



Photograph: Madeleine Chan Stanley

## A 24-hour bouldering gym with a rooftop café and sauna is opening in Brooklyn

**It's a 45,000-square-foot climber's paradise.**

By [Shaye Weaver](#) Posted: Wednesday April 14 2021, 2:45 PM



A climber's paradise with an incredible rooftop café is about to open its doors in Brooklyn.

[VITAL Brooklyn](#) will launch its 24-hour bouldering gym inside a former warehouse in Greenpoint this May, bringing 45,000 square feet of tread walls, tension, kilter and campus climbing, hang boards, slacklines, and even other fitness equipment, from cardio machines and aerial silks to a yoga studio and more.

Founders David Sacher and Nam Phan are dedicated to climbing and bouldering, but they also want to create a community for fitness-minded folks by casting a wider net. That's why the gym is so much more than rock walls. There's a fully decked-out cycling studio with a great sound system, fitness classes, weight machines, full programs with instructors for those who want to do yoga, aerial silks or other types of exercise. The good news is that all of this is included with membership.

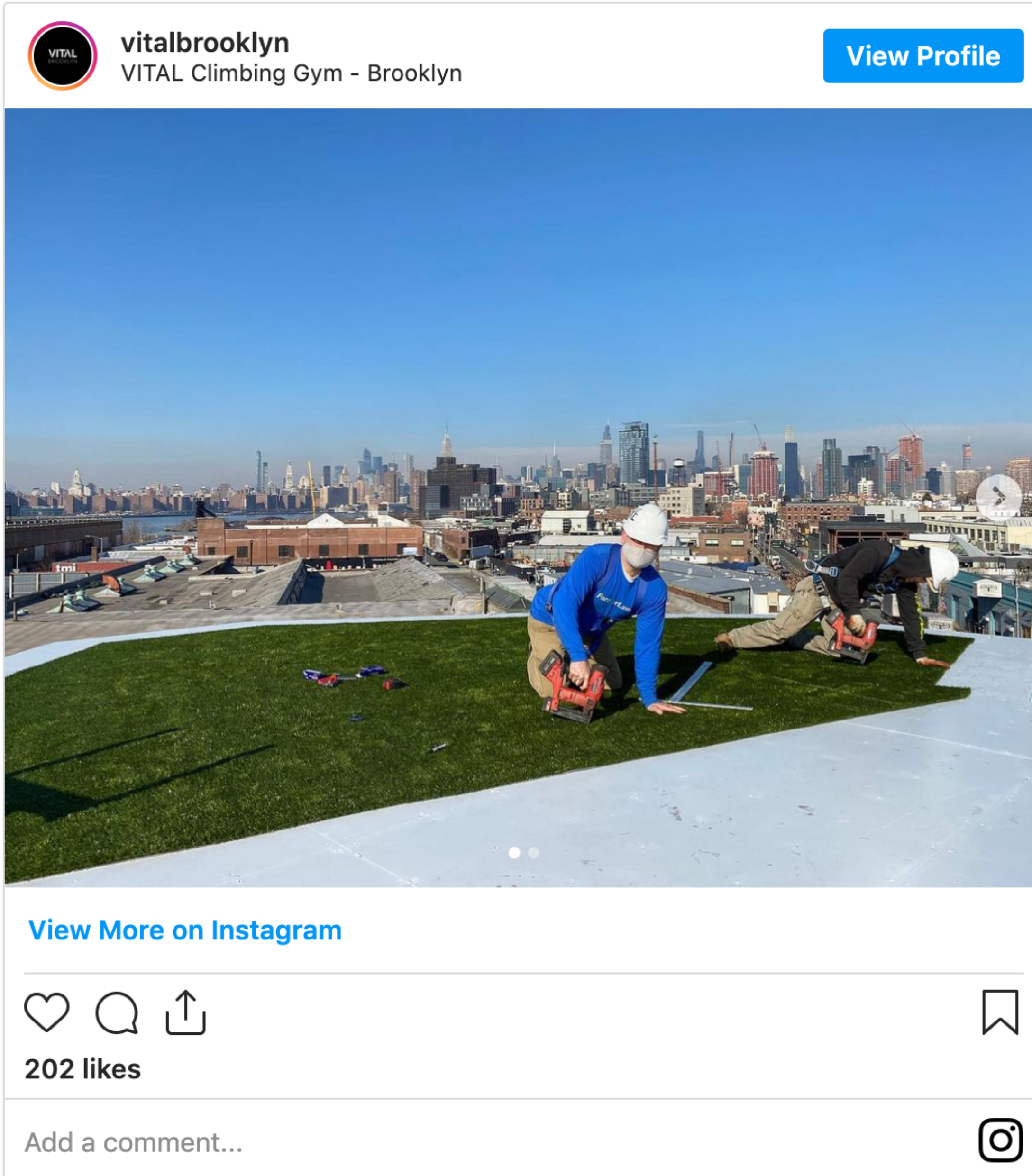


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The building itself, which is a gut-renovated historic warehouse built around 1910, is two floors with a top-floor yoga studio that opens onto a patio containing a fire pit and view of the city. The gym's stairwells have been painted vivid colors and there's a gorgeous black-ink mural of a NYC street scene on the second floor, while the rest of the building maintains the historic brick and architectural elements. But the real jewel in this climbing crown is the rooftop.

VITAL has made its rooftop weatherized and turfed so members can climb on it year-round, relax in a rooftop sauna and even grab a bite to eat from its café by Jason Baron, the co-owner of Lower East Side restaurant [Bonnie Vee](#). It'll be its own independent eatery called Refuge and will sell healthy meals like salads and wraps, but also calorie-packed comfort food like pizza and hamburgers. Members will also be able to order wine or beer and catch the sunset from there.

"We were really careful to make the most of the building," said co-owner David Sacher. "Every wall and every square foot is an opportunity when space is at a premium. The huge roof could have defaulted to air conditioning units and tar up there, but when I was climbing around up there before construction began, I could see the Manhattan skyline and Empire State Building. And while it was difficult to pull off, having this space is in line with our mission to make places people love."



Sacher and Nam Phan already have two VITAL locations, but they're all the way on the west coast in California and Washington, so this will be their first east coast adventure. They felt that of all the places they could open a new location, Brooklyn posed the perfect opportunity for expansion since its climbing community is well-established and passionate.

Before the duo moved here three years ago to set it up, they sent staffers to NYC to scout it out. When they connected with climbers out here, they found it's the exact same culture," Sacher said. "There were no barriers to get over."

The only difference is that maybe New York City climbers are even more passionate because there are no mountains nearby to climb, so it's a super niche activity.

That being said, VITAL is geared to attract not only experienced climbers but beginners, too.



Bouldering is actually the perfect way to get into climbing, Sacher said. It's how advanced climbers train for bigger mountains but it's also super approachable because you don't need to have a partner and you can try moves on your own easily.

"It allows advanced climbers to push the limits of what's possible in all climbing disciplines and allows beginners to walk up and get started," Sacher said.

The U.S. is currently experiencing a "Bouldering Boom." Forty-four new climbing gyms opened in the country in 2020, and of these gyms, 50% had bouldering as the prominent focus. And for the first time ever, sport climbing is going to be part of the Olympics when it takes place in Tokyo this year.



David Sacher and Nam Phan have been climbing since college when they were roommates, but it wasn't until Sacher went on a bike tour from the top of Alaska to the bottom of South America that the idea to open a climbing gym dawned upon him. He was so fond of the friends and memories he made while climbing and wanted to recreate that chill and positive atmosphere. Eventually after some fundraising, they opened their first (small) bouldering gym by the beach in Carlsbad, California. From there, they opened two more in California and another in Bellingham, Washington.

Brooklyn seemed like a natural extension.

"This neighborhood had both a fantastic demographic and there's so much to do," Sacher said. "It's such a beautiful city such a positive place."

*[VITAL Brooklyn](#) opens in May at 221 N 14th St, Brooklyn. Memberships are offered in three, six, and 12-month options and are on pre-sale right now, starting at \$360 for three months.*