



2022

ANNUAL REPORT

A vibrant street scene in New York City, likely in the East Village. The image shows a row of shops including 'Makita America USA Inc.', 'DECENT TRADING INC.' (selling hair accessories, jewelry, watches, and perfumes), and 'JEWELRY IN TREND'. A large billboard on the right reads 'Global HR that actually works? Si, ja, oui, yes.' and 'Feel. Bring the world to work'. In the foreground, two men are sitting at small black metal tables on the sidewalk, drinking iced coffee. A woman is walking a black dog across the street. The background features brick buildings with many windows and a water tower on a distant rooftop.

Open Plans uses grassroots advocacy and policy change to inspire structural reforms and cultural shifts.

We promote a people-first street culture that prioritizes community, safety, joy, mobility and empowerment.



Open Plans' mission is
to transform how people experience
New York City's streets.

STREETSBLOG

STREETOPIA
UPPER WEST SIDE



STREETFILMS

From our Co-Executive Directors



Lisa Orman

Sara Lind

*What a difference a year makes!
For Open Plans' three sister organizations,
2022 was an award-winning year
of firsts and milestones.*

As pandemic restrictions and challenges eased, it was clear that Open Plans' advocacy and tenacious thought leadership had impacted the way our city was planning for the future.

We began 2022 with a new mayor, and Eric Adams immediately set out to inspire economic recovery by appointing a **"New New York" panel**. Open Plans was invited to meet with the panel to make recommendations, and when the report was released, our impact was clear. The set of recommendations included several items on Open Plans' own agenda, and clearly centered livability as vital to social and economic well-being. It was gratifying to see Open Plans' leadership acknowledged and encouraging to see the City commit to livable streets in its strategic planning.

Open Plans also looked toward the future with a new focus on the experience of young New Yorkers. Streetsblog's Jesse Coburn published a **bombshell investigative report**, proving with data that streets near schools are far more dangerous than the city average. While parents and kids already know this – they experience it every day – the piece got the attention of elected officials and won Jesse

a **Silurian award**. Streetfilms released an in-depth film on kids' experiences getting to school. (Producer Clarence Eckerson, Jr. also won a **prestigious award from the UN** honoring his work over the last two decades!). Uptown, Streetopia Upper West Side made a direct impact at three schools, securing desperately needed containerized trash at two buildings in Morningside Heights and helping an elementary school organize and apply for DOT's school streets program. All this energy around advocating for students inspired Open Plans' Advocacy to launch its own dedicated campaign for schools and school streets citywide.

Schools were not the only new arena for Open Plans. In 2022, we also began to focus on community-based education through Community Boards. Sensing that many New Yorkers didn't understand what these boards were or how they impact neighborhoods, our advocacy team got to work providing education and practical resources. We published a set of **model resolutions for street safety and livability**; we're proud to say that Community Boards across the city immediately began using them to create positive change in their districts. These types of projects, which give New Yorkers the tools to become their own advocates, have long-lasting ripple effects in communities.

Open Plans, Inc. charted ambitious goals in 2022, and made real headway in achieving them. We were encouraged by new commitments from city leaders and incremental progress from our community-based organizing, and there's much more to be done! We look forward to building on the success of 2022 and harnessing our holistic vision to continue building a better New York.



▲ School Streets transform busy streets into safe space for city kids to walk, talk, play, and learn.



This School Street is an anchor
of the community-oriented
public street space on Jackson
Height's 34th Avenue.

Open Plans Advocacy

Open Plans Advocacy had a banner year in 2022. With more capacity and ambitions, the team diversified campaigns, made new partnerships and cast a wider-than-ever net in their work toward a more livable city.

A robust campaign for curb reform came into focus in 2022, and Open Plans assembled twelve diverse stakeholders for a first-ever coalition. These partners, including UPS, Riders Alliance, Lime, and the Deliveristas' Union, represented diverse interests and industries with a stake in how New York manages its curbs. The coalition sent a detailed letter to Mayor Eric Adams entitled **Reimagine the Curb**, which laid out the current state of the curb as well as solutions in five categories. These solutions offered legislative and agency changes to develop better commerce, safety, sanitation, mobility, and management. The letter, and the multi-industry approach, laid the foundation for Open Plans' ongoing advocacy in curb reform.

With a new team member dedicated to community engagement, Open Plans was able to reach more New Yorkers. Community Boards were a focus. Despite having mere advisory roles, and typically being whiter and wealthier than the districts they serve, these boards can greatly impact how streets are designed and prioritized. Open Plans saw this as an opportunity. The team made new connections with Community Boards members throughout the



▲ New tabling efforts shared Open Plans' vision with New Yorkers far and wide.



boroughs and began presenting directly to boards on how to create more livable streets. New digital materials educated New Yorkers on how these boards work and how members can make an impact; Open Plans released a set of [model community board resolutions](#) that offered practical information on introducing and passing livability resolutions. Board members across the city quickly began to use these resolutions to start conversations on these important issues.

The advocacy team connected with city leaders, too. Two videos with Borough Presidents [Antonio Reynoso \(Brooklyn\)](#) and [Donovan Richards \(Queens\)](#) showcased honest and open conversations about the future of New York City's public space. Filmed on bustling Open Streets in Prospect Heights and Astoria, the videos perfectly demonstrate what makes New York's innovative, people-centered streets so special. And they demonstrate how change is made – with pioneering thinking, vision, and bold city leaders.



At the end of the year, Open Plans saw its advocacy pay off in a very gratifying way. The New New York panel released their [set of recommendations](#) for New York's economic recovery; Open Plan's influence was obvious. The panel's plan took a people-first approach, employing livability solutions to drive business growth. Many of the items represented the first time the City committed to strategies Open Plans had been pushing for months or years. Tenets of the organization's approach – strategic management of public space, expanded Open Streets, curb reform, bike infrastructure and storage, and reforming parking mandates – all appeared in the report. Most notable was the call for a dedicated Director of the Public Realm, an idea that has been central to Open Plans' Office of Public Space Management campaign since 2019. In all, the release of the New New York report was a reminder that advocacy works and that Open Plans is blazing a trail toward transformative change.

Streetfilms

Even if Streetfilms' Clarence Eckerson, Jr. had not produced a single new video in 2022, it would have been an exceptional year. That's because in April, the United Nations General Assembly awarded Clarence a Lifetime Achievement Award for World Bike Day.

Recognizing his 25 years of work and broad catalog of over 1,000 films, the [UN awarded the Streetfilms founder](#) along with 24 other bike laureates. Eckerson was one of only three Americans and the only filmmaker to win the esteemed award.

Of course, Streetfilms did produce many fantastic films in 2022. Befitting an internationally acclaimed filmmaker, Clarence took to Paris to explore public space and mobility in the city of lights. [Four Streetfilms](#) celebrated bustling Paris plazas, innovative public spaces, and the city's commitment to super-wide bike lanes.

Marveling at Paris' spacious bike lanes only strengthened Clarence's ongoing interest in the width of New York City's. Bike count videos along

[First](#) and [Second Avenues](#) made it clear that New York's narrow bike lanes are quickly becoming inadequate. That documentation has helped to create a groundswell on social media for widening First and Second Avenues. The videos also gave Streetsblog the fuel for articles that continued to advocate that the City administration address the [bike boom with bold strategy](#).

Finally, Clarence secured two exclusive walk-throughs on the 34th Avenue Open Street: one with the district's [Council Member Shekar Krishnan and then-newly sworn in Mayor Eric Adams](#), and one with [NYC DOT staff members](#), who gave viewers an inside look at the Open Street design process and the many diverse treatments DOT employed on this innovative corridor.

Streetsblog

The first full year of a new mayoral administration gave Streetsblog a good chance to mark progress, diversify coverage, and broaden its definition of livable streets.

As always, the blog spent the year holding leadership accountable, tracking promises against reality, and taking New Yorkers behind the curtain of city government.

As Mayor Adams got to work, Streetsblog kept New Yorkers up to speed on the new culture in City Hall. In March, staff broke the news that the **MTA had abandoned all-door boarding**, a much-lauded plan that could have led to faster bus service. And as the Adams administration struggled to get projects done across agencies and neighborhoods, Streetsblog was there with behind-the-scenes scoops. Stories detailed **staffing shortages and morale problems at the Department of Transportation** and revealed concerns from City Hall insiders' about the administrations' lack of commitment

to and enthusiasm for livability issues. By the end of the year, Streetsblog was holding leadership accountable, reporting that the city had **failed to meet their required benchmarks** for new bus and bike lanes in 2022.

On transportation, Streetsblog did what it does best, diving deeply into the hot issues. Congestion pricing passed the state legislature in 2019, but was still limping to the finish line, providing lots of fodder for increased coverage. One of Streetsblog's most incisive stories revealed that the resistance to congestion pricing, although positioned as a broad, working class issue, stemmed from the **tiny but politically connected cohort of drivers** who work in city offices in Lower Manhattan.

The investigations team continued to shine with marquee stories. Jesse Coburn's bombshell, **"Always Scared,"** found that streets near schools are significantly more dangerous than the citywide average, especially in the hours when students are traveling to and from school. The story highlighted the way these harmful streets impact the physical and emotional well-being of our youngest New Yorkers. Coburn's investigations also debunked popular myths. An analysis of transit infrastructure and commerce found that **bike lanes actually help local businesses.** And another story offered evidence to **debunk the argument that the city's speed camera system is biased** against some drivers.

Streetsblog also expanded its coverage of the city's Department of Sanitation. Under new leadership, the department increasingly adopted positions and policies that seemed ripped from Streetsblog's pages. After advocacy from Streetsblog, DSNY began to pursue repurposing the curb lane for the storage of trash. December saw the launch of a **new containerized trash pilot program** aimed at securing trash and moving it out of the way of pedestrians and vulnerable sidewalk users. As the agency continues their work reforming trash collection and their use of public space, Streetsblog will be there to comment and catalyze change.



▲ Clarence Eckerson, Jr. shows off his Lifetime Achievement Award from the United Nations General Assembly

◀ StreetsblogNYC reporter Jesse Coburn with his Silurian Award, one of two awards that the StreetsblogNYC team won in 2022.

StreetopiaUWS

For StreetopiaUWS, 2022 was another year of direct engagement and tangible results. More than any other Open Plans, Inc. brand, Streetopia's work is grassroots.

Being laser-focused on one neighborhood allows Streetopia to get intimately involved in day-to-day issues that impact livability on the Upper West Side.

The experience of our youngest New Yorkers is often front and center. In Morningside Heights, Streetopia drew attention to two schools' dire need for containerized trash. Director Carl Mahaney employed social media savvy to catch the attention of Council Member Shaun Abreu and Sanitation Commissioner Jessica Tisch, who came to visit the sites. Shortly after, they made commitments to launch a curbside trash containerization pilot at both locations. At another school, Streetopia assisted parents with the onerous school streets application process.

Mobility, in and outside of Central Park, was another focus in 2022. Carl made the case for

better in-park infrastructure through group bike rides, meetings with Central Park Conservancy staff and a data partnership with BetaNYC that revealed the high number of daily cross-park cyclists. This work led directly to new signage and other improvements on the 97th Street shared path – the first improvements to this path since its installation over a decade ago (which was also a direct result of Streetopia's advocacy!).

Outside the park, Streetopia connected with New Yorkers to better understand their experience using micromobility on the Upper West Side. Partnering with Council Member Gale Brewer, they surveyed over 350 New Yorkers about their experience using bikes or scooters. And volunteers rode more than 50 miles of bike lanes to document conditions for ease of use, legibility, consistency, and more. The copious data collected from both surveys became the subject of a **comprehensive digital report** released in 2023.



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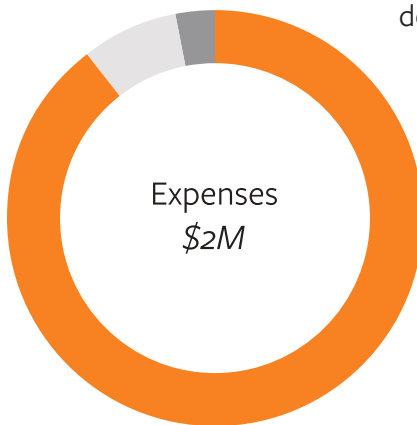
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During the COVID-19 pandemic, Open Plans, Inc. recognized two major opportunities: a tremendous new wave of passion for public spaces in New York City and a strong financial footing that allowed us to focus on harnessing that energy by investing in our programmatic work. In this period, our program ratio swelled to 90% as we reduced our focus on fundraising in favor of programmatic progress – including taking our advocacy work citywide and to Albany, as well as supporting and advocating for the many activities and initiatives described in these pages. This radical reset laid the groundwork for significant staff growth in 2023, a trend we seek to continue. As Open Plans, Inc. moves into the next phase of strategic growth, we hope the accomplishments of this growing staff will inspire new and increased support from a diverse group of funding sources.



● Programs	89.5%
● Management & General	7.6%
● Fundraising	2.9%

Support

To see a full financial statement for the year 2022, please visit openplans.org/about

When you support Open Plans, you support community.

Since 2000, 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 help make that happen. Thank you for creating 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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