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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES THE LAUNCH OF "OPEN CHICAGO"

Open Chicago is the latest initiative to safely reopen the city

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced the launch of Open Chicago, the latest initiative to safely and fully reopen the city. Open Chicago's initial programming will feature activated, re-imagined, and pop-up spaces for Chicago residents to enjoy. These spaces will either build on ongoing Chicago traditions, are expanded from programs that launched last year, or are new programs specifically crafted to get the City back into a new normal.

The initiative's mission centers on communicating Chicago's safe reopening strategy, which allows for the reopening of public amenities and private venues, activating public spaces with arts, culture, and recreation, expanding outdoor dining, and ensuring businesses can return to offices and in-person events.

"Despite the unimaginable challenges that were thrown our way last year, we were still able to persist and come together to slow and stop the spread of this virus and put our city on the right path toward a safe reopening," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Open Chicago is not only the direct result of these efforts, but it also serves as the latest step in our mission to fully restore a sense of normalcy within our city by bringing back and reimagining some of our favorite summer- and fall-time activities. I am grateful to each and every City, community and business leader who partnered with us on this incredible initiative as well as our residents, who continue to follow public health guidance and keep our COVID-19 metrics low enough to launch efforts like these."

Chicago has made significant progress in reversing the worrying rise in our COVID-19 metrics that started in March and caused the City to pause our cautious reopening plan. The reopening metrics have remained stable or decreased over the past two weeks, with our test positivity rate dropping to the Lower-Risk level, below 5.0% earlier this week for the first time since late March. Our ICU and non-ICU hospital capacity remains in the Moderate-Risk level despite the recent rise in cases.



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Due to this improvement in our reopening metrics and the ongoing distribution of the lifesaving COVID-19 vaccine – two million doses administered in the city and counting – Chicago will be loosening Phase Four regulations to allow for higher capacity across industries effective immediately. If our reopening metrics remain stable or continue to decrease for the next two weeks and we reach the criteria set by the state, Chicago will join the State of Illinois in moving to the Bridge Phase. Chicago’s new Phase Four Regulations that come into effect today and the Chicago Bridge Phase will broadly align with state-imposed regulations, with some additional restrictions that reflect Chicago’s experience with the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We have made significant progress over the past few weeks in daily case counts, test positivity, and other important metrics, allowing us to further reopen Chicago,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. “While this is an exciting moment, I have to warn everyone that we are not out of this pandemic yet, and we need to continue to be safe and smart. We need all Chicagoans to get the vaccine – it is available, it is safe and effective, and it is the best tool we have to stop the spread of COVID-19.”

Under the new Phase Four Regulations, most Chicago industries will have the ability to increase capacity effective immediately, including the following changes:

- **Restaurants and bars:** Indoor capacity can increase to the lesser of 50% or 100 people.
- **Spectator events, theater, and performing arts:** Large indoor venues, including the United Center, can now operate at 25% capacity.
- **Meetings, conferences, and conventions:** Large indoor venues can now operate at the lesser of 25% or 250 people.
- **Places of worship:** Large indoor venues can now operate at 25% capacity.
- **Festivals and general admission outdoor spectator events:** Operate at 15 people per 1,000 sq. ft.
- **Flea and farmers markets:** Operate at 25% capacity or 15 people per 1,000 sq. Ft.

While COVID-19 capacity restrictions are beginning to loosen across industries, other regulations remain in place to keep patrons and employees safe, including the requirement to maintain six feet of social distancing and remove face coverings only in limited circumstances. Additional regulations will ease across industries once we reach the Chicago Bridge Phase, including expanding operating hours for restaurants and bars. The full reopening guidelines can be found at [Chicago.gov/reopening](https://chicago.gov/reopening).



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In addition, effective immediately, guests that are fully vaccinated – defined as 14 days after receiving their final vaccine dose – will not count towards capacity limits at private events such as weddings. Events must be at a licensed business, they cannot be open to the public, and guests must RSVP prior to the event. Business owners will be responsible for verifying that exempted guests are fully vaccinated and keep records. The City will consider expanding this exemption to other industries in the coming weeks, provided that our COVID-19 metrics continue to improve.

“Our business community has consistently risen to the occasion throughout this pandemic and saved countless lives through their efforts,” said Rosa Escareño, BACP Commissioner. “With the vaccine widely available and our health metrics rapidly improving, I am thrilled that we are ready to take the next step in our reopening plan and help our businesses continue to recover. We must commit to what works by wearing masks indoors and social distancing in order to continue moving forward in our safe and cautious reopening plan.”

Open Parks

The relaunch of the 9th season of Night Out in the Parks this summer will feature more than 100 of Chicago’s talented artists and organizations performing in over 350 outdoor cultural arts events. This year’s experience will reconnect diverse audiences across all of Chicago’s 77 community areas with the arts and cultural landscape of the City. Movie screenings in 100 parks will kick off on July 6 at Oakdale Park in the Washington Heights community.

From hip-hop to folkloric dance, and even Tightrope Fairies, new arts partners M.A.D.D. Rhythms and Open Architecture Chicago’s Poetic Platforms will join returning favorites, like the Midnight Circus, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, and the Chicago Philharmonic Society, on stages in parks citywide. For additional information about Night Out in the Parks, visit www.nightoutintheparks.com.

For the past six years, the Chicago Park District has teamed up with ComEd to celebrate the start of summer by turning on the iconic Buckingham Fountain as part of the annual “Switch on Summer” event. For the first time in over a year, a ComEd contest winner will once again revive Buckingham Fountain with the flip of a switch – bringing back the longstanding Chicago tradition. For details about the event and contest, visit www.ComEd.com/SwitchOnSummer.

Maggie Daley Park’s 18-hole, Chicago-themed miniature golf course, and ribbon will be open daily, starting April 30. In the summer, the ribbon is transformed to welcome scooter users, rollerbladers, and roller skaters. Weekend rentals are now available. The park will offer daily rentals starting on May 28. An adventure awaits



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visitors on the 19,000 square foot climbing wall and bungee, which will open to the public on May 28. Concessions at Maggie Daley Park will also be open. For details about Maggie Daley Park activities, visit www.maggiedaleypark.com.

Chicago's lakefront parks witnessed a resurgence of activity after their reopening in late February, and soon many more lakeside activities will resume with safety guidelines in place.

Popular drive-in events at Soldier Field will be a welcomed addition to the annual walk/run fundraisers hosted in lots at the sports venue, which celebrated the return of the Chicago Fire FC and their fans earlier this month. Soldier Field concessions will also be open as part of the Open Chicago efforts. For more information about the Chicago Park District's summer activities in the parks, visit www.chicagoparkdistrict.com.

"We are ready and eager for the return of summer in Chicago as we know it. From leisure activities, like walking along the lakefront and watching Buckingham Fountain's nightly light spectacle, to music, theater, dance, and movies in our neighborhood parks, rediscovering the outdoors and reconnecting with the arts in Chicago will be an enriching experience for everyone this summer and fall," said Chicago Park District Chief Administrative Officer, Juliet Azimi. "It is imperative, however, that we collectively continue to follow the safety guidelines that have been instrumental in our progress and will be part of these experiences for the immediate future."

Open Streets

In order to support bars and restaurants and encourage outdoor dining, which continues to be the safest option, the City is creating a \$2 million program using CDBG funding to provide businesses in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods with grants to support expanded outdoor dining and safe spaces for consumers.

In addition, the City is receiving \$4 million in CDBG funding to support Plaza Streets and Shared Streets. Plaza Streets will convert excess pavement into usable community space for outdoor seating or programming by local community groups. It will also help improve the pedestrian experience and safety of these corridors.

The Shared Streets program, which closes local streets to through traffic, will be returning this year to provide people with more comfortable space to walk, bike and roll. The 2021 program will launch this Spring on Leland in the Lincoln Square neighborhood and will be expanded to other streets where there is community support.



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“We learned a lot in the last year about how with imagination and thoughtful planning, much of the outdoor space we took for granted could be transformed into valuable assets, into places for people to congregate safely and into a lifeline for our businesses,” said CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi. “Working with our City and community partners, we created Shared Streets and Expanded Outdoor dining programs that were great success stories. And this year, we have new resources, and we are going to use those to build on that success.”

Last month, the City announced Chicago Alfresco, an initiative to open streets and create places for dining, public life, community, arts, culture, walking, and biking. The purpose of Chicago Alfresco is to encourage chambers of commerce and other neighborhood community groups to think beyond emergency traffic barricades and construction cones to propose and build design-forward outdoor community spaces through Chicago Alfresco. Many proposals for this project were submitted and can expect groundbreaking on projects early this summer. For more details on Chicago Alfresco, visit Chicago.gov/alfresco.

Windy City Smokeout will be the first street festival to return to the City's roster of summer events. The annual festival, which features dozens of local and national BBQ pitmasters and restaurants is expected to host up to 12,500 people per day. The outdoor fest will take place in the parking lot of the iconic United Center, with an impressive musical lineup featuring country superstars and up-and-coming talent. All vendors, performers, ticketholders, and staff will be required to be fully vaccinated. For non-vaccinated attendees, proof of a negative COVID PCR test will be required within 72 hours of entry to the event.

"Windy City Smokeout is an opportunity for us to show off Chicago, the greatest city in the world, to guests from all around the country," said R.J. Melman, President of Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises. "We're thrilled to return this summer and safely welcome everyone back to Chicago outdoor music festivals."

In an effort to bring people safely back to the Loop, the City, in partnership with the Chicago Loop Alliance will transform State Street from Madison to Lake into an open street on Sundays beginning July 11. For up to 12 Sundays, a portion of State Street will be closed to vehicle traffic to give pedestrians a chance to experience arts and culture, active recreation, retail, restaurants and bars against the backdrop of State Street's iconic architecture. The closures will last from 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m., and the event itself will take place from 11:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Learn more at LoopChicago.com/SundaysOnState.

“Last year was incredibly challenging for the Loop community, which relies so heavily on the 370,000 workers and millions of visitors it normally sees,” said



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Chicago Loop Alliance President and CEO Michael Edwards. “As vaccine distribution continues to ramp up, and as the weather warms, we see Sundays on State as an opportunity to attract people back to the Loop in 2021. In a time when people are eager for community and connection, but still want to stay healthy and safe during a pandemic, this free, outdoor event is just what the city needs.”

As the city reopens to with more in-person activities for the summer, we urge residents to continue to be safe, social distance, wear their masks and get vaccinated. As of April 19, all Chicago residents over the age of 16 are eligible to be vaccinated and can schedule an appointment or learn more about the City’s vaccination efforts at chicago.gov/covid.

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