



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CITY COUNCIL APPROVES LATEST MEASURES TO SUPPORT BUSINESSES  
IMPACTED BY COVID-19**

*Ordinance approved today will remove regulatory burdens and reduce fees for outdoor dining while legalizing cocktails to-go in Chicago*

**CHICAGO** – The Chicago City Council today approved two ordinances introduced by Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot to remove regulatory burdens and provide much-needed support to Chicago's businesses impacted by COVID-19. The first ordinance will make outdoor dining easier during phase three by reducing fees, expanding the opportunity for revenue and expediting the permitting process for Sidewalk Cafes while removing a regulatory burden for the new Expanded Outdoor Dining Permits. The second ordinance temporarily legalizes the sale of pre-mixed cocktails for pick up or delivery in the city.

"Chicago's neighborhood businesses have been deeply impacted by the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, and it's our job to do everything we can to help them thrive," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The measures passed today offer new and critical support to our neighborhood businesses in ways that enhance our communities and strengthen our bonds with each other. By removing regulatory burdens and providing the necessary relief these establishments need, we can further reinvigorate our communities on Chicago's road to recovery."

Chicago's Sidewalk Café permits have long been an option for Retail Food Establishments looking to operate on the sidewalk directly in front of or adjacent to their establishment, and today's ordinance is a life-line to help many businesses that may not currently have an option for outdoor dining during phase three. The legislation is designed to make it easier than ever to acquire a Sidewalk Café permit.

Under the ordinance passed today, the following measures will be taken to remove regulatory burdens and ensure establishments can operate as quickly and safely as possible:

- Reduce the fees for Sidewalk Café permits by 75%, which would apply retroactively to all permits issues this year. Businesses who have already been granted a permit will receive a refund.



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- Extend the boundaries of Sidewalk Cafés into the public way in front of a neighboring establishment, provided that the neighbor is not a retail food or liquor establishment. Cafes must extend continuously, cannot block the door or window of a neighboring property, and plans for extended cafes must be submitted as part of the application, with insurance coverage including the entire extended footprint.
- Expedite the permit process by removing the requirement for Sidewalk Café permit applications to be submitted to City Council before issuance. This will preserve the local alderman’s ability to approve applications on the front end while removing a regulatory burden that can add 30 days to the issuance timeline.

BACP has already issued over 400 sidewalk cafes in 2020, with an additional 670 approved and in the final stages of issuance. While their offices are closed to the public, BACP continues to operate remotely to receive and process applications - [click here for more information](#).

“Sidewalk cafes have long been a fundamental part of Chicago’s vibrant dining scene and are now essential to reopening restaurants at this critical time,” said Rosa Escareno, BACP Commissioner. “As we cautiously reopen, these important changes will make it easier than ever for restaurateurs throughout Chicago to open up quickly and safely. I look forward to continuing to work with our business community to ease regulations, simplify processes and reopen our city.”

Restaurants and bars can temporarily expand operations into the street or other private property by applying for the new Expanded Outdoor Dining Permit. This permit is part of the City’s “Our Streets” plan and is processed by the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) and BACP. Applicants for street closures can be submitted by a Chamber of Commerce, Special Service Area Agency, Business Association, or three (3) or more establishments. At least 50 percent of participating establishments must serve food. Individual restaurants with their own parking lots may apply by themselves to expand into their own or a nearby private lot.

As a part of the application, establishments that serve liquor must submit a valid Special Event Liquor License from BACP. Today’s ordinance will extend the term from 11 to 180 days for any Special Event Liquor License issued under the Expanded Outdoor Dining Permit Program. This will allow establishments to continue serving liquor under the program without having to renew their license every 11 days.



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“As the city begins to reopen, we need to pursue every opportunity to remove red tape and eliminate regulatory hurdles for businesses,” said Howard Brookins, Jr., 21st Ward Alderman and Chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Public Way. “The City must ensure that we are not a burden on businesses, and today’s efforts will make it much easier for restaurants throughout the City to open quickly, profitably and safely.”

To provide additional revenue for hundreds of bars and restaurants across Chicago who have been, and continue to be, impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, City Council today also approved an ordinance to temporarily legalize the sale of pre-mixed cocktails for pick up or delivery in the city. This ordinance will allow for cocktails to-go in Chicago with [health and safety measures](#) in place based on provision of the recently passed State Law:

- Pre-mixed cocktails must be sold in a sealed and tamper-evident container.
- Cocktails can only be sold by bars and restaurants, not liquor stores.
- Cocktails must be labeled and cannot be delivered by third-party delivery services.

“As we begin to cautiously reopen, restaurants throughout the city need to be given the opportunity to operate outside quickly and safely,” said Sam Toia, President & CEO of the Illinois Restaurant Association. “With a streamlined Sidewalk Café process, the Expanded Outdoor Dining Permit and cocktails to-go, the City is taking clear actions to roll out creative supports for restaurants and bars. These efforts will support our world-class restaurant community during this challenging time.”

Beginning today, bars, breweries and other establishments that sell alcohol for on-site consumption without a Retail Food License will be allowed to open for outdoor service. To minimize gatherings during the cautious reopening, Chicago Department of Public Health Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady signed a Public Health Order to restrict the sales of alcoholic liquor sales each evening. Under the updated order, liquor sales for off-site consumption via delivery or carry out must cease at 9 p.m. each evening, and liquor sales for on-site consumption via outdoor dining must end at 11 p.m.

To guide Chicago’s residents and businesses during phase three, the City has developed industry-specific guidelines for seventeen different industries, including Food Services, eligible to cautiously reopen. BACP has held twelve webinars on these guidelines, with over 1,200 participants, and will continue working to educate all businesses about the reopening guidelines and business support resources during this ongoing challenge. To further ensure an ongoing line of communication, the City created the CHIBIZ alerts to notify Chicago’s businesses of emergency



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situations that may impact their operations. Interested businesses can text “CHIBIZ” to 67284 or register at [chicago.gov/chibizalerts](https://chicago.gov/chibizalerts).

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