



20 25

**ANNUAL
REPORT**



From the Co-Executive Directors

As advocates, sometimes it's hard to know what ideas will resonate with a larger audience. This year, our Low Traffic Neighborhoods (LTN) work was **the** big idea. Though simple and cost-effective to implement — at times only requiring merely flipping the direction of traffic or using diverters to allow access for walkers, bikers, and bus riders — LTNs make a profound impact on the livability of a residential neighborhood. Suddenly, people feel less stress. They walk places. Neighbors meet on a bench and talk in relative quiet. Kids and older adults feel a sense of ownership and ease, like the space is built with their needs in mind - because it is.

When we started talking to community members about Low Traffic Neighborhoods as a way to reduce driving, people would light up. The thought of eliminating the constant onslaught of cut-through traffic was incredibly appealing. To date, Open Plans has presented on LTNs to 12 community boards, with many community boards passing resolutions asking the Department of Transportation to study the effectiveness of LTNs in their neighborhoods. Elected officials are also getting in on the action with their letters of support. Even the DOT is studying LTNs. The enthusiasm is spreading.

Even though sometimes we don't know what will resonate with people, **our job as advocates is to help people envision a better future for our city and then fight to make that a reality.** Together, we are doing just that.

This LTN work is just one of our campaigns at Open Plans. Read on to get updates on all of our visionary work — from Reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), to Daylighting, to Outdoor Dining, to School Streets, to StreetopiaUWS and more — plus the award-winning reporting and inspiring visual storytelling from our friends at Streetsblog and Streetfilms. We at OpenPlans, Inc. will continue fighting for the city of our collective wildest dreams.

We're always grateful to be on this journey with you!

Lisa Orman
Co-Executive Director

Sara Lind
Co-Executive Director

Open Plans' mission is to promote a people-first street culture that prioritizes community, active mobility, and connection

We use grassroots advocacy and policy changes to help transform how people experience New York City's public spaces.

Hitting the brakes on unnecessary driving in New York City

In 2025, Open Plans released *Hit the Brakes: Understanding and Reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled in NYC*, a major new report examining how vehicle miles traveled (VMT) impacts daily life in New York City — from air and noise pollution, to cost of living, to the number of fatalities and serious injuries on our streets.

Grounded in extensive research and policy analysis, the report makes the case that **New York City must begin tracking and actively reducing unnecessary driving** in order to create neighborhoods that prioritize health, wellness, social cohesion, and environmental resilience. Without implementing tracking, setting explicit targets and enacting policies that provide carrots and sticks, the benefits from congestion pricing will disappear and congestion, and all of the attendant impacts, will climb.

The report highlights a stark trend: between 2005 and 2023, VMT in New York City increased by an estimated 16%. The surprising — or maybe not surprising — part is that **private vehicles account for roughly 80% of all driving, and are responsible for most of the growth in VMT**. While FHVs and freight are very visible on our streets — and have outsized impacts on curb use and idling — they actually make up much less VMT than many would expect.

While congestion pricing marked an important first step toward reducing excessive car use in one of the most public transit accessible regions in the US, the report argues that the city must go further by setting a bold target of reducing VMT by 40% by 2035.

To reach that goal, the report outlines a series of practical and achievable strategies, including:

- Investing in better alternatives to driving, such as true Bus Rapid Transit and a connected, protected micromobility network
- Reforming policies that encourage car dependency, including parking mandates and free parking
- Expanding initiatives that discourage unnecessary driving, such as congestion pricing, car-free zones, Limited Traffic Zones, and Low Traffic Neighborhoods

By centering data and concrete policies that would act as both rewards and punishments, this report asserts both the why and the how to reduce VMT in NYC. One of the report's key findings was that Low Traffic Neighborhoods offer a relatively fast and cost-effective way to reduce unnecessary driving while improving quality of life for residents. Our groundbreaking work on LTNs in NYC was directly informed by this research.

LTNs: a bold new way to prioritize neighborhoods



This year, we learned how quickly a movement can gather momentum when the underlying idea makes daily life better for New Yorkers. This idea came as a direct result of the deep research we conducted for our *Hit the Brakes* report on VMT.

Low Traffic Neighborhoods are designated areas where traffic reducing treatments are employed to quiet streets and reduce unnecessary driving and cut-through traffic, creating a calm experience for people within the area. LTNs have been used successfully around the world in a wide variety of street typologies, from more residential areas to business-oriented districts. Some LTNs use schools or other community-based institutions as an anchor for a central plaza block, creating a more connected feeling within the zone.

LTNs are used around the world, but the idea is brand new to NYC — and it wouldn't be here without Open Plans. Building on deep research our policy team did in 2024, **in 2025 we moved the conversation from theoretical ideas and educational events to a serious proposal backed by the DOT, Community Boards, and elected officials.**

We presented on LTNs to 10 elected officials, a community board round table, and 26 community boards across the city. We included LTNs in our agenda for the new Mayor and briefed design firms, including a briefing with Mike Flynn, who went on to become the new DOT Commissioner. Looking ahead, we will continue to educate and organize communities about the many benefits of LTNs, and we will continue to advocate for our goal of pilot LTNs in each borough.

📍 Diverting some traffic and creating small plazas makes it harder to drive through and prioritizes local use. *Photo of modal filter in Montreal by Clarence Eckerson Jr., LTN community event with 1014 featuring The Happy Urbanist, Jon Jon Wesolowski by Jamie Isaacs, and LTN presentation to WXY Architecture + Urban Design by Jackson Chabot.*

Daylighting: a groundswell of support still comes up short



Our daylighting campaign built broad, citywide support: from Community Boards to elected officials to everyday New Yorkers. The bill didn't cross the finish line in 2025, but the coalition we built isn't going anywhere. *Photos by Angel Mendoza, Michael Sutherland, and Jackson Chabot*

Despite not getting across the finish line, our Daylighting work continued to gain traction through a coordinated campaign that built steady momentum through legislative advocacy, public education, and community engagement. Our campaign focused on strengthening support for the policy at both the city and state level, while also making the case directly to communities and decision-makers about their role in improving street safety.

A major coordinated push in the spring, followed by an even larger push at the end of the year, helped bring broader visibility to the issue, reinforcing growing support among advocates and elected officials alike. Through this sustained effort, we continued to build a broad base of support and keep daylighting at the forefront of street safety conversations in NYC. While we didn't get the win we wanted in 2025, we set the stage for continued work in 2026.

In 2025, Open Plans' advocacy team did the work to advance Daylighting as a vital part of street safety in NYC. **We met with 100 elected officials to discuss the benefits of daylighting**, and we secured 23 additional sponsors for daylighting legislation in Albany and 32 in the New York City Council. **Our team presented to Community Boards across the city, with 23 passing supportive resolutions**, and hosted a webinar to support advocates preparing testimony. Ultimately, we supported testimony from over 100 advocates and 40+ written submissions at the City Council hearing. Open Plans also organized a rally on the steps of City Hall, attended by more than 130 people, and coordinated a citywide social media day of action.

Looking forward, we will continue to advocate for Daylighting and other measures that make NYC streets safer for everyone.



Helping school communities reimagine their streets

Open Plans helped bring streets to life for school communities across New York City — transforming streets outside schools into places for learning, play, and connection.


We worked side by side with 35 schools and community partners — guiding them through complex applications, troubleshooting challenges, and supporting on-the-ground activations that make School Streets vibrant and welcoming.

From first conversations with educators to streets filled with students and families, our team was there at every step, helping communities reimagine what their streets can be. This work reached a wide range of partners, from individual public schools to youth-serving organizations, all united by a shared goal: creating streets that young people feel connected to.

In 2025, we achieved an important milestone: we were awarded a competitive \$100,000 Community Placemaking Grant from Project for Public Spaces to help support City-As-School and M721's Open Street and create a more vibrant, welcoming public space for students and the community-at-large on Clarkson Street in Manhattan. With this grant, Open Plans conducted outreach

and engagement at numerous block parties, school visits, and through surveys, reaching hundreds of students, community members, and businesses. All of this community outreach identified the top needs for these schools: more community seating, shade, and ways to activate the School Street with less physical labor from the school staff. This August, we will be piloting a swing arm gate to make the street easier for the schools to open (and close to traffic) and a lovely Street Seat with seating and plantings, providing much needed community space for both the schools and the neighborhood. **This School Street is groundbreaking, as it will be the first in the city with this kind of infrastructure — we hope it will serve as a model that can be easily replicated around the city.**

As 2025 wrapped up, we had an opportunity to brief the incoming Mayor's team on school streets, and to encourage him to keep his campaign promise of universal School Streets. There's incredible momentum — created in no small part by our years of advocacy — and we will be pushing to make universal School Streets a reality.

 Photos of the Clarkson St. School Street by Camila Santander, Open Plans.





Building trust with BIDs and Merchant Associations

Across the city, a variety of groups do the critical work of maintaining, managing, and growing our public spaces. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and informal merchant groups are a key part of that ecosystem. Open Plans works with these groups to understand their public space needs, to help solve problems, and to share the tools needed to both activate their public spaces and plan for more permanent infrastructure and placemaking.

Over the past year, **our team conducted extensive visits, walkthroughs, and corridor audits across commercial districts in all five boroughs.** Our corridor engagement efforts also emphasized consistency and relationship building. On Austin Street in Forest Hills, for example, our team canvassed every business on the corridor three times. This sustained outreach helped establish trust among merchants and brought along even skeptical businesses for the inaugural Austin Day Community event, a day-long street fair that transformed the street from a congested space filled with double parking to a community-centered celebratory space. Across other neighborhoods, **our in-person audits and walkthroughs allowed us to document storefront needs, gather direct feedback from business owners related to commercial corridor improvements and outdoor dining opportunities, and brainstorm long-term goals for expanding and managing public space.**

Our team also participated in citywide events such as National Night Out. Across all of this work, we centered listening to merchants, identifying common needs, and ensuring that business communities had access to information, support, and pathways for placemaking.

 Photos by Cecil Brooks Jr., Open Plans



Outdoor Dining: the push for a permanent, year-round program

Outdoor dining work this year focused on shifting the conversation from a temporary pandemic-era program toward a permanent city-run program. Open Plans began the year by drawing attention to the fact that a seasonal program limits the months where New Yorkers could be enjoying a meal outside on a nice day.



📷 Photos by Angel Mendoza, Open Plans

We did this in true Open Plans style: by erecting a pop-up curbside dining spot on E. 7th Street, complete with seating, tables, and greenery, on a nice day in March before the season had officially started. Once we set it up, we watched the reactions: people walking by stopped to talk with us and ask to learn more (many of them not realizing that the program was seasonal) or folks sitting down with friends and just appreciating a place to drink their coffee. At this event, the Comptroller shared what was really at stake: the number of restaurants participating in outdoor dining was plummeting. And, instead of outdoor dining spots creating places where people can build community and support their local restaurants (and the city's coffers with taxes collected through food sales and the additional jobs related to outdoor dining), those spots sit idle with a single parked car, likely not even paying for parking.

What was the big reason for this plummet? We had our hunches, but we really dug in with our partners to learn more. The biggest reason: **the cost of breaking down and storing the dining sheds during the off-season is cost prohibitive for small businesses.**

The equity impacts were even more staggering than we thought — income inequality plays a huge role in which neighborhoods have access to curbside dining. **In 2025, 78% of restaurants that offered outdoor dining were located in neighborhoods where the annual mean income is above \$100,000. Only 2.2% of the city's outdoor dining was located in neighborhoods where the annual mean income is \$60,000 or lower.**



📷 Photos by Angel Mendoza, Open Plans

As the debate about the future of the program continued, throughout the year, we kept up our one-of-a-kind advocacy. In the fall, we launched the first-ever Curbside Restaurant Week, highlighting participating restaurants and demonstrating the continued demand for outdoor dining across the five boroughs. This was the single biggest media event in Open Plans' history — we were featured in Gothamist, CBS, and NBC, among others, cementing Open Plans as the organization working to fix the issues with Outdoor Dining. Throughout the year, our collective efforts laid important groundwork for advancing legislation to support year-round outdoor dining in New York City.

Looking forward, **we will continue to advocate for year-round curbside dining and a simplified application process.** These changes will lower the barrier to entry and financial burden of the program, so New Yorkers in neighborhoods across the city can enjoy access to dining al fresco.

Just one piece in the puzzle

Our partner and coalition work

The livable streets movement encompasses so much, and we know we're just one piece in the puzzle — which is why we value coalition work so deeply. In 2025, we continued to work closely with our coalition partners across the city to support their critical work.

Reducing driving is fundamental to our mission, so we joined coalitions like the Stop the Cross Bronx Expressway Expansion Coalition (with groups like the Bronx River Alliance, South Bronx Unite, and Nos Quedamos, as well as students and teachers from Fanny Lou Hamer Freedom High School), New Yorkers for Transportation Equity (working to pass a state VMT reduction bill) and the Brooklyn Queens Expressway (BQE) Coalition (demanding that solutions for the crumbling infrastructure reduce pollution, improve public health, and reconnect previously divided neighborhoods).

Giving people alternative ways to get around is necessary to get them out of the cars, so we joined a large coalition working to get true Bus Rapid Transit in neighborhoods around the city, and we continue to support Riders Alliance in their fight for expanded Fair Fares. Similarly, we are consistent supporters of Transportation Alternatives in their work to build out a fully connected and protected bike lane network, the NYC Greenways Coalition in their work to (finally) build out a full Greenways system throughout the city (and beyond), and Los Deliveristas in their work to provide a workplace that is safe, comfortable, and serves their riders' needs. And we're proud Steering Committee members of the New York State Safe Streets Coalition, participating in lobby days up in Albany and joining calls to action to make our streets safer for all users. It's an honor to join forces with all of these fellow advocates around the city and the state to help advance the movement for a livable city.

📷 Photos by Jackson Chabot, Adrian Cacho, and Emily Chingay, Open Plans



Open Plans' impact at a glance

4189

advocacy actions generated through campaign calls-to-action



130+

people rallied for daylighting at City Hall

40+

written testimonies submitted

100+

advocates coordinated for the City Council hearing

26

CBs presented to with 23 passing supportive resolutions



14

legislative offices met with during Albany Lobby Day

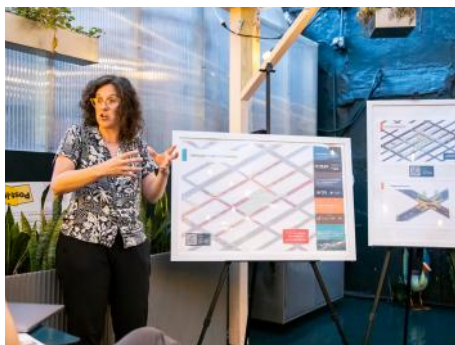
30+

business corridor visits and merchant engagements conducted across all five boroughs

35

schools and community-based organizations supported with School Streets





StreetopiaUWS

Our 2025 progress is best exemplified by our West 72nd Street campaign, a vision for a ‘Complete Street’ overhaul of this long neglected corridor.

In 2025, we deepened our stakeholder engagement and data collection to move this campaign ever closer to reality while working to ensure the ultimate project is as good as it can be.

To that end, we surveyed more than three dozen businesses about their operations, customers, and staff. We analyzed transportation data along the corridor to understand how people get to work and to shop. We observed more than one thousand pedestrians to gain insight into the social life of the sidewalks and public spaces on the street. And we conducted and issued a comprehensive Commercial Vehicle Parking and Loading Survey to identify hot spots of double parking and the overall scale of commercial vehicle activity, offering insights critical to the success of any future changes.

When the DOT released preliminary designs for the corridor, it was clear they weren’t bold

enough. Our vision and research pushed them to think bigger — a small delay in 2025 for an ultimately better project in the future. In other words, thoughtful and lasting change is on the way as a direct result of our tireless advocacy.

We also continued to champion livable streets and public spaces by defending the DOT’s Smart Curbs pilot and continuing to push for easy and frequent access for people riding bikes across Central Park.

We presented our campaigns to Community Boards 7 and 9, tabled at multiple Upper West Side events, and hosted a social hour attended by elected officials along with dozens of current and future advocates. The Upper West Side is that much closer to more livable streets as a result of the conversations we had, and the work we put in, in 2025.

 Illustration by Carl Mahaney, StreetopiaUWS






Streetfilms

Streetfilms celebrated its 20th anniversary this year, marking two decades of bringing the promise of people-centered streets to life through film.

The team continued that tradition with new international stories, including films on London’s Low Traffic Neighborhoods (LTNs) and Paris’s School Streets — clear, compelling examples of how cities can redesign streets to better serve communities.

2025 also marked the debut of “Ghent Kicked Out the Cars So You Can Walk, Bike, Live & Thrive in the City,” a new film about the host city for Velo-City 2024. This film has enjoyed widespread popularity and also serves as a follow-up to their 2019 piece about the city’s extensive network of biking infrastructure. These films reflect Streetfilms’ enduring ability to capture how thoughtfully designed public space can transform a community.

 Photos and stills by Clarence Eckerson Jr., Streetfilms



StreetsblogNYC

StreetsblogNYC, New York City's premiere transportation news source, has experienced an explosion in growth in the last year after hiring its first dedicated Engagement Editor to expand video and social media output.

Streetsblog's Instagram following has grown six-fold from 600 to 4,700 followers, with 1.7 million views on their most watched video. Follower counts have similarly skyrocketed on BlueSky, TikTok, and Youtube. This coverage shapes what appears in the mainstream press more than ever before as StreetsblogNYC's work has been featured on The Daily Show and This American Life, along with widely read publications like the New Yorker and New York Times.

Streetsblog had a powerful year covering New York's transportation and livable streets landscape, tracking the policies, politics, and enforcement actions shaping how the city's streets are used and managed. The newsroom continued to deliver a mix of daily reporting and investigative work while also receiving accolades for its journalism.

Highlights from 2025 include Streetsblog's coverage of the Congestion Pricing rollout and the public response, including early impacts on noise, air quality, and vehicle miles traveled. They also published groundbreaking investigative

reporting on "The Moped King" (co-publishead with Curbed). Their extensive coverage of NYPD enforcement actions targeting e-bike riders and corruption within the Adams administration tied to transportation and safety decisions helped keep New Yorkers informed. And they launched Streetsblog Empire State to expand coverage of Albany and upstate liveable streets issues.

Additional milestones from 2025 include:

- The video team received a Deadline Club award, beating ABC News (national) and Newsday
- Reporter Sophia Lebowitz and Editor Gersh Kuntzman received a Silurians award for their investigation into the cottage industry surrounding fake chaplains and parking placard abuse
- Overall website growth has grown significantly with 1.5 million visits in 2025 — this is an increase of 26.41%. Newsletter subscribers have grown 140% over the last year from 3,500 to 8,550





StreetsblogUSA

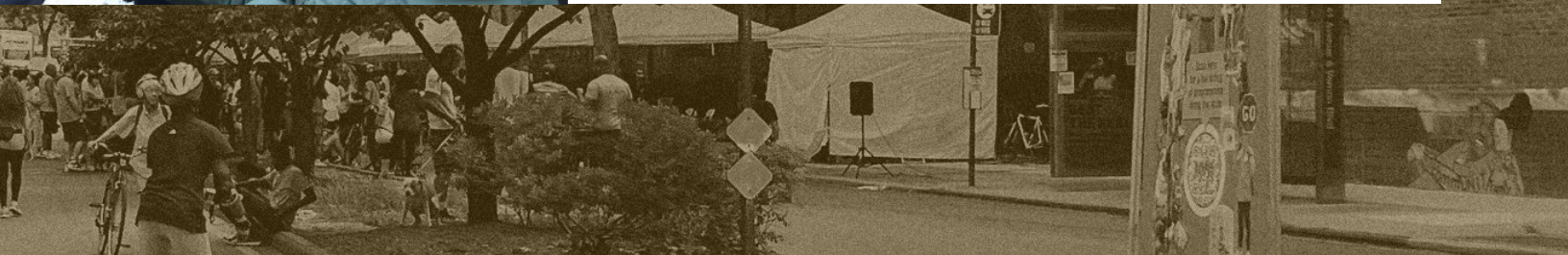
StreetsblogUSA worked hard to expand its legacy as one of the oldest, most respected, and widely-cited sources for daily news and analysis about urbanism, livable streets, and the movement to end mass car dependency in America.

In its federal coverage, StreetsblogUSA tracked the tumultuous first year of the second Trump administration, and helped advocates weather a tsunami of attacks on livable streets grants and policies — and rallied them around opportunities to fight back.

At the state and local level, StreetsblogUSA empowered readers with the knowledge, strategies, and inspiration to make transformative change on their community's streets.

And throughout, they delivered thoughtful analysis about American transportation culture that readers won't find anywhere else, like viral think pieces on Secretary Duffy's "Great American Road Trip" challenge, how deadly e-motos are threatening the e-bike revolution, and the secret history of the rails to trails movement.

📷 Photos and stills from StreetsblogNYC





Public Space Awards

In 2025, Open Plans brought together neighborhood stewards, advocates, artists, and city leaders for our third annual Public Space Awards, Open Plans’ annual fundraising event and a joyful celebration of the people and places shaping public life across New York City. With heartfelt tributes, thoughtful conversation, and a room full of joy and connection, the evening reflected the very values the Awards were created to honor: civic pride, grassroots leadership, and the power of public space to strengthen communities.

📷 Photos by Anna Zimmer and Camila Santander, Open Plans





Awardees for Open Plans' 3rd Annual Public Space Awards

528 Bea Fuller Rodgers School
Most Inspiring School Street

Rosa Chang
Community Advocate Award

Christine Berthet
City Visionary Award



Avenue C Plaza (Kensington)
Creativity and Care Award

31st Avenue Open Street Collective
People's Choice Award
Best Public Space Activator

People's Choice Award Nominees

The Downtown Jamaica Partnership
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	Poul Price	Sarah Sachs	Kevin Smith	Marissa Valley	
	Keondra Prier		Cynthia Snow		
	Project for Public Spaces		Sebastian Solomon		
	Robert Prouse				

Financials

Momentum and enthusiasm for a more people-centered New York City was palpable this year — we celebrated the start of Congestion Pricing and the resulting improvements to air quality, congestion, and quality of life. Thousands of New Yorkers gathered and recreated in Summer Streets and Open Streets, and enjoyed dining al fresco at our popular Curbside Restaurant Week. This spirit was also reflected in the continued growth of our development efforts. We ended 2025 with a 19% increase in unique donors, including 100% participation from our Board of Directors and a 62% increase in the number of gifts made to support the organization. As our fundraising program and events calendar continue to grow, we'll look to build on the relationships we've made this year and connect with the many more New Yorkers who yearn for a more livable city but haven't yet joined our mission!

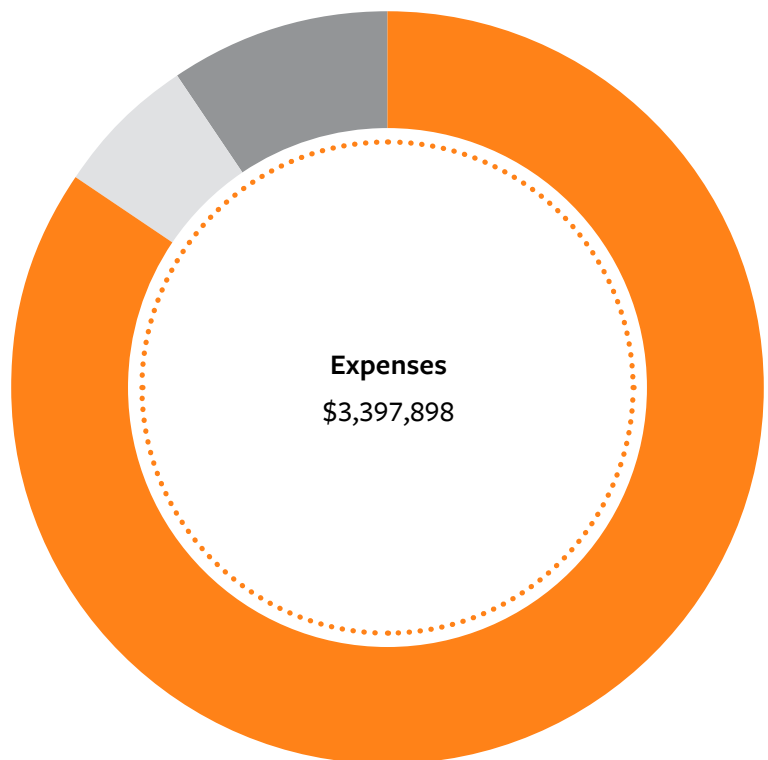
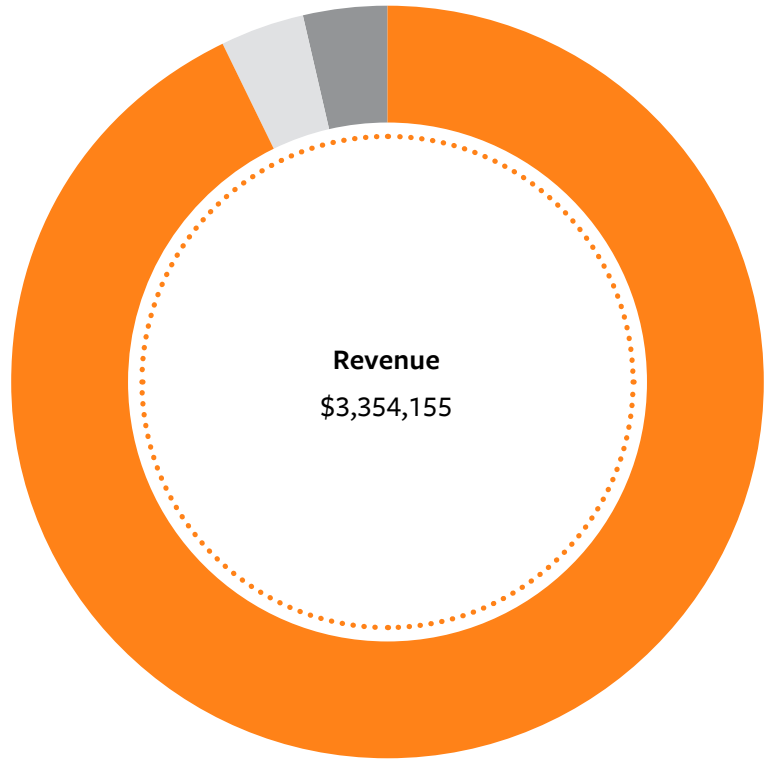
Revenue

- Contributions & grants 93%
- Investment Returns 3.5%
- In-kind contributions 3.5%

Expenses

- Program 85%
- Management & General 9%
- Fundraising 6%

To see a full financial statement for 2025, please visit openplans.org/about



Support Open Plans

Since 2000, Open Plans has been helping New Yorkers envision — and realize — a more people-centered city. On the steps of City Hall, we advocate for policy changes that prioritize community needs, active mobility, and connection. On the ground in our neighborhoods, we urge communities to dream big about their streets, sidewalks, plazas, and parklets.

This people-first approach includes dismantling car culture and providing alternatives for travel that are healthier for people and the planet. We use grassroots advocacy, policy, and legislation to help transform how people experience New York City's public spaces.

When you support Open Plans, you are helping inspire transformative change! Your support allows this dedicated and ambitious team to stay nimble while fiercely pursuing outcomes that will make New York City a better place to live, work, and play.

To donate, please visit openplans.org/support.



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Lisa Orman,
Co-Executive Director

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Adrian Cacho,
Senior Organizer

Jackson Chabot,
*Director of Advocacy and
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Austin Jefferson,
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SUMMER INTERNS

**Open Plans Livable
Streets**

Laila Abed,
*Columbia University, Urban
Studies undergraduate
program*

Andrew Leung,
*Pratt Institute, Urban
and Community Planning
graduate program*

Talisha Ward,
*Pratt Institute, Placemaking
and Management graduate
program*

Open Plans Engagement

Naasir Bonilla,
*Fannie Lou Hamer High
School*

Natasha Herman,
*Brooklyn College
Urban Sustainability
undergraduate program*

Tommy Richards,
*Brooklyn College
Urban Sustainability
undergraduate program*

Alex Rodriguez,
*Fannie Lou Hamer High
School*

Streetsblog

Jack Guan,
StreetsblogUSA intern

Maya Landau,
Rudolf Steiner High School

Yoshi Omi-Jarett,
*NYU Wagner, Urban
Planning graduate program*

Matthew Sage,
Tufts University

Ilan Cardenas-Silverstein,
*Post Grad Social Video
Intern*

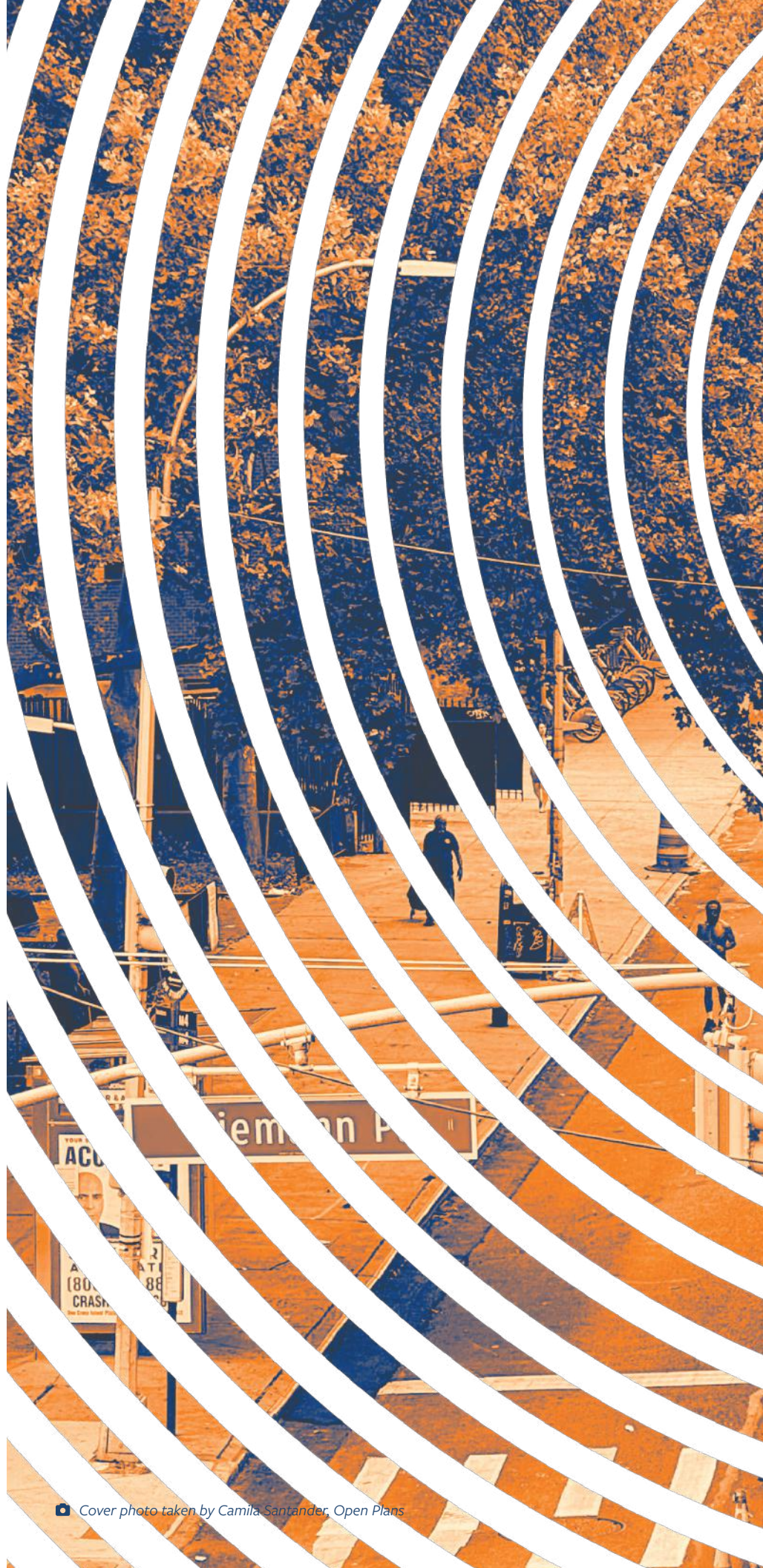


Open Plans

www.openplans.org

Open Plans' mission is to promote a people-first street culture that prioritizes community, active mobility, and connection.

We use grassroots advocacy and policy changes to help transform how people experience New York City's public spaces.



 Cover photo taken by Camila Santander, Open Plans