



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT JOINS BMO HARRIS BANK AND ILLINOIS RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION TO LAUNCH WINTER DESIGN CHALLENGE TO REIMAGINE WINTER OUTDOOR DINING

Competition will challenge residents to design practical winter outdoor dining solutions for restaurants impacted by COVID-19

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, in partnership with IDEO, BMO Harris Bank and the Illinois Restaurant Association, today announced the Winter Design Challenge, a first-of-its-kind competition that will engage community members to reimagine the winter outdoor dining experience in Chicago. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a variety of challenges to Chicago's restaurant and bar owners, and the Winter Design Challenge will draw on the expertise and creativity of Chicago residents to propose innovative outdoor dining solutions that adhere to COVID-19 protocols. The Challenge will run from August 25 to September 7, with winners announced in mid-September.

"While we've had to implement restrictions and take hard measures to combat a recent rise in 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. "We are asking our community members to come together and think creatively about how we can make outdoor dining feasible in the winter."

The Winter Design Challenge will use human-centered design principles to generate ideas that are tailor made to suit the needs of Chicago residents and take into account the many stakeholders involved – from customers to restaurant workers to construction trade workers. In partnership with IDEO, a leading global design company, the City will use design thinking to find ideas that are innovative, viable, equitable and feasible.

All City of Chicago residents are invited to participate in the Winter Design Challenge. Submissions will be accepted on [IDEO's open innovation platform](#). A panel of local restaurants and community members will select one winner in each of the following categories: 1) outdoor, standalone structures 2) indoor-adjacent



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spaces and 3) cultural shifts making winter dining more appealing. All submissions must comply with local COVID-19 guidelines. Thanks to support from BMO Harris Bank, each winner will receive a \$5,000 cash prize and opportunities to pilot their idea at restaurants and bars in the City.

“At BMO Harris Bank, we are committed to investing in our local communities, and we’re here to help support Chicago’s restaurants during this difficult time,” said Eric Smith, Vice Chair of BMO Harris Bank. “We know that Chicago residents are innovative and forward-thinking, and we look forward to seeing their ideas for supporting our restaurants and bars, and I hope that the solutions that come out of the Winter Design Challenge will remain long after the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.”

The Winter Design Challenge builds on Mayor Lightfoot’s efforts to support restaurants and bars during each phase of the City’s re-opening framework. In May, Mayor Lightfoot announced the Expanded Outdoor Dining Program, which has allowed over 300 restaurants and bars to temporarily into the street or private property. This program was recently expanded to allow taverns without a Retail Food Establishment license to expand into the sidewalk area for the first time. In June, Chicago City Council passed Mayor Lightfoot’s reforms to the sidewalk café permit, making it easier and cheaper for restaurants to operate on their sidewalk space. The City is looking for innovative ideas to keep bars and restaurants thriving during the cold winter months.

“Our restaurants and bars are the heart and soul of the city, and we must do everything possible to keep them operational during the harsh winter months,” said Sam Toia, President and CEO of the Illinois Restaurant Association. “We need out-of-the-box thinking to address the hardship facing our industry. The Winter Design Challenge demonstrates the City’s support of innovation in these trying times, and we look forward to ideas that are both creative and operationally attainable for our members.”

To learn more about The Winter Design Challenge, click [here](#).

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