



2021 Annual Report
Open Plans

From our Chief Operating Officer

Lisa Orman



In so many ways, 2021 was defined by *growth* for Open Plans, StreetopiaUWS, Streetsblog, and Streetfilms.

Our work became stronger, more ambitious, more focused, and distinct. As the city was continually challenged by changing rules and policies, we pivoted. Pandemic-era programs like Open Streets and Open Restaurants were iterating and growing, political leaders were preparing to leave office, and new prospective candidates jockeyed for support. Amidst this shifting landscape, we seized opportunity, honed our competitive edge, and helped build a successful future for our organization and the city itself.

The pandemic inspired a newfound spirit of experimentation in the city, and Open Plans responded to that moment with curiosity and inventiveness. Prohibitions on indoor gatherings persisted throughout 2021, so we engaged with New Yorkers on their streets. At large outdoor events, we met neighbors, asked big questions and proposed bold solutions. We set out to inspire New Yorkers - sometimes for the very first time - to envision a better future for their streets and public spaces. Part workshop, part block party, these cultural events had high impact. They planted seeds that pushed the vision of what's possible on our streets. We provided tactical support to communities, too. In Chelsea, we built and installed curbside trash corrals, which planted the seed for our city's first trash containerization pilot. Uptown on West 103rd, we helped residents envision and produce a proposal that served as the catalyst for a street redesign by DOT, the first and only of its kind in Manhattan. This hands-on, community-based work propelled a feedback loop unique to Open Plans.

We used what we learned in communities to build strategies rooted in needs and realities. Visioning exercises helped us identify real problems and the solutions needed to fix them; incisive op-eds brought awareness to the issue; legislative advocacy cemented real change. Each new victory allowed us to envision new, even more aspirational goals.



Open Plans grew at the staff level, too. We hired key positions that allowed us to set our sights higher than ever before. We hired the organization's first-ever communications strategist and policy director; StreetopiaUWS finished the year with a new director as well. Streetsblog hired an investigative reporter who won the blog a journalism award. This investment in new full-time roles strengthened our foundation, bolstered our citywide impact, and allowed our teams to better plan ahead and strategize.

Working in this environment was at times extremely challenging. The pandemic continued to paralyze parts of city government and the shifting mayoral administration and City Council made it difficult to make real headway on bold initiatives. Despite these challenges, Open Plans worked hard, learned lessons, built relationships, and devised processes that have built a base for future progress.

We can feel that our strategy is working and our impact on the city is continuing to grow. The visible changes on the streets are heartening, and the public's understanding of the possibilities of our streets has greatly expanded. Struggles remain, but we'll continue to meet them with energy and innovation.

Streetsblog New York

2021 was the most deadly year on New York City's streets since 2013 and Streetsblog New York doggedly reported the issue from all angles.

Articles throughout the year tracked the mounting deaths and injuries, explored the cultural and design conditions that allow such violence to proliferate, and exposed the city agencies' and lawmakers' inaction in the face of a known public health crisis.

Challenging bad actors while fighting for the safety and dignity of pedestrians and cyclists, Streetsblog consistently exposed the horrifying status quo of the city's deference to cars and drivers. Reporters also covered the state legislature's failure to enact crucial, life-saving bills related to street safety, including the eight-bill Crash Victims Rights and Safety Act package.

Streetsblog also zeroed in on NYPD, and specific individuals, harassing bicyclists, especially hard-working delivery workers. Coverage positions the issues as a longstanding culture of incompetence and disrespect toward cyclists in favor of car drivers.

NYPD corruption was another breakout topic in 2021. Streetsblog reporter Jesse Coburn broke the story that calls made to 311, the citizen complaint service, were routinely ignored and marked complete with no action taken. Reports about illegal parking, dangerous driving, blocked bike lanes and more were often marked resolved without any action by the NYPD. What's worse, NYPD members were found to actually harass New Yorkers who had made reports through 311. Coburn's story "Ignored, Dismissed: How the NYPD Neglects 311 Complaints about Driving Misconduct" was given a merit award by the Silurian Press, one of only two prizes for investigative journalism given that year. What's more, the piece catalyzed an ongoing probe of the issue by the Department of Investigation.

Once again in 2021, Streetsblog New York proved its preeminence and influence. Read by urbanists, advocates, City Hall insiders, and every day New Yorkers, the blog helped shape public opinion and push local leaders to be better.

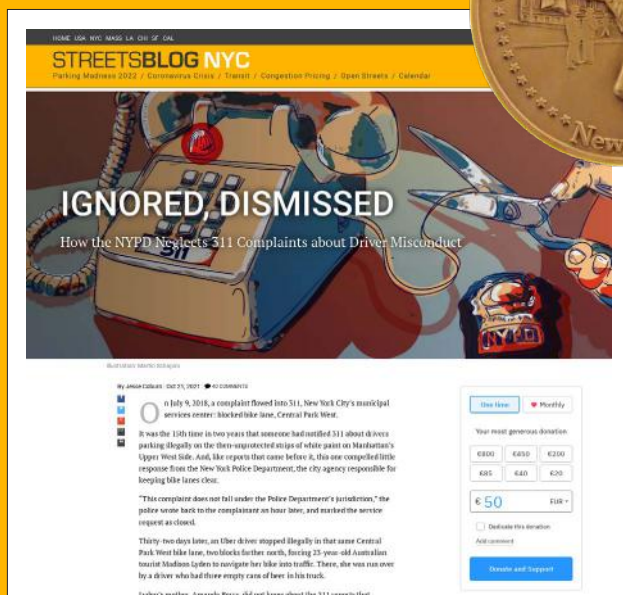
3,000,000
page views in 2021

~1,500
number of stories in 2021

30,000
views in 2021's most read story

Courtesy, Professional and Disrespect - NYPD Tickets E-Bike Riders for Legally Following Pedestrian Signal

November 15, 2021
by Julianne Cuba



HOME USA NY NYHWS LA CHI SF GAK

STREETS BLOG NYC
Parking Madness 2021 / Commuter Strugg / Transit / Congestion Pricing / Open Streets / Calendar

IGNORED, DISMISSED

How the NYPD Neglects 311 Complaints about Driver Misconduct

Illustration: [MARTIN BISHOP](#)

By Jesse Coburn Oct 21, 2021 40 comments

In July 9, 2018, a complaint flowed into 311, New York City's municipal services center: blocked bike lanes, Central Park West.

It was the 15th time in two years that someone had notified 311 about a driver parking illegally on the then-restricted strips of white paint on Manhattan's Upper West Side. And, like regular time cases before it, this one compelled little response from the New York Police Department, the city agency responsible for keeping bike lanes clear.

"This complaint does not fall under the Police Department's jurisdiction," the police wrote back to the complainant an hour later, and marked the service request archived.

Thirty-two days later, an Uber driver stopped illegally in that same Central Park West bike lane, too blocked for her own, forcing 22-year-old Australian tourist Madison Lyders to navigate her bike into traffic. There, she was run over by a driver who had three empty cars of beer in his trunk.

Lyders's mother, Amanda Reiss, did not know about the 311 reports that

Year most generous donation:

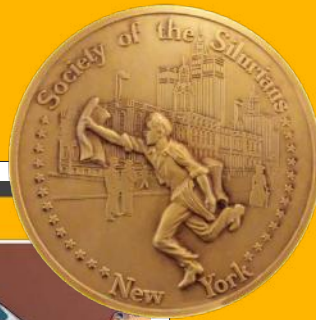
€500	€400	€200
€30	€40	€20

€ 50 EUR

Deductible this donation

Add comment

Donate and Support



"Ignored, Dismissed: How the NYPD Neglects 311 Complaints about Driving Misconduct" by Jesse Coburn is a merit award recipient of the Silurian Press for 2021.

Streetfilms

For Clarence Eckerson, Streetfilms' intrepid Director of Video Production, 2021 was a year spent transitioning from full pandemic lockdown to a return to more mobility and travel.

Clarence ventured to several cities outside of New York, in search of thriving street culture, bike infrastructure and public space. In Montreal, Clarence showcased the city's latest bike lanes, including the Réseau express vélo (or REV). The 184-kilometer bike network connects points across Montreal and mirrors a similar amenity in Paris. In DC, Clarence attended a bike summit with the The League of American Bicyclists and made a video celebrating the many diverse ways cyclists are planned for and protected in our nation's capital.

Back in New York, Clarence traveled the five boroughs to celebrate community and public space. He published videos on the thriving continuation of Open Streets and Open Restaurants, celebrated new bike infrastructure, biked around with candidates in the upcoming city election and interviewed stars from the thriving #bikenyc Twitter community. Streetfilms was on hand to celebrate a new Union Square street mural installed on 14th Street between Broadway and 4th Avenue. Designed by Gera

Lozano, painting the mural was a collective effort by members of the local community, the Union Square Partnership, and Streets Plans, a design and planning practice. The vibrant mural is one piece of a robust plan to redesign the streets around Union Square to calm traffic, improve bus service, and protect micromobility users.

Clarence also produced a series of bike count videos, documenting ridership on 1st and 2nd Avenues in Manhattan, and Kent Avenue in Brooklyn. The video compellingly demonstrates the popularity of these corridors for bikers and the desperate need for more and wider bike lanes.

In every video Clarence produced with Streetfilms in 2021, he brought his unique energy, boundless curiosity and joy for the people and places of New York City. His work celebrates the present and pushes the envelope for what's possible in the future.

~1,000,000

total Youtube plays in 2021

Films with over 1 million views in 2021: Utrecht and Groningen

52

videos produced

(and many more clips, outtakes, etc.)

5970

Youtube subscribers



Open Streets in Montreal, 2021,
teeming with life and people out and
about captured by Streetfilms.

StreetopiaUWS

Upper West Side Open Streets were fruitful venues for Streetopia’s engagement in 2021 and the local elections took centerstage.

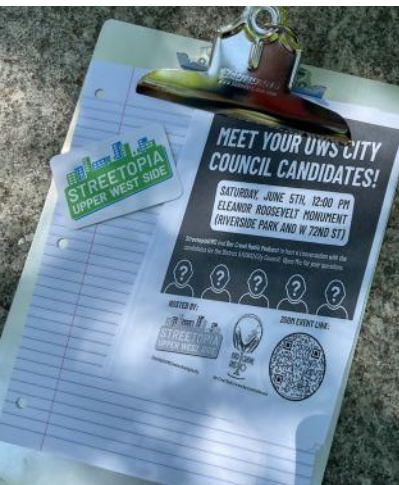


We hosted several outdoor events throughout the year that focused on voter education and empowerment. Engagement tools, like vision boards and question prompts, helped New Yorkers share their visions for the streets,

sidewalks and other public space in their neighborhoods; a Candidate Question Guide, co-branded with friends at the midtown advocacy group CHEKPEDS, helped local voters understand where candidates stood on livability and public space issues. Streetopia even hosted several events directly with political candidates, including walking and biking tours, a podcast (recorded at 72nd and Riverside, with Eleanor Roosevelt watching), and question sessions inviting Open Streets attendees to ask questions of candidates.



StreetopiaUWS hosted a podcast together with Bar Crawl Radio featuring Q&A sessions with candidates helping voters understand where they stood on issues regarding livability.



▲
On Top: Children plant flowers on a sidewalk strip during #StreetArts2021, an event hosted by StreetopiaUWS.



On the West 103rd Open Street specifically, Streetopia events focused on advancing Park to Park103, a vision to transform and expand the 103rd Open Street into a park-to-park people-centered corridor for pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users, and more. One event drew 100s of attendees with live musical and arts performances. And it wasn't all fun and games - this event in particular provided crucial research data for our Summer of Play report, which gave recommendations to the city on how to activate more public spaces.

In many ways, StreetopiaUWS's 2021 work set the stage for greater progress in coming years. The community connections made this year will be invaluable to our team as we remain steadfast and enthusiastic about making change in our Upper West Side neighborhood.



Musicians and local residents got the children and the neighborhood in the groove for Make Music NY in June 2021.



▶ ▶
In May 2021, Upper West Side residents and StreetopiaUWS volunteers engaged District 6 candidates in a walking tour around the neighborhood.



Open Plans



In many ways, Open Plans spent 2021 laying the groundwork for future growth and strategy. Not only did the team itself grow in size, but the scope and ambitions of the organization grew as well. Each area was connected to the others; direct action on Open Streets informed policy agendas which, in turn, informed advocacy strategy. The result was an interconnected, multifaceted, and interdisciplinary approach to creating substantive change.



▲
The Open Plans Team together with CHEKPEDS build trash corrals in Hells Kitchen. July 2021

Advocacy Momentum

Fall of 2021 was a turbulent time in New York City, as the Mayoral administration and the majority of the City Council prepared to turn over. Open Plans used this opportunity to pursue new relationships with incoming decision makers and strengthen our visibility among local leaders and agencies. Ahead of the November election, Open Plans met with nearly every Mayoral candidate. We stressed the importance of public space as a public health issue, highlighted some of the areas of opportunity, and detailed our vision for iterating on the energy and innovation created by early pandemic solutions. In some cases, our advocacy had a direct impact; candidate Maya Wiley

included our public space ideas in her Community First Action Plan.

We reached people on the streets, too. Open Plans partnered with Chelsea/Hell's Kitchen neighborhood advocacy group CHEKPEDS and Doug Gordon (@BrooklynSpoke) on a tactical urbanism project. We created a makeshift trash corral as a solution to the disorganized, unsightly and pedestrian-unfriendly mounds of trash bags on the sidewalk. The result was a sternly worded letter from the city - and a new pilot program for trash containerization in select locations across the city.



In July, the Vanderbilt Avenue Open Street in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn got a splash of color thanks to a mural entitled “Carpet Collage.” The patterns drew inspiration from different cultures, ranging from the American Southwest to European designs.

Running one block between Bergen and Dean streets, the mural was painted by Brooklynite Cara Lynch as part of the Department of Transportation’s “Asphalt Art Activations,” which hired artists to paint large-scale murals to enliven and beautify pedestrianized spaces.

Public Space Management

Our Public Space Management campaign got a boost from pandemic innovation, as the Open Streets, Open Restaurants and Open Culture programs showed New Yorkers what we already knew - that streets can be powerful places for community, culture, health and safety. As these programs entered their second year in 2021, we helped build on their success and envision the next phase.

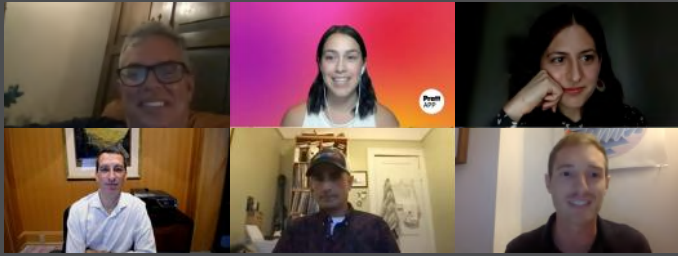
Open Plans worked with OpenCultureWORKS to ensure that the Open Culture program, which brought live cultural performances to open spaces, was accessible for communities across the city. OpenCultureWORKS produced nearly 100 events that connected artists, arts groups, and cultural organizations with streets, parks, plazas and other public spaces. We used that hands-on experience to produce a concluding report that

we presented to local officials. The report shared our perspective of the program's challenges, strengths and opportunities for the future. We made a number of recommendations to city officials to help make Open Culture's future years a further success. It was another great example of how our on-the-ground work informed and catalyzed political advocacy.

We also created opportunities to reach the general public more directly. Two panel discussions, "Managing Streets as Places" and "The Future of Streets", connected New Yorkers with like-minded urbanists and leaders in the field. "Managing Streets as Places" was held in collaboration with the Association of Pratt Placemakers and intended for the general public as well as Open Streets operators.

▼
A pedestrianized corridor in Herald Square. May 2021.





Managing Streets as Places
Panel Discussion



The Future of New York City Streets
Panel Discussion

Panelists Mark Gorton, Open Plans founder; Mark Caserta of the Fifth Ave Park Slope BID; and Sophie Maerowitz of the Loaisida Open Streets Coalition reinforced the need for New York City to better manage and invest in public space, especially Open Streets.

The “Future of Streets” panel was hosted in collaboration with the Transportation Committee of the American Planning Association’s New York Metro Chapter. Lean Farhi of Sam Schwartz Engineering moderated the conversation that featured Emily Weidenhof, NYC DOT; David Vega-Barachowitz, WXY; and Jen Tausig, Montefiore Health System. The conversation explored three themes: the evolution of New York streets, balancing street uses, and looking to the future of streets. Approximately 100 attendees were present at this virtual discussion that helped develop Open Plans’ relationship with the public space unit at DOT and positioned the organization as a thought leader among design professionals.



Congestion Pricing

The MTA began holding public hearings on their new congestion pricing program in the fall of 2021 and Open Plans got to work organizing and educating. Info sessions ahead of the hearings helped familiarize potential advocates with the issue, explained the testimony process, and shared best practices. We also sent key talking points to our network of activists to use when testifying. At the end of the year, we officially joined a congestion pricing coalition led by Riders Alliance and Regional Plan Association.

Building Coalitions

As Open Plans expanded our citywide advocacy work, we planted the seeds for several new coalitions. We began meeting with housing organization Open New York to discuss eliminating parking mandates and created the beginning of a productive coalition. Conversations with members of the Department of City Planning and staffers in the incoming Mayoral administration also helped to seed the idea of an advocacy push around changes to the city's parking mandates.

Additionally, we joined Transportation Alternatives and Families for Safe Streets to form a statewide coalition focused on passing street safety bills in Albany. The New York State Safe Streets Coalition formed in late 2021 and began making plans for advocacy and legislative pushes early in the new year. Initial meetings with bill sponsors happened in December 2021 and pulled together groups from around the state to participate.

▶ Open Plans', Sara Lind and Transportation Alternatives' Elizabeth Adams at a NYS Safe Streets Coalition Event.

CONGESTION PRICING NOW



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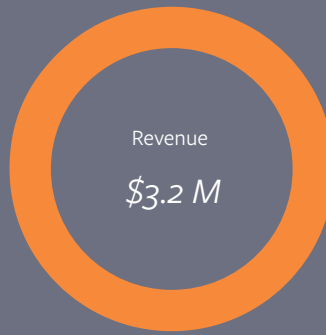
Open Plans gratefully acknowledges the support of these individuals, foundations, and entities. It is because of their generosity that Open Plans is able to transform New York City to be truly livable.

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Audited Financials



Expenses
\$1.5 M



Revenue
\$3.2 M

- Programs 88%
- Contributions
- Management & General 10%
- Fundraising 2%

To see a full financial statement for the year 2021, please visit openplans.org/about.



Support

When you support Open Plans,
you support community.

Since 1999, Open Plans has been helping New Yorkers envision – and realize – new possibilities for their city. On the steps of City Hall, we advocate for the policy changes that promote safety and accessibility. And in the streets of our neighborhoods, we urge communities to dream big about their streets, sidewalks, plazas and parklets. Then we help provide the tools to make those dreams a reality.

We believe that everyone should have access to safe and joyful public space. When you support Open Plans, you become an advocate and an ally. Thank you for helping to create transformative change! Your support allows this small-but-mighty team to stay nimble while fiercely pursuing outcomes that will make New York a better place to live, work and play.



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Open Plans' mission is to transform the streets of New York City to be truly livable for the residents of this city.

Open Plans uses tactical urbanism, grassroots advocacy, policy and targeted journalism to promote structural reforms within city government that support livable streets, neighborhoods and the city-at-large.



▲
On the Cover: A pedestrianized
corridor in Herald Square.