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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT, BACP AND CDOT ANNOUNCE EXPANSION OF OUTDOOR DINING PROGRAM THAT HAS SUPPORTED MORE THAN 250 RESTAURANTS AND BARS TO DATE

Program has given restaurants and bars greater outdoor options during COVID-19; enhancements will make it easier for liquor-only establishments to operate outdoors

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot along with Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) Commissioner Rosa Escareño and Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) Commissioner Gia Biagi today announced an expansion of its Outdoor Dining Program that has already allowed over 250 bars and restaurants throughout the city to operate outdoors during the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak. As part of this effort to support Chicago's businesses, the City announced new reforms to the Expanded Outdoor Dining Program that will make it easier for bars, taverns and breweries affected by the latest rollback of the reopening guidelines to operate outdoors. Effective immediately, individual establishments that serve alcohol without a Retail Food License may apply to use this program to temporarily operate on the sidewalk in front of their establishment, and all restaurants and bars may use the permit in outdoor areas that would typically require an Outdoor Patio License.

"While we've had to implement restrictions and take hard measures to combat a recent rise COVID-19 activity, we will continue to ensure our restaurants, bars and businesses have the supports they need to survive during these unprecedented times," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Our innovative Outdoor Dining Program has already helped more than 250 restaurants and bars in our communities, and now by expanding our efforts to better support our bars impacted by these new restrictions, we are providing a lifeline to hundreds of local establishments across Chicago's neighborhoods."

Established to support bars and restaurants that have been impacted by COVID-19, the Expanded Outdoor Dining Permit has given bars and restaurants the ability to temporarily operate outside in private property or through street closures. However, prior to today's reform, individual businesses that serve alcohol without a Retail Food License did not have the ability to expand into the sidewalk – this option



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had only been available to restaurants through a sidewalk café. Today's alteration will give these establishments, which cannot operate indoors due to COVID-19, a new option for outdoor service on the sidewalk. The sidewalk space utilized by bars and taverns must be set up with six feet of pedestrian clearance remaining, and service areas must be enclosed by a barrier, similar to sidewalk cafes. Furthermore, liquor establishments must identify a partner food establishment to ensure that food is available for patrons.

"In times like these, City government must be nimble and flexible and give businesses the opportunity to stay afloat," said BACP Commissioner Rosa Escareño. "This program has kept hundreds of bars and restaurants going through unprecedented challenges and we will continue to do what we can to make it easier for all businesses that need our support."

Over 250 individual bars and restaurants have been able to apply to operate outside in private or public property through the Expanded Outdoor Dining Permit. However, for private property expansion, this permit has only been available at locations that are temporary in nature, such as a parking lots. For other locations in which permanent operations would be possible, such as patios, courtyards, or terraces, applicants were required to obtain an Outdoor Patio license. Effective today, bars and restaurants can use the Expanded Outdoor Dining Permit to temporarily operate in locations that would typically require the permanent Outdoor Patio License, reducing time to receive approval by up to two months and removing additional regulatory burdens that have prevented some applicants from receiving their permits.

"Opening up opportunities for neighborhood gathering places to thrive is an excellent use of the City's public way," said CDOT commissioner Gia Biagi. "The Expanded Dining Program is providing safe, popular and healthy alternatives for people wanting to explore our neighborhoods."

Since the reopening of Chicago began on June 3rd, the City has prioritized outdoor service for bars, restaurants and other food and drink-serving establishments. In June, City Council passed Mayor Lightfoot's sidewalk café reform ordinance to make it easier for restaurants to acquire sidewalk café permits; there are currently 840 active sidewalk café permits. Additionally, 614 establishments have Outdoor Patio licenses, allowing them to permanently operate in outdoor private property or on rooftops. Finally, the Expanded Outdoor Dining Permit has brought outdoor dining options to over 250 establishments, many of which may not have any opportunities for outdoor operations. This includes 108 individual establishments operating on private property and 145 participating in street closures throughout the City. The



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street closures and locations on the public way planned for this weekend can be [found here](#).

“During these unprecedented times, the City of Chicago outdoor dining license was truly a life raft for my business” said Mike Moreno, Jr., owner of Osito’s Tap.

Multiple City Departments, including BACP, CDOT, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) and the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) have worked closely with applicants to bring about safe outdoor options through the Expanded Outdoor Dining Program quickly, responsibly and in a manner that adds to the character of a neighborhood. The unprecedented program is designed to give flexibility to businesses while ensuring that Alderman and Police District Commanders have the opportunity to provide feedback and preserve safety within their neighborhoods. Each application is evaluated based on the unique needs of the establishment and the neighborhood and the City works to grant as much flexibility and space to participants as possible.

“Businesses throughout Chicago, especially bars and restaurants, continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic every day,” said Emma Mitts, Alderman of the 37th Ward and Chairman of the Committee on License and Consumer Protection. “Programs like this are necessary to keep our businesses open and our neighborhoods vibrant. We must do everything we can to support and save businesses during this ongoing crisis.”

Due to the recent rise in community cases of COVID-19, the City of Chicago has reinstated certain restrictions for businesses, including the closure of indoor service for bars, taverns, breweries and other establishments that serve alcohol without a retail food license. By providing outdoor space to bars and restaurants, businesses can not only operate safely but further ensure social distancing can be maintained as much as possible. Additionally, sitting outdoors in socially distanced spaces can further lower the risk of spreading COVID-19 as opposed to indoor spaces.

“This is a critical time for businesses in every neighborhood and we need to think outside the box to support our business community,” said Tom Tunney, Alderman of the 44th Ward. “This program is an example of City government doing everything possible to support businesses when they need it most. The flexibility to operate outdoors is essential for bars and restaurants and it is now easier than ever.”

To learn more about the Expanded Outdoor Dining Permit and to apply, [click here](#). To help businesses navigate the permit, the City will be holding webinars next Wednesday, August 5 at 11:00am and Thursday, August 6 at 2:00pm. To register, visit chicago.gov/businessworkshops.



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