People have always lived on streets. They have been the places where children first learned about the world, where neighbors met, the social centers of towns and cities.

DONALD APPLEYARD
New York City’s streets are the soul of its neighborhoods and the pathways to some of the world’s most in-demand destinations. For generations, New Yorkers and visitors have strolled, shopped and socialized on sidewalks and street corners. Pedestrian-friendly streets are the city’s most fundamental assets.

Unfortunately, we aren’t making the most of these assets. Instead, our streets are being managed almost entirely for traffic flow. If we continue planning our streets for cars and traffic we will get more cars and traffic; conversely, if we start planning our cities for people and places, we will get more people and places.

Around the world, cities are tackling the problems caused by automobile traffic with creative solutions. New York is not keeping up. The choice is clear: either we choose to be defined by worsening traffic and perilous streets or we can define ourselves through great public spaces and lively streets.

This exhibition sheds light on the unbalanced, undemocratic, and underperforming condition of New York City’s streets. Through action and dialogue New Yorkers can raise expectations for their public realm and envision better streets for all New Yorkers.
It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.

WILLIAM H. WHYTE
New York City has an enormous traffic problem. Streets are overrun with cars, pedestrians are jammed onto sidewalks, cyclists are forced into dangerous traffic, buses fall behind schedule, and deliveries, taxis and emergency vehicles struggle to get through.

New York’s outdated traffic planning policy primarily attempts to maximize vehicular throughput. This fails to consider how pedestrians, cyclists and transit-users can improve the total capacity of our streets.

Traffic Harms Neighborhoods
Donald Appleyard, UC Berkeley Professor of Urban Design, quantified the impact of traffic on social ties. He found that people who live on low traffic streets:
- had more friends
- knew more neighbors
- felt greater pride and stewardship

How Do New Yorkers Deal With Traffic?
In the summer of 2005, Appleyard’s research was replicated in four New York City neighborhoods. The results confirmed the detrimental effect of traffic on relations between neighbors.

Traffic Harms Neighborhoods
- Undemocratic Use of Space
  - Cars are the most inefficient users of New York City street space. A sensible, sustainable transportation policy would prioritize transit users, cyclists and walkers.

UNFRIENDLY SIDEWALKS
The Times Square Alliance found that 68% of employees surveyed within their district rated congestion as the number one reason they would consider working somewhere other than Times Square.

UNFRIENDLY SIDEWALKS
- Pedestrian traffic frequently reaches levels that not only make walking uncomfortable, but also negatively affects retail sales.

UNFRIENDLY SIDEWALKS
- Sidewalks in all neighborhoods could be more accommodating to people. Trash, blank walls, poor pavement and lack of shade are some common conditions.

VULNERABLE PEDESTRIANS
- 86% of respondents to the NYC Stroller Report Card said they have avoided streets because they are too difficult to navigate when walking with a stroller or child.
- An incredible 50% indicated that they avoid these streets even without a stroller.

CRONIC LAWLESS DRIVING
- Pedestrians are killed at twice the national average in metropolitan New York. Nearly one in seven admissions to the trauma center at Staten Island University Hospital are pedestrians struck by motor vehicles.

GRIDLOCK
- 83% of cars in Manhattan originate from the outer boroughs and the suburbs. 60% of drivers using the East River bridges are simply passing through Manhattan, causing congestion and delays for everyone.

GRIDLOCK
- A sense of entitlement among drivers is reflected in pervasive car advertising and increasingly large automobiles.

Traffic Harms Neighborhoods
- Unbalanced Streets
  - Cars are the most inefficient users of New York City street space. A sensible, sustainable transportation policy would prioritize transit users, cyclists and walkers.

UNFRIENDLY SIDEWALKS
- Many of the city’s major intersections, where great streets meet, are the least friendly places to pedestrians. If treated as squares and plazas, these car-dominated areas could become some of the most valuable destinations in New York City.

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Unbalanced Streets
- 2 in 5 New Yorkers own a car
- 1 in 5 Manhattanites own a car
- Yet New York City streets are almost entirely devoted to cars.

Undemocratic Use of Space
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Yet New York City streets are almost entirely devoted to cars.
Urban transport is a political and not a technical issue. The technical aspects are very simple. The difficult decisions relate to who is going to benefit from the models adopted.

ENRIQUE PEÑALOSA
After decades of auto-centric traffic policies, we have lost sight of the role that cars should play in New York.

In a city where over half of all commuters walk or use transit, and only 6% of all shopping below 59th Street involves a car, why do we dedicate so much street space to vehicles?

An honest examination of how New Yorkers get around would allow us to shrug off outdated assumptions about traffic and set transportation policy that serves the New York of the 21st century.

Alternatives to Driving

New York City has the potential to be the most walkable city in the world. In fact, most trips are five miles or less—making them easily walkable or bikeable. In addition, the city boasts the largest public transportation network in North America.

Driving is a choice, not a necessity

- 90% of auto commuters have an existing transit alternative.
- 30-60% of cars entering Manhattan below 59th Street are going “through” the district and have no economic purpose.
- 69% of all trips below 59th Street in Manhattan are on foot.

Cars Can Disappear

Requested street improvements are often rejected on the premise that they will increase traffic congestion. However, cities around the world have increased transportation throughput while simultaneously reducing the amount of road space allocated to cars.

Shoppers are Walkers

All too frequently we forget that cars don’t shop, people do. When shopping destinations work for the pedestrians and connect well to public transportation, people linger longer and spend more.
Whenever a street is widened, a few more [cars] are able to trickle in, with the net result that they and not the general public are benefited. Congestion has not been relieved, nor will it be by any such public improvement until adequate restrictive measures are adopted.

A 1926 NYC TRAFFIC COMMISSION REPORT
New York City can be greatly improved. There is much progress being made today that we can build on tomorrow.

Each street and neighborhood faces its own issues and opportunities. Here are several recent examples of how the New York City Department of Transportation and other city agencies have successfully worked with communities to improve streets and neighborhoods.

A Highway turned into an Urban Amenity
West Street was transformed into one of New York’s most visited waterfront and public spaces, spawing neighborhood regeneration and development.

Fixing an Unsafe Intersection
In 1996, NYCDOT painted the proposed sidewalk bulbouts, as a cheap and effective experiment at the dangerous Mulry Square. In 2001, once it became clear that the experiment was successful, NYCDOT invested in real sidewalk expansions. Today, Mulry Square is much safer and more pleasant to navigate—both for pedestrians and drivers.

A Destination thatAccommodates the People Who Use It
The Herald Square Pedestrian Project succeeds due to the 146 planters, paid for by DOT, that delineate the newly claimed sidewalks from the street. The temporary widening was so popular with local users, DOT has agreed to make sidewalk widenings permanent.

Neighborhood Streets that are Easier to Cross
Shortening the crossing distances on neighborhood streets indicates that streets are designed for the community first.

A Downtown Retail Street and Pedestrian/Transit Destination
Wide sidewalks, amenities and slow vehicle speeds have created a walking environment that attracts pedestrians from all over Brooklyn to the otherwise isolated downtown area.

Thoroughfares as Boulevards
A new boulevard brings refuge and a pedestrian scale to an otherwise unfriendly corridor.

Bicycle Lanes that Protect Riders
SANDS STREET GREENWAY
In June 2005, the NYC DOT announced its plan to build an on-street greenway on Sands Street in Brooklyn. The new on-street greenway, with fencing and bollards, will connect the Manhattan Bridge bike path with the Navy Street bike lane and planned Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway. It will make bridge access safer for many of the 2,000 cyclists who ride across it each day.

IN NEW YORK CITY

An Historic Street Brought Back to Life
Once a desolate, neglected street in Lower Manhattan, Stone Street was used as a back entrance alley for adjacent tenements. Now closed to cars, Stone Street flourishes. New restaurants and businesses have opened creating highly desirable retail space.

Private Partners Building Streets as Public Spaces
Over the years, Rockefeller Center has closed streets to traffic to serve a variety of users. The newly created space has become a civic square for New York City, featuring public markets, art, seating, plantings and events, including the daily taping of the Today Show.

Streets as Public Spaces
Now closed to cars, Stone Street is used as a back entrance alley for adjacent tenements.

Rockefeller Center used to be a Civic Square Featuring Public Markets, Art, Seating, Plantings and Events, Including the Daily Taping of the Today Show.
I believe very strongly that the cities that pay attention—really pay attention—to quality of life will be the cities that thrive in the 21st century.

RICHARD M. DALEY
The Chicago Edgewater neighborhood establishes an unprecedented protocol for transportation planning in American cities.

The Edgewater neighborhood has become a model for pedestrian-oriented planning in Chicago, and other wards are flocking to the idea of community-generated physical change.

The positive relationships between neighborhood associations and the Chicago Department of Transportation are key to the success of the Edgewater planning project.

Walkable Edgewater works with the community as well as the Illinois DOT to create a community-generated physical plan that is oriented toward local residents rather than the pass-through commuter.

Multi-agency teams include a zoning specialist, a planning and development aide, a traffic-calming expert, and a chief of staff. The team works with local organizations, block clubs, and fire, police, and sanitation agencies to develop areas of improvement and test the projects’ physical feasibility.

Community Input

Suggestions generated by community charrettes were implemented along North Marine Drive. These intersections are now hospitable for all pedestrians.

“Too Much Traffic”

Although only about half the residents in Edgewater actually own vehicles, traffic volumes are intensely congested.

Locals complain of noise, pollution, dangerous intersections, and a feeling of isolation from the parks and waterfront.

Chicago CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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“MAYOR RICHARD M. DALY

“No department is concerned exclusively with quality of life and attractive public spaces. So all of them have to be.”

A Walkable Neighborhood

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The Center City District in Philadelphia initiates street improvements that spawn safer streets and economic vitality.

Failing Streets
In the 1980’s, downtown Philadelphia was ridden with crime and economic decline. The Center City District Business Improvement District formed to promote a “clean, safe, attractive and well-managed public environment.”

Pedestrian-oriented Improvements
Center City District’s plan to create a more pleasant and profitable urban environment succeeded primarily because of pedestrian-oriented improvements. Streetscape improvements include new pedestrian-scale lampposts, trees, street furniture, and effective, directional signage to local destinations.

Logan Circle (below), though in a prime downtown location, was rarely used by pedestrians and was designed primarily for automobiles.

Philadelphia

Downtown Revitalized
Short-term improvements have already been implemented, including narrowing roads, adding amenities and installing art. The pedestrians who now fill the streets keep downtown safe and promote local business. In the ten years following the inception of the Center City District plan, crime plummeted, and the downtown economy boomed.

An Ambassador program and effective signage create a comfortable street environment for strolling and shopping.

Small business improvement districts with smaller operating budgets can follow this model for promoting neighborhood revival.
It’s really wonderful to wake up in a city where everyday you realize that today the city is a little bit better than yesterday.
Rather than easing traffic by increasing road space, Transport for London has recognized that making improvements to public transportation is a more sustainable and healthy approach to reducing congestion and improving quality of life in the city.

Increasing the ease, efficiency and reliability of bus travel is central to achieving this goal.

"Increasing the capacity of the transport system cannot be based upon the private car."

The Mayor’s Transport Strategy Report, released in July 2001

"If New York City is paying any attention at all, they have a good example in London to follow."

BOB KILEY, Head Commissioner of Transport for London and former Chairman and CEO of the New York MTA

Street Improvements

Kensington High Street is both a major shopping destination and an important route for through-traffic to the center of London. These uses were balanced in a recent renovation of the area, which included:

- Removal of guard rails at pedestrian crossings
- A central refuge which provides additional bike parking space and helps people cross the street at any point
- Improved lighting and reduced street clutter, through installation of multi-functional street lamps. One lamp column accommodates lights for traffic, lights for pedestrians, directional signs, and a hanging basket for flowers

Congestion Pricing

An on-going shift away from private car use has been accomplished with congestion charging, better buses, and bus priority measures.

The daily £8 ($14) fee to drive in Central London during peak weekday hours, encourages commuters to seek alternative modes of transportation, while asking motorists who use the city’s scarce, valuable road space to pay accordingly.

Money raised through the congestion charging scheme is being put back into public transportation facilities. Six months after the program began, the number of vehicles in downtown London had decreased by a third. Travel times were reduced by 15%. The congestion charge zone will double in size in February 2007.

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The Mayor’s 100 public spaces program is a major campaign to realize the untapped potential of public spaces throughout London’s boroughs. These forward-thinking initiatives are aimed at enhancing streets and public spaces in order to create a more comfortable environment in which Londoners are invited to linger and enjoy their city, rather than rush through it.

Infrastructure changes to Kensington High Street have made the area more accessible to walkers and cyclists.

Before: Although many people predicted that closing the road to cars at the north side of Trafalgar Square would cause a traffic disaster in surrounding areas, no such spillover congestion occurred.

After: Today, Londoners enjoy a beautiful terrace connecting the square to the National Gallery.

100 Public Spaces Program

London, England
A granite buffer separates buses, bikes, and taxis from private automobile traffic. While bus speeds have increased 25% city-wide, car speeds have remained stable at about 7.5 miles per hour.

In the last five years, sidewalks have been widened, bike lanes striped, and trees planted across the city. A new light rail line is being constructed around the periphery, and driving is actively discouraged.

On 25 miles of Paris’s most congested avenues, medians have been added to provide a dedicated lane for buses, bicycles, and taxis. Furthermore, bus service was made more reliable and convenient by the addition of real-time service information at every shelter.

In neighborhoods throughout Paris, the Mayor’s office has planned traffic calming improvements, as noted in this sign. The city implements an ambitious campaign to reduce car traffic, improve public transit, and encourage walking and biking.

There are currently almost 200 miles of dedicated bike lanes in Paris.

INCREASE IN BICYCLE USE 40%

DECREASE IN CAR USAGE 13%

INCREASE IN TRANSIT USE 6%

The city’s transportation plan bans the construction of new off-street parking and will eliminate all free parking. By 2007, 3,500 on-street parking spots will be eliminated.

Paris Plage, a highway-turned-beach along the Seine during the summer, allows for more activities. The City’s Transportation Plan bans the construction of new off-street parking and will eliminate all free parking. By 2007, 3,500 on-street parking spots will be eliminated.

More than 80% of Parisians approve of the changes and want more.

From Congestion to Shared Streets

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Copenhagen’s city center was transformed into a welcoming place through the slow conversion of streets to pedestrian-friendly areas.

**Gradual Change**

Gradual change made the process politically feasible and gave people the opportunity to incrementally adapt their behavior. Lanes of car traffic and parking spaces in the city center were eliminated slowly, 3-5% per year. The freed-up space was put to new uses, including bicycle and bus lanes. One third of Copenhagen commuters now travel by bicycle, with 60-70% of cyclists choosing to pedal even through sun and winter cold. Four times as many people come to the city center now than thirty years ago. Traffic jams are a thing of the past.

**Parking Lots Removed**

Throughout Copenhagen, parking lots were converted from places to store cars into places to enjoy life—places with public squares and markets. Although Danes had little tradition of using outdoor public spaces, pedestrian-friendly changes proved to be very popular.

**Pedestrian Streets**

As the total area of pedestrianized street space increases, the number of people engaged in “stationary activities”—lingering or sitting on benches—also increases.

**Sustaining Success**

Copenhagen’s success in creating a livable downtown was supported and driven by the collection of pedestrian data and activity mapping, making people visible in the planning process.
Cars are happiest when there are no other cars around. People are happiest when there are other people around.
What Makes a Great Street?

**Access & Linkages**
- Easy to cross the street
- Sidewalks accommodate pedestrians and activity comfortably
- Multiple transportation options

"Pedestrians and bicyclists don’t need mobility. They need accessibility—roads that provide continuity, connections, and frequent destinations."
DAN BURDEN
Walkable Communities

"The street is the river of life of the city, the place where we come together, the pathway to the center."
WILLIAM H. WHYTE
The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces

**Uses & Activities**
- There are reasons to linger
- Ground floors are welcoming to passers-by
- Mix of restaurants, stores and services

"Sidewalks: the urban arteries of a city, make them wider, well-lit, and accommodating. Make them more accessible with the addition of benches, outdoor cafes and public art."
DAN BURWELL
Project for Public Spaces

"The street is unpleasant and dangerous for pedestrians."
QUEENS BOULEVARD
Queens Boulevard is unpleasant and dangerous for pedestrians

**Comfort & Image**
- Local and cultural identity is reflected
- Good seating, lighting, trees and other amenities
- Clear signage with local information

"Sidewalks in the urban arteries of a city make them wider, well-lit and accommodating. Make them more accessible with the addition of benches, outdoor cafes and public art."
DAN BURWELL
Project for Public Spaces

**Sociability**
- People are inclined to gather
- Sense of pride and ownership
- Presence of children and seniors

"As we all know, the street is a place to be seen. Sociability is a large part of why cities exist and streets are made to reflect the public places for that sociability to take hold."
ALLAN JACOBS
Great Streets
The importance of pedestrian public spaces cannot be measured, but most other important things in life cannot be measured either...pedestrian places are essential to a city’s happiness.

ENRIQUE PEÑALOSA
The Benefits of Great Streets

**Stronger Local Economies**
- Shoppers are walkers: improved pedestrian life supports local businesses and jobs.
- Street investments enhance real estate values and increase the tax base.

**A Sense of Community**
- Great streets create emblematic places that define a region.
- Sidewalks serve as public venues shared by people of diverse ethnicities and ages.
- Vibrant streets encourage local pride and volunteerism.

**Improved Safety and Security**
- Making neighborhoods safer for pedestrians and cyclists reduces crime.
- More “eyes on the street” increases residents’ sense of security.

**Better Access for All**
- Reduced emphasis on cars and parking makes transit, walking, and bicycling more viable options.
- Walkable streets are comfortable public settings for people of diverse abilities.
- Community assets, jobs, and services become more accessible.

**Healthier Cities**
- Increased walking brings significant health benefits.
- Fewer cars on the road and less congestion reduces pollution.
- Streets as public venues combat isolation and depression.

**Wise Development**
- Developing streets as public spaces can attract business and development.
- Streets in busy cities become destinations.
- Success leads to more investment.
If we can develop and design streets so that they are wonderful, fulfilling places to be—community-building places, attractive for all people—then we will have successfully designed about one-third of the city directly and will have had an immense impact on the rest.

ALAN JACOBS
New York City streets are suffering under outdated and auto-centric policies that fail to meet the social, economic, health and cultural needs of this great city.

Fortunately, it doesn’t have to stay this way. Streets are our greatest public space and greatest public asset; improving these spaces is the simplest way to improve the quality of life for every New Yorker.

By combining New York’s innovative spirit with an unparalleled urban infrastructure we can work together to bring about a New York City Streets Renaissance. Success is possible!

Sign on to the NYC Streets Renaissance Campaign

As a supporter of the Streets Renaissance Campaign, you are sending a strong message that you support:

- Healthy Communities
- Pedestrians First
- Safe Bicycling
- Efficient Public Transit
- Walking Shoppers
- Fewer Cars
- Balanced Streets

Concerned Citizens

1. Join your local block or neighborhood association and sign up as a supporter of the Streets Renaissance Campaign.
2. Write a letter to Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff.
3. Get involved with your local Community Board.
4. Call 311 to report problems on your street.
5. Contact the Streets Renaissance Campaign to strategize about neighborhood efforts.
6. Throw a block party and close your street for an afternoon.

Business Leaders

1. Get involved with your Business Improvement District, local Chamber of Commerce or Merchants Association and push for pedestrian-oriented streetscape improvements.
2. Contact Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff and Small Business Services to ask for market-rate curbside parking fees.
3. Work with local businesses to sponsor temporary or short-term improvements, such as adding amenities or hosting a street fair as a way of giving shoppers a taste of how pleasant the streets could be everyday.
4. Contact the Streets Renaissance Campaign team.

Elected Officials

1. Support proposed City Council legislation that changes how transportation and street performance is measured.
2. Fund pedestrian-oriented street improvements.
3. Learn from domestic and international efforts that enhance pedestrian conditions and create lively streets.
4. Schedule a meeting with the Streets Renaissance Campaign team.

Sign up at www.nycstreets.org.