



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**CITY COUNCIL PASSES PUBLIC WAY REFORM ORDINANCE**

*Final piece of Chi Biz Strong Initiative will save small business owners up to 60 days in the Public Way Use Permitting Process*

**CHICAGO** – Today, the Chicago City Council passed a revised Public Way Use Reform substitute ordinance that delivers on Mayor Lightfoot's promise to reduce red tape for thousands of small business owners. This initiative, which is the result of weeks of collaborative discussions, will remove the ordinance requirement for the vast majority of Public Way Use permits. Removing the ordinance will help business owners obtain a sign, awning or other public way permit up to 60 days faster while ensuring that the local alderman continues to play a critical role in the public way permitting process. With today's vote, Mayor Lightfoot's bold Chi Biz Strong Initiative has now passed in its entirety, setting the City up for a swift and long-lasting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"In order to truly recover from this pandemic, we must boldly reimagine the way we do business here in Chicago," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Speed is absolutely key to this recovery, meaning that the quicker we issue licenses and permits, the quicker our economy is able to bounce back from this crisis. I want to thank Alderman Reilly and Chairman Mitts for their willingness to work collaboratively on this revised ordinance, which will eliminate an unnecessary burden for thousands of our small business owners and strengthen our post-COVID recovery efforts moving forward."

Under the revised proposal, the local alderman will continue to conduct the initial review of a Public Way Use (PWU) application for a sign, awning, canopy, or another use of the public way before the application is fully reviewed by the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP). Aldermen can object to a permit based on a set of broad criteria, including if they determine that the granting of the public way use is not in the best interest of the public or if it does not comport with the quality or character of the existing streetscape. Since the local alderman is the representative for their community, BACP often concurs with their recommendation, provided that it is rooted in these codified bases.



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If both the local alderman and BACP agree that the application meets the requirements for a permit, BACP will now have the authority to issue permits immediately, removing the requirement that a separate ordinance be introduced and passed for each permit. This will expedite the process by up to 60 days for the vast majority of permit applicants.

In very rare instances, BACP may disagree with the alderman's rejection of a PWU permit application. In these cases, the ordinance process will be preserved. The permit applicant, with the assistance of BACP, may submit to City Council an applicant-sponsored ordinance and only if the City Council passes this ordinance will the public way use permit be issued.

"As the Alderman with the most public way use permits within my ward, I understand the importance of speeding up this process. I am proud to support this compromise that will deliver the process improvements that thousands of small business owners desperately need while preserving the local alderman's role," said Brendan Reilly, 42nd Ward Alderman. "I want to thank Mayor Lightfoot and Commissioner Escareno for sitting down and hashing out a plan that works for our communities and our small businesses."

"For the last sixteen months, we have worked tirelessly to help our businesses survive a once-in-a-century pandemic," said Emma Mitts, 37th Ward Alderman and Chairman of the Committee on License and Consumer Protection. "In order to fully recover from the pandemic, we must commit to working together and delivering real solutions that work for our entire city, and I am proud to support this effort and deliver this much-needed support to our small businesses."

The revised Public Way Use Reform Ordinance will deliver the final piece of Mayor Lightfoot's Chi Biz Strong Initiative. Along with the rest of the initiative that passed in June, this bold legislative package will jumpstart Chicago's recovery by delivering financial relief to thousands of businesses, cutting red tape across numerous City processes, and guaranteeing new protections for workers and consumers.

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