

Myths vs. Facts About the Zoning Updates

Myth: The zoning updates will eliminate green space.

Fact: Nearly **48% of Forest Park's land area is open space**, primarily cemetery land, which is not affected by the zoning updates. Parks, public open space, parkways, and rights-of-way are unchanged. The updates apply only to private residential lots, which represent a small portion of the Village's total land area.

Myth: Increased lot coverage will cause more flooding.

Fact: All new construction must still meet strict stormwater management requirements through the permitting process. Zoning approval does not bypass engineering review. Modern development includes on-site detention, controlled drainage, and other measures that prevent adverse stormwater impacts.

Myth: These changes will lead to overcrowding.

Fact: Density is not the same as overcrowding. Forest Park's population has declined by approximately **3.4%**, and zoning standards continue to regulate height, setbacks, parking, and building design. The updates support moderate, well-managed development that aligns with existing neighborhoods.

Myth: Developers will suddenly build on every 25-foot lot.

Fact: Forest Park already has **803 homes** built on 25-foot-wide lots (Source Cook County GIS). Very few vacant 25-foot lots remain. The updates simply bring those 803 homes into conformance while allowing remaining 25' lots to be developed without requiring special zoning approval, consistent with the Village's historic development pattern.

Myth: Investors will buy 50-foot lots and split them in half.

Fact: In most cases, lot splitting is not financially practical. Existing homes often cross lot lines, subdivision reduces property value, and demolition and construction costs are high. Current market conditions make speculative lot splitting uncommon. Currently there are no vacant/buildable lots in Forest Park

Myth: Single-family homes will be converted into two-flats across the Village.

Fact: While zoning would allow two-flats in limited situations, real-world constraints make this rare. Basement conversions and floor separations are costly, reduce usable living space, and often lower resale value. These projects are typically not economically feasible.

Myth: The zoning updates remove safeguards.

Fact: All existing safeguards remain in place. Projects must still comply with building codes, engineering standards, utility capacity limits, and permitting requirements. Zoning and permitting are two very different processes. Permitting includes enforcement of adopted codes and third party review(s) to ensure construction does not cause adverse impacts on adjacent properties. If standards are not met, a project cannot proceed.

Myth: Once adopted, the zoning code cannot be changed.

Fact: Zoning codes can be amended. The Village retains the authority to adjust standards, address unforeseen issues, or establish temporary moratoriums if necessary.

Historical context (Forest Park’s development pattern)

Forest Park’s current lot pattern and large share of cemetery/open space are the result of long-standing historic development, not recent zoning changes. The following highlights provide context for the Village’s established land use pattern and long-term population trends.

- **1856:** Railroad-era growth helped establish early settlement patterns in the area. (Encyclopedia of Chicago)
- **1870s–1910s:** Several large cemeteries were established and expanded in Forest Park, shaping land use and contributing to the Village’s distinctive open-space/cemetery footprint. (Encyclopedia of Chicago; Forest Home Cemetery history)
- **1907:** The community was incorporated and renamed Forest Park. (Village of Forest Park; Encyclopedia of Chicago)
- **Decennial population (Census):** 2000: 15,666; 2010: 14,167; 2020: 14,339. (U.S. Census Bureau; compiled in Census QuickFacts / decennial census tables)
- **Recent estimate (Census QuickFacts):** Population estimate July 1, 2024: 13,846 (and –3.4% change from April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2024). (U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts)

References & Data Sources

1. **U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts: Forest Park village, Illinois.** Decennial counts (2010, 2020) and population estimates (e.g., July 1, 2024) including percent change April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2024 (–3.4%).
2. **Village of Forest Park, Comprehensive Plan (2014).** Background on existing conditions and land use context, including cemetery properties and open space discussion. (PDF hosted on the Village website.)
3. **Encyclopedia of Chicago: “Forest Park, IL.”** Summary of settlement history, incorporation/renaming, and cemetery development as a defining land use over time.
4. **Historical Society of Forest Park: “Timeline.”** Local historical milestones including early settlement context and community development chronology.
5. **Forest Home Cemetery / German Waldheim Cemetery historical background (Franzosenbusch Heritage Project compilation).** Background on the cemetery landscape and its historic role in Forest Park.
6. **Cook County GIS / CookViewer (Cook County Parcel Viewer).** Parcel boundaries, lot dimensions, and parcel attribute review supporting parcel-level counts (e.g., lot width such as 25-foot lots) and vacancy checks. Counts should be derived from a documented query/export performed on the publication date.
7. **Stormwater permitting and engineering review requirements (local process).** Requirements set forth in the Village’s current building permit and engineering review procedures and any adopted stormwater ordinances/standards.
8. **Village zoning map and zoning ordinance (current adoption).** Current zoning Village’s published zoning map and adopted zoning code.