



# BIRD-FRIENDLY BUILDING DESIGN

July 23, 2025





# BOMA/Chicago

- BOMA/Chicago represents about 240 large office buildings in Chicago.
- Our buildings house over 18,000 businesses and nearly 647,000 office workers.
- Chicago's office industry supports 64,000 jobs (majority union) and contributes \$5.9B to the city and state's economy.
- Chicago office buildings lead the nation in Green Building Stock; Chicago is one of the top 3 US markets for LEED certification.

# Marketplace Realities

Downtown Chicago's office market is experiencing record high vacancy rates while buildings sell for pennies on the dollar. In this climate where new developments are years away, costly new mandates raise serious concerns about timing and feasibility.

## Low Occupancy

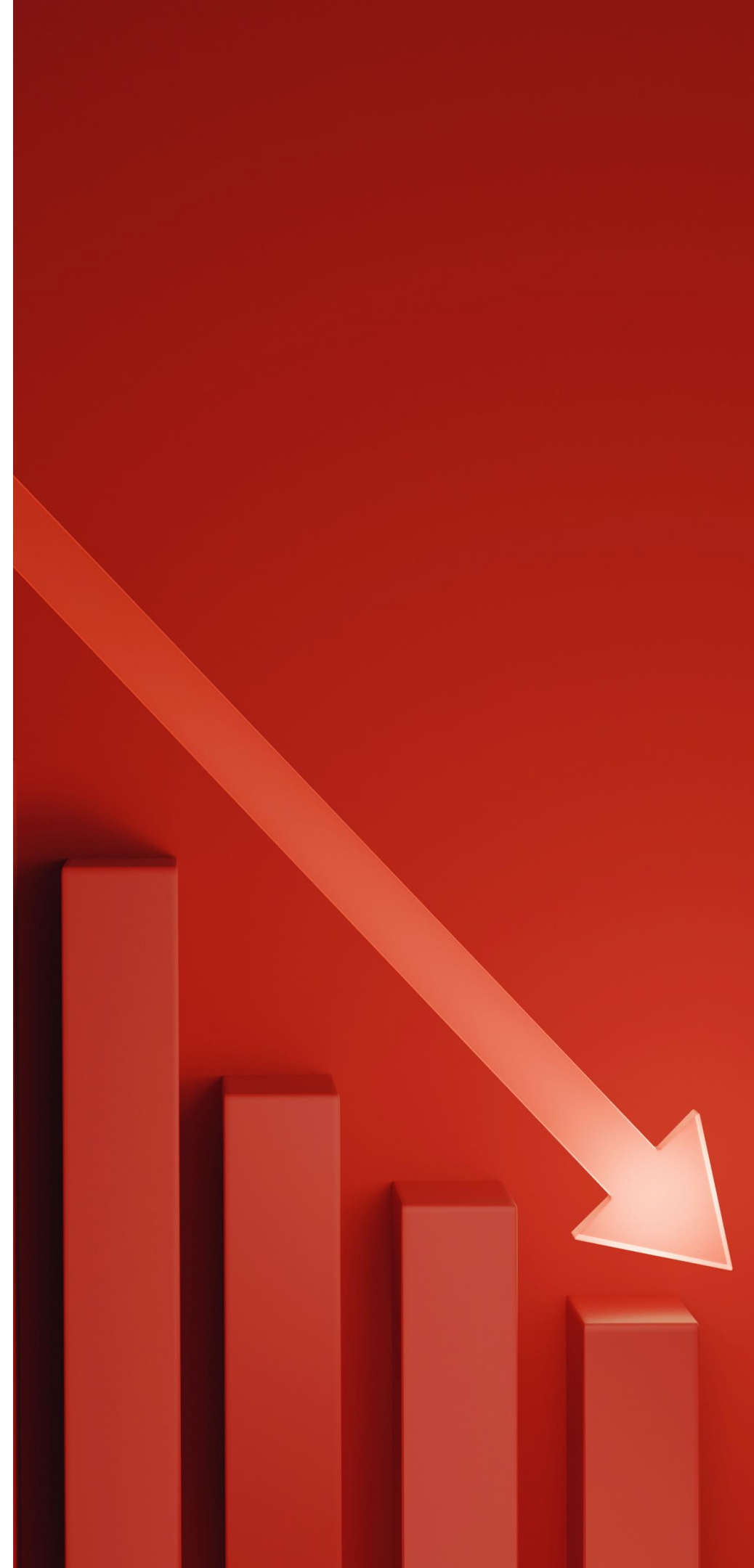
Downtown workers in the office has stagnated around 60%, compared to pre-Covid numbers.

## Record Vacancy

Low occupancy has contributed to a record high downtown office vacancy, with the Central Loop at 28.5%. There is over 44M square foot of empty office space downtown.

## Plunging Values

The Downtown market has cratered, with buildings selling at deep discounts from 50-85%.



# Stalled City Growth

Cranes once symbolized Chicago's job-creating investment. Today, their absence reflects a development pause expected to last for years.

In this climate, added costs have a greater impact. Even a 5–10% increase in window costs can cost millions of dollars more for large buildings — potentially discouraging future investment and job creation.



# Lower Flight Risk

Birds tend to fly low to the ground making residences and low-rises a greater risk.

Both the [\*Clemson University Factsheet, Reducing Bird Strikes at Your Home\*](#) and the [\*Bird-Building Collisions in the United States: Estimates of Annual Mortality and Species Vulnerability\*](#) estimate that less than 1% of birds collide with high-rises and the remainder of collisions occur with lower story buildings:

- 44% of mortality at residences (1-3 stories);
- 56% at low-rises (4-11 stories); and
- <1% at high-rises (greater than 12 stories).

Given the lower flight levels, low-rises and residences should be included as policies are being developed.



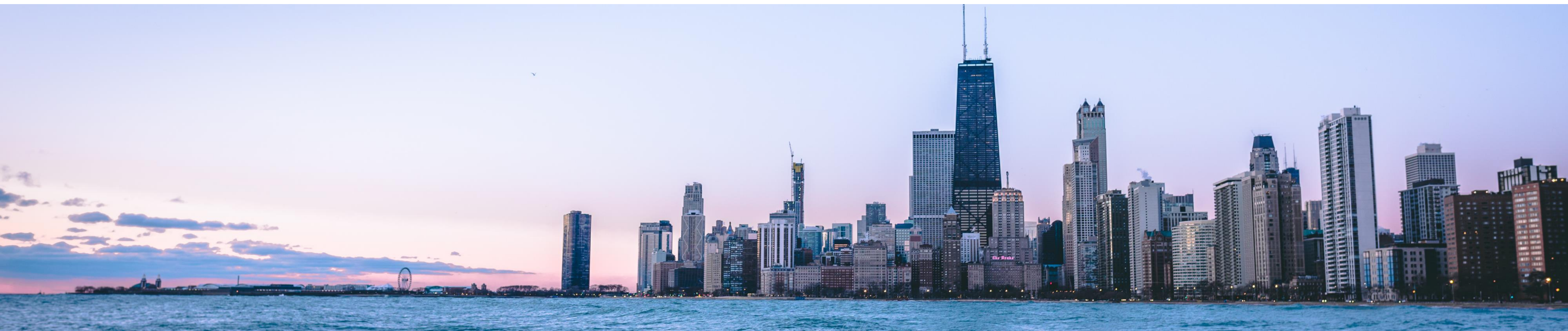
# Bird-Friendly Design Alternatives

## Distancing Landscaping

Distancing landscaping—both indoor greenery and outdoor feeders or vegetation—from glass helps prevent bird collisions by either keeping birds from building fatal speed or by placing attractants far enough away to avoid dangerous reflections.

## Minimize Lighting

Minimizing upward-directed light, glare, and using warmer color temperatures helps birds navigate more naturally and avoid hazards associated with artificial light. Reducing nighttime lighting and turning off unnecessary lights are also effective.





# Lights Out Program

BOMA/Chicago partnered with the Chicago Audubon Society in 2001 to launch the successful Lights Out program and continues to promote the program. By minimizing decorative and tenant lighting, our buildings support a safe passage for birds during Spring and Fall migration seasons. Extinguishing lights also helps reduce energy consumption.

## Decorative Lighting

Extinguish decorative lighting on the upper stories after 11 p.m. until daylight during the Spring and Fall bird migration seasons.

## Minimize Lights

Minimize lighting in lobbies and atriums. Tenants are also encouraged to turn out lights or draw blinds after 11 p.m.

# Policy Alignment

City Council is also reviewing a stricter window signage ordinance by limiting tinting and obstructed visibility into businesses.

As bird-friendly building design policies are considered, it's important that any rules around etching, tinting, or window opacity are aligned to avoid conflicting regulations.





# Thank You

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