

MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES EASING OF PHASE FOUR GUIDELINES FOR CHICAGO BUSINESSES

Progress in the fight against COVID-19 will allow for expanded indoor capacity, extended operating hours and loosening of other restrictions for businesses beginning October 1st

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) today announced that Chicago has made sufficient progress in the fight against COVID-19 to ease certain restrictions on businesses. Effective Thursday, October 1st, new guidelines for businesses will come into effect that will expand indoor capacity to 40% for certain businesses, reopen bars for indoor service, allow restaurants and bars to serve alcohol until 1:00 am, increase maximum group sizes for fitness classes and after-school programming and allow personal services that require the removal of masks. These changes build on Chicago’s status as the most open large city in America and are possible due to continued improvement on crucial COVID health metrics, including a declining number of new daily cases, a test positivity rate now below 5% and the lowest rates of hospitalization and death in months.

“Over the past six months, we have asked so much of our business community. But each time, our businesses have stepped up to the plate,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “Thanks to this cooperation, we have met this challenging moment with grace, commitment and resilience, and the sacrifices made by our businesses, workers and residents have saved countless lives. This next step in our reopening is good news for business owners as well as the communities they serve and the thousands of residents that work for them.”

Chicago is now seeing around 300 new COVID cases per day whereas in late August the city was over 350 cases per day and rising. Test positivity (the percentage of COVID tests with a positive result) has fallen to 4.5% and severe outcomes have also improved, with hospitalizations from COVID lower than they’ve been since March and deaths at an average of 2-3 per day, when they were around 50 per day at the peak of the pandemic.

The outbreak continues to have a disproportionate impact on Black and, particularly of late, Latinx communities, but we are seeing improvement there, as well, and declines in the Latinx community outpace the overall averages. As we gradually ease our reopening guidelines, we will continue to watch trends closely, particularly among essential workers and People of Color.

“Overall, we are heading in the right direction, and this affords us an opportunity to further re-open the city and to do so gradually and safely,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. “But I can’t emphasize this enough: Chicagoans need to continue to follow the public health guidance; wearing masks, social distancing, frequent hand washing and staying home when sick; or we risk falling back and experiencing another rise in cases.”

Effective Thursday, October 1st, at 5:00am, the following guidelines will come into effect:

- **Increased Indoor Capacity:** Restaurants, health and fitness centers, personal services, non-essential retail and all other establishments that have been limited to 25% indoor capacity will now be able to increase their maximum indoor capacity to 40%. The limit of 50 total customers

within one room or space at restaurants, venues and other establishments will remain in place, as will the limit of no more than six people per table.

- **Reopening of Bars:** Breweries, taverns, bars and other establishments that serve alcohol without a food license may reopen with indoor seating, at 25% capacity or 50 people, whichever is fewer. Service remains limited to no more than two hours per party, and customers must be seated when eating, drinking or ordering – patrons cannot walk up to the bar to order.
- **Extended Hours for Bars and Restaurants:** Bars, restaurants and other establishments that serve alcohol will now be able to sell alcohol for on-site or off-site consumption until 1:00 am and may remain open until 1:30 am. Liquor stores, grocery stores and other establishments that sell alcohol to-go through a Packaged Goods license must continue to cease alcohol sales at 9:00 p.m.
- **Increased Group Size:** Maximum group size for health and fitness classes and after-school programming will increase from 10 to 15 people.
- **Expanded Personal Services:** Facials, shaves and other personal services that require the removal of face coverings will be allowed.

Updated reopening guidelines can be found at chicago.gov/reopening.

“The last six months have brought unprecedented challenges for everyone, especially the small businesses that form the pillars of so many of our neighborhoods,” said BACP Commissioner Rosa Escareno. “I want to thank the many businesses that have shown their dedication to their employees and patrons throughout this crisis by strictly following our guidelines. While this crisis has brought extraordinary pain, our recovery has outpaced peer cities and I am confident that this next step will bring much-needed economic support for thousands of businesses and workers while still prioritizing the health of our community.”

To help keep communities safe while supporting the neighborhood economy, the City today also announced a partnership with homegrown technology company Tock to provide free technology solutions for restaurants and bars in low-income communities. Through this partnership, Tock will offer a free set-up and six-month subscription to [Tock Plus Lite](#) for restaurants and bars without a reservation system in areas of the city below 60% of the Area Median Income. This one-of-a-kind program will provide these establishments with the ability to manage reservations, takeout, delivery and events all through one unified system. This program, which is also available at a low cost citywide, can be used by businesses to retain cell phone numbers and email addresses to support contact tracing for reservations and when seating walk-ins.

“As a locally-grown Chicago business, we are thrilled to partner with the City to help expand safe dining and help restaurants build a bridge to the future,” said Brian Fitzpatrick, Tock's co-founder and CTO. “For many restaurants and bars, especially those in historically disinvested areas, technology can make all the difference. Access to reservation systems during this critical time will help businesses keep pace while ensuring that they comply with regulations to keep their employees and patrons safe.”

While enough progress has been made to ease certain restrictions, Chicago remains in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and calls on all businesses and customers to continue following the phase four

guidelines. In order to continue the significant progress, the following additional guidelines will also come into effect on Thursday, October 1st:

- When dining out at a food service establishment or bar, customers must always wear face coverings while seated, except when actively eating or drinking. This protects employees that may interact closely with patrons.
- Patrons at indoor bars, taverns and breweries must order from their seats – they cannot walk up to the bar to order.
- Bars, taverns and breweries that are reopening indoors must partner with a food establishment so that food is available to patrons at all times (e.g., making menus available and allowing delivery, allowing patrons to order from third-party delivery services).
- When taking reservations and seating walk-in customers, restaurants and bars should retain an email and/or phone number for possible contact tracing.
- Personal services that require the removal of face coverings are recommended to be kept under 15 minutes, and the employee conducting the service must always wear a face covering.
- All places of business should provide hand sanitizer for patrons and employees to use upon entry.

“The next few months will be critical for Chicago’s hospitality industry as we work to recover from a once-in-a-lifetime crisis,” said Sam Toia, President and CEO of the Illinois Restaurant Association. “Increased capacity and longer hours will mean more jobs, greater opportunity for profit and a path towards stability for our restaurants. We are committed to continuing to prioritize the health and safety of our workers and patrons as we take this essential next step in our economic recovery.”

These new health and safety regulations are in addition to existing guidelines, including the requirement for diners to continue wearing face coverings when interacting with staff and for residential property managers to limit guest entry to five additional people for single-member households such that total indoor gatherings and parties do not exceed six people. BACP will continue enforcement of these guidelines. Since June 3rd, when phase three began, BACP investigators have conducted 2,018 investigations and issued citations to 130 businesses for failing to follow the reopening guidelines.

“The compliance rate makes it clear - businesses in every corner of the city have taken the steps they need to keep our residents safe,” said Emma Mitts, 37th Ward Alderman and Chairman of the Committee on License and Consumer Protection. “I am proud of our business community and thrilled that increased capacity and extended hours will bring the opportunity for additional revenue. I am glad to be a part of the efforts to help businesses throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and to support this meaningful step forward on our road to a safe and responsible recovery.”

“Our downtown and neighborhood businesses are central to what makes our city great,” said Brendan Reilly, 42nd Ward Alderman. “This next step in our reopening will be a lifeline for thousands of businesses, but we must continue to follow critical health and safety guidelines while we move towards a reopened economy that works for our businesses and workers.”

“Throughout this crisis, our businesses and their workers have been at the frontline of our fight against COVID-19 and critical to our response,” said Tom Tunney, 44th Ward Alderman. “As we take this next

step towards are recovery we must continue working together to keep our community healthy while helping our businesses succeed.”

While indoor service can expand starting October 1st, the City recognizes the continued importance of outdoor options for bars and restaurants as part of a safe and successful fall and winter season. The City has worked with industry experts to develop guidance for safe and responsible outdoor operations, which were distributed to businesses last week. Under these guidelines, tents and other structures will be allowed on the public way for the first time, Expanded Outdoor Dining Permits will be extended to last through the winter season and road closures will continue - weather permitting - in order to allow our small businesses as much time as possible to make up for lost revenues. The outdoor guidance can be [found here](#).

“Our city’s restaurants and service industry workers have really suffered as a result of COVID-19, and while we look forward to fully reopening in the future, we respect that the City of Chicago is using the best public health guidance available to inform their decisions,” said Erick Williams, Owner and Chef of Virtue Restaurant & Bar in Hyde Park. “The safety of our team and guests has and will continue to be our first priority, and it is encouraging to be able to bring more of our staff back to work with the increased capacity allowed.”

To prepare all business owners for the new phase four guidelines and for the cold weather regulations, the City of Chicago will be hosting a series of webinars this week. To register and learn more, visit chicago.gov/businesseducation. Additionally, the City today is launching an “Eat. Shop. Live Chicago.” campaign to support small businesses. The City and its partners will use this campaign to encourage dining and shopping at small businesses throughout the fall and winter months while highlighting businesses that are operating safely and responsibly.

“As business owners, we appreciate the opportunity to show how seriously we take the health and safety of our employees and patrons,” said Abby Phelps, Studio Owner of Club Pilates in Lincoln Park. “We are committed to keeping those priorities top of mind as we increase our capacity to allow more members in our gyms and studios.”

As part of the City’s plan for a safe, healthy and gradual recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the City today has announced eight guidelines for a safe Halloween. The “Halloweek” guidelines are available now and establish requirements for social distancing, face coverings and group size while celebrating Halloween.

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