

CITY OF NEW YORK

May 18, 2020

Mayor Bill de Blasio
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio,

As we enter the third month of social distancing and the weather turns warmer, we must ensure that when New Yorkers go outside, they do so safely. This weekend saw reports of gatherings outside of liquor establishments on the Upper East Side, where some residents chose to flout liquor laws, remove face coverings, and ignore social distancing rules. We request that the city immediately grant temporary permission before Memorial Day Weekend for bars and restaurants to use sidewalks and streets to serve patrons safely for everyone's benefit.

This weekend it was widely reported that restaurants and bars on the Upper East Side serving alcohol to residents who were congregating outside the establishments without face coverings or respecting social distancing, putting essential workers, themselves, and those passing by at risk. Despite warnings and enforcement attempts by the NYPD there did not appear to be a change in behavior. Rather than rely on enforcement or fine individuals and small businesses that may already be hurting financially from the pandemic, we should adapt our city's streets to allow for and encourage safe practices. Without granting businesses a better option, we are afraid restaurants and bars may just take the risk and pay whatever violations may be issued as a cost of doing business rather than shutter their doors permanently.

The answer is to work with public health experts to allow restaurants and bars to set up seating, with proper barriers, in a sufficient number of parking spots in front of their establishment to reach as close to their previous capacity as possible, again while respecting social distancing. On streets with multiple restaurants and bars, with letters or resolutions in support from the local Community Board and/or Council Member, parking and lanes of traffic could be temporarily replaced with social distanced seating (provided a lane is preserved for emergency access). In all cases, hours for outdoor seating should be restricted from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Sundays.

Opening streets to social distancing sidewalk cafes is already being explored in Berkeley, California and Hoboken, New Jersey, and was proposed in April by Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

As an initial step, we are requesting immediate rollout prior to Memorial Day at the following locations on the Upper East Side:

- **Second Avenue** from 49th to 53rd Street, 55th to 58th Street, 66th to 70th Street, 73rd to 79th Street, and 81st to 92nd Street.
- **First Avenue** from 49th to East 64th Street, 68th Street to 69th Street, 73rd to 78th Street, 81st to 84th Street, and 87th to 89th Street.
- **York Avenue** from 75th to 79th Street and 84th to 86th Street.

In exchange for this space, participating businesses would be subject to strict enforcement to ensure safe social distancing and would be required to prohibit pick-up customers from congregating once available seating was used.

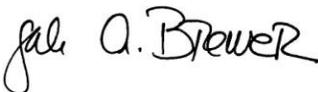
When the time comes that New York City can begin to reopen indoor food and drink establishments, we should do so initially with reduced capacity to ensure social distancing both inside and out.

We are all in this together. It is not working to confine New Yorkers to narrow sidewalks and rely on enforcement to prevent crowding. The best way to keep New Yorkers safe is to reorder our streets for social distancing.

Sincerely,



Ben Kallos
Council Member, District 5



Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President



Keith Powers
Council Member, District 4

Cc: Department of Transportation
New York Police Department