



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CITY OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES CHICAGO ALFRESCO PROGRAM FOR CREATIVE  
OUTDOOR SPACES ACROSS CHICAGO**

*Chicago Alfresco will build upon the Expanded Outdoor Dining Program with an added opportunity for community organizations to design creative outdoor areas in support of outdoor dining*

**CHICAGO** – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, with Choose Chicago and the Chicago Department of Transportation, today announced [Chicago Alfresco](#), an initiative to increase outdoor dining area and the opportunity for businesses and community organizations to design creative long-term outdoor spaces.

This new program builds on Mayor Lightfoot's commitment to support businesses throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Last year, in an effort to increase dining spaces due to safety regulations from the COVID-19 pandemic, the City introduced special permits that allowed bars and restaurants to operate outside in private parking lots, on the sidewalk or in closed streets through the Expanded Outdoor Dining program. While that program will continue as it did last year, the City is now encouraging 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. Chicago Alfresco is part of the City's broader initiative to open streets and create places for dining, public life, community, arts, culture, walking and biking.

"Outdoor dining has become a lifeline for so many of our neighborhoods, but not all of them have been able to take advantage of our safe, outdoor dining programs," said Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "And by creating and transforming public spaces, the Chicago Alfresco initiative will significantly increase our city's ability to fully revitalize the public way. Last year, we started this program out of necessity to help bars and restaurants stay open safely, now we've seen how well this program works and how much the City loves it, so we want to keep it going."

The new Chicago Alfresco design guidelines encourage the thoughtful design of visually appealing community places that cultivate a sense of ownership, belonging,



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and safety through activation, physical transformation, community engagement, and economic development. Through the pandemic, the restaurant industry, much like the rest of the city had to adapt to accommodate people in their spaces safely. The Outdoor Dining Expansion was a solution that helped businesses accommodate people safely in restaurants in bars but has evolved into a change that will contribute to an enhanced quality of life for Chicago residents and tourists.

“Chicago has never needed its streets more, and we’ve never needed more out of our streets,” said CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi. “As the crises mounted last year, we supported neighborhoods with streets open for healthy activity, community connection, and for safe, outdoor dining. As we emerge from the shadow of the pandemic, we must continue to put our streets in the service of what people and small businesses need in their neighborhoods to keep everybody safe and moving while keeping us all together.”

The Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) is now seeking Chicago Alfresco proposals from community organizations such as chambers of commerce, Special Service Area providers, and other not-for-profit organizations interested in creating longer-term active community spaces that support outdoor dining or highlight community-focused placemaking, support community identity, and provide opportunities for public enjoyment. Interested neighborhood organizations can find more information at [chicago.gov/alfresco](https://chicago.gov/alfresco). The first round of Chicago Alfresco proposals from neighborhood organizations will be accepted until April 15. The City will approve the first round of plans by April 30. A virtual webinar will be held on March 26 at 3 p.m. to answer any questions regarding the Chicago Alfresco Call for Projects.

Businesses may continue to apply for Expanded Outdoor Dining permits at [chicago.gov/specialeventspermits](https://chicago.gov/specialeventspermits).

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