

NYC seeks to reinstate virus restrictions in some spots

October 5 2020, by Karen Matthews



Two young women walk with children during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, in the Borough Park neighborhood of New York. New York City's mayor says he has asked the state for permission to close schools and reinstate restrictions on nonessential businesses in several neighborhoods because of a resurgence of the coronavirus. Shutdowns would happen starting Wednesday in nine zip codes in the city, including Borough Park. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

New York City's mayor said Sunday that he has asked the state for permission to close schools and reinstate restrictions on nonessential businesses in several neighborhoods because of a resurgence of the coronavirus.

The action, if approved, would mark a disheartening retreat for a city that enjoyed a summer with less spread of the virus than most other parts of the country, and had only recently celebrated the return of students citywide to in-person learning in classrooms.

Shutdowns would happen starting Wednesday in nine ZIP codes in the city, Mayor Bill de Blasio said.

About 100 public schools and 200 [private schools](#) would have to close. Indoor dining, which just resumed a few days ago, would be suspended. Outdoor restaurant dining would shut down in the affected [neighborhoods](#) as well, and gyms would close.

Houses of worship would be allowed to remain open with existing restrictions in place, de Blasio said.

The mayor, a Democrat, said he was taking the action in an attempt to stop the virus from spreading deeper into the city and becoming a "second wave," like the one that killed more than 24,000 New Yorkers in the spring.

"We've learned over and over from this disease that it is important to act aggressively, and when the data tells us it's time for even the toughest and most rigorous actions we follow the data, we follow the science," de Blasio said.



A man walks with his family, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, in the Borough Park neighborhood of New York. New York City's mayor says he has asked the state for permission to close schools and reinstate restrictions on nonessential businesses in several neighborhoods because of a resurgence of the coronavirus in nine zip codes, including Borough Park. Pending the governor's approval, shutdowns would happen starting Wednesday. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

Over the past two weeks, the number of new cases of the virus has been rising in pockets of the city, predominantly in neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens that are home to the city's large Orthodox Jewish population.

Nearly 1,100 people have tested positive in Brooklyn in just the last four days, according to state figures.

De Blasio made the announcement shortly after Gov. Andrew Cuomo complained that local governments with [coronavirus](#) hot spots had "not done an effective job" of enforcing social distancing rules.

"If a local jurisdiction cannot or will not perform effective enforcement of violating entities, notify the state and we will close all business activity in the [hot spots](#) where the [local governments](#) cannot do compliance," Cuomo said.

Cuomo did not immediately comment on de Blasio's proposed shutdown in the areas where the virus is spiking.



An Ultra-Orthodox man and woman cross a street, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, in the Borough Park neighborhood of New York on the Jewish holiday of Sukkot. Over the past two weeks, the number of new cases of coronavirus has been rising in

pockets of the city, predominantly in neighborhoods in Queens and Brooklyn, including Borough Park, that are home to the city's large Orthodox Jewish population. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

As many as 500,000 people live in the neighborhoods affected by the proposed shutdown, de Blasio said. He said the lockdown could be lifted in 14 days or 28 days if the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 declines.

The coronavirus was estimated to have hit between 1 and 2 million people in New York City, mostly in the spring before testing was widely available. Thousands of people fell ill each day. By the summer's end, the city appeared to have the virus partly in check, averaging fewer than 240 new cases per day citywide as recently as Sept. 7.

Overall, the city's infection rate remains relatively low, with around 420 new cases a day over the past few days, but those have been concentrated in a handful of neighborhoods. The nine ZIP codes singled out by the mayor have been responsible for more than 20% of all new infections in the city over the past four weeks, though they represent only 7% of the population.



An ultra-Orthodox Jewish man and woman wheel strollers with sleeping children in them as they cross a street on the Jewish joldiay of Sukkot, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, in the Borough Park neighborhood of Brooklyn in New York. New York City's mayor said Sunday that he has asked the state for permission to close schools and reinstate restrictions on nonessential businesses in several neighborhoods, including Borough Park, because of a resurgence of the coronavirus. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

De Blasio had said in the past that public schools were largely unaffected by the rise in virus infections in Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods, but he said Sunday that [public schools](#) in the hot spot neighborhoods would be closed "out of an abundance of caution."

United Federation of Teachers President Michael Mulgrew praised the

decision. "This is the right decision, one that helps protect our schools, our neighborhoods, and ultimately our [city](#)," Mulgrew said Sunday.

The staff at Public School 164 in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn, one of the affected neighborhoods, sent a letter to de Blasio on Thursday demanding that the school be closed.

Teacher Frances Hidalgo said it was unrealistic to think the [school](#) would be immune from infection when students and staff interact with people in the neighborhood daily.



A woman walks with a child, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, through the Borough Park neighborhood of New York, one of nine zip codes to have recently seen a rise in cases of coronavirus. New York City's mayor said Sunday that he has asked the state for permission to close schools and reinstate restrictions on nonessential

businesses in several neighborhoods because of a resurgence of the coronavirus. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)



People line up to order take-out pizzas at L&B Spumoni Gardens, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, in the Brooklyn borough of New York. The restaurant's indoor dining is closed due to the limitations of serving at 25% capacity, and is also being renovated. But the large outdoor seating area was busy at dinner time Sunday. Since it's in a New York city zip code experiencing a rise in the number of coronavirus cases, the restaurant may be forced to close all but its takeout service and delivery service. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)



People dine outside at L&B Spumoni Gardens, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, in the Brooklyn borough of New York. The popular Brooklyn eatery is located in one of the Zip Codes that have seen a spike in coronavirus cases recently. New York's mayor said Sunday that he has asked the state for permission to close schools and reinstate restrictions on nonessential businesses in several neighborhoods, including that of Spumoni Gardens, because of a resurgence of the virus. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)



A woman adjusts her mask, right, as people wait in line to order pizza at L&B Spumoni Gardens in the Gravesend neighborhood of Brooklyn, and near the Bensonhurst neighborhood, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, in New York. The well-known Italian restaurant specializing in pizza and Italian ices attracts people from all over Brooklyn and is in a Zip Code that is experiencing a rise in coronavirus cases. L&B's indoor dining is currently closed, but if new restrictions proposed by New York's mayor go into place this week, the restaurant's outdoor seating area may have to be shut down. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)



Nora Feher, Sarah Howard, Mike Sternfeld and Annie Simon, from left, share a pizza while eating outdoors, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, at L&B Spumoni Gardens in the Brooklyn borough of New York. Feher and Sternfeld both work in the food service industry. The restaurant is in a Zip Code that has seen a spike in coronavirus cases recently. On Sunday, New York's mayor said he asked the state for permission to close schools and reinstate restrictions on nonessential businesses in several neighborhoods because of a resurgence of virus cases. Should restrictions be imposed, the restaurant may have to close its outdoor dining area and restrict itself to takeout and delivery only. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)



A customer waits for food he ordered at L&B Spumoni Gardens, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, in the Brooklyn borough of New York. The restaurant, located in a neighborhood where coronavirus cases are rising, may have to close down its outdoor seating area and restrict itself to takeout and delivery only if New York's mayor imposes restrictions he announced Sunday, pending approval by the state. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)



Bar owner Alejandra Benitez, left, chats with friends as she shares pizza with them while dining outdoors at L&B Spumoni Gardens, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, in the Brooklyn borough of New York. The restaurant is in a neighborhood that has seen a rise in coronavirus cases recently. New York's mayor said Sunday that he has asked the state for permission to close schools and reinstate restrictions on nonessential businesses in several neighborhoods, including this one, because of a resurgence of cases. If restrictions are imposed, the restaurant may be forced to shut down its outdoor dining and service takeout and delivery orders only. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)



People place orders at L&B Spumoni Gardens, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, in the Bensonhurst/Gravesend section of the Brooklyn borough of New York. The popular neighborhood pizzeria that is also famous for its Italian ices may be forced to close down its outdoor dining area after New York's mayor said Sunday that he has asked the state for permission to close schools and reinstate restrictions on nonessential businesses in several neighborhoods because of a resurgence of the coronavirus. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)



A woman waits in line at L&B Spumoni Gardens during the dinner hour, Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020, in the Bensonhurst/Gravesend section of the Brooklyn borough of New York. The popular Italian eatery, located in an area where coronavirus cases are rising, may be forced to close down its outdoor dining area this week if restrictions announced by New York's mayor Sunday go into place. Mayor Bill de Blasio said that he has asked the state for permission to close schools and reinstate restrictions on nonessential businesses in several New York neighborhoods, including this one, because of a resurgence of the coronavirus. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

Hidalgo, a fourth grade teacher, pointed to the high positivity rate in Borough Park. "We don't live in a bubble. We're part of the neighborhood," she said in a phone interview Saturday.

Cuomo allowed New York City restaurants to resume indoor dining starting on Sept. 30, but at only 25% of their seating capacity. Several friends in the restaurant business said Sunday that shutting down for a while might be better.

"It's going to be a hard winter," said Alejandra Benitez, who owns Beco Bar in a Brooklyn ZIP code affected by de Blasio's shutdown proposal. "But it's almost cheaper to close. It's just that people don't want to risk it."

Mike Sternfield, who was dining with Benitez and other friends outside L&B Spumoni Gardens in Brooklyn, agreed with her. "As a bartender, I don't think we should be going inside to eat and drink at all," Sternfield said. "But operating at 25% capacity isn't going to help anyone anyway."

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