

LOGAN SQUARE, HUMBOLDT PARK, AVONDALE

Logan Square And Avondale Are Losing The Most Affordable Housing In Chicago, Study Shows

Other North Side neighborhoods like West Town, Uptown and Rogers Park also are losing more low-cost apartments. Two- and four-flat buildings also are continuing to vanish throughout the city.

Mina Bloom 10:00 AM CDT on Jul 6, 2023



Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

The Trailhead Apartments, 1744 N. Western Ave., along The 606 Trail in Logan Square on Nov. 8, 2021.

Credibility: Original Reporting Sources Cited

LOGAN SQUARE — It's getting more difficult to rent in Logan Square and Avondale, as low-cost apartments disappear faster than anyplace else in the city, according to a new study.

The DePaul Institute for Housing Studies last week released its 2023 State of Rental Housing report, an analysis of census data ending in 2021.

The report found North and Northwest Side neighborhoods are getting less affordable. For the study, researchers determined affordability for lower-income households earning 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (\$41,610 in 2021).

For the second time in recent years, Logan Square and Avondale topped the list for biggest loss of affordable housing in Cook County "submarkets." The Northwest Side neighborhoods lost 15.3 percent of their affordable rental units between 2012-2014 and 2019-2021, according to the report.

West Town and the Near West Side ranked second, losing 14.6 percent of its lower-cost apartments during the same time period. Rogers Park and Uptown logged a drop of 12.5 percent, according to the study.

DePaul researchers measure the loss of affordable housing through "rent increasing to unaffordable levels, conversion of the rental unit to owner-occupied or non-residential uses, or deterioration and demolition."





Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

Homes in Logan Square as seen from above on Nov. 19, 2021.

The neighborhoods with the biggest declines in affordability also continue to lose more lower-income residents, according to the report.

Logan Square and Avondale recorded an 18.9 percent decline in lower-income households between 2012-2014 and 2019-2021. West Town and the Near West Side lost 14 percent of that type of household during the same time period.

At the same time, the number of lower-income residents living in unaffordable units in those areas went up more than 10 percent, respectively.

“This pattern suggests that the number of lower-income households living in unaffordable units would likely have been even greater if not for the general neighborhood loss of lower-income renters,” researchers wrote.

Relatedly, neighborhoods struggling with affordability, like Logan Square and Avondale but also the Loop, Lincoln Square and Jefferson Park, have the highest number of lower-income people living in apartments they can’t afford, according to the report.

“These higher-cost submarkets have likely lost formerly affordable rentals to market pressures through rent increases and conversions to more expensive housing types such as condominiums and single-family homes,” the report said.

In Logan Square and Avondale, rising rents are driving the loss of affordable housing, said Geoff Smith, Executive Director of the DePaul Institute for Housing Studies.

“You see longtime property owners who have owned their properties for 20-plus years sell to a new owner. Each time one of those scenarios happen, it’s highly likely the new owner is going to raise the rent. Essentially, the new sale price is

resetting the rents on that property,” Smith said.

The neighborhoods have also seen some of their affordable housing stock replaced with market-rate and luxury housing in recent years, Smith said.

“Walk around the California Blue Line stop, the Western Avenue stop, or all along the Blue Line — all that new construction is the new rental supply and those new units are largely not affordable,” he said.

Smith said in order to reverse this trend, policymakers and officials need to find ways to preserve the neighborhoods’ remaining low-cost apartments “either through supporting some of those small-scale owners through programs that help them mitigate rising costs or make repairs, or identifying owners that are willing to keep rents affordable.”

“You aren’t going to build enough affordable housing to meet the demand. You could build a lot of new housing that would take some pressure off the existing rental supply, but that takes time,” he said.





Credit: Mina Bloom

2-Flats And 4-Flats Continue To Dwindle

Chicago as a whole is experiencing a shift in which smaller apartment buildings are being replaced with larger, more expensive buildings, the report found.

Affordable apartments in two- and four-flat buildings, considered the “backbone of Chicago’s unsubsidized affordable housing”, were about 38 percent of the city’s overall housing stock in 2012. But in 2021, the share of those units fell to 32 percent, the lowest level in a decade, according to the report.

Meanwhile, units in larger multifamily buildings, especially those with 50 units or more, have increased, the report found.

Like in 2021, researchers also measured Chicago’s “affordability gap,” or the disparity between affordable housing supply and demand.

This “affordability gap” is calculated by comparing the demand for rental housing by lower-income households earning 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (\$41,610 in 2021) and the supply of units that would be affordable at 30 percent of a lower-income household’s income (about \$1,040 per month in 2021).

Driven largely by the shrinking affordable housing supply, data show Chicago’s “affordability gap” reached a 10-year high of 119,435 units in 2021, just over the previous high in 2016.

More key findings:

- The affordable housing supply in Chicago has declined about 15 percent between 2012 and 2021, the report said. A significant portion of the loss — nearly 37 percent — happened between 2019 and 2021. During that period, demand for

affordable housing increased by nearly 2 percent.

- Chicago's lower-income population — people earning less than 80 percent of the area median income — steadily declined over the past decade, but the number of very low-income residents went up during the pandemic, the report found.
- The pandemic also had an effect on Chicago's older renter population: For the past decade, the city was steadily gaining renters 65 and older, but that growth slowed between 2019 and 2021, according to the report.

Thanks for subscribing to Block Club Chicago, an independent, 501(c)(3), journalist-run newsroom. Every dime we make funds reporting from Chicago's neighborhoods. Click [here](#) to support Block Club with a [tax-deductible donation](#).

Listen to "It's All Good: A Block Club Chicago Podcast":

