Whether you are moving to Chicago from a small town or from another major city, the relocation process can be a little daunting. We at the graduate Admissions Office offer this guide to make the move a little easier.
Welcome to Chicago, the third most populous city in the United States. The city is divided into four major sections: North Side, South Side, West Side, and the Loop. Within those sections lie roughly 200 distinct neighborhoods. Chicago’s streets were originally designed in a grid system. Every eight blocks equals approximately one mile. Addresses are determined using Madison Avenue as zero North/South and State Street as zero East/West. Columbia’s main building is located at 200 East and 600 South (600 S. Michigan Avenue) and is home to the Graduate Office and the Graduate Lounge.

GETTING AROUND

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
Columbia’s campus is readily served by the L (elevated train) and bus systems. The Red line’s Harrison stop is only two blocks from our main building, and the Blue, Brown, Orange, Purple, and Green lines are also easily within walking distance from campus. Full-time graduate students receive a Ventra U-Pass, which is included in the price of tuition, and can be applied towards unlimited use of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) trains and busses during Columbia’s academic calendar. There are various apps for your phone that can be downloaded which help tell you when busses/trains will be at which stops/stations. Google Maps is also a great tool to use when figuring out what bus or train to take to get to your destination, and roughly how long your trip will take.

CARS
Many of our students find it easier to not own a car in Chicago, but for those of you who would like to bring your vehicles, there are a few things you must keep in mind. Many apartments do not come with garages or private parking spaces. If this is something important to you, be sure to include that in your search criteria while looking for an apartment. Often, spaces can be rented separately. Be sure to look at the streets surrounding any apartment you may choose to see what kind of parking is available. If these streets are part of a permit zone, visit chicityclerk.com/city-stickers-parking for more information.

BICYCLES
Chicago is a bike-friendly city, and many of our students use their bicycles to get around and for exercise. There are bike lanes on many major roads, and an 18.5 mile bike path along Lake Michigan. Some apartments even have special bike rooms for tenants. It is advised that you buy a heavy-duty lock for times when you leave your bike unattended, and that you don’t leave it outside at night. Chicago also offers various private bike rental facilities.

CAR SHARING
If you don’t want to bring a car to the city, but live a far distance from a grocery store, there are several car-share services available in Chicago. Two that many students use are zipcar.com and igo-cars.com. Be sure to ask about student discounts and offers.

CABS
Although cabs are not as heavily relied on in Chicago as they are in cities like New York, cabs are still a useful resource. You can hail a cab the traditional way or call a cab company’s phone number, but many graduate students rely heavily on cell phone apps when hailing cabs around the city. One such app is Uber, which uses your phone’s GPS to send the closest cab to your location, and allows you to pay directly from your phone.
CHOOSE A NEIGHBORHOOD

Chicago is known for being a “neighborhood city.” Not only do Chicagoans take pride in the city itself, but often in the neighborhood they reside as well. Different neighborhoods have decidedly different characters and before living in Chicago long, you may feel a pull towards different areas of town. Who you are will have a large impact on the neighborhood you choose to live in. There are artsy neighborhoods, working class neighborhoods, wealthy neighborhoods, ethnically focused neighborhoods, and GLBT neighborhoods. All of Chicago’s neighborhoods cater to a unique cultural subset, and it is important to take the time to explore them and find the one that fits you best.

With roughly two hundred neighborhoods to choose from, the search can become a little overwhelming. We recommend you make a list of the things that are important to you in a neighborhood before deciding. How far do you want to live from campus? Which line or bus would you prefer to live off of and how close are you to the nearest stop? What kind of cultural attractions do you need nearby? Try to consider everything.

Here you’ll find brief descriptions of a few areas of the city, and the neighborhoods that are within these areas. We recommend you don’t stop your research after the next few pages, and instead dig deeper into the neighborhoods that interest you. Use resources like walkscore.com if you want to know how “walkable” your chosen neighborhood is, or sites like Chicago Tribune’s crime.chicagotribune.com if safety is a large concern of yours.
SOUTH LOOP 1
Columbia College Chicago Campus

Much of the Loop consists of the financial district and businesses with a lot less housing than other areas. However, the South Loop has seen a boom in development over the past few years with huge numbers of condos popping up, and has become home to many successful professionals. The South Loop is also home to Columbia’s campus, and our residence halls. Although most of our Graduate Students do not live on campus or in the residence halls, it is always an option. One must first think about what living in a residence hall means, and how it might effect them (limited visitors, living with undergraduate students, unknown roommates, etc.)

If the residence halls are something you are interested in, visit colum.edu/ResidenceLife for rates.

NEAR NORTH SIDE 2
Red Line or Brown Line ●●
10-15 minute ride

Some of the poshest neighborhoods in Chicago are to be found in this area, stretching along the lake into downtown just above the loop, to as far north as North Avenue. Here you’ll find neighborhoods like River North, Streeterville, Near North, Gold Coast, and Old Town. These neighborhoods are home to great nightlife (Rush and Division), elegant dining, popular retail establishments, and trendy boutiques.
Located just north of “Near North” you’ll find the Lincoln Park neighborhood, which stretches all the way North to Diversey and just past the Chicago River to the west. Lincoln Park is home to the Lincoln Park Zoo along the lakefront, and DePaul University.

Just north of Lincoln Park are neighborhoods like Lakeview and Wrigleyville. In East Lakeview you’ll find “Boys Town,” Chicago’s gay district, and Wrigleyville is the home of the historic Wrigley Field, where the Chicago Cubs play. Both neighborhoods offer tons of shopping, boutiques, restaurants, bars, and several theaters.

Just west of these neighborhoods you’ll find Roscoe Village, North Center, and Lincoln Square. These neighborhoods are home to many young families. Many apartments in these neighborhoods are too far from public transportation for most students, but the brown line does cut just below Lincoln Square.

If you continue to travel north along the lake, you’ll come to neighborhoods like Sheridan Park, Uptown, Andersonville, Edgewater, and Rogers Park, Avondale, and Irving Park. Within these neighborhoods lie many very reasonably priced apartments, though these are a bit of a commute from campus.

As you journey just west of the loop, you come across the Near West Side. This is home to the University of Illinois Chicago’s campus, as well as Chicago’s Greektown and Little Italy.

North of the Near West Side lies West Town, where you’ll find neighborhoods like Wicker Park, Ukrainian Village, Humboldt Park, Bucktown, and Logan Square. Much of this area is rather bohemian, and it is very popular among students and young artists. This area offers a lively nightlife and affordable housing.

Just below the South Loop is the Near South Side. Here you’ll find Chinatown, a popular place to visit. Just below Chinatown are many other neighborhoods that stretch along the lake and Lake Shore Drive. Most notably, the South Side is home to Hyde Park, where the University of Chicago has placed its campus.

Another option for our graduate students is to commute from the suburbs. Here homes and apartments are usually much less expensive, and these areas are not as bustling as the city. However, the commute can be long and difficult, and Metra Trains run less often than the CTA and are not covered by your Ventra U-Pass. The suburbs can also prove difficult to get around without having a car.
Many websites and resources exist for finding an apartment in Chicago. Although we are not affiliated with any of the below vendors, we have had students find apartments using them.

**APARTMENT FINDING SERVICES**

These businesses are generally free for you to use, and you are at no obligation to rent from them if they do not show you an apartment you like. After consulting with one of their employees about the neighborhoods you are considering and the things you are looking for in an apartment, they will drive you around the city to view several apartments they have selected for you.

- **The Apartment People**
  apartmentpeople.com
- **Apartment Savvy**
  apartmentsavvy.com
- **Chicago Apartment Finders**
  chicagoapartmentfinders.com

**APARTMENT LISTING SITES**

These sites range from the traditional type of newspaper classifieds, to location based sites that allow you to view maps of available apartments.

- **Hot Pads**
  hotpads.com
- **Domu**
  domu.com
- **Craigslist**
  chicago.craigslist.org
- **Chicago Reader**
  chireader.com

**QUESTIONS TO ASK:**

- **What utilities am I responsible for?**
  For the most part, Chicago apartments include water and garbage removal. However, some apartments include other utilities such as gas or electric. Be sure to ask if the apartment is heated by gas or electric, and if the kitchen stove is gas or electric. If your landlord covers gas, and the apartment’s heat is run on gas, you will be saving yourself a lot of money in the winter. Ask the person showing you the apartment for an estimate of the monthly utility cost.

- **Where is laundry?**
  Most apartments have some sort of shared laundry facility in the building. A select few will even have laundry in-unit. Be aware of where the laundry room is located, and how much it costs per load. If there is no laundry, find out where the nearest laundromat is.

- **Is this apartment safe?**
  Aside from just scoping out the neighborhood, be sure to consider safety in other ways too. What kind of locks are on the doors? Do the windows lock from the inside? This is especially smart to consider when renting a garden unit (mostly below ground) or a unit with any kind of direct entrances.

- **Are pets allowed?**
  If you are bringing a pet, this limits your rental options a little. However, many Chicago apartments are pet-friendly, but often require some kind of one-time or monthly deposit.

- **What is the Security Deposit?**
  Most of the time, depending on the apartment, the security deposit will be one month’s rent. This is needed along with the first month’s rent prior to your move-in, and you will not get this back until you move out.

- **Roommates?**
  Having a roommate will significantly decrease the cost of rent when living in Chicago.
  Once admitted to Columbia, a great place to find other like-minded students looking for roommates is on our Facebook page: facebook.com/ColumbiaGradStudy

- **Renter’s Insurance?**
  It is a good idea to look into renter’s insurance when you move into your new apartment. Contact your current insurance carriers, as they may also provide renters insurance options.

As always, you can contact the Graduate Office at 312-369-7260 or gradstudy@colum.edu if you have any questions, concerns or simply just need advice on the relocation process. We know it can be overwhelming process at times and we’re here to help in any way we can.

**Good luck!**