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MAYOR LORI LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES PLAN TO OPEN CHICAGO'S STREETS TO SUPPORT BUSINESSES AND HELP RESIDENTS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

City announces six neighborhood-focused pilot projects to provide relief to local businesses through expanded outdoor dining space; puts forth initial plans to open residential streets for recreational activities

CHICAGO — Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today joined Commissioners Gia Biagi and Rosa Escareno from the Chicago Departments of Transportation (CDOT) and Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) to announce Chicago's 'Our Streets' plan to open and convert residential streets and commercial corridors for alternative uses. Today's announcement outlines two main uses for Chicago's streets as the City looks to move into phase three of its 'Protecting Chicago' reopening framework. First, the City plans to convert streets, or portions of those streets and cross-streets, in key commercial corridors throughout the City into expanded outdoor dining, providing much needed relief to restaurants of all sizes. Second, the City will also convert residential streets to provide Chicagoans with additional transportation options and space for outside recreational activities while safely social distancing throughout many different neighborhoods as the State's 'Stay at Home' order is lifted.

"As our City looks to move into the next phase of our reopening framework, it is essential that we take additional steps to protect the health and safety of Chicagoans as they visit local businesses and travel throughout the city," said Mayor Lightfoot. "This vision to reimagine some of Chicago's residential streets and key restaurant corridors allows for increased social distancing and adherence to public health guidance as we begin the gradual reopening of our great city. In coming days and weeks, I look forward to expanding these pilot projects citywide with input from the public and local stakeholders."

Through a multi-departmental effort and in coordination with the Illinois Restaurant Association and its members, local chambers of commerce and in conversation with local aldermen, the City has identified six corridors to pilot expanded outdoor dining. These areas have been selected based upon location, proximity to local businesses and residents for ease of walking and biking, and impact to traffic. Over the coming weeks and following the City's official move into



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phase three, we will close the roads in these areas to thru traffic during specified hours and restaurants will be allowed to move tables and chairs into the streets to accommodate additional capacity for guests looking to dine outdoors.

The six pilot streets included in the program are:

- Chatham: 75th Street from Calumet Avenue to Indiana Avenue
- Lakeview: Broadway from Belmont Avenue to Diversey Parkway
- Little Village: 26th Street from Central Park to Harding Avenue
- Rush & Division: Rush Street from Oak Street to Cedar Street
- Near West Side: Taylor Street from Loomis Street to Ashland Avenue
- West Loop: Randolph Street from Expressway no further than Elizabeth Street

"Today, Mayor Lightfoot and the city of Chicago are taking clear actions to support our world-class restaurant community in our time of need," said Sam Toia, President of the Illinois Restaurant Association. "Closing down streets to allow expanded outdoor dining in Chicago's neighborhoods is an innovative measure to help reopen our economy. This announcement today is not a solution for every restaurant in Chicago, but it is another pragmatic and crucial step forward in the path to recovery."

"The little village 26th street area chamber of commerce would like to thank Mayor Lori Lightfoot for including the 26th street business corridor in the new outdoor dining pilot," said Blanca Soto, Executive Director of the Little Village Chamber of Commerce.

After the initial pilots have launched, the City will evaluate the potential to expand programming to other areas in the City. Beginning Monday, June 1, chambers of commerce, SSAs, business associations and restaurants in groups of three or more can visit the City website to submit an application for Expanded Outdoor Dining. This will allow for existing, fully licensed Retail Food Establishments to temporarily use streets or private property for outdoor dining and drinking until 11 PM. However, the City's 9PM liquor sales curfew remains in effect at all retail establishments. More information on the application process and supporting documents will be made available on the website, as well, and the City will be hosting multiple informational sessions with potential applicants in the coming days.

"It is critical that we pursue every opportunity to creatively support Chicago's businesses as we reopen cautiously over the coming weeks," said BACP Commissioner Rosa Escareno. "This new pilot adds to our array of outdoor dining options and represents unprecedented collaboration between City departments,



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local chambers of commerce, industry groups and restaurateurs. We know that business owners are looking forward to reopening their doors and it is essential that we provide the resources and options they need to open up safely and responsibly.”

Under the phase three reopening framework, establishments with an active Retail Food Establishment license may reopen for outside dining only, subject to the restrictions in the [Food Service guidelines](#). Businesses that do not serve food, such as bars and lounges, must remain closed except for carry-out or delivery. In addition to the opportunities available under the Expanded Outdoor Dining program, food-serving establishments may open outdoor patios, rooftops, rooms with retractable roofs, indoor spaces where 50% or more of a wall can be removed via the opening of windows, doors, or panels provided that dining tables are within 8-ft from such openings and sidewalk cafes. As part of the City’s ongoing efforts to help the small business community, BACP is continuing to [issue sidewalk café permits](#) while working with Aldermen to determine how best to deliver an efficient and straightforward permitting process

“Chicago’s 4,000 miles of streets represent 4,000 miles of opportunity to help both our residents and businesses that have faced unprecedented challenges from the COVID-19 global pandemic,” said CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi. “Finding solutions for people to get around safely, reliably and affordably and for businesses to resume more normal operations are essential parts of the City’s re-opening strategy. I am thrilled to have worked in collaboration with many City Departments to find creative approaches that support our communities. Reimagining the use of our streets ensures that we can bring businesses and neighborhoods back stronger and more connected than ever before.”

Throughout the past several weeks, CDOT has been working with transportation stakeholders and local aldermen, while also gathering input from residents throughout Chicago’s many neighborhoods to better understand how the transportation system can support community needs such as social distancing or improving travel to essential jobs. In the coming weeks, CDOT will use this input to launch a citywide effort to open residential streets and provide additional transportation options to residents throughout the city to keep Chicagoans safe and healthy.

“In the COVID era, many more people are choosing to move around on bikes and on foot. It is critical that we provide increased street and sidewalk space for residents to do so safely,” said MarySue Barrett, President of the Metropolitan Planning Council.



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Since launching the initial feedback process, CDOT has already received more than 500 requests from Chicagoans, most of them to allow only local traffic along residential streets while opening them to pedestrians and cyclists – easing essential travel to transit stops and local stores, and allowing people to walk or run while maintaining safe distances. Neighborhoods may also request location-specific interventions that reflect local needs, including transit access improvements or collaborations with community groups to improve the accessibility and operation of streets. CDOT will continue to work with aldermen and other community and cultural organizations to determine ways that street design can address local issues beyond social distancing—from transit access and speeding up buses to public and traffic safety, or to address lack of open space in neighborhoods.

Mayor Lightfoot and CDOT also made public new mobility guidelines as part of the ‘Be Safe Chicago’ campaign which provide clear indications of how Chicagoans can maintain safety as they return in greater numbers to walking, driving and riding a bike on Chicago streets. Residents looking to learn more about the Our Streets program and to share their ideas and take a short survey can visit: chicago.gov/covidmobility.

Businesses that are looking for more information about expanding outdoor capacity should reach out to their local chamber of commerce or visit Chicago.gov beginning June 1.

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