



RELOCATION GUIDE • SEPTEMBER 2026

Moving to Chicago

Neighborhoods, suburbs, commutes, schools, taxes and the Illinois buying process: everything we walk relocating clients through, in one place.



A big-city market that still moves fast

Chicago gives you a world-class downtown, 26 miles of lakefront and a deep job market, at prices well below the coasts. The trade-off is speed. Good homes in the most popular areas often sell in under two weeks.

\$390K
CITY MEDIAN PRICE

+8.3%
VS. A YEAR AGO

16 days
MEDIAN TIME TO SELL

2.1
MONTHS OF SUPPLY

Those are the City of Chicago numbers from 1,656 closed sales in September 2026. About 63% were condos (median \$400K) and the rest were houses and townhomes (median \$375K). Anything under about 4 months of supply favors sellers, so plan to move decisively once you find the right home.

What that means for you

- ✓ Get a full pre-approval (not a pre-qualification) before you fly in to tour.
- ✓ Decide your must-haves first: commute, schools, home type. Then pick 2–3 areas, not 10.
- ✓ Have a local agent preview homes by video, so your in-person trip is spent on real contenders.
- ✓ Budget for property taxes, which vary a lot by town and change what a "price" really costs.

Tip: Take our 60-second Area Match quiz at teamspacematch.com/area-match-quiz. It ranks 20 neighborhoods and suburbs against your budget, commute and priorities using the same MLS data.

Four ways to live in Chicagoland

1 • City neighborhoods

Walk to restaurants, the lake and the 'L'. Mostly condos, vintage 2- and 3-flats and row homes, and single-family homes at a premium. Best for: no-car or one-car households, downtown jobs, nightlife. Lincoln Park, Lake View, Logan Square, Wicker Park, West Loop, River North, Gold Coast, Hyde Park.

2 • Walkable inner suburbs

A real downtown and a train station, with quieter streets and more house for the money. Best for: families who still want a short commute. Evanston, Oak Park, Arlington Heights, Hinsdale.

3 • Classic suburbs

Yards, garages, parks and highly rated school districts, with Metra or expressway commutes. Best for: space plus schools. Glenview, Northbrook, Highland Park, Winnetka, Schaumburg, Hoffman Estates, Oak Brook.

4 • Space and privacy

Acre-plus wooded lots, newer custom homes, longer drives. Wells and septic systems are common. Best for: remote workers and anyone who wants room. Long Grove, Lake Zurich, Kildeer, Hawthorn Woods.

Know the map: Chicago's address grid starts at State & Madison (0 N/S, 0 E/W), and 800 numbers is about one mile. "North Shore" means the lakefront suburbs north of Evanston. "Northwest suburbs" means the I-90 corridor around O'Hare and Schaumburg.

What homes actually sell for

AREA	MEDIAN	CONDO	HOUSE	DAYS	TRANSIT
Lincoln Park · City · lakefront	\$855K	\$725K	\$2.34M	7	CTA Brown/Red/Purple
Lake View · City · lakefront	\$558K	\$532K	\$1.94M	9	CTA Red/Brown/Purple
Logan Square · City	\$835K	\$640K	\$929K	9	CTA Blue
Wicker Park / Bucktown / Ukrainian Village · City	\$710K	\$710K	\$821K	11	CTA Blue
Near West Side (West Loop) · City	\$402K	\$402K	—	17	CTA Green/Pink; walk to Ogilvie & Union Station
Near North (River North, Gold Coast, Streeterville) · City · high-rise	\$473K	\$460K	—	26	CTA Red/Brown/Purple
Hyde Park · City · lakefront	\$283K	\$250K	\$1.40M	78	Metra Electric
Evanston · Inner suburb · lakefront	\$503K	\$320K	\$795K	11	CTA Purple, Metra UP-N
Oak Park · Inner suburb	\$428K	\$189K	\$710K	10	CTA Green/Blue, Metra UP-W
Arlington Heights · NW suburb	\$480K	\$244K	\$599K	9	Metra UP-NW
Schaumburg · NW suburb	\$361K	\$283K	\$510K	14	I-90, Metra MD-W
Hoffman Estates · NW suburb	\$420K	\$395K	\$477K	13	I-90
Glenview / Golf · North suburb	\$702K	\$386K	\$806K	16	Metra MD-N
Northbrook · North suburb	\$722K	\$462K	\$1.31M	12	Metra MD-N
Highland Park · North Shore	\$655K	\$490K	\$860K	7	Metra UP-N
Winnetka · North Shore	\$1.80M	—	\$1.82M	13	Metra UP-N
Long Grove / Lake Zurich area · Lake County · acreage	\$736K	—	\$755K	20	Route 53 / I-94
Hinsdale · West suburb	\$1.63M	\$792K	\$1.86M	28	Metra BNSF
Oak Brook / Oakbrook Terrace · West suburb	\$933K	\$650K	\$966K	34	I-88 / I-294

Source: MRED closed sales for September 2026, compiled by SpaceMatch. "Days" = median days on market. "—" = fewer than 3 sales of that type. Area boundaries follow MLS areas, so neighborhood pairs share one figure. Updated monthly at teamspacematch.com/market-report.

Commutes: 'L', Metra or car

CTA 'L' (city + inner suburbs)

8 color-coded rail lines run through the Loop, plus city buses. The Blue Line runs 24 hours to O'Hare, and the Orange Line serves Midway. If you'll live in the city, being within a 10-minute walk of a station is the single biggest daily-life upgrade and resale factor.

Metra (suburbs)

Commuter rail with 11 lines into 4 downtown terminals: Ogilvie, Union Station, LaSalle Street and Millennium Station. Downtown rides from the near suburbs often take 25–45 minutes. Homes walkable to a Metra station carry a premium in most towns.

Driving

The main arteries are I-90/94 (Kennedy/Dan Ryan/Edens), I-290 (Eisenhower), I-55 (Stevenson), I-88 and the I-294 Tri-State. Rush-hour times can double. Test your commute at the time you'd actually drive it before you commit to a town.

Airports

O'Hare (ORD) is best for the northwest and north suburbs. Midway (MDW) is easiest for the South and Southwest Sides. Frequent flyers often favor Park Ridge, Arlington Heights, Schaumburg or a Blue Line neighborhood.

Our advice: pick the commute first, then the town. A 20-minute difference each way adds up to about 160 hours a year.

What's different here

Attorneys on both sides

In the Chicago area, buyers and sellers each hire a real estate attorney. Standard contracts include an attorney review period (typically 5 business days) in which either attorney can propose changes or cancel. Inspection requests are usually negotiated in this window too.

Property taxes are local, and paid a year behind

Rates differ a lot from town to town, so compare the actual tax bill, not just the price. Cook County bills in two installments for the prior year, so sellers usually credit buyers at closing for taxes owed. Once you live in the home, file for the homeowner (homestead) exemption, which takes up to \$10,000 off your home's equalized assessed value in Cook County.

Transfer taxes

Illinois charges \$0.50 per \$500 of price and Cook County \$0.25, both normally paid by the seller. In Chicago, buyers pay a city transfer tax of \$3.75 per \$500 (0.75%), and sellers pay a separate \$1.50 per \$500 CTA portion. Several suburbs add their own.

Condos and HOAs

Before closing, condo buyers receive the association's disclosure package (budget, reserves, rules, any special assessments). Read it with your attorney. Reserves and pending assessments matter as much as the price.

Schools follow addresses, not towns

Many suburbs have separate elementary and high school districts, and boundaries can split a single town. Chicago Public Schools uses neighborhood boundaries plus selective enrollment and magnet options by application. Always confirm the assigned schools for the exact address.

90 days out to move-in

90 Get your numbers straight

Talk to a lender and get pre-approved. Ask about down payment assistance if you qualify (see our First-Time Buyer Guide). Set a budget that includes taxes, HOA dues and insurance.

75 Narrow to 2–3 areas

Take the Area Match quiz, read our area guides and the monthly market report, then do a video call with a SpaceMatch agent to compare areas.

60 Tour, by video first

We preview homes live on video and send you neighborhood walk-throughs, so your in-person trip is spent on finalists.

45 Offer, attorney review, inspection

Write a strong offer and hire an Illinois real estate attorney (we'll refer several). Complete the inspection inside the review window.

30 Appraisal, final loan approval, insurance

Book movers early, since summer and month-end dates fill up. Line up homeowners insurance and set up utilities.

0 Close and settle in

Do a final walk-through and sign. Then file your homestead exemption, update your voter registration, and get an Illinois driver's license and vehicle registration within the state's deadlines. In Chicago, buy your city vehicle sticker.

Winter tip: if you're moving between November and March, ask about the furnace age, snow removal (HOA or yours) and where you'll park overnight.

NEXT STEP

Talk to a SpaceMatch agent

We help relocating buyers every month, from out of state and from overseas. We do video tours, school and commute research, and attorney and lender referrals, and we coordinate the whole process whether you're here or not. Korean-language help is available too.

\$297M+
TEAM SOLD VOLUME

20
AREAS WE TRACK MONTHLY

15 min
FREE STRATEGY CALL

Call or text

773-985-7153

Email

team@spacematchinc.com

Book a call

teamspacematch.com/book-a-call

Find your area

teamspacematch.com/area-match-quiz

Monthly market report

teamspacematch.com/market-report

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This guide is general information, not legal, tax or lending advice. Program terms, limits and funding change often. Confirm current details with the program, your lender and your attorney. Market figures are from closed MLS sales (MRED) and may be revised.