Coalition of 80+ Organizations Launch NYC 25x25, Challenge New York City’s Next Mayor To Give Streets Back To People

The Challenge, Spearheaded by Transportation Alternatives, Calls For 25 Percent of Car Space To Be Transformed Into Space For People by 2025

Initial supporters include five-borough coalition of educational, environmental, disability rights, public health, cultural, transportation, labor, business and community organizations, including NY League of Conservation Voters, NY Building Congress, Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, Tech:NYC, Local 372 (DC37), Municipal Art Society, Riders Alliance, BRIC and more

NEW YORK — New York City’s next leaders must make streets — our largest public space — better serve the needs of all New Yorkers, according to a new report released today by Transportation Alternatives and backed by a coalition of more than 80 local organizations and businesses across all five boroughs. NYC 25x25 challenges those running for mayor and local office to transform 25 percent of our streetspace by 2025, creating a more equitable, safe, vibrant, and resilient city as we recover from the pandemic and for generations to come.

“It’s time to reimagine our largest public asset — streets — and make them work better for all New Yorkers,” said Danny Harris, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives. “There is a huge inequity in how New York City’s public spaces are allotted and who they serve. A supermajority of New Yorkers walk, take public transit, or ride a bike to work, but most of New York City’s streetspace is still designed for cars. In this moment of overlapping crises, the question for New York City’s future leaders is not whether we can afford to build streets for people, but whether we can afford not to.”

NYC 25x25 lays out, in methodical detail, the harm that car traffic poses to New Yorkers and what can be built by converting 25 percent of street space to higher use for all New Yorkers, how New York City as a whole — and especially low income communities and communities of color —
will benefit, and asks how our future leaders will advance a platform to give space for cars back to people.

**Streets are the single largest public space in New York City. Our current allocation of street space is fundamentally inequitable.** Streets cover more than 91 square miles of New York City’s public space. Space for parking and moving cars — which a minority of residents own — represents more than 75 percent of New York City’s current streetscape. The remaining scraps of space are devoted to car-free bus lanes (0.02 percent), bike lanes (0.03 percent), and sidewalks (24 percent). A better future will require a new approach from city officials — one that sees streets as a system of public spaces designed to serve people and breaks from traditional thinking centered on moving and storing cars.

Traffic-clogged and dangerous streets cost the City of New York and its residents more than $6 billion a year in the cost of traffic crashes and lost time. Low-income communities and communities of color suffer the worst — longer commutes, hotter neighborhoods, worse air pollution, higher asthma rates, more health conditions related to car pollution, and more premature deaths.

Putting streets to better use can solve long standing public health crises, speed our city’s economic recovery, and ensure streets work for New Yorkers and local businesses. As the Open Streets program prepares to expand and as congestion pricing is set to reduce car traffic to central Manhattan, addressing the distribution of street space is not only especially timely, it is also smart. Converting car space into expedited bus routes, protected bike routes, and expansive space for neighborhood life is highly popular with New York City voters, proven to create more jobs, and bring significant economic benefit for small businesses and city budgets alike.

New York City’s next leaders will need an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to management, community engagement, phasing, enforcement, and revenue in order to make NYC 25x25 a reality. In NYC 25x25, Transportation Alternatives details key questions that candidates must address in order to make this vision come to life. These include questions on the creation of a new position or office in City Hall devoted to public space, broadening engagement beyond the Community Board, pricing and enforcing curb space, prioritizing communities that have suffered the most from a history of disinvestment, and more.

**What could be done in a city with 25 percent less space for cars and 25 percent more space for people?** Future leaders of New York City could create more than 13 Central Parks worth of new space by 2025. The best way to understand the significant amount of space New York City currently allocates to drivers is to hypothesize just a partial list of what could be built instead if NYC 25x25 were adopted in full:

- 500 lane miles of new protected bus-only lanes, so every New Yorker lives within a quarter mile of a protected bus lane;
→ 500 lane miles of new protected class one bike lanes, so every New Yorker lives within a quarter mile of a protected bike lane that connects to a citywide network;
→ 1,000 lane miles of permanent Open Streets;
→ 780,000 spaces for car-share parking and paid parking spaces (converted from free parking) with the potential to generate, by the most conservative estimate, at least $1 billion annually;
→ 19.4 million square feet of bike parking spaces, including racks, secure bike parking, bike share, and other micromobility uses, so that Citi Bike access can stretch citywide and nearly every New York City block will host bike parking;
→ “Universal daylighting” — removing car parking directly adjacent to an intersection in order to increase visibility and decrease the likelihood of a crash — at every one of New York City’s 39,000 intersections;
→ A one-block-long car-free multi-use space for play, student drop-off and pick-up, and outdoor learning outside each of New York City’s 1,700 public schools;
→ At least one 80-foot-long zone on every block for deliveries, e-cargo bikes, for-hire-vehicle and taxi passenger drop-off, and trash collection, so trash bags are off the sidewalk.

What the NYC 25x25 Coalition is saying:

"New York City has suffered from a long-term lack of open space and sorely needs to reimagine its streetscape. We strongly support the NYC 25x25 platform because it will create more public space, improve air quality, help slash pollution, and prioritize families. We urge all candidates to adopt 25x25 into their campaign platforms and their communications with the voters,” said Julie Tighe, President of the New York League of Conservation Voters.

“New York is one of the most vibrant, diverse and resilient cities in the world, and looking toward the future, we must design and build in a way that matches that ethos. Following the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we can use initiatives like NYC 25x25 to guide a forward-thinking approach to equitable and sustainable recovery. By taking a comprehensive view of our built environment, we can promote investment in our infrastructure and in the lives of New Yorkers. There is no better place to prioritize this investment than our streetscape. The Building Congress is proud to support NYC 25x25, and we look forward to continuing to work with the City to build a better New York for all,” said Carlo A. Scissura, President & CEO of New York Building Congress

“We support Transportation Alternatives’ NYC 25x25 campaign and urge our future leaders to implement its recommendations, said Tracey Capers, EVP & Chief Program Officer at Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation. “Our organization aims to strategically reduce racial gaps in wealth and health in Central Brooklyn. Lack of quality transportation options makes it difficult for many of the people in the low-income communities of color we serve to access resources, such as employment, education, good food, and health care, that are needed to be healthy and financially stable. As the lead of the NYC Better Bike Share Partnership, Restoration has been working for years to equalize access to Citi Bike and other micromobility options as conduits to better health and economic opportunities. Likewise, we
support the re-allocation of our public spaces, including the creation of more car-free bus lanes and protected bike lanes, to better serve the majority of our residents, who don’t own cars.”

“Promoting livable, equitable, and environmentally-friendly public spaces — especially our streets — is paramount to New York’s recovery, and will help us continue to attract tech talent and companies that share these important New York values,” said Julie Samuels, Executive Director of Tech:NYC. “As this report lays out, what we can accomplish by putting streets to better use is exciting and important, and we’re proud to stand with such a diverse range of organizations in challenging our next mayor to take action.”

"The safety of all our NYC school children and our Local 372 members is always at the forefront of our minds. That is why we support NYC 25x25 to keep our streets safe,” said Shaun D. Francois I, President of Local 372 and DC 37.

"Over the last year, we have turned to our streets, sidewalks, parks, plazas, and playgrounds to stay active and connected, even while distanced. The success of our city depends on our ability to re-envision and enrich those spaces, which represent roughly 40 percent of New York's land mass. We applaud the goals set by NYC 25x25 and encourage the next Mayor to also establish a Director of the Public Realm, who would oversee this and many more worthy initiatives. As we outlined in our recent report, A Public Champion for the Public Realm, this position is essential to building a more livable future,” said Elizabeth Goldstein, President of the Municipal Art Society of New York.

"New York's 2.5 million bus riders need and deserve much more from our city streets," said Betsy Plum, Executive Director of Riders Alliance. "For too long, leaders have ceded our scarce public space to cars and drivers. The past year proved that bus riders carry our city, doing the essential work to beat COVID and keep New York strong. The City owes riders a great debt of gratitude and more space on the road. Thanks to our partners at Transportation Alternatives for leading this visionary campaign for fairer, safer streets."

“El Puente applauds the timely advocacy of Transportations Alternatives with NYC 25x25,” said Marco A. Carrión, Executive Director of El Puente. "This report demands that those vying for New York City elected office look at our streets as a way to mitigate the unequal distribution of open space across every community, along with the consequences of that unequal distribution. This is without a doubt an equity issue, not just of open space but also the impacts that this disparity causes in air quality particularly in vulnerable communities of color which leads to acute health conditions, such as asthma, respiratory disease and ultimately premature death.

“Our streets continue to be built with the wrong priorities in mind. This leads to speeding and tragic traffic violence. Adopting the vision of NYC 25x25 will help us prevent crashes and make streets safer for all road users. We urge our next leaders to these bold and necessary steps to save lives on our streets,” said Irma Rosenblatt, Families for Safe Streets member.
"Through time, young people have been the ones to bring change, the ones who have looked past the challenges of the day to the wonder of tomorrow. Right now, the youth of New York City can see that our streets are broken, that they are deadly and unjust. But with our idealism, we can also look to a reimagined city, a city where space is given to people, not cars, and where our streets foster joy and life, not fear and death. NYC 25×25 is the future the Vision Zero Youth Council wants — and the future we all deserve," said Zane Walker, Co-Leader of Vision Zero Youth Council.

"The Flushing Chamber fully endorses NYC 25×25 and looks forward to collaborating with Transportation Alternatives to finally regain control of our public space and revive our local economy," stated John Choe, Executive Director of the Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce. "In Flushing, private interests have encroached on public space with devastating results. Luxury developers claim our waterfront and garage owners held our Main Street Busway hostage for months. Over the past decade, traffic violence has claimed 57 lives and resulted in more than 7000 serious injuries in Council District 20. Enough is enough. Let's restore power back to the everyday New Yorkers who live and work in our community.

“As the county with the worst health outcomes in New York State, our leaders must put communities and their needs first in the Bronx. By giving streets back to people as laid out in Transportation Alternatives’ ambitious plan, residents across the Bronx can have cleaner air, easier commutes, better access to jobs, and more green space,” said Charmaine Ruddock, MS, Project Director at Bronx Health REACH.

"Despite its history of being a car-centric borough, Staten Islanders are increasing their cycling and pedestrian activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even outdoor walks, including across the new Bayonne Bridge path, are becoming more prevalent amongst Latinx and immigrant communities. We need more opportunities, not less, to enjoy the outdoors and connect with New York City and the world. Our next mayor should commit to a robust policy and increase spending to build and improve infrastructure that will allow cyclists and pedestrians to move safely and freely across our city. The pandemic has changed the culture of Staten Island forever. We need a mayor that moves towards a future that has more options to move freely in and across our borough," said Yesenia Mata, Executive Director of La Colmena.

“Repurposing 25 percent of the City’s streets to increase pedestrian spaces would benefit all New Yorkers, including people with disabilities, seniors, and others with mobility impairments,” said Christopher Schuyler, Senior Staff Attorney to the Disability Justice Program with New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. “Currently, the City’s sidewalks and pedestrian spaces are narrow and often impassable for people with disabilities, a group which includes nearly 1 million New Yorkers. Especially now, as the City recovers from the Covid-19 crisis, improving the accessibility of the City’s pedestrian spaces will enable all New Yorkers to participate in the City’s rebuild — and fully enjoy its benefits!”

“We have long known street space is at a premium in New York City. NYC 25×25 is the right challenge for our City at the right time. By prioritizing people and their needs as laid out in our
Fourth Regional Plan — especially as we recover from the pandemic — we can ensure a more prosperous and equitable city for everyone,” said Tom Wright, President & CEO of Regional Plan Association.

“We’re proud to endorse Transportation Alternatives’ NYC 25x25 initiative. Attaining the goals outlined in TA’s NYC 25x25 platform will make New York a greener, healthier, more equitable city, and we need visionary leaders willing to rise to the challenge,” said Eric McClure, Executive Director of StreetsPAC.

"While we are behind many of our peer cities around the world when it comes to giving streets back to people, New York City, the NYC 25x25 plan gives our city the chance to once again be a leader in the US," said Felicia Park-Rogers, Director of Regional Infrastructure Projects for Tri-State Transportation Campaign. "A 21st century city is one that prioritizes people over private vehicles for the health and safety of its citizens, not to mention the quality of life of the community. It's time for NYC to become a model city with streets and sidewalks that are accessible to all — whether on a bike, in a wheelchair, walking with a stroller or a toddler or a cane. With NYC 25x25 we have the vision and the tools, what we need now is the commitment to bring this potential to reality."

“Reports of New York City’s death are greatly exaggerated. But the city’s recovery can be accelerated and its future made far brighter by a sweeping overhaul of how we design and use public space. Thanks to Transportation Alternatives for a forceful call for change for our space between buildings,” said Jon Orcutt, Advocacy Director at Bike New York.

“The cards are all on the table: a drastic surge in the need for more open space; the most consequential election year in recent history; and major advancements in innovation in design and planning. There is an undeniable opening across sectors to redefine what parks and open space mean for our communities — especially those as dense as New York City. Reimagining our streets is that opportunity” said Katie Denny Horowitz, Executive Director of North Brooklyn Parks Alliance.

"New York City's response to the coronavirus pandemic demonstrated that changes to our streetscape that officials often described as impossible are not only doable but can be carried out in a matter of weeks,” says Ellen McDermott, Co-Executive Director of Project for Public Spaces. "They are popular, and they improve people's everyday lives. What if we applied the same kind of flexibility and creativity we used to support restaurants and open streets in 2020 to reimagining our street space at large? Especially when it comes to taking steps that address the many other crises facing low-income communities and communities of color, this shouldn't be a hard decision."

"Play is vital to children’s health and well-being, yet opportunities for play are not distributed equitably. In New York City, where access to space is limited, we must use this moment to demand that opportunities for play are rebuilt into the fabric of our city,” said Rebecca Faulkner Ph.D, Executive Director of play:groundNYC.
"The 25x25 initiative is aligned with BRIC's mission to empower and support communities in all of their artistic and creative endeavors. It strives to create a deeper connection between people and their neighborhoods' well-being by unlocking the potential of public spaces,” said Kristina Newman-Scott, President of BRIC.

“New York City has fewer acres of green space per person than almost any other major U.S. city. Creatively repurposing 25 percent of our street space by 2025 will help us meet the needs of all New Yorkers — especially those who live in majority non-white communities where parks are 3.2 times smaller and serve 1.4 times more people per open-space acre in majority-white communities,” said Carter Strickland, NYS Director of the Trust for Public Land.

“We're excited to join this citywide coalition to transform New York City's streets for people,” said Aileen Fuchs, President & CEO of Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden. “Greater citywide access to alternative and affordable transit options can only help expand the reach of Snug Harbor's cultural and educational programs and open our gates to new communities throughout Staten Island, New York City and visitors from around the world.”

"25x25 is the pragmatic platform our city needs to speed our city's recovery while also righting the historical spatial, racial, and public health inequities so brutally exposed by the pandemic. We're happy to stand with TA so ensure our electeds do not miss this opportunity to remake New York City as a better place for everyone,” said Mike Lydon, Principal & Co-Founder of Street Plans.

"While the scale of the work to be done might seem daunting at first, city leaders already have the tools they need to be able to retrofit city streets in the very short term. Examples abound of other large impact changes that happened seemingly overnight around the city, the benefits of which have been widely acknowledged. Continuing to scale these efforts up — and ensuring that they are equitably implemented — should be seen as a moral imperative by city leaders," said Tony Garcia, Principal & Co-Founder of Street Plans.

“If budgets are moral documents, our streets are sonnets to a city’s inhabitants. Either they sing in a chorus of laughter, enjoyment, and safety, or reverberate in industrial frustration and danger. Decade after decade, we’ve heard the agony of frustration and witnessed the pain of unsafe streets. We need public spaces for the century we are in, not the one that ended 20 years ago,” said Noel Hidalgo, Executive Director of BetaNYC. “NYC 25x25 charts out what we need for our city’s streets to reflect our values in a time of climate crisis, public health uncertainty, and fight for justice. It provides proper public space equity across all of neighborhoods, and sets the tone for how New Yorkers of all abilities can move through the 21st Century. Today, we sing in harmony — this land was made for you and me.”

"It is time to truly address inequities by dedicating more real estate to people who need it the most. We endorse this ambitious but necessary plan which will improve the live of front line workers, low income communities, commuters, seniors and families,” said Christine Berthet, Co-Founder of CHEKPEDS.
"The pandemic permanently changed our relationship to public space. After last year, we all understand in a visceral way that our mental and physical well being depends on safe, accessible, and welcoming streets. Van Alen Institute stands with NYC 25x25 — it’s time to create the city we want, by using our streets in ways that serve the majority of New Yorkers,” said Deborah Marton, Executive Director of Van Alen Institute.

“The pandemic has exposed and highlighted many injustices done to low-income communities, especially immigrant communities. We saw first hand that clean and climate-friendly modes of transportation such as bicycles, e-bikes & e-scooters have not only cleared our skies of pollution but provided safe and affordable alternatives to expensive cars, SUVs, and trucks. Now, more than ever, we need to expand the infrastructure and storage for these environmentally friendly modes of transportation,” said Kashif Hussain of the Pakistani American Youth Society.

"Reclaiming space from cars will support short distance trips to local destinations and is part of reimagining the economy around wellbeing. New York can join cities like Jakarta, Paris, Mexico City and Boston in making more space for people, centering access to opportunities and investments to public life in neighborhoods as a recovery response to the urgent crises of public health, social inequality and planetary sustainability,” said Michael Kodransky, U.S. Director at the Institute for Transportation & Development Policy.

“The IPA stands with Transportation Alternatives and its partners, adding our voice to the call for the next NYC Mayor to prioritize our public realm by taking back our streets and creating a more equitable and resilient city,” said Jonathan Kirschenfeld, Founder of the Institute for Public Architecture.

"Early in the pandemic, we saw better streets, cleaner air, and the possibility of a better city for all. We need to create a future with fewer cars and more streets for people. If not now, when?" said John Massengale AIA CNU, Chair of CNU NYC

“We owe it to our kids to make our streets safer and our cities more sustainable, and urban design and street features make our cities safer. Kids are using the streets constantly, whether walking, traveling by car or public transit, or by bike or on wheels with KidicalMassNYC. But kids are so much more vulnerable because they are much smaller. Taking back space on the public street allows for traffic calming design and better sight lines resulting in safer streets and healthier kids,” said Hilda Cohen of KidicalMassNYC.

"We have a literal free-rider problem in New York City and NYC 25x25 is a solution to that problem. For far too long we have inequitably and inefficiently valued the public space we call streets, putting accommodation of commuters and car owners above even the best interest of our children. Bold thinking means reimagining our City, and we must start with our pavement. New York is only as strong as our communities, and our communities will be made stronger by NYC 25x25," said James McIntyre, Founder of the Queens Bike Initiative.
"Street planning and design need to embody the needs and values of people who live here, protecting us from pay-to-play access to a high quality of life," says Josh Bisker, Executive Director of the Mechanical Gardens Bike Coop. "Streets are for New Yorkers who need space to congregate, ruminate, and be outside, to share responsibilities for childcare and eldercare, to play music and hold festivals, and to experience freedom from harassment, harm, and control. Streets are where we live, not where we pass through -- designing them only around 'efficient transportation' and parking is like forcing people to live in a house that's only as big as a thin single bed: shortsighted to the point of ridiculousness, it cheats us out of an enriching, safe, and prosperous home. We can and must do better."

“We want equitable streets for all people not just for vehicles and vehicle owners,” said Graham Weinstein, Founder & CEO of the OutCycling Network.

“In a year of limited travel, our top destinations have been at our front door - neighborhood streets and sidewalks were cited by 86% of New Yorkers as the top public space visited in a survey conducted by Gehl spring 2020. Rather than solely move us from A to B, the COVID-19 pandemic spotlights streets as essential open spaces to socialize, play, support local business, and maintain our health. It's time we treated them as such and redesigned them for people,” said Julia Day, Director & Team Lead, Gehl NY.

"Year over year, we've seen monumental increases in the number of bikers that we, Unlimited Biking, host in New York City. People are looking for outdoor activities, and for more ways to interact with the city space around them. Bringing that space back to the people is crucial for long term sustainability,” said Annie Zou, Director of Sales at Unlimited Biking.

"New York City's streets are the key to New Yorker’s health and wellbeing. We have an opportunity to change the script and focus of great street design for people. With 25x25 roadways used today for parking cars and speeding traffic will be the exception, rather than the rule,” said Claire Weisz FAIA, Principal-in-Charge, WXY Studio.

“It’s remarkable what a profound effect safe, equitable streets have on health, business and happiness, said Susan Mocarski, Founder and Designer of Cleverhood. “We applaud Transportation Alternatives’ long-term dedication to improving urban neighborhoods for everyone.”

“Loisaida has some of the worst air, highest cancer and asthma rates of the city, being located next to the FDR and Con Ed plant. Our neighborhood desperately needs more car-free space for the community to breathe and stretch its legs, and Open Streets are only a start,” said Sophie Maerowitz, Co-Founder, Loisaida Open Streets Community Coalition.

“For Friends of Cooper Park, the Open Street adjacent to our park has opened our eyes to the amount of public space that we dedicate to the storage and movement of cars. Reclaiming and reimagining street space for people is key to an equitable recovery for New York City. We hope that every mayoral candidate charts out a path to meet the goals of NYC 25x25 by prioritizing a
high quality public realm and all the benefits that would provide for the health and wellbeing of all New Yorkers,” said Paul Kelterborn of Friends of Cooper Park.

“The Open Streets program has been great. It has reduced speeding on our street and created a safe place for people to exercise, teach their kids to ride bikes, and skate. It is well used and well loved,” said Anthony Goicolea, President of the Sharon Street Alley Association. “It seems all public space in my neighborhood is given to parking for a small minority of drivers. If that space were converted to bike parking, trash corrals and loading zones, the street would work so much better for everyone.” said Melodie Bryant of the West22ndOpenStreet.

###