A long-exposure photograph of the Chicago skyline at night, viewed from across a body of water. The Willis Tower is the central focus, with its spire illuminated. Other skyscrapers are lit up, and their lights reflect on the water. The sky is dark with some light clouds.

Chicago Relocation Guide

www.LuxuryResidencesChicago.com
Presented by ROAM Real Estate Inc

welcome note

At ROAM Real Estate Inc., we created this guide to help make your move to Chicago feel more informed, more organized, and far less overwhelming.

Relocating is not just about choosing an address. It is about understanding how the city works, how each neighborhood feels, what type of home fits your day-to-day life, and how to move through the process with greater clarity and confidence.

Chicago is a city with depth. It offers world-class dining, culture, architecture, sports, lakefront living, and a strong sense of neighborhood identity. It can feel energetic and cosmopolitan, but also highly livable once you understand where and how you want to live.

As someone who relocated here from the Boston area and later made the move from the suburbs into the city, I understand that every move comes with both excitement and adjustment. Chicago is a city I truly love, and it is always a privilege to help clients discover the neighborhoods, homes, and details that can make a move feel more aligned—whether that means commute, lifestyle, amenities, privacy, walkability, or pet-friendly living.

Think of this guide as your starting point. From there, your ROAM advisor can help refine the search around your priorities, preferences, timing, and housing goals, guiding you through the process in a way that feels thoughtful, informed, and personalized.

Because home is about more than where you live. It is about how you live once you get there.



Lia Caton
Founder &
Managing Broker



Chicago at a Glance



Chicago is a city of contrast in the best sense—cosmopolitan yet grounded, high-energy yet deeply neighborhood-driven, architecturally iconic yet full of everyday livability.

Set along Lake Michigan, Chicago offers a distinctive blend of skyline, lakefront, culture, commerce, and community. More than many cities, daily life here is shaped by neighborhood. Your experience of Chicago can feel dramatically different depending on whether you choose a downtown high-rise, a quieter residential pocket, a more design-driven area, or a neighborhood with stronger lake access and green space.

Key things to know

- Chicago is highly navigable, with a strong combination of walkability, public transit, rideshare access, and neighborhood connectivity.
- The downtown core includes areas such as The Loop, River North, Streeterville, Lakeshore East, West Loop, South Loop, and Gold Coast, each with a different pace and personality.
- The lakefront is one of the city's defining assets, with trails, beaches, parks, and open space that shape daily life year-round.
- Chicago's seasons matter. Summer feels vibrant and social, fall is one of the city's best-kept luxuries, winter creates a more local and home-centered rhythm, and spring brings the city back to life.
- Chicago often feels more intimate than it appears from the outside. Once you find the right neighborhood, the city tends to become far more personal and navigable.

Why People Love Living in Chicago

Chicago offers something many cities struggle to balance: scale, opportunity, beauty, and livability. You can have lakefront access, major sports, strong dining, architecture, museums, theater, and world-class hotels—while still building a day-to-day life around neighborhood coffee shops, local parks, farmers markets, dog walks, and routines that feel grounded.

For many people relocating here, that balance is what makes Chicago so compelling. It has the energy and infrastructure of a major city, but often feels more manageable, more navigable, and more relationship-driven than other large urban markets.

Local Lifestyle & City Attractions

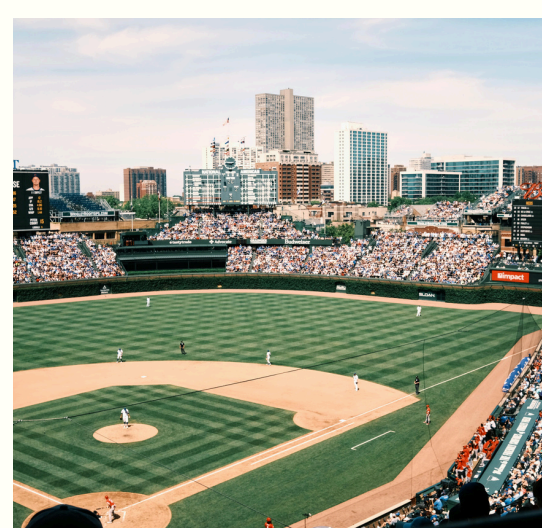
Chicago offers a lifestyle that is both metropolitan and deeply livable, shaped by a balance of culture, recreation, dining, and neighborhood rhythm. While the city is known for its skyline and architecture, daily life is often defined just as much by access to the lakefront, parks, restaurants, markets, and the local routines that make each neighborhood feel distinct.

The lakefront is one of Chicago's defining assets, stretching for miles with trails, beaches, harbors, and green space that remain central to city life throughout the year. The Chicago Riverwalk, Navy Pier, and the city's downtown parks and public spaces add another layer of activity, offering places to walk, gather, dine, and experience the city in a more open and connected way.

Chicago is also recognized for its cultural depth. Theater, live music, museums, architecture, and a strong restaurant scene are woven into everyday life, while seasonal street festivals, farmers markets, and neighborhood events give the city much of its personality, especially in the warmer months.

Sports are also a meaningful part of the city's identity, with major professional teams across baseball, basketball, football, hockey, and soccer contributing to a year-round sense of energy and civic connection.

For relocation clients, lifestyle fit often comes down to access, rhythm, and preference, whether that means being close to the lake, cultural institutions, dining, wellness, parks, entertainment, or a quieter neighborhood pace that still feels connected to the city.





Dining & Culinary Scene

Chicago is one of the country's great restaurant cities, with a dining scene defined by both range and depth. Home to Michelin-starred restaurants, acclaimed chef-driven concepts, and long-standing neighborhood institutions, the city offers a culinary landscape that is both sophisticated and deeply woven into everyday life.



Dining in Chicago is highly neighborhood-driven. Areas such as River North, the West Loop, Fulton Market, the Gold Coast, and the Near North offer strong concentration and access to many of the city's most talked-about restaurants, while other neighborhoods are known for a more local and understated dining rhythm.

The city's food culture extends well beyond destination restaurants. Quality grocery stores, specialty food markets, cafés, bakeries, wine shops, and prepared-food concepts all contribute to a day-to-day lifestyle that can feel both convenient and elevated.



Seasons & Climate

Insight



Winter

Winters are cold and can include snow, ice, and wind. Average temperatures are around 28°F, with typical daytime highs in the low to mid-30s and overnight lows in the upper teens to mid-20s. Many professionally managed buildings are well-equipped for winter conditions, and full-service properties can offer meaningful comfort advantages such as lobby buffering, sidewalk clearing, enclosed entries, heated parking access, door staff, package handling, and easier day-to-day logistics.

Spring

Spring tends to feel transitional, with average temperatures around 50°F overall. Early spring can still be quite cool, while late spring becomes much milder, with average highs rising from the upper 40s in March to around the low 70s by May. It is also when the city begins to open back up, with outdoor dining returning, lakefront activity increasing, and neighborhoods starting to feel more social again.

Summer

Summer is one of Chicago's great lifestyle advantages. Average temperatures are around 73°F, with typical highs in the low to mid-80s and lows generally in the 60s. The lakefront becomes central to daily life, rooftops fill up, neighborhood events increase, and the city feels highly active and outdoors-oriented.

Fall

Fall is one of the most underrated times to live in Chicago. Average temperatures are around 54°F overall, with early fall often still warm and late fall becoming noticeably cooler. September typically still sees average highs in the mid-70s, while November drops closer to the upper 40s. The city remains active, the weather is often ideal for part of the season, and many neighborhoods feel especially beautiful and livable.



For those prioritizing convenience, privacy, or comfort, building features such as valet parking, covered access, elevator service, indoor amenities, and strong management can make a noticeable difference during seasonal transitions.

Cost of Living

Chicago can offer a broader range of value than many coastal markets, but pricing can shift meaningfully depending on neighborhood, building type, level of service, views, and overall living experience.

In many of the city's more elevated rental neighborhoods—including Gold Coast, Streeterville, River North, Lakeshore East, South Loop, West Loop, and select areas of Lincoln Park and Lakeview—pricing often moves quickly based on amenities, newer construction, floor height, parking, views, updated finishes, and whether a building offers full-service features.

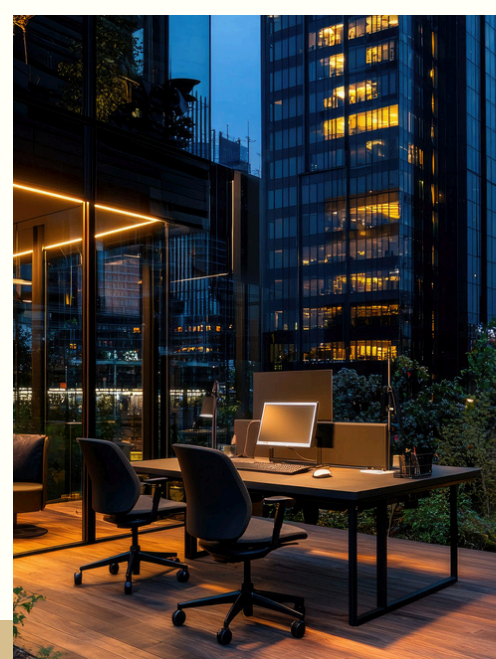
In addition to base rent, it is important to plan for:

- parking
- utilities
- renter's insurance
- move-in fees or deposits
- amenity-related fees, where applicable
- pet fees, pet rent, or pet deposits
- storage or bike room fees in some buildings

Typical General Rental Ranges

- Studio: approximately \$1,900–\$3,200
- Convertible: approximately \$2,100–\$3,400
- 1 Bedroom: approximately \$2,400–\$4,100
- 1 Bedroom + Den: approximately \$3,100–\$4,900
- 2 Bedroom: approximately \$3,400–\$5,800+
- Parking: often approximately \$250–\$500 per month depending on building and location

At ROAM, we believe the search is about more than price alone. It is about understanding how budget, location, building type, and day-to-day lifestyle come together to shape the right fit.



Finding the Right Neighborhood

Choosing the right neighborhood starts with identifying the factors that matter most to your day-to-day life.

For many relocation clients, the decision comes down to practical considerations such as commute time, walkability, building style, parking, access to transit, proximity to the lakefront or green space, pet routines, dining and retail convenience, and overall pace of the area.

At ROAM, we help clients compare neighborhoods based on their stated priorities and objective housing criteria. That may include whether a client prefers a full-service high-rise, a quieter residential setting, easier access to work, more privacy, or stronger alignment with daily lifestyle needs.

Because neighborhood fit is personal, we encourage clients to explore areas through objective information and firsthand experience whenever possible. Our role is to help narrow options, compare housing opportunities, and bring clarity to the decision-making process based on what matters most to you.



Neighborhood Map Chicago, IL



 [MORE DETAILS](#)





NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDE



BUCKTOWN

Bucktown blends creativity with urban sophistication, offering a distinctive mix of independent boutiques, acclaimed restaurants, and a thriving arts scene.

Tree-lined streets, classic architecture, and easy access to the 606 Trail give the neighborhood a sense of warmth and character, while bustling Damen Avenue adds energy and convenience. With a mix of historic greystones and modern residences, Bucktown offers a stylish, neighborhood-driven lifestyle with strong city access.



GOLD COAST

Set along the lakefront, the Gold Coast is one of Chicago's most established and elegant neighborhoods, known for its stately homes, luxury high-rises, and beautifully landscaped streets.

Its proximity to Oak Street Beach, designer shopping, and some of the city's most iconic dining destinations gives it an unmistakably refined appeal. Blending timeless architecture with modern convenience, the Gold Coast offers a polished and sophisticated residential experience.



FULTON MARKET

Once rooted in Chicago's industrial past, Fulton Market has evolved into one of the city's most dynamic neighborhoods, known for its celebrated restaurants, design-forward developments, and vibrant energy. With acclaimed hospitality concepts, modern lofts, and a strong mix of office, retail, and residential growth, the neighborhood offers a distinctly urban lifestyle shaped by both innovation and character.



LAKESHORE EAST

Tucked between the Chicago River and Lake Michigan, Lakeshore East offers a uniquely peaceful residential setting in the heart of downtown. Known for its modern high-rises, impressive views, and beautifully designed central park, the neighborhood feels both private and connected. With close access to the lakefront, Millennium Park, and the city's core, Lakeshore East offers a rare blend of calm, convenience, and elevated city living.



LAKEVIEW

Lakeview offers a balance of energy, accessibility, and neighborhood charm, all set along the lakefront on Chicago's North Side. From Wrigley Field and the theater scene to local restaurants, boutiques, and everyday conveniences, Lakeview has long appealed to those seeking a lively and well-rounded lifestyle. Its distinct pockets, including Northalsted and Southport Corridor, give the neighborhood a range of character while maintaining a strong sense of community.



LINCOLN PARK

Centered around Chicago's largest park, Lincoln Park is known for its tree-lined streets, classic brownstones, and enduring residential appeal.

The neighborhood combines green space, cultural institutions, boutique shopping, and exceptional dining in a way that feels both refined and livable. With the zoo, lakefront, and numerous neighborhood amenities nearby, Lincoln Park offers one of the city's most established and desirable lifestyles.



LOGAN SQUARE

Logan Square combines historic character with a strong creative identity, offering a neighborhood experience that feels both grounded and evolving.

Known for its greystones, boulevards, coffee shops, restaurants, and music venues, it has become one of Chicago's most distinctive places to live. Its mix of architectural charm and cultural energy gives Logan Square a personality that continues to attract those looking for something with depth and edge.



OLD TOWN

Old Town is one of Chicago's most charming neighborhoods, known for its historic streetscapes, Victorian-era buildings, and classic city character.

Home to The Second City, boutique retail, and a vibrant dining scene, it offers a unique blend of tradition and energy. With close proximity to Lincoln Park, the lakefront, and downtown, Old Town feels both rooted and highly connected.



PRINTER'S ROW

Printer's Row offers a quieter, more literary side of city living, with historic loft buildings, independent bookstores, and a distinctly residential feel.

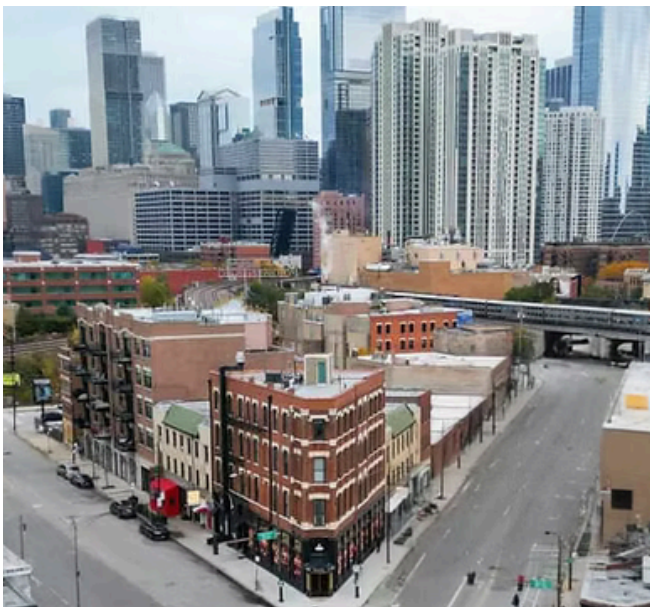
Once the center of Chicago's printing industry, the neighborhood retains a strong architectural identity while offering convenient access to downtown. Its cultural legacy, including the annual Printer's Row Lit Fest, adds to its enduring appeal.



RIVER NORTH

River North is one of Chicago's most vibrant and polished neighborhoods, known for its gallery scene, luxury residences, and exceptional dining.

From rooftop lounges to renowned restaurants and a central downtown location, the neighborhood offers a cosmopolitan lifestyle with strong visual and cultural appeal. Its energy, convenience, and concentration of high-end living make it one of the city's most in-demand areas.



RIVER WEST

River West offers a more understated alternative to some of its neighboring districts, while still providing excellent access to downtown, the West Loop, and River North.

Known for its loft-style buildings, newer developments, and growing restaurant scene, the neighborhood continues to attract those seeking an urban lifestyle with a slightly more relaxed feel. Its evolution has made it an increasingly compelling place to live.



STREETERVILLE

Streeterville combines waterfront views, modern convenience, and a highly central location just east of Michigan Avenue. With Navy Pier, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Northwestern medical campuses, and an abundance of high-rise residences nearby, the neighborhood offers an upscale and highly connected lifestyle. Its proximity to both the lake and downtown gives it a uniquely balanced appeal.



THE LOOP

As Chicago's downtown center, the Loop places residents in the middle of the city's architecture, culture, business, and public life. Home to Millennium Park, the Chicago Riverwalk, the Theater District, and the Art Institute, the neighborhood offers immediate access to many of the city's defining landmarks. For those seeking a true urban lifestyle with convenience at every turn, the Loop remains unmatched.



SOUTH LOOP

The South Loop offers a more residential take on downtown living, with access to green space, the lakefront, and some of the city's most important cultural institutions. Once industrial in character, the neighborhood has grown into a well-rounded residential area with luxury condos, townhomes, and a steadily expanding mix of dining and retail. Its location near Grant Park and Museum Campus gives it a sense of openness that sets it apart from denser parts of downtown.



WEST LOOP

The West Loop has become one of Chicago's most sought-after neighborhoods, known for its industrial character, acclaimed restaurants, and strong sense of momentum. Once a warehouse district, it now blends loft conversions, luxury developments, boutique hospitality, and some of the city's most notable dining destinations. The result is a neighborhood that feels current, energetic, and deeply tied to Chicago's evolving identity



WICKER PARK

Wicker Park is defined by its creative spirit, strong street life, and eclectic mix of shopping, dining, and culture. With vintage stores, record shops, cocktail bars, and a wide range of housing options, the neighborhood offers a distinctly expressive and lived-in feel. Its combination of architectural character, neighborhood identity, and cultural energy makes it one of Chicago's most compelling places to call home.



Choosing the Right Building for the Way You Live



Chicago offers a wide range of living experiences, and the right fit often comes down to how you want to live day to day. Some buildings emphasize service, amenities, and convenience, while others offer more character, privacy, or a stronger connection to the surrounding neighborhood

Full-Service Luxury Towers

These buildings typically offer the widest range of amenities and services, often including door staff, concierge, fitness centers, lounges, coworking areas, and polished common spaces. For pet owners, many also offer features that can make day-to-day life easier, such as dog runs, pet spa areas, relief stations, nearby parks, or more convenient elevator access. They are often a strong fit if you are looking for a more seamless, high-rise living experience.

Boutique and Neighborhood Luxury

These properties tend to feel more intimate and residential, often with fewer shared amenities but stronger architectural character, privacy, and neighborhood charm. They can be a great option if you prefer a more refined setting without the scale or pace of a large downtown tower.

Lofts and Character-Driven Buildings

These buildings often stand out for their personality, design details, and less traditional layouts. Depending on the property, they may offer more character, unique finishes, and a stronger connection to the energy of a particular neighborhood.

A Note on Building Access

It is also worth considering whether an elevator building or walk-up is the better fit for your day-to-day routine. Elevator buildings often offer greater ease, especially for move-ins, pets, groceries, and everyday accessibility. Walk-up buildings can feel more charming and residential, but depending on the floor and layout, they may require a bit more flexibility in daily living.

Pet Friendly Living



Chicago can be a very pet-friendly city, with designated dog-friendly areas in parks, a well-loved dog beach at Montrose Beach, and many restaurants, bars, and patios that welcome dogs outdoors. For those relocating with pets, that broader lifestyle piece can matter just as much as the apartment itself.

For those relocating with dogs or cats, the right home often involves more than simply confirming whether a building allows pets.

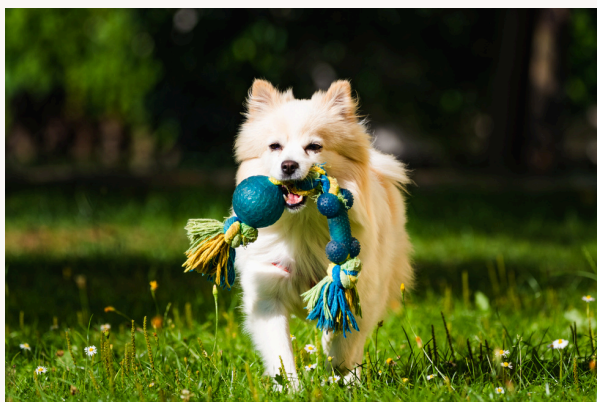
Important considerations may include:

- pet fees, pet rent, and deposits
- weight limits or breed restrictions
- number of pets allowed
- elevator access and ease of daily routines
- availability of nearby parks or green space
- on-site dog runs, pet relief areas, or pet spa features in some buildings
- walkability and sidewalk rhythm for daily dog routines
- nearby veterinarians, groomers, daycare, trainers, pet supply options, and other support services
- building layout, noise level, and day-to-day flow, which can be especially important for cats and more sensitive pets



It is also worth thinking through move-day logistics, including how to help your pet stay comfortable, calm, and well cared for during what can often be a busy and unfamiliar transition.

Through ROAM with Rover, we help clients think through these details more practically — from building fit and neighborhood routine to move-day coordination and comfort — so the home works not only on paper, but in real life.



A photograph of the Chicago skyline at night, featuring the illuminated 'CHICAGO' sign. The letters are white with a warm glow, and the 'C' in the middle is a large, circular neon sign with a red and yellow pattern. The background is dark with some blurred lights.

CHICAGO

Working with Us

Pre-Arrival Guidance

Before the search begins, we help narrow the focus by discussing neighborhood preferences, commute patterns, building style, parking needs, pet considerations, lifestyle priorities, and overall budget alignment. This helps create a search strategy that is more realistic, more efficient, and better tailored from the start.

Property Search and Vetting

We curate options based on your criteria and help assess them beyond the listing itself. That may include building quality, layout, floor plan functionality, service level, location, parking, privacy, pet policies, and the overall day-to-day fit of the property.

Pet-Friendly Guidance

For those relocating with dogs or cats, we provide added insight around building rules, fees, breed or weight restrictions where applicable, elevator access, daily routine practicality, nearby green space, and access to veterinarians, groomers, daycare, trainers, and other support services. Through ROAM with Rover, we can also help clients think through move-day coordination so pets remain as comfortable as possible during the transition.

Tour and Transaction Coordination

We help organize the search process by coordinating tours, assisting with required building registration steps, tracking timing, and helping keep the major housing-related details moving in the right order. The goal is to make the process feel more streamlined and less fragmented.

Support Through Move-In

Our support does not end once a lease is signed or a purchase is completed. We remain available through the transition to help with next steps, questions, and the practical details that often come up as you prepare for move-in and begin settling into the city.

Moving Checklist

Before the move

Confirm neighborhood fit and building profile based on your priorities. (full-service high-rise vs. low-rise vs. townhome).

Finalize budget, including parking, utilities, insurance, and amenity-related costs.

Narrow down a short list of target residences based on commute, layout, privacy, and lifestyle considerations.



During the move

Coordinate with movers and building-side logistics, including elevator reservations and move-in procedures.

Confirm any onboarding- or move-in-day paperwork with the management.

Coordinate with your advisor on any immediate post-arrival adjustments, from parking access to security-system setup and service-provider introductions.

After the move

Support the first stage of settling in, including practical details such as parking setup, building familiarity, and day-to-day convenience.

Share tailored local recommendations based on your preferences and lifestyle, from fitness and wellness to dining, pet resources, and essential services.

Reconnect after move-in to ensure the home, building, and neighborhood are aligning with expectations