

Contact: Tracy Baim
Publisher, Chicago Reader
tbaim@chicagoreader.com
773-387-2394

***Chicago Reader* pivots to biweekly print schedule**

Precipitous ad revenue drops seen across the industry from COVID-19 contributed to the decision

The *Chicago Reader*, the nation's first free weekly newspaper, has announced it is pivoting to a biweekly print schedule with a renewed focus on digital content and storytelling, and a refreshed special issues calendar.

Founded in 1971, the *Reader* has gone through several ownership changes over the past decade, and most recently has applied to the IRS for 501(c)(3) status that would usher in ownership by a newly formed Reader Institute for Community Journalism. That application is pending, and the *Reader* is currently an L3C, mission-driven company.

Advertising spending has dropped nearly 90 percent due to COVID-19 shutdowns, and the continued struggle of some of the core marketing partners of the *Reader* has contributed to this decision. Savings from the move to a biweekly schedule will allow the *Reader* to continue its award-winning journalism in print and online and help fund a refresh of chicagoreader.com. The *Reader* will undergo a complete digital makeover in 2020, with a new website and other digital channels to come.

The print edition is still core to the company's mission, and many readers prefer the printed page. As the economy re-opens, the *Reader* will return to its full 50,000+ printed copies biweekly to nearly 1,200 delivery locations across the city. In addition, the popular PDF version of the paper will continue to be available for download.

"This was not an easy decision," said *Reader* publisher Tracy Baim. "We wanted to focus on the current strengths of the paper. We did not have to lay off or furlough any editorial employees during the recent crisis, but it is clear there is still a difficult path to navigate in the coming months and years. This is the right time to focus on streamlining costs to keep our team intact, and to focus on new revenue sources."

"We are so proud of the *Reader's* legacy as an alt-weekly, and I'm honored that all of us have been part of its history as a weekly publication," said co editor-in-chief Karen

Hawkins. “As much as we would love to continue bringing our readers a weekly print paper, we know that this is the best path forward for the future. We’re grateful to still be here—and still kicking ass— when so many of our peers are not. Our print publication schedule is changing, but our commitment to being Chicago’s premier alternative news source has not.”

For more details on the *Reader*, see chicagoreader.com, and for ways to support see chicagoreader.com/support.

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About the *Reader*’s reach:

More than 600,000 unique visitors view the *Reader*’s website each month, in addition to 43,000 *Reader* email subscribers, 95,000 Facebook followers, 283,000 on Twitter, and 61,000 on Instagram. Each issue’s PDF is downloaded an average of 4,500 times.