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New Yorkers share their 'silver linings' during these tough times

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Times are tough in New York, but New Yorkers are even tougher. Though we're facing a lot of challenges right now, one way to get through it is to try to find a "silver lining." Here at 6sqft, we thought all of us in NYC could use some positivity, so we asked our fellow New Yorkers to share their personal silver linings. From 3D printing face masks to spending more time with family to stepping it up in the kitchen to witnessing communities coming together, here are some of the things that are providing some light in these dark times.

Helping hands

Bjarke Ingels, Founder and Creative Director, [BIG](#): One thing that we find intriguing out of this situation is the idea of distributed just-in-time manufacturing capabilities. In response to the acute and escalating need for PPE here in New York City, we had the possibility to mobilize our

3D printing and modelmaking capabilities to make nearly 5,000 face masks per week for the medical forces on the front lines at Mount Sinai Hospital and Weill Cornell Medicine. Just like computers went from business machines to PC's to handheld devices – the internet went from institutional to businesses and internet cafes to cable and wireless – and perhaps manufacturing is in the process to move from purpose-built factories to general capabilities and eventually to the maker hub on the block or the PF Personal Fabricator. Out of the massive urgency and shortcomings of the traditional provisions and supply chain during the COVID-19 outbreak, the silver lining here is perhaps in revealing the flexible making capacity that resides in so many places you don't normally associate with the manufacturing industry, like architecture and design studios. Our BIG NYC Model Shop has been spearheading our 3D printing efforts these past days, adapting the open-source face shield design by Erik Cederberg of 3DVerkstan to be optimized for high-volume print production. As with distributed computing, perhaps distributed manufacturing has potentials we haven't even thought of yet. The cloud of the material world – that allows instant and omnipresent translation from data to matter. [[You can download the public 3D print files here](#)]

Amanda Davis, Project Manager, [NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project](#): I'm really thankful that I've been able to turn my love of sewing into a way to help others during this pandemic. I've been sewing masks and surgical gowns for the medical community, as well as masks for my family. It's one way of staying connected to people as I stay inside, with the added benefit of keeping my mind active and focused!

Scott Weiner, founder of [Scott's Pizza Tours](#) and [Slice Out Hunger](#): I'm definitely exploring some things I'd never thought about in terms of reaching people via scheduled live video and things like that. Through the [Pizza vs. Pandemic](#) campaign, I've definitely seen that people are not interested in sitting back thinking they're useless they are stepping up and doing their part to help from home!

Photographers [James and Karla Murray](#): We have been documenting small, independently-owned businesses in NYC for well over 25 years, trying to help raise awareness of their necessity as they truly are the lifeblood of the various neighborhoods of New York City. We are proud to say that during the current state of emergency, many small businesses, including [East Village Pizza](#) and [Sauce Pizzeria](#) in our own neighborhood of the East Village, have stepped up to help support local hospital workers who are working overtime battling COVID-19 by donating free pizza to them. These pizzerias are asking the public to donate pies in their name and they will match every donation with an additional pie. We can't think of a better way of New Yorkers coming together during this difficult time.

Adam Henick, Co-Founder [Current Real Estate Advisors](#): There are so many ways to help right now and my team is sharing how people can make a difference, such as through contributions to organizations like [Invisible Hands](#), donating blood, or simply ordering from your favorite local restaurants and buying gift cards to support small business.

Jordan Brill, Partner, [Magnum Real Estate Group](#): It's beautiful and uplifting to watch so many people from many diverse backgrounds and life circumstances band together and offer help in any way they can... the 7pm collective cheer for our healthcare workers gives me goosebumps. It's emblematic of the heart and soul of this great city and proof that even a crisis of this magnitude won't kill our spirit. We have seen our residents collect PRP equipment, provide meals for building staff, raise money for local establishments, and volunteer their time delivering groceries to those who are at high risk.

Coming together

[Melissa Mark-Viverito](#), former NYC Council Speaker and current congressional candidate: COVID-19 has exposed what thousands of Bronxites already knew – we live in a country where systemic oppression made us vulnerable far before the coronavirus outbreak even happened. The silver lining here is that in exposing this reality, we are given the

opportunity to push for change that will create a more just and equitable society. We must seize this moment to finally pass Healthcare for All, a Green New Deal, and a Homes Guarantee.

Roger Clark, NY1 news reporter: I think the city as a whole has come together and realized there are a lot of our fellow New Yorkers we take for granted, essential workers who can't do their jobs remotely and are putting their lives on the line to take care of us during this pandemic.

Jessica Lappin, President, Alliance for Downtown New York: The last few weeks have certainly been difficult, yet we've really witnessed the resilience of Lower Manhattan. As a community, Downtowners have lived through our share of tragedies and crises, and every time I'm astounded by how quickly people in the neighborhood step up, come together and find new ways to support one another. This week alone we've seen firefighters applauding health-care workers, restaurants donating food, and individuals delivering goods for their most vulnerable neighbors. My silver lining is to see so clearly that we're part of such a strong community, one that knows that we are all in this together.

Elaine Masci, real estate agent with Halstead: As a real estate agent who grew up in Manhattan, I'm very well aware of the horrific living conditions many New Yorkers are subjected to. I believe that this virus has brought to the public's attention the dangerous realities people who live in public housing face daily. I can only hope that this pandemic forces Albany and the Mayor's hand to finally make fundamental changes in how these buildings are managed by holding NYCHA officials accountable for their inaction.

Elizabeth Goldstein, President, The Municipal Art Society of New York: I live on one of the streets that was closed to traffic... On Sunday morning, it connected with the local farmers market, stretched out way beyond normal to put great distance between the vendors and to set up orderly lines. I feel so delighted to see the vendors I, and my neighbors, rely on and to

hear they are alright. These are not friends, per se, but my regular interactions make them a part of my world and I worry for them. How is the economy treating them? Are their families okay? And like many of us, this quiet, what should be a normal transaction, suddenly takes on new meaning. It connects me even more tightly to this web of people and their businesses and their bravery for bringing me food every week, despite the changed life we are all living.

More time with loved ones

Eliza Blank, CEO and founder of [The Sill](#): My personal silver lining is more time with my family. Since we started working from home, I've been able to spend time with my daughter throughout the day, instead of just in the mornings and evenings. It's been such a treat to have lunch together and go on walks. I've already had to buy her new pants since we started staying at home because she's grown so tall — what a wild way to track the time!

Nick Gray, founder of [Museum Hack](#): They say pray for the couples who have never lived together before. Well, we're doing OK. My girlfriend is a second-grade special education teacher. I work remotely, and her classes are now online. We've never lived or worked together before. This experience has brought us closer together. I know that we'll come out of it stronger as a couple with a better understanding of each other.

Elana Friedman, Chief Marketing Officer, [AKA Hotel Residences](#): For me, the silver lining is spending more time with my kids and husband. When my kids were younger, my husband would make these outrageous breakfast dishes for them, which he has been able to start doing again with being home. We call it Daddy's Diner! I believe we will come out of this with an appreciation and understanding for each family member's "whole person," and that this will be a moment in time that families and communities will always share.

Michelle Young, founder of [Untapped New York](#): On a personal level, spending more time with my 2.5-year-old daughter Charlotte has been amazing (and challenging, of course). We laugh a

lot, have meltdowns, and laugh some more. I get to see her grow and learn new things every day in a much more intimate way, and the time I get to spend with her feels like a blessing in this strange and unprecedented time. I've also been playing cello and recording pieces to [post on social media](#), making use of the musical training I had as a child at Juilliard! I have daily Facetime calls with my parents and my 90-year-old grandmother who are hunkering down on Long Island (although my dad still works as a doctor out at the Stony Brook-area hospitals, which has its risks). I've caught up with friends I hadn't spoken to in a while, and I'm seeing heroic work by friends who work in the medical field. My close friend group of about 20 people does a weekly Sunday brunch over Google Hangout and text messages fly between us all day long.

Andrew Berman, Executive Director, [Village Preservation](#): I appreciate how much less crowded streets around Times Square are, which can sometimes be intolerably packed with people. Working from home and seeing more of my partner, who is of course now also working from home, is also a wonderful upside. Having plenty of time to binge watch TV shows and movies I have always wanted to see is an advantage, though I fear I may run out of those soon.

Warren Webster, CEO, [Atlas Obscura](#): Self-isolating in New York City isn't easy. Isolation flies in the face of many of the reasons we all live here. But there are silver linings. Despite not seeing each other in person, many of my most important, life-long relationships with friends and family have actually grown stronger. We're making an effort to talk or FaceTime and we value each others' virtual company. I'm also reacquainting myself with my kitchen — with mixed results!

Zack Elias, Rental Manager at [DJK Residential](#): I am enjoying spending time with my wife and daughter, and my colleagues and I are keeping in touch throughout the day by sending funny, positive messages to help keep our spirits high. That is important through all of this. Also, the morning coffee is just better at home.

Adam Meshberg, Founder and Principal of [Meshberg Group](#): This time has allowed my wife and me to parent mindfully, and the kids have developed a higher level of respect, while we've gained a level of control, which oftentimes isn't there as working parents. Normally, because our time is limited when we're with them, we give them what they want. We've had the chance to play teacher, friend while disciplining and teaching them even the simple acts of kindness this world needs.

Gabe Hernandez, principal at [Design Republic](#): A considerable silver lining I found in my personal life is reconnecting with my older siblings. We were never close for various reasons. Partly because of our age difference, and growing up relatively poor with parents who did their best in providing great family values but because of their multiple responsibilities could not teach my siblings to behave appropriately in our early years. Long story short, I was not close with them for many years; because of COVID I have felt the need to set aside our differences and reconnect because each day is too fragile and we are all vulnerable to this pandemic. We are setting aside our differences and actually want to reengage.

Taking time for ourselves

Jean Brownhill, founder of [Sweeten](#): In the past few weeks, I've been cooking for myself more than I ever have in my life. If there was a silver lining to this "stay-at-home" time is that I've gotten over whatever fear I had about cooking. My new favorite search term is "What's the replacement for XX?" I'm totally not precious about it anymore. No ricotta cheese while planning to make lasagne? No problem, farmers cheese works too. Life is precious, cooking isn't. After this is all over, I know I'll carry this attitude forward with me, and I'm thankful for that.

David West, Founding Partner of [Hill West Architects](#): Before the pandemic, my basement flooded, forcing us to gut the room. My very personal silver lining is that I'm able to use my craft—architecture—to rebuild the cellar any way that I want. For me, that's building

out a personal wine cellar. I'm grateful that I get to spend the time that I would have otherwise been commuting on a project that combines two of my passions, architecture and wine. Now, I'll get to enjoy the finished project much sooner than I otherwise would have (although if this lasts much longer, I may not have much wine left to stock it!).

Greg Young, co-founder of [The Bowery Boys](#): I live between a couple industrial areas of Brooklyn, places that are rather drab and uninteresting compared to the thousands of other truly amazing streets in New York City. During our shelter-in-place moment here, I've taken daily walks to clear my head, get some exercise, and walk my dog. These industrial areas have actually been ideal places for walks and I can stay away from possibly busier thoroughfares at this time. Some days I never see another person. And in walking these industrial blocks, I've realized that they aren't uninteresting at ALL. In fact, a routine block of two-story warehouses can sometimes give you an interesting view of New York City history — whether a converted older structure or even older signage that has survived over the year. You can also find places where urban life meets up with nature. In Red Hook, I saw a family of raccoons under a rusted old truck in an empty lot!

I know not all of us live by streets that are vacant. (Believe me, I've never considered this "fortunate" until now!) But I suspect if you plan your route, you can find less crowded streets if you want to get some open air. And if you do, DON'T RUSH! Appreciate the architecture and how the city has developed in your neighborhood. When we all get past this thing together, you might find that you appreciate the place where you live even more.

Paul Massey, CEO, [B6 Real Estate Advisors](#): My personal silver lining, aside from spending great time with my grown children who are all here with us, is that I've been able to focus on exercising (running and boxing) in a more disciplined and enjoyable way.

New business outlooks

Mark Stumer, Founding Principal of [Mojo Stumer](#): I have seen during this period how precious the human experience is, especially with my staff, and just how important the interaction of us

working together as a team truly is. I miss my staff just walking into my office and those wonderful interruptions. I will never again complain that I have no privacy in my office!

Michelle Young, founder of [Untapped New York](#): As for my work as the founder of Untapped New York, my husband who is the CEO and I are learning how to adapt quickly while working only half days each. In just a few weeks, I brushed up on video editing and learned how to record and edit podcasts as part of the virtual experiences we've added to our membership program, [Untapped New York Insiders](#). The challenges brought forth by coronavirus for our business also provided opportunities to do the initiatives that have long been on our to-do list, so in a way, I feel that I have achieved things despite being unable to explore New York City in the ways that I used to.

Andrew Berman, Executive Director, [Village Preservation](#): As non-essential construction and the land use review process in New York has been placed on pause, I've been able to spend more of my work time on research and writing, which is always deeply satisfying. I'm finally becoming well-versed in Zoom and hope that in the future more meetings will be done that way, saving us all time and money and cutting down on our carbon footprint from travel. That so much less fossil fuel is being used during this time is also an upside to the current terrible situation.

[Tom Cooper](#), real estate agent at [Compass](#): The biggest personal silver lining for me was being able to get a board interview and closing done via FaceTime and electronic document submission. The closing would have been impossible without the assertiveness and creativity of Richard Barentblatt of Guardhill Financial (he handled the mortgage for my buyers) and the Law Offices of Sam Eber, which represented my buyers in their purchase. It was proven that the often time-consuming and frequently logistically difficult consummation of a transaction can be done in a more streamlined, efficient way than the cumbersome way NYC transactions have

happened up until now. I hope this streamlined approach continues far beyond the end of the Coronavirus crisis, now that it's been proven it can be done.

Josh Schuster, Managing Principal of [Silverback Development](#): Having been displaced from our office and routines it quickly became apparent that our team was galvanized by the need to work together to create not only a remote office, but to move our projects forward with as little disruption as possible. These circumstances have led us to recognize and empathize with each team member in a manner that typically gets checked at the proverbial “office door” under normal circumstances. It has made us more sensitive to each other as people and, in some ways, forced us to be more efficient, and better communicators.