



April 1, 2024

Re: RNRA Clarification on Clark Street Outdoor Dining

RNRA wishes to clarify the coverage of our position on future closures of Clark Street for dining. On May 4, 2023 the RNRA Board sent a letter to Mayor Johnson urging careful consideration and assessment of all impacts of future closures of Clark Street for outdoor dining. RNRA did not state that we opposed future closures, or street closures for restaurants in general, but raised considerations about Clark Street specifically that were valid at the time due to a number of unknown factors. These included impacts of the temporary Bally's casino (which had not yet opened), the ongoing closure of the Dearborn Street bridge, incomplete information about NASCAR detours, pending construction and closures on the expressways, Chicago Avenue bridge and Halsted viaduct work, and the planned development of the permanent casino, Halsted Pointe and other developments. Considerations we asked to have addressed in any future decisions included impacts on public transportation, emergency services, bicycle routes, and pedestrian considerations as well as congestion. We also supported the need to allow input from alderpersons in these decisions in their Wards.

Our letter was issued prior to the ordinance approved on May 31 because our goal was to have these assessments considered in the final plans.

Alderman Reilly replied to RNRA after the ordinance was passed, noting that the final ordinance addressed many of the RNRA concerns by requiring an annual review of all applications; requiring that CDOT, OEMC, CFD, and CPD review all applications to make recommendations related to safety and traffic; and supported aldermanic input. He also noted that there was agreement not to expand street closures in River North to East/West streets to help support all vehicular traffic circulation. He stated he would continue to review future proposals with a narrow focus on traffic and safety and noted the many evolving factors impacting this specific location.

RNRA was pleased to see that our concerns had been addressed in the process outlined in the final ordinance.