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Commentary/Op-Ed - June 2020

To help struggling small businesses, the city needs to reconsider its public spaces

CUF Executive Director Jonathan Bowles and Winston C. Fisher call on the city to think bigger about opportunities for outdoor commerce. Access to open streets, parks, markets and fairs could make the difference for hundreds if not thousands of New York entrepreneurs who have endured three months of business closures and are desperate for customers.

by Jonathan Bowles & Winston C. Fisher

As the city continues to move forward with its reopening plans, opening public spaces for commerce is one way to provide a lifeline for New York's ailing small businesses. In this op-ed for *Crain's New York*, CUF Executive Director Jonathan Bowles and Winston C. Fisher, co-chair of the New York City Regional Economic Development Council, urge Mayor de Blasio to go beyond opening sidewalks and portions of streets for restaurants and consider other ways of using public spaces to help struggling small businesses reach customers. The city should consider opening portions of city parks for cafes, food trucks, street vendors, artisans, and book sellers; reimagining the city's typically dull street fairs so that neighborhood retailers gain new opportunities to reach customers in the open air, and creating summer versions of the city's successful holiday markets.

You can read the op-ed here.

This op-ed is part of the Center for an Urban Future's Middle Class Jobs Project, and builds on the Center's extensive research on small businesses and its recent work on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including Supporting Small Businesses Through Coronavirus and recent virtual policy forum, "Bolstering Immigrant and Minority-Owned Small Businesses Impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic."

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