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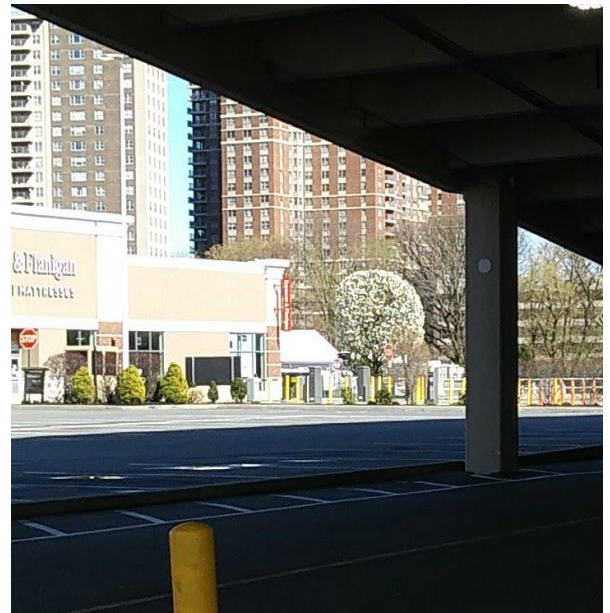
A window to Covid-19 efforts

I was an essential worker during the Covid-19 crisis, I work at one of the many chipotle locations in New York City, specifically in the Bay Plaza mall in Coop City, the Bronx. I am writing my narrative based on the view from the store I work at, I am also including some insights in how the mall dynamics changed as the virus progressed. Working through the pandemic gave me an inside view to all the changes that occurred in the city as the pandemic progressed. I did not have the privilege to stay indoors, even when I was not working I had to travel to Queens to give my mother groceries after she was diagnosed with Covid-19. During these commutes I saw the situation across different income areas in the city. New York city's income inequality is at the top of the nation and this can be noted to the extent in which people were able to attain self-quarantine and follow the instructions given by the governor. It is to be noted that the guidelines implemented by the government also impacted people very differently.

The store is located outside the main building in the corner next to a supermarket. There are floor to ceiling windows which give a view of the mall parking lot and some other stores. I spend an average of 25-30 hours a week at the store, so when this assignment came up it was easy to decide that it will be based on the view from those windows. First of all it used to be difficult to look outside the window while working, people would stand in line in front of the food and eat, the store had become common within Bay Plaza shoppers and Coop city residents. When the pandemic started the first steps taken at Chipotle were reducing the sitting space by taking out all the chairs and leaving only the seats mounted to the floor, then a 10 customer inside the store policy was implemented, this however did not work very well as no one was implementing the policy. When I came back to the store one day we had stopped letting people inside completely, all deliveries were meant to be hand in at the door. This has also been the

procedure for other restaurants that stayed open in the mall such as Olive Garden, Red Lobster, and Dallas BBQ. Most of the other stores had implemented curfews before the state mandated all non-essential stores to close. Only big restaurant franchises have stayed open, the K-mart and the Stop and Shop supermarket.

One day while going to work I saw that they had closed the AMC cinema parking lot and a state patrol was parked in the road going there. I knew that it must be something big because it wasn't NYPD or the mall security there, it was the state patrol. The day after that I saw that they had built the white tents, I asked co-workers if they had seen it and if they knew what it was, no one knew. Around a week after, I found out online that this new place was actually a Covid-19 drive-thru testing site. I feel like this was some information that we should have been aware of. I told coworkers about it, we all had the same feeling, what if the people who had just been tested order food online and we had to hand them the food? We felt more exposed than before, we never had a say or at least were warned about this. The state and the city chose the mall as a good place for a testing site, the population in coop city is over 40,000, it is close to major highways, and most Bronx residents know how to get to Bay Plaza. I think this connects to our urban science class because of how officials chose the place, they must have looked at transportation systems. The factors affecting the election for a Covid-19 testing site were not natural, they were all artificial, more specifically urban characteristics. Characteristics created by population growth, affordable housing (such as NYCHA), and highway systems made over the years as the city expanded.



As I was arriving to work another day I saw a lot of people in the Bank of America parking lot right in front of the store. Through the window I saw that there were 3 pop up tables with 1 person per table, that person had one person sitting in front, and a biohazard trash can next

to them. The people doing the test had complete PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), those in the line were wearing masks, some of them gloves. There were workers handing masks to those



in line who were being structured to stay 6ft apart while waiting for the antibody test. Something interesting is that while those in line were 6ft apart, the bystanders around where not keeping social distancing measurements, some were congregating in front our window and door. I asked those that were finishing the morning shift at what time the testing began, they say it was around 10am, it was 3pm. I quickly figured out this was part of the antibody testing campaign to count how much percent of the population had been exposed to the virus, even if they never showed symptoms.

This campaign was testing random samples of people outside supermarkets across the state. The view from the window that day was interesting as we could see how different people reacted differently to the testing site. I asked coworkers if any of them had been able to take the test, none of them had. Inside the store, while working there is no way to keep 6ft away from each other, I figured that if one of us tested positive all of us would too since we had not been allowed to use masks by then. I took this picture when I had my break at 5pm, by then the testing site was closing and they were not accepting anyone else in the line. That day no one in the store got tested.

The last thing I want to include from the view from the window at the store is that on Saturday (5/9) it snowed out of nowhere. Unfortunately the only picture I have from this has a curse word in it, I am adding it anyways because it creates emphasis on how weird it was. In this class we learned about how the city works, and its dynamics. While this last topic does not have to do directly with urban science I believe it is worth mentioning as it was an extremely weird event to happen in May. Climate change increased tremendously over the years with weird weather incidents happening more and more often. Some reports have shown that there has been a decrease in pollutants in the air worldwide since



the epidemic started. We all have seen the pictures of Venice with clear water, cities skylines with a clear view of the extent horizon thanks to the decrease of human activities. Daily commutes have decreased in NYC by millions, an MTA report states that its ridership has gone down 92% compared to last year. Factories that made non-essential items have closed, and so have the major distribution of things such as clothing from factories to stores. Should we implement a force lockdown to help alleviate climate change? Could the 2020 lockdown give us more time in the race to save the planet?