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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES THE RETURN OF FANS IN CHICAGO BALLPARKS

Chicago ballparks to welcome the return of fans of up to 20% capacity on Opening Day

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced plans to reopen Guaranteed Rate Field and Wrigley Field to fans beginning on each team's respective Opening Day in April as part of the City's "Open Chicago" efforts. Under limited capacity and guidelines in compliance with the City's recovery plan, fans can expect to watch their favorite teams from the stands this season. The decision follows evaluation of Chicago's remarkable progress in recent months with recovery efforts resulting in eased restrictions on COVID-19 mandates. Mayor Lightfoot, in partnership with the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Major League Baseball (MLB) Association, evaluated capacity and restrictions to ensure fans will have a safe and fun experience when they return to the ballparks this season.

"As a diehard sports fan myself, I'm personally excited to have Chicago take its first, cautious steps toward safely reopening our beloved baseball stadiums to fans this season," said Mayor Lightfoot. "We're able to do that thanks to the commitment of our city's two great baseball franchises who continue to work in close partnership with Chicago's public health officials to find solutions that are not only safe, but offer a path forward toward safely increasing stadium capacity as we move closer into our COVID-19 recovery."

Last week, Mayor Lightfoot, CDPH and the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) announced further easing of COVID-19 restrictions due to sustained progress in reopening metrics. Indoor capacity at bars, restaurants, and other businesses sits at 50% capacity as COVID-19 cases, test positivity, emergency department visits for COVID-like illness and ICU beds occupied by COVID-19 patients are at low- to moderate-risk levels.

Guaranteed Rate Field, home to the Chicago White Sox on the South Side, normally seats just over 40,000 guests. The reopening capacity will be limited to 20%, or 8,122 fans with at least six feet between parties. White Sox Opening Day is April 8, 2021. The White Sox had minimal cases of COVID-19 in players last season.



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“We are proud of the important and historic role baseball plays in our country, offering respite during some of the most difficult times or in providing fans with a sense of comfort when circumstances seemed uncertain,” said Jerry Reinsdorf, chairman of the White Sox. “We believe this is a moment when baseball can indeed serve our fans and our communities again as we all hope for a gradual return to normal. It’s why we applaud Mayor Lightfoot, the leadership role she and Governor Pritzker have played for our city and state, and the decision today — guided by an unwavering commitment to public health and safety — to allow fans to return to Guaranteed Rate Field for Opening Day.”

Wrigley Field, the oldest ballpark in the National League and home to the Chicago Cubs will also be limited to 20% capacity and there must be appropriate distance between parties. The ballpark, which has a normal capacity of 41,374, will be limited to 8,274 fans per game. Opening Day is April 1, and the Cubs are slated to have 81 home games this year. Last year, the Cubs finished their season with zero positive COVID-19 tests for their players.

“We appreciate Mayor Lightfoot’s leadership and share the City of Chicago’s commitment to safely welcoming fans back to baseball,” said Cubs Executive Chairman Tom Ricketts. “The return of fans is incredibly meaningful to our players, our City and the game we all love. Nothing can replace the energy and enthusiasm our beloved fans bring to the Friendly Confines each and every game. We’re ready and excited for our much-anticipated Wrigley Field reunion.”

The ballpark reopening will start at 20% capacity with additional restrictions, and potentially open to more fans as vaccination and recovery efforts continue. In the same vein, an increase in COVID cases could result in ballparks, bars, restaurants and businesses closing to reduce outbreaks. The process will be data-driven and depend on the compliance of residents and businesses. Wrigley rooftops will also be open and will be required to follow latest guidelines for bars and restaurants.

“On behalf of Major League Baseball, I thank Mayor Lightfoot for her shared commitment to a responsible resumption of fan attendance in Chicago, under protocols designed to promote safety,” said Major League Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred. “The health of on-field personnel and our communities will remain the highest priority in our operations. MLB will continue to urge fans to follow best practices for health and safety in the fight against COVID-19.”

MLB, White Sox, and Cubs leadership have instituted several enhancements and operational measures designed to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission in compliance with City mandates. These measures include:

- Ballpark entry and amenity zones limited contact entry
- Cashless concessions and retail



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- Additional restrooms per guest
- Reduced queueing times
- Reconfigured indoor spaces

Additionally, players, fans, associates, partners, and media can expect comprehensive screening and sanitization procedures based on the latest scientific guidance and data to provide a safe environment for everyone at the ballpark. All guests will be required to wear their masks.

“With our COVID-19 numbers declining and our vaccination efforts successful and ongoing, this is truly a milestone for the city’s reopening,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. “As our favorite places in the city reopen, it is important we remain vigilant and continue to follow the public health guidance so we can enjoy everything Chicago has to offer.”

As the city continues to make progress in COVID-19 recovery and vaccinations, each step in the process will be reevaluated to ensure the safety of Chicago residents. The City will continue to work closely with the MLB Association and Chicago ballpark owners so fans returning to the ballparks in April can enjoy games in a responsible and safe manner while supporting their home teams. For the most up to date capacity protocols across all industries and activities for which the City has released reopening guidelines, visit chicago.gov/reopening.

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