

OPEN STOREFRONTS

Reimagining Outdoor Space for New Yorkers and Small Businesses



Photo by NYC & Company



The City's long-term strategy places public health at the center of New York City's economic recovery. The strategy builds upon the City's successful efforts to respond to COVID-19, with significant new investments to cement our position as a global leader in public health innovation—attracting and growing high-quality jobs and improving health outcomes in historically underinvested communities.



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The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unique challenges to businesses across industries in New York City—challenges that reinforce the direct, yet complex connection between public health and our economy. For over 40,000 storefront businesses in the city (90 percent of which are small businesses and many of which are immigrant- and minority-owned), these challenges are a threat to survival—and to the vitality of their neighborhoods—even while stemming from measures necessary for public health.

THE NEED FOR BUSINESS OUTDOORS

Storefront businesses can benefit greatly from a reimagination of how the city uses outdoor spaces—an effort that will support business owners, neighborhoods, and the city's economy, while allowing customers to shop safely, following public health protocols. Currently, indoor retail can only operate at half capacity (with even more restrictions on businesses in high or moderate COVID cluster zones). Under existing rules and regulations, storefront businesses are prohibited from conducting transactions outdoors and, on many commercial corridors, from displaying merchandise outside. Additionally, business owners are required to obtain relevant permits for any activity on a sidewalk, such as placement of signage, ropes, stanchions, etc.

THE OPEN STOREFRONTS PROGRAM

As part of the mayor's recovery strategy and building from the success of the Open Restaurants program, the City is launching an Open Storefronts program that will allow storefront businesses to use a portion of the sidewalk to conduct business. Businesses will be able to display merchandise, complete transactions, and provide areas for customers to line up, as long as the business meets eligibility criteria identified by the City, which will be made available at nyc.gov/openstorefronts. Further, for designated Open Streets: Restaurants corridors, the Open Storefronts program will also permit businesses to use the curbside lane to conduct business activities during the hours that Open Streets: Restaurants is in effect.

The program will be available to all ground-floor storefront businesses after the completion of a short online form acknowledging their understanding of the program's criteria and restrictions.

WHAT WE'VE DONE

- The City made available online specific guidance and siting criteria for storefront businesses to participate in the Open Storefronts program.
- An Emergency Executive Order was drafted to suspend any necessary rules and regulations to help implement the program.
- The SBS Restart hotline has been briefed on how to respond to business owners' inquiries on the program and where to direct their questions.
- The City created an intake form/process and terms and conditions that business owners must agree to for participation in the program.