

Street Design Policy

Planning and designing streets in accord with the goals and principles of this section will contribute to a consistent level of quality and functionality for New York City's streets. This policy, along with the project's planning framework (see Chapter 1), should be used to resolve conflicting priorities for limited street space.

Goals

At over a quarter of the city’s land area, streets are a critical part of New York City’s infrastructure. They provide the bulk of its public space and have wide-ranging impacts on both its environmental health and the quality of life of its neighborhoods.

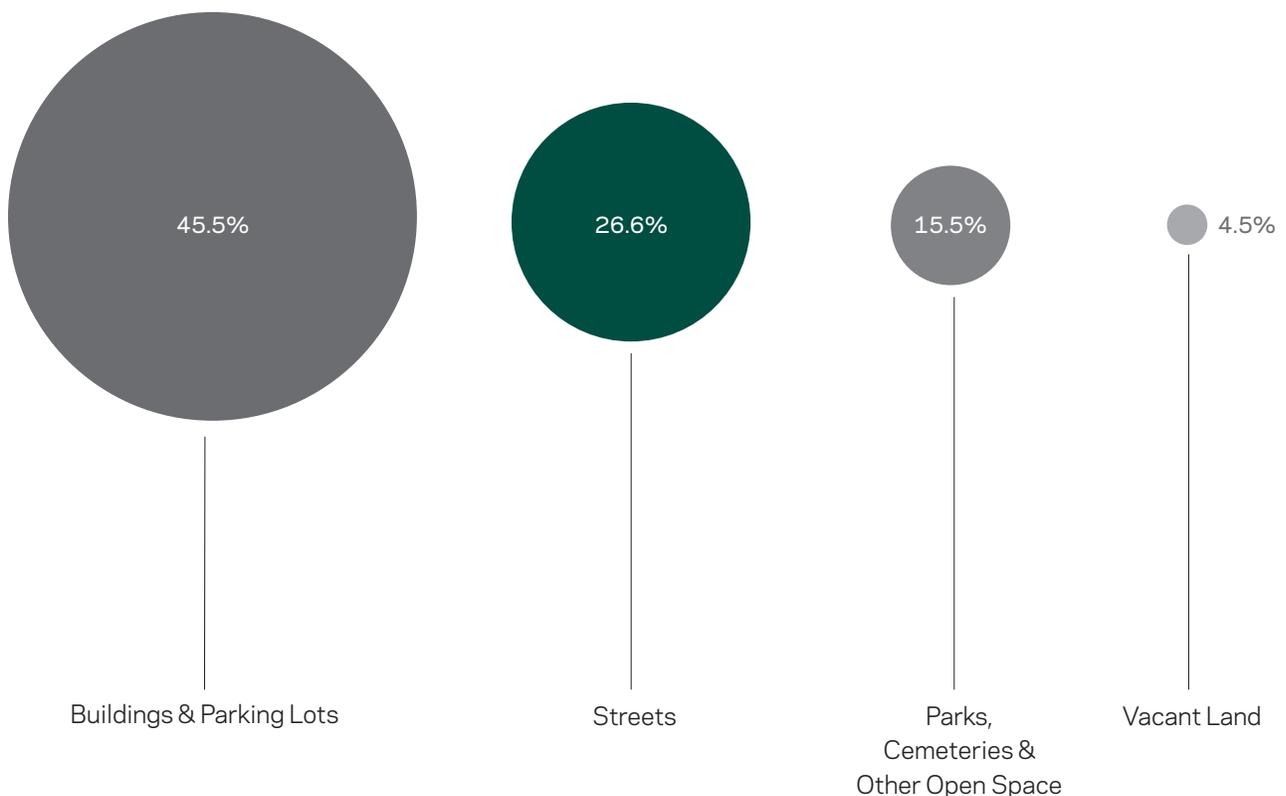
Accordingly, it is the policy of NYC DOT that the following goals and principles be adhered to when designing city streets.

Overall goals are:

- 1 Design for Safety:** Move people and goods safely.
- 2 Design for Access and Mobility:** Accommodate all street users, giving priority to the most energy- and space-efficient modes.
- 3 Design for Context:** Respond to neighborhood character.
- 4 Design for Livability:** Create a vibrant public realm with high-quality public spaces.
- 5 Design for Sustainability:** Contribute to a healthier and more sustainable environment.
- 6 Design for Visual Excellence:** Create coherent and harmonious streetscapes.
- 7 Design for Cost-Effectiveness:** Provide the greatest possible value to the public.

Percent of New York City Land Area by Use

Streets make up over a quarter of the city’s land area. (Source: PlaNYC Sustainable Stormwater Management Plan, 2008)



Principles



1

Design for Safety

The city's efforts to enhance street safety through engineering, education and enforcement have helped contribute to the lowest number of pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries since the city began keeping such statistics in 1910. Designing safe streets will continue to be the first priority for NYC DOT.

- o **Prioritize safety** for all street users, particularly more vulnerable groups (children, the elderly, those with disabilities) and more vulnerable modes (walking, bicycling).
- o **Design streets serving primarily local trips for slower speeds** to reduce crashes and injuries and discourage cut-through traffic.
- o **Research, test, and evaluate innovative new safety treatments**, particularly those successfully adopted in other cities.



2

Design for Access and Mobility

With a growing population and limited right-of-way, street designs should provide efficient ways to move people and goods and improve the economic vitality of the city.

- o **Prioritize walking, bicycling, and transit** by providing safe, accessible, convenient, and comfortable facilities for these modes, particularly on designated routes and at critical network connections.
- o **Accommodate truck traffic and deliveries** while minimizing their negative impacts on neighborhoods.
- o **Strive to meet accessibility standards.**
- o **Accommodate emergency vehicle access.**



3

Design for Context

Streets help define the character of neighborhoods. Their design should refer to the surrounding context, including the history, land uses, and nearby landmarks.

- **Preserve the unique character of neighborhoods.**
- **Support connections to adjacent land uses** by providing gathering spaces and pedestrian access to and from major destinations.
- **Design local streets to be green, traffic-calmed environments** that encourage walking, bicycling, and recreational activities.
- **Design through-streets to balance the accommodation of traffic** with safety and community needs.



4

Design for Livability

Beyond their use for moving people and goods, streets comprise an extensive network of public open spaces that can facilitate social, civic, and economic interactions.

- **Expand usable public open space** by reallocating underutilized roadway space to create pedestrian plazas, expanded sidewalks, corner and mid-block curb extensions, and opportunities for green planted areas.
- **Design streets to encourage physical activity** for all ages and populations by making walking, bicycling, and transit attractive and convenient.
- **Include public seating** when there is an appropriate maintenance partner.



5

Design for Sustainability

Streets present an extraordinary opportunity to improve the environmental health of the city.

- **Collaborate across agencies in testing new materials** so that our streets are constructed in an environmentally sound way.
- **Minimize impermeable surfaces and maximize vegetation** on streets. Street designs should use stormwater source controls and other best management practices (BMPs) wherever possible.
- **Reduce the heat absorption of streets** by maximizing tree canopy cover and utilizing paving materials with high Solar Reflectance Index (SRI) values when possible.



6

Design for Visual Excellence

Great cities are defined by the visual quality of their streets. New York City's streets should be designed to the highest aesthetic standards possible, maintaining consistency in their character in order to achieve a coherent and harmonious streetscape.

- **Improve the coherence of streets** by using consistent materials.
- **Consider long term maintenance.** Materials should be selected that are readily maintained and durable over an extended period of time.



7

Design for Cost-Effectiveness

Reconstruction of city streets requires substantial financial resources. The list of worthwhile projects competing for a limited pool of funding is extensive. It is therefore important to ensure that street designs are cost-effective.

- **Consider full lifecycle costs and benefits** when developing street designs. Besides their initial capital outlays, the measurable long-term economic, environmental, safety, health, and other benefits of well-designed, well-managed streets should be taken into consideration.
- **Design streets to meet the city's future needs.** Streets are reconstructed very infrequently. Consideration of future conditions and needs should be part of the planning process.
- **Implement a clear and consistent design review process** to streamline project review.