For example, can zoning reform redress the legacy of exclusionary, wealthy, white communities by making them more affordable while also promoting vibrancy in neighborhoods that have been historically undervalued?	How can we balance our desire to oppose segregation by race/class with our desire to encourage and preserve ethnic enclaves?
City council is considering requiring special use approval for ADUs in some areas. Special use approval is for uses that have distinct and universal adverse impacts. What possible adverse impacts could an ADU have?	How do we ensure proper and sufficient infrastructure (water, sewer, electric, future and current communications/digital tech, storm water management, etc) is built equitably and in tandem with the increased demand?
How do single family housing regulations in Chicago’s zoning code compare to other cities in the United States? Should single family zoning be abolished altogether?	

Business Corridors

Strong and vibrant business corridors with diverse business opportunities to support the economic needs and resiliency of every community

Directly related to research**Indirectly related to research**

How can zoning make Chicago and our communities more livable, economically vibrant, and promote opportunities to increase household wealth?

How can zoning address the inequitable distribution of car-oriented uses like excess gas stations and drive throughs down commercial corridors in Black and Brown neighborhoods?

Here in Chicago, we often see first floor commercial required on denser buildings to enforce mixed-use neighborhoods, but those spaces often sit vacant. How can zoning codes encourage mixed-use without mandates that may end up increasing vacant space?

Pollution Exposure

All neighborhoods feature low levels of pollution, taking into account cumulative impacts on overburdened communities

Directly related to research**Indirectly related to research**

Given the economic benefits of industrial and manufacturing businesses in terms of job creation and wealth building, how do we use zoning to protect industries as well as residents?

Public Transit Hubs

All communities feature public transit options that are convenient and reliable, and serve hubs with housing, businesses, recreation and other services

Directly related to research**Indirectly related to research**

How does zoning intersect with sprawl, and can zoning be used as a tool to promote walkability, public transportation and sustainability instead?

If transit creates value by facilitating higher density urban land use with higher taxable property value per acre, why is it so difficult to maintain adequate transit funding?

Productive Land Use

All land in communities is used productively, meaning beneficial to local residents and aligned with community needs

Directly related to research**Indirectly related to research**

How does zoning policy intersect with urban agriculture and local food production?

Can the vacant housing stock found in Chicago be leveraged to provide more affordable housing?

How can zoning promote equitable access to amenities for young people? For example, athletic facilities in communities that do not have high quality facilities provided by their local schools.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

All communities feature green infrastructure and energy-efficient building stock that both mitigates and adapts to climate change

Directly related to research**Indirectly related to research**

How can zoning reduce flooding?

Best Practices and Case Study Review	
Directly related to research	Indirectly related to research
What are best practices for communicating about zoning so that people see its impact on their experience of their communities and relevant national political priorities, such as housing affordability?	Research on including cost of living for non-housing costs in discussions of affordability
An interesting case study could be New Rochelle, NY, which has authorized over 10,000 new residential developments in the past decade since City Council updated the city's zoning and building codes to increase development and require 10% of units to be affordable.	A case study comparing zoning priorities in less dense, suburban communities to more dense communities.
Are form-based codes more equitable than Euclidian zoning? Are there case studies that examine this?	
Hyde Park would be an interesting case study of a south side community with a mixed-use downtown and to examine why there aren't more thoroughfares on the south side zoned for mixed-use.	
A case study into efforts to establish equitable development and oversight in cities without zoning, such as Houston.	
The role of parking and efforts to reform how we approach it.	

Additional Resources from Panelists

[*Key to the City: How Zoning Shapes Our World*](#) By Sara Bronin

[*Arbitrary Lines: How Zoning Broke the American City and How to Fix It*](#) by Nolan Gray

[“Zoning Change: Upzonings, Downzonings, and Their Impacts on Residential Construction, Housing Costs, and Neighborhood Demographics”](#) By Yonah Freemark

[“Bringing Zoning into Focus: A Fine-Grained Analysis of Zoning’s Relationships to Housing Affordability, Income Distributions, and Segregation in Connecticut”](#) By Yonah Freemark, Lydia Lo, and Sara Bronin

[“National Zoning Atlas”](#) By Bronin, et al.

[“Supply Skepticism Revisited”](#) by Been, et al.

[“Desegregate Connecticut”](#)-- A coalition “creating a post-sprawl Connecticut”

[“Evaluating Inclusionary Zoning Policies”](#) by Claudia Aiken