

New York City's first phase of reopening spurs hope and anxiety among businesses



People wear protective masks during the coronavirus pandemic in Times Square | AP Photo

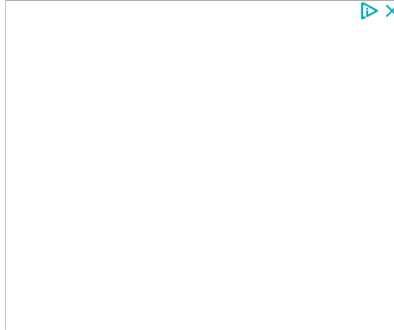
By JANAKI CHADHA
06/08/2020 08:03 PM EDT



Many of New York City's businesses welcomed their first sign of life Monday after the coronavirus shutdown, but the long-term damage wrought by months of closures is still impossible to tally.

Construction sites and manufacturing businesses will be able to continue their work under new guidelines, and retail stores will be permitted to reopen for in-store and curbside pick-up. Wholesale supply chain businesses, agriculture and landscaping will also be allowed to resume under the initial phase.

Advertisement



But business leaders say it's too soon to forecast how quickly or completely the city will rebound

"There's still plenty of shuttered storefronts where we just don't know yet," said Randy Peers, president and CEO of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, after touring commercial strips in the borough Monday. "I think we're going to get a better sense come 'phase two' how many businesses are ultimately going to come back and how many will stay shuttered."

The Department of Small Business Services estimates 16,000 retail businesses and 3,700 manufacturing businesses considered nonessential during the shutdown are slated to reopen. About 33,000 nonessential construction sites could resume operations, according to the Department of Buildings.

The shift will bring thousands of [New Yorkers back to work](#) after spending months confined to their homes. And while the first step of the reopening has been celebrated, it also comes on the heels of a fraught week for the city amid protests against police brutality, and business leaders say they've been troubled by social unrest and reports of looting.

"People were very excited and optimistic to an extent about the reopening," said Thomas Grech, president and CEO of the Queens Chamber of Commerce. "It's gone from more optimism to more anxiety than ever before ... I'm really hoping we're able to get back to some kind of normalcy."

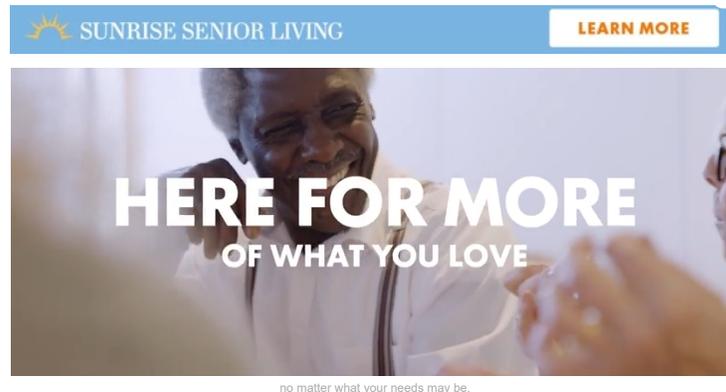
Under the second phase of the reopening, expected to begin in a few weeks, more of New York's crucial tourism economy will be allowed to reopen. Restaurants will be able to resume outdoor dining; clothing shops and bookstores will be able to resume in-store operations. Hair salons and barbershops will also be allowed to reopen.

That, many say, will give a better sense of how quickly the city's economy can recover.

"We're still waiting to see what retail is going to look like once we get to a true reopening," said Stuart Appelbaum, president of the Retail, Wholesale and

future will look like for them. Even before the pandemic, they were worried about having adequate hours, and now they don't know what the future will look like at all."

Advertisement



The Brooklyn Running Company, which sells running shoes and other sporting goods at Park Slope and Williamsburg locations, started doing online sales just as the pandemic hit, said co-owner Matthew Rosetti. While being able to ramp that up was a "godsend" during the shutdown, Rosetti said, revenue is still down around 80 percent compared with last year. Curbside pickup is not the most efficient way to sell merchandise, he added, but it's a way to connect with customers after months of not being able to do so.

"It's kind of clunky, but the way we look at it is it's just one step back towards normalcy," he said. "It's at least encouraging that there is some pent-up demand there, that there is some comfort level with people to get out and shop and interact again."

Some business leaders said incidents of looting over the past week amid protests against police killings have brought new anxieties to the reopening process.

"There was a lot of momentum and enthusiasm about the reopening, which was clearly tamped down, clearly affected by the looting and civil unrest of the past week," said Kathy Wylde, president and CEO of the Partnership for New York City. "Coming back to boarded-up stores and concerns about the return of lawlessness to the city kind of deflated some of the enthusiasm."

The reopening of many industries will also come up against the logistical challenges of social distancing.

Construction and real estate groups reached an agreement Sunday on safety protocols and methods to reduce density at construction sites. They include staggering start times and shifting work schedules, which would require more after-hours construction variances from the city.

"Especially on a larger site where you have hundreds of people, we know it can get very congested and can be tight quarters," said Gary LaBarbera, president

Labarbera said as many as 70 percent of unionized construction workers were out of work during the shutdown, but he's optimistic things will recover quickly.

For other sectors, even as they are allowed to reopen, they face ongoing uncertainty on how demand for goods and services will recover as parts of the economy experience longer-term damage.

"A huge amount of our woodworkers and metal workers are making items for commercial developments in Manhattan, but if there's no demand from hotels to upgrade, if there's no demand for office buildings to install new cabinetry, they're going to have fewer orders," said Leah Archibald, executive director at the Evergreen Exchange, a North Brooklyn organization that helps industrial businesses.

"Our local production is really linked to the local commercial business ecosystem," she said.

Huddle
A play-by-play preview of the day's congressional news

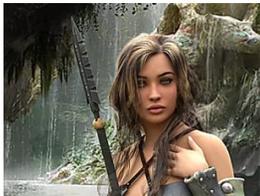
EMAIL
Your Email

INDUSTRY
Select Industry

SIGN UP

By signing up you agree to allow POLITICO to collect your user information and use it to better recommend content to you, send you email newsletters or updates from POLITICO, and share insights based on aggregated user information. You further agree to our privacy policy and terms of service. You can unsubscribe at any time and can contact us here. This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google Privacy Policy and Terms of Service apply.

SPONSORED CONTENT



You Can Do Anything You Want In This Game

RAID: Shadow Legends



Average Retirement Savings By Age: Are You Normal?

SmartAsset



2022 Audi Lineup Is Turning Heads

All Things Auto | Search ads



Kia - Brand New and Affordable

Car deals | Search ads



BMW Offers Major Incentives For Leftover 2022 Inventory

BMW Deals | Search Ads



- [About Us](#)
 - [Advertising](#)
 - [Breaking News Alerts](#)
 - [Careers](#)
 - [Credit Card Payments](#)
 - [Digital Edition](#)
 - [FAQ](#)
 - [Feedback](#)
 - [Headlines](#)
 - [Photos](#)
 - [POWERJobs](#)
 - [Press](#)
 - [Print Subscriptions](#)
 - [Request A Correction](#)
 - [Write For Us](#)
 - [RSS](#)
 - [Site Map](#)
-
- [Terms of Service](#)
 - [Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Do not sell my info](#)
 - [Notice to California Residents](#)

© 2023 POLITICO LLC