



20
24

ANNUAL
REPORT



Perhaps never before has one year represented the highs and lows of advocacy work as much as 2024 did.

Some years, advocacy is all about chugging along, taking tiny baby steps and waiting months—years!—for the culminating moment of success. But in 2024 we had TWO of those moments, as years-long campaigns in daylighting and parking mandates both achieved major milestones by December. But it wasn't all unimpeded, upward trajectories. The Governor's pause of congestion pricing in June, right before the historic program was set to begin, was shocking. It was a reminder that advocacy is a bumpy, twisting road, but it's one that our team navigates with enthusiasm, dedication, and skill.

That dedicated team grew a lot this year: the advocacy team added staff members in charge of social media and operations, plus a new policy team member and two new campaign organizers focused on making the community connections that are so important to our work at Open Plans. Over at Streetsblog, we welcomed a digital engagement editor to translate stories into compelling video and social content. The result is that our work is reaching more people than ever, creating more connections and community impact.

We grew in ambition, too. We connected with three times as many Community Boards and three times as many schools as we did in 2023. And StreetopiaUWS released a visionary plan for West 72nd Street that is wildly ambitious but also, in the end, entirely rooted in reality and feasibility. That's what we do—pursue exciting ideas that, although they might seem revolutionary, are well within reach!

As advocates, it's our job to keep reaching and inspiring others to do the same; we're aiming for the stars while building the map to actually get us there. Despite all the ups and downs, we are immensely proud of the way our team and livable streets advocates stayed energized this year to create a more livable New York City. Thanks for joining us on this wild journey and giving our team the support we need to navigate all the twists and turns!

With thanks,

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.

Daylighting

A Grassroots Success Story

Daylighting—the practice of removing parking spots near intersections to improve visibility and prevent crashes—has long been championed by safe streets advocates. But Open Plans made everyday New Yorkers aware of this popular street intervention and built a broad, diverse movement that passionately advocated for universal adoption of this simple tactic.

It was this deep collaboration with New Yorkers that pushed New York City to a major daylighting milestone in 2024: the introduction of State and City bills calling for universal daylighting. The achievement didn't happen in one moment—it was built, over the course of a year, thanks to the work of our dedicated team who activated community boards, engaged with elected officials, and mobilized residents across all five boroughs.

2024 daylighting campaign by the numbers

- Connected with 16 Community Boards; 7 passed resolutions
- Engaged with new-to-us community groups, including Central Harlem Senior Center and the Historic Neighborhoods of the Bronx Association
- Helped over 200 New Yorkers send letters of support
- Secured 36 elected officials to sign on to State and City bills

The bills build on the demonstrated success of daylighting pilots and the overwhelming community support generated by this campaign. They also reflect a growing consensus that street design must prioritize safety over parking—a necessary shift to build the city we all deserve.

📷 Photos of daylighted intersections by Jackson Chabot, Clarence Eckerson Jr., and Chelsea Dowell, and daylighting rally by Angel Mendoza, Open Plans



2024 Daylighting campaign by the numbers

16

Community Boards connected with

7

passed Community Board resolutions

200+

New Yorkers helped to send letters of support

36

elected officials signed on to State and City bills





Debuting a Framework for our Future

Photo by New York City Department of Transportation

In 2024, Open Plans took our public space advocacy to the next level with a truly visionary framework for management of local spaces. *Framework for the Future: Managing Public Space in New York City for Equity, Safety, and Joy* is an extensively researched report which assesses the role of public space in the social and economic life of the city and calls on the City to strategically invest in the public realm under a first-ever framework for managing and expanding people-centered public spaces.

The report explored a troubling reality; we know local public spaces play a crucial role in community, safety, and economic growth, but the City does not have an adequate or equitable strategy to cultivate them. Current management is fractured, siloed, and full of red tape. As a result, we miss out on the proven economic boosts of public space, thousands of potential jobs, and the chance for more vibrant neighborhoods that are welcoming, green, and safe.

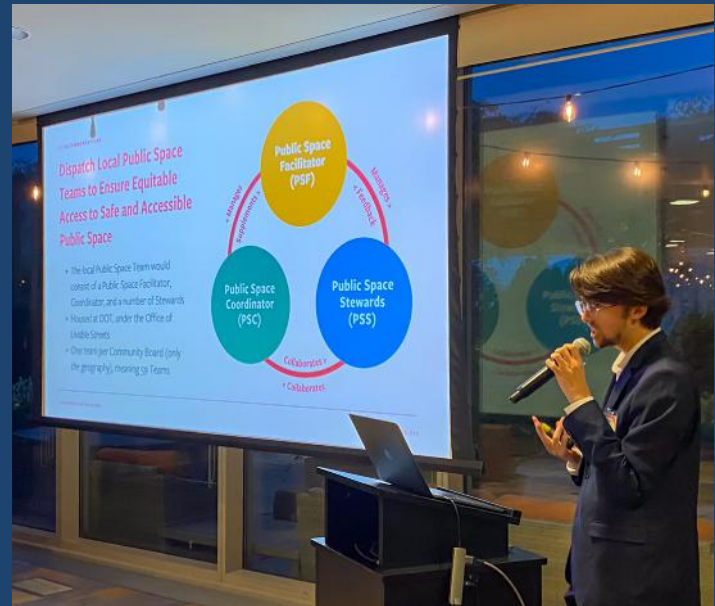


Our report recommends:

- 1 **Creating Public Space Teams for each Community District** that would oversee the management and development of local public spaces with input from residents
- 2 **Reforming the City's processes and approach to recognize the vital need for people-centered and well-managed local public spaces**, including creating a Deputy Commissioner for Public Space Management & Creation and enhancing the role of the Chief Public Realm Officer
- 3 **Lowering administrative barriers for current public space partners** and supporting them as true collaborators in the city's public space initiatives

Included in the report is a budgetary analysis that calculates the necessary City investment to implement these recommendations.

Once the report was released, the policy team got to work sharing this novel framework, and the importance of public space management, to elected officials and experts in the field. Through conversations with City Council Members, Borough Presidents, and other elected officials — in addition to public space partners and planning professionals — Open Plans elevated the conversation around public space, and laid the groundwork to continue advocacy in the following year.



Michael Sutherland presents our Framework for the Future report and leads a mock case study activity with public space stakeholders, experts, and BID professionals, demonstrating the importance of Public Space Teams and our other key recommendations. Photos by Angel Mendoza, Open Plans



Throughout our tenacious City of Yes advocacy, Open Plans staff worked alongside advocates, elected officials, and everyday New Yorkers at rallies and City Council hearings to push for the elimination of parking mandates. Photos by Angel Mendoza and Sara Lind, Open Plans



City of Yes campaign makes history—and compromises

Nearly three years of advocacy to remove parking mandates came to fruition in December when the Department of City Planning voted to pass a set of text amendments to New York City’s zoning code. The milestone came after a whirlwind year building on relationships with decision makers and mobilizing our dedicated community, allowing Open Plans to make progress toward livability in a way only this organization can.

We began working to get full citywide elimination of parking mandates included in City of Yes in 2021. Although City of Yes was mostly a housing issue, Open Plans’ holistic approach to livability made parking mandates a key focus for our team. Within a diverse coalition of housing and environmental advocates, Open Plans provided a crucial voice highlighting the impact of parking mandates on car dependence, traffic violence, and accessibility in communities.

The year was full of rallies and marathon public hearings—including a City Planning Commission hearing in July that lasted 15 hours! Throughout it all, the Open Plans team was tenacious, not only testifying at multiple hearings and writing letters to decision makers but organizing members of the community to do the same. In October, we helped over 200 people submit written testimony specifically on lifting parking mandates. The next month, as the final City Planning vote loomed, we organized Open Plans’ first-ever phone call campaign, helping 70 people call their decision

makers and ask for citywide elimination of parking mandates to be included in the final version of the text amendment.

We advocated for full elimination until the 11th hour, even as City Council was debating the fine points of the bill and considering changes or concessions. In the end, what passed was a compromise that didn’t quite lift mandates citywide, but did create major reforms to the zoning rule. We heard from several decision makers that it was our advocacy that helped push the amendment to be as bold as it was. In the end, New York City created the largest mandate-free zone in the country and reduced mandates in many other parts of the city.

We’re so proud of the work our team did to highlight the interconnectedness of zoning and other issues impacting livability in our city and bring a crucial people-centered voice to the conversations around allocating space for cars both inside and outside buildings.



Providing inspiration and assistance to school communities

Our schools work is unique in that it provides inspiration and education as well as practical assistance to schools. We not only help schools understand what's possible for the streets outside their building through programs like schools streets, we help them navigate a complex application process, organize community members, and make the most of their school street once they've been accepted. At the heart of this work is a belief that it should be simpler and easier for schools to get safe street space near their buildings.

This year, Open Plans served as a sounding board and a technical resource for more schools than ever before. We criss-crossed the city presenting to educators, students, community groups and fellow advocates to promote our work with schools and the many positive benefits of car-free street space for school communities. We even made it out to Detroit to speak on a panel during Placemaking Week.

Here's our year in schools organizing:

- Reached a milestone of 23 total schools that we have helped apply for an Open Street
- Secured letters of recommendations from dozens of elected officials and community leaders for the program, including many that are not typically part of our coalition
- Hosted Open Plans' first-ever community engagement resource fairs at three schools: IS 528 in Washington Heights, PS 129 in College Point, and City-As School in Lower Manhattan as a strategy for neighborhood activation and educating neighbors, staff, and students about open streets and their potential
- Conducted deep outreach in neighborhoods to help schools (and school streets) thrive, including knocking on doors, presenting to community boards, setting up a call to action to reach decision makers, speaking at Community Education Council meetings, speaking with elected officials, negotiating with neighborhood associations, local parks, NYPD, and more



City-As-School in West Village, Manhattan



PS 129 in College Point, Queens



IS 528 in Washington Heights, Manhattan



Congestion pricing pause becomes advocacy opportunity

No one was prepared for what happened on June 5th, when Governor Kathy Hochul announced a surprise pause of congestion pricing mere weeks before it was set to begin. In fact, Open Plans was hard at work ensuring the city was strategizing and prepared for day one. Early in 2024, we began sounding the alarm that the city should pursue changes before congestion pricing begins that would take advantage of the newly freed-up street space once the program was in place. Our list of big ideas, including pedestrianizing bustling areas like FiDi and proactively designating school streets across the city, garnered a lot of excited attention from the media; soon after, DOT put out their own short list of planned projects tied to the anticipated changes that congestion pricing would bring.

But everything changed in June when the program was paused. In typical fashion, Open Plans jumped into action. Our policy staff got on the phone with elected officials to shore up their support and ensure that the pause wouldn't turn into a cancellation. Our advocacy team helped organize rallies and marches where 100s of New Yorkers turned out to show the Governor she was tampering with a popular policy. We made a lot of noise in the press and on social media.

While we weren't able to reverse her decision before 2024 ended, our advocacy through the end of 2024 was instrumental in convincing the Governor to announce that congestion pricing would begin on January 5th. We're so proud of the way our team stepped up, adapted, and showed out to defend congestion pricing and New Yorkers' right to less car-clogged streets.







10

items on our legislative agenda
were passed or made progress

25

tabling events at community
gatherings across the city

11,700+

actions taken: emails, calls to decision
makers and petition signatures

160+

people hosted at Community Board
Happy Hours, Info Sessions & Roundtables

200+

urbanists brought together at our
Annual Young Professionals party

100

press mentions and 8 opinion
pieces published

📷 Photos by Open Plans interns and staff

StreetsblogNYC

What a year it was for Streetsblog! In 2024, our reporters dominated transportation coverage, in part due to our flood-the-zone approach to congestion pricing.

For the first half of the year, our reporters documented the many ways that congestion pricing would benefit the city, only to have to shift gears when Governor Hochul announced that she had paused the tolling program mere days before it was scheduled to start.

That led to scores of stories over the next many weeks, explaining to readers why Hochul paused the toll, how damaging it was to public transit, and how she had undermined the political foundations on which the program was built. By November, Hochul had changed course again and Streetsblog remained on top of the drama as congestion pricing indeed rolled out.

But that's not all. In 2024, Streetsblog also:

- Launched an entirely new social media and engagement desk, producing social media content as well as videos, which won a Deadline Club award this year.
- Streetsblog also continued its world-leading coverage of fake or defaced license plates and parking placards, culminating in a special investigation into fake chaplain credentials — a story that was a finalist for a Deadline Club award.
- Spent all year covering Mayor Adams's signature zoning initiative, the City of Yes, which has huge implications for transit and transportation.
- Continued comprehensive coverage of the MTA including the congestion pricing pause

Bottom line: If there is a single outlet that covers transportation and transit better than Streetsblog, we'd like to know about it.

StreetsblogUSA

Over at StreetsblogUSA, we worked hard to expand our 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 our federal coverage, we demystified the fast-changing federal transportation outlook during the 2024 election cycle — and after Trump won a second term in the White House, we helped advocates prepare themselves for the impending shifts in policies and funding that a new Administration brings.

At the state and local level, we empowered readers with the knowledge, strategies, and inspiration to make transformative change on their community's streets, including stories about innovative policies and legislation that centers the human experience and de-centers roads, "stroads" and highways.

Throughout the year, we delivered thoughtful analysis about American transportation culture that readers won't find anywhere else, like viral thinkpieces on how car culture warps the way we see the world around us and emotional stories about the human costs of traffic crashes, like the deaths of cycling star Magnus White and hockey players Johnny and Matt Gaudreau.





StreetopiaUWS

At StreetopiaUWS, we have equal enthusiasm for offering bold visions as well as getting into the sticky details. 2024 saw plenty of both.



Let's start with our transformative vision for West 72nd Street. Combining data collection, community engagement, elected outreach, research, and design, we offered the public a glimpse of what 72nd Street could look like as a "Complete Street" that prioritized street users in a way that would make life a whole lot better for everyone.

Working closely with the Columbus Ave BID and community members, we also supported DOT's UWS "Smart Curbs" pilot in 2024, by socializing the concepts of curb reform to the broader community and strategizing with stakeholders on the best locations for certain curb uses. The results are a work in progress but represent an important step toward a more livable streets UWS.

 Real changes on UWS streets: a daylighted curb on 83rd St and Amsterdam Ave with boulder seating and bike corrals enhancing intersection safety and trash containers at the curb in Morningside Heights. Photos by Carl Mahaney, Open Plans



The most consequential curb reform in NYC in 2024 was undoubtedly trash containerization. StreetopiaUWS worked closely with Council Member Shaun Abreu to support the pilot by organizing the community, testifying at Community Board meetings, and promoting the concept in the media. The result: in 2025 Community District 9 will be the first CB to have full containerization, leading the way for the entire city.

Lastly, 2024 finally saw some movement in our decade-long campaign for reasonable access into and across Central Park for people using bicycles for transportation. After tireless advocacy, detailed mapping, spatial analysis, ride-throughs with decision makers, organizing school communities, and more, the Central Park Conservancy released a report incorporating many of our recommendations. A major win, with still more work to do.



Streetfilms

Two of 2024's most popular Streetfilms were educational tools — “Paris School Street”'s (32k Youtube views) and “What is Daylighting?” (23k views)—which dovetailed nicely with Open Plans' advocacy to 1) help grow the number of NYC educational institutions using open streets for recess, class activities & gym and 2) increase pedestrian safety by removing car parking at street corners to increase intersection visibility.

With congestion pricing on the brink of beginning in late spring, Streetfilms took a jaunt to Stockholm for a fresh look at how much better a city could be by charging drivers a fee to enter the Central Business District. Teaming up with Streetsblog, we produced films and articles with experts on how Stockholm has benefitted from the program in the past 15 years. And when the Governor's unexpected “pause” hit, Streetfilms' two dozen congestion pricing films were reshared again and again to prove how the program works around the world and why it is urgently needed in New York City.

As NYC DOT continued to widen bike lanes, Streetfilms covered their expanded ability to pour concrete to make safer designs with in-house concrete crews. Streetfilms amplified that and showed many of the new bike lane and pedestrian safety victories in places such as McGinness Boulevard in Brooklyn, 2nd Avenue in Manhattan and Queens Boulevard in Queens.

Finally, in a comprehensive Slate story on the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Ciclovía, Streetfilms was singled out by many as being one of the most important voices for increasing the world's awareness of open street events.

Public Space Awards

In 2024, Open Plans brought together neighborhood stewards, advocates, artists, and city leaders for our second 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.



Awardees for Open Plans' 2nd Annual Public Space Awards

Corona Plaza

Most Innovative Model for Public Space Management

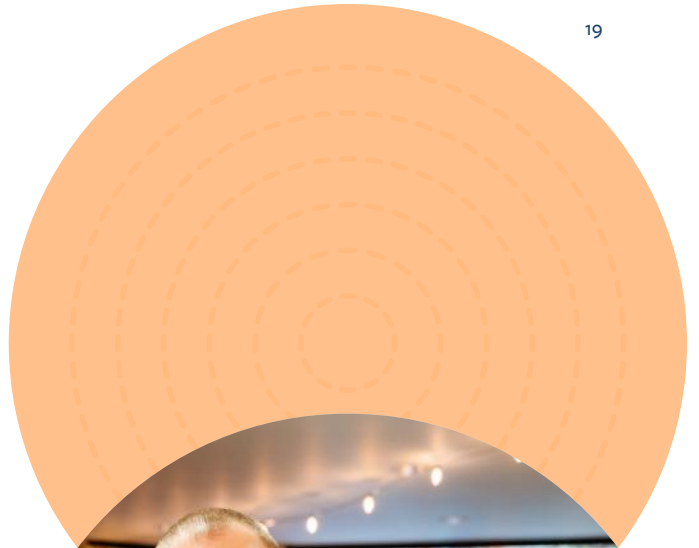
Flatbush Nostrand Junction BID

Neighborhood Champion Award

NYC Department of Transportation's Summer Streets

Citywide Transformation Award





**North Brooklyn Safe Streets Organizers
& North Brooklyn Parks Alliance**
Most Inspiring Neighborhood Vision

Skate Everything School
*People's Choice Award
Best Public Space Activator*

People's Choice Award Nominees

Kuki Go

Misha Tyutyunik



Our Donors

Open Plans gratefully acknowledges the support of the individuals, foundations, and corporations listed below, whose generous gifts allow us to fulfill our mission.

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Financials

Momentum and enthusiasm for a more people-centered New York City was palpable this year – in protests around the congestion pricing pause to the droves of people enjoying Summer Streets and Open Streets to packed Community Board meetings discussing City of Yes, bus lanes, and bike infrastructure. This spirit was also reflected in the continued growth of our development efforts. We ended 2024 with a 32% increase in unique donors, including 100% of our Board of Directors and 269 new donors this year alone. 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 don't have the words or community to support those feelings – Yet!

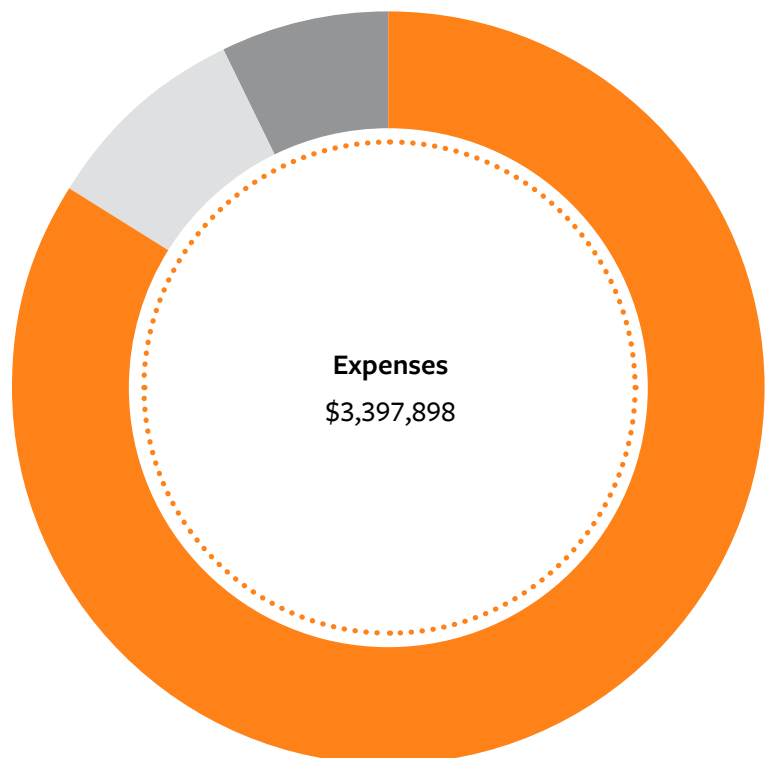
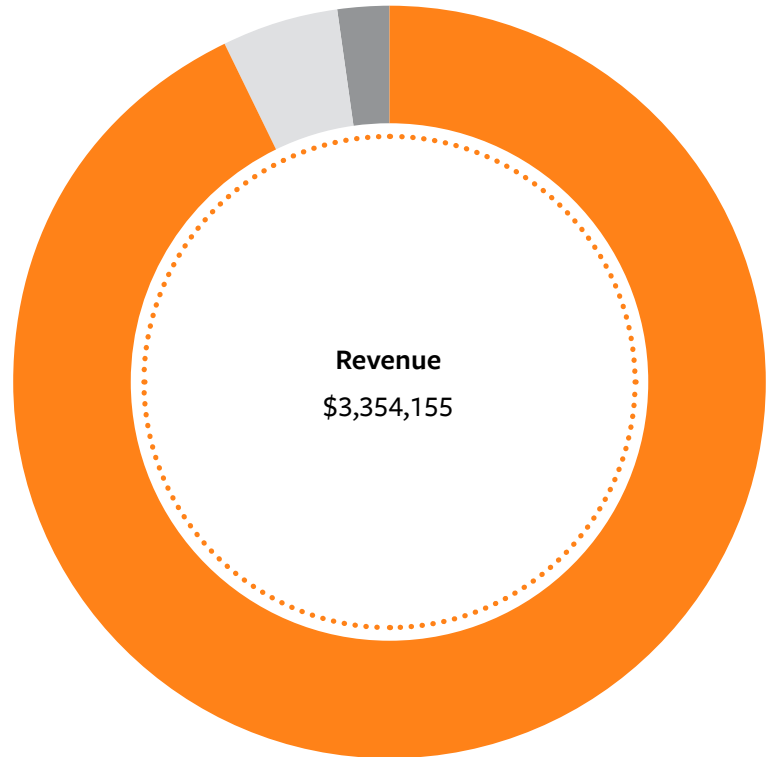
Revenue

● Contributions & grants	93%
● Investment Returns	5%
● In-kind contributions	2%

Expenses

● Program	84%
● Management & General	9%
● Fundraising	7%

To see a full financial statement for the year 2024, 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 promote safety, accessibility, and mode shift. On the ground in our neighborhoods, we urge communities to dream big about their streets, sidewalks, plazas, and parklets.

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 inspiring 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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Streetfilms

Clarence Eckerson Jr.
Director of Video Production

SUMMER INTERNS

Open Plans Advocacy

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*Harvard Graduate School
of Design, Urban Planning
graduate program*

Gladys Mbugua,
*Fordham University, Urban
Studies graduate program*

Matt Choi,
*Hunter University, Urban
Planning graduate program*

Ghuncha Shaheed,
*Pratt Institute, Urban
Placemaking and
Management graduate
program*

Emily Padilla-Chicas,
*Columbia University,
Graduate School of
Architecture, Planning, and
Preservation program*

Open Plans Engagement

Wil Kitcher,
*Brooklyn College, Urban
Sustainability*

Ebosetale Guobadia,
*Reachout Global intern
- Achievement First
University Prep High School*

Streetsblog

Ibrahim Hersi,
*CUNY, Craig Newmark
Graduate School of
Journalism*

Jackie Zamora,
*CUNY, Craig Newmark
Graduate School of
Journalism*



Open Plans

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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.



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