



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ORDERS THE IMMEDIATE CLOSURE OF THE CITY'S LAKEFRONT, ADJACENT PARKS, 606 AND RIVERWALK TO THE PUBLIC**

*Despite Stay at Home order, an excessive number of people gathering along the lakefront and in neighborhoods necessitates further action to bend the curve of COVID-19*

**CHICAGO** - In response to the excessive gatherings of people along Chicago's Lakefront, Riverwalk and 606 Trail this week, effective immediately, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot has issued an executive order closing these spaces to the public until further notice. The Mayor made the announcement alongside city officials and mayors from surrounding communities that are also grappling with the issue of social and congregate gatherings in their communities while the state's 'Stay at Home' order is in effect.

The Mayor's Executive Order will direct a shutdown of the Lakefront including adjacent trails, green spaces and facilities. In addition, the order provides guidance for residents to make every effort to practice social distancing during recreational activities, such as walking, running or cycling. The order also prohibits contact sports, like basketball and football. These measures are designed to protect the health and safety of residents amid the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

"While our parks and other green spaces offer residents a brief respite during this stay at home order, we simply must take action to prevent the large gatherings that are putting our public health at risk," said Mayor Lightfoot. "As we work tirelessly to flatten the curve and prevent the spread of COVID-19, we need people to stay at home as much as possible. Our order to temporarily close access to the Lakefront and restrict gatherings has now become a necessary step in our effort to protect people, and to get our city through this crisis as quickly as possible."

Throughout the week, City officials have observed crowds congregating along the lakefront, in parks, and other public spaces violating the state's mandate and health guidance, both requiring that residents do not gather in groups to prevent the further spread of COVID-19. To ensure residents comply with the State's mandate and abstain from non-essential activities, the Chicago Park District Security and the Chicago Police Department will continue to patrol the lakefront and disband people who violate the closure.

"Above all, we want the residents of Chicago to be safe," said Chicago Park District General Superintendent and CEO Michael Kelly. "This closure is necessary to enforce social distancing and mitigate crowding that is typical along Chicago's lakefront but threatens the health of our city during this very delicate time."



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The Mayor's order bans lakefront access to all parkland in Chicago adjoining Lake Michigan, including walking, running and cycling paths, beaches and other recreational facilities. To keep these areas secured, the Chicago Park District is putting in place barricades and other security measures pursuant to the order. Please visit [chicagoparkdistrict.com](http://chicagoparkdistrict.com) for the full list of closures.

The order also bans access to other Chicago public spaces like Millennium Park, Chicago's Riverwalk and the 606 Trail. Many alternative routes will still be available to Chicago residents choosing to walk or bike to work during this time, and residents are encouraged to visit [Chicago.gov/CDOT](http://Chicago.gov/CDOT) to view the city's network of 248 miles of bike lanes.

"The movement of people who are essential workers and others doing necessary travel must take priority during this unprecedented time. We understand the Mayor's decision to close the Lakefront and 606 to protect our public health," said Melody Geraci, interim executive Director of the Active Transportation Alliance. "Chicagoans should stay home as much as possible and, when spending time outside, they should follow public health guidelines by maintaining social distancing and staying away from busy areas."

While the Chicago Police Department is empowered to enforce the Mayor's new order through citations up to \$500 and additional measures, the Department is primarily focusing on educating residents about the new order and providing warnings to individuals using these closed spaces. To further ensure compliance with the order, the Department will move forward with issuing citations if individuals don't adhere to initial warnings from police officers.

"For the most part, Chicagoans have been doing well at maintaining social distancing but with the number of people gathering on the lakefront in recent days, it is necessary that we shut down these areas for the health and safety of our residents," said Interim Superintendent Beck. "Again, it is the responsibility of every Chicagoan to do their part to help keep each other safe and following this order will save the lives of our fellow neighbors."

On Wednesday, Mayor Lightfoot joined Commissioner Allison Arwady of the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and other city officials to remind residents of important guidance to adhere to during the state's order, and as public health officials work to stem the spread of the virus. Chicagoans are still able, and encouraged, to do the following during this time:

- Go for a short walk or runs but maintain physical distance from others while doing so, preferably in their own neighborhoods.
- Walk their dog, but do not congregate at the dog park or beach.
- Shop at the grocery stores that remain open, as long as, you are not sick, and practice social distancing.
- Continue visiting the restaurants that remain open for pick-up and delivery.



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“As we have learned from watching how other countries have responded to this outbreak, the best way for us to contain this virus is to practice proper social distancing,” said Dr. Arwady. “This doesn’t mean you can’t go outside for fresh air, walk your dog or go for a run. It just means you have to do it the right way, by keeping your distance from others and not congregating in groups.”

Chicago Park District’s facilities and fieldhouses will remain closed for the duration of the stay at home order. Currently, the District’s green spaces and parks remain open, and the City will monitor park activity in the event more closures are necessary to prevent large gatherings and congregations of people during the stay at home order.

Under Governor Pritzker’s ‘Stay at Home’ Order, which went into effect on March 21, residents of Chicago and across the state are mandated to stay at home as much as possible, and to limit occasions for leaving their homes, unless it is to: retrieve essential goods or services, go work if they are an essential employee, seek medical care, or to get fresh air for brief amounts of time while practicing social distancing. The order was issued out of an abundance of caution to safeguard the public health and prevent further spread in the community and is expected to last through April 7, unless otherwise directed.

Additionally, under an order released by CDPH last week, any Chicago resident that has COVID-19 or is displaying symptoms must stay at home during this time unless seeking emergency medical care. This order was issued out of an abundance of caution to safeguard the public health and prevent further spread in the community.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the City is launching the Stay Home, Save Lives campaign to inform residents about how they can stay healthy and do their part to bend the curve of the virus. For more information and updates on COVID-19, text COVID19 to 78015, email [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov) or visit [Chicago.gov/coronavirus](https://chicago.gov/coronavirus).

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