

REALM OF POSSIBILITY

15 Ways NYC Is Improving Public Space
For New Yorkers

June 2024





Letter From The Mayor

To my fellow New Yorkers,

The public realm — our parks, plazas, streets, and sidewalks — plays a vital role in our dense urban life. These spaces have become infrastructure for community — providing New Yorkers space for recreation, relaxation, and social interaction in our cityscape, building the physical and social fabric of our great city.

The public realm is also a fundamental part of our future —a canvas for economic development, climate resiliency, and self-determination. Increasing tree canopies and green space provides vulnerable communities with areas for relaxation and recreation, and also creates nature-based solutions to address extreme climate events. Open streets and open restaurants support local business and generate economic growth in all five boroughs.

However, we know that our city still faces challenges in maximizing its public realm's full potential. Lengthy procurement processes prevent the timely delivery of open space projects to underserved communities. Regulatory frameworks encourage building owners to leave scaffolding sheds standing for long periods of time, creating clunky eyesores and limiting the use of the sidewalk. Too many of the city's privately-owned public spaces remain closed or inaccessible, blocking access to a potential 3.8 million square feet of accessible space for community.

To meet these challenges head on and fully capitalize on the public realm's potential, New York City is releasing its first ever Public Realm Report: 15 Ways NYC is Improving Public Space for New Yorkers—to ensure that the city is making the most out of its public space and increasing accessibility and usability for all New Yorkers.

We are mobilizing across three categories of public realm initiatives:

- Improving the way people experience public space throughout the city, by increasing access, greening, and amenities.
- Increasing our public space footprint across all five boroughs, by delivering more quality public space in less time.
- Cutting red tape for partners who help activate and maintain public space, by leveraging resources for residents and neighborhood organizations to utilize local public spaces more seamlessly.

Turning our vision for the public realm into reality requires a holistic approach that blends the past, present, and future. It involves honoring the deep legacy of open space within our city's history, improving the modern-day experience of the public realm through a variety of inclusive and innovative measures, and building a substantive road map for the future of the city's public space.

This is how we are creating a more vibrant, accessible, and lasting public realm.

Sincerely,

Eric L. Adams
Mayor



Letter From The Chief Public Realm Officer

Dear fellow New Yorkers,

Our public realm makes New York a better city—providing the informal living rooms outside of our small apartments for us to connect, to relax, to enjoy the best parts of being a member of this 8.8 million-person community. It provides the glue that keeps people visiting, staying, raising their families.

If there's a recipe for the Big Apple, our public space is the secret sauce.

Never was that clearer than during the pandemic. New Yorkers had an opportunity to envision what the future of our public spaces might look like, with art and music in our parks and plazas, and clean, safe places in which to eat al fresco. We were also reminded of what wasn't serving us, from construction sheds up way too long to too few public bathrooms there for when we needed to go.

We are addressing all this and more. Our public space provides the backbone for so many of the priorities of this administration: economic recovery, climate resiliency, and improving quality of life for New Yorkers from 9 to 99 years old.

We are focusing on the communities that need public space most—and making it easier for our partners to do what they do best, keeping our neighborhoods clean and vibrant with visual art and performances that represent the spirit of their communities.

Three key areas define our public space work:

- **Hardware:** We are expanding and improving our public space footprint across the five boroughs and working to deliver public realm projects on time and on budget.
- **Software:** Public spaces are only as good as they feel; we rely on partners outside government to help maintain and program them. We are cutting red tape for partners to work with city government to improve the quality of our public spaces.
- **'Org-ware':** Over a dozen agencies and mayoral offices have some hand in the oversight of spaces between buildings in New York City. Coordination, planning, and project management are crucial to ensure quality. We are gathering agencies, elevating issues, providing direction, and sharing successes as we execute all these initiatives.

From managing critical public space projects like Chinatown Connections, Broadway Junction, and Queensway to rolling out the country's largest outdoor dining program, the Public Realm Team under the leadership of Mayor Eric Adams and Deputy Mayor for Operations Meera Joshi has been able to make a difference to the way people live, work, play, and experience New York City.

Together, we will leave the public realm more beautiful and joyful than before.

Can't wait to see you outside,

Ya-Ting Liu
Public Realm Officer

Executive Summary

Improve the Way People Experience Public Space Throughout the City



1. Implement the country's largest outdoor dining program

Created in crisis, our city's outdoor dining program positively changed how we engage with our streetscape; but it's time for the program to mature — to ensure that it is safe, clean and cohesive and adds to the vibrancy of streetscape.

New, pre-approved kits of accessible and affordable roadway setups will ensure that outdoor dining is equitable across the boroughs and successful in the long term — by creating high-quality, pest-resistant, movable structures, while allowing New Yorkers to continue enjoying New York's dining scene al fresco.

2. Remove longstanding sidewalk sheds

Sidewalk sheds are necessary to keep New Yorkers safe from unsafe building façades, but they detract from the look and feel of our streetscape. The rules governing sidewalk sheds have incentivized property owners to delay conducting façade repairs, leaving sidewalk sheds covering our sidewalks for extended periods.

The City will advance proposals to ensure the expeditious removal of sheds and reimagine a new, more attractive sidewalk shed for the future.

3. Plant thousands of new street trees at a lower cost

Street trees keep our neighborhoods cool and improve health outcomes but planting trees on New York City sidewalks, like many other City construction efforts, can be cost- and time-intensive.

The City plans to reduce costs and accelerate street tree planting through innovations such as launching an in-house tree planting team. The City is on track to plant 16,500 street trees citywide in FY 24, with over half planned for the most heat vulnerable neighborhoods.

4. Increase access to public restrooms

When you gotta go, you gotta go. When you can't find a bathroom, that's a problem.

The City will install and upgrade approximately 82 public parks restrooms and site 14 automatic self-cleaning toilets across the five boroughs. The City also created a public restroom map to increase awareness of the nearly 1,000 existing public restrooms in New York City.

5. Prioritize our curb space for best public use

Most curbs around the city are dedicated to free street parking, a fact of New York City life that has not been revisited in decades.

The City's Curb Management Plan will prioritize the use of curb space with maximum public benefit. This will be achieved in part by working with Business Improvement Districts on the "Smart Curbs" initiative which will rethink curb regulations and programming from scratch.



Deliver More Quality Public Space in Less Time in All Five Boroughs



6. Create a Public Space Incubator to complete public space capital projects in underserved communities within a 5-year timeline

Far too often, the City's capital projects take too long to complete and cost more than originally budgeted.

A new Public Space Incubator will expedite the building of public space projects in communities that are most in need, leveraging new capital delivery methods to cut down on both time and costs.

7. Establish a Public Space Avengers interagency team to better coordinate planning and project delivery

In NYC, it is too common to see a road get ripped up by one entity, paved over and ripped up again by another. Better coordination and support for City capital agencies can assist in planning and aligning projects without unnecessary disruption for the public.

The Public Space Avengers, made up of agencies responsible for work above and below ground, will combine efforts to shave off time and deliver projects faster, creating an outsized impact from day one.

8. Ensure privately-owned public spaces are open and inviting to New Yorkers

Privately-owned public spaces (POPS) can be a crucial tool in giving New Yorkers access to public space near where they live and work. But not all of New York City's 598 POPS are accessible for New Yorkers to enjoy.

The City will support incentives to maximize public space, while ramping up enforcement efforts, including an audit of out-of-compliance POPS in 2024, to keep POPS open for New York.

9. Open more schoolyards to the public after hours

Creating new parks in a dense urban environment takes time: transforming schoolyards to publicly-accessible playgrounds is a key strategy to expand the city's public space footprint, especially in communities that lack open public areas.

The City will address gaps in access to parks in the highest-need areas by opening more school playgrounds to community members after hours.

10. Establish NYC as the most skate-friendly city in the world

New York City is experiencing a post-pandemic skateboarding boom. Skateparks offer inclusive spaces to perfect skills on inline skates, skateboards, and bikes.

The City will create four world class skate parks in the Bronx and Brooklyn to provide new and improved spaces for New Yorkers to have fun and build community.



Cut Red Tape for Partners Who Help Activate and Maintain Public Spaces



11. Establish a Public Space Academy to train partners on best practices

From parks to streets and plazas, the City relies heavily on partners to activate public spaces and bring them to life with creative programming, but there can be a steep learning curve for partners navigating the various rules and requirements.

The City will establish a Public Space Academy to provide technical assistance and resources to Public Space Partners – like plaza partners, BIDs, Open Streets, parks, and community-based organizations.

12. Streamline permitting process for public space activations

The City's street activity permitting process can be long and arduous; this can especially impact smaller organizers with limited capacity and staff.

The City will work to improve the user experience of obtaining a permit for street activations.



13. Reduce legal and financial burden of Public Space Partners maintaining and activating public spaces

The City often requires partners to take on onerous costs and risks for maintaining the City's public spaces.

The City will work to revise maintenance agreements for our streetscapes and parks so that partners can focus resources on the maintenance and activation of spaces within their communities.

14. Mobilize a Clean Team to provide on-demand cleaning and maintenance efforts for critical public space connectors

BIDs and other neighborhood organizations provide essential maintenance to commercial corridors across the five boroughs, but there are areas that require additional support to maintain consistently.

A new Public Space Clean Team will serve areas with smaller, lower-resourced BIDs and corridors without BIDs to conduct targeted cleanups across the city.



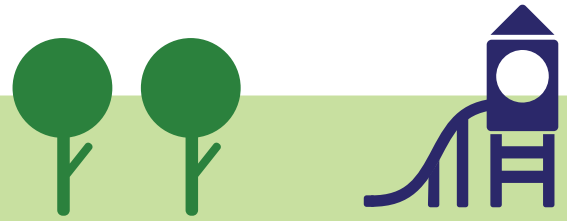
15. Establish metrics for measuring impact of public space projects and activations

The City has an abundance of data related to the built environment, but none of it is unified to show the economic, environmental, and public health impact of our public space.

A new Public Space Clean Team will provide targeted neighborhood cleanups for spaces that provide critical connections to neighborhoods to ensure all of our spaces are clean, vibrant, and safe.

Public Realm By The Numbers

2,000 public parks



1,000+ public playgrounds



30,000 acres of parkland



75 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

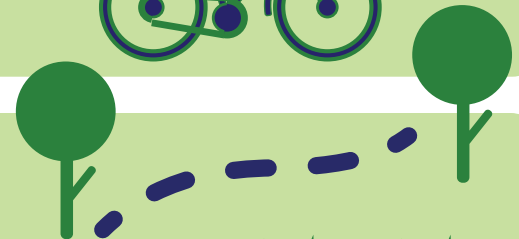
70+ public plazas



1,500 miles of bike lanes



150+ miles of citywide greenways



595 Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)



666,000 street trees

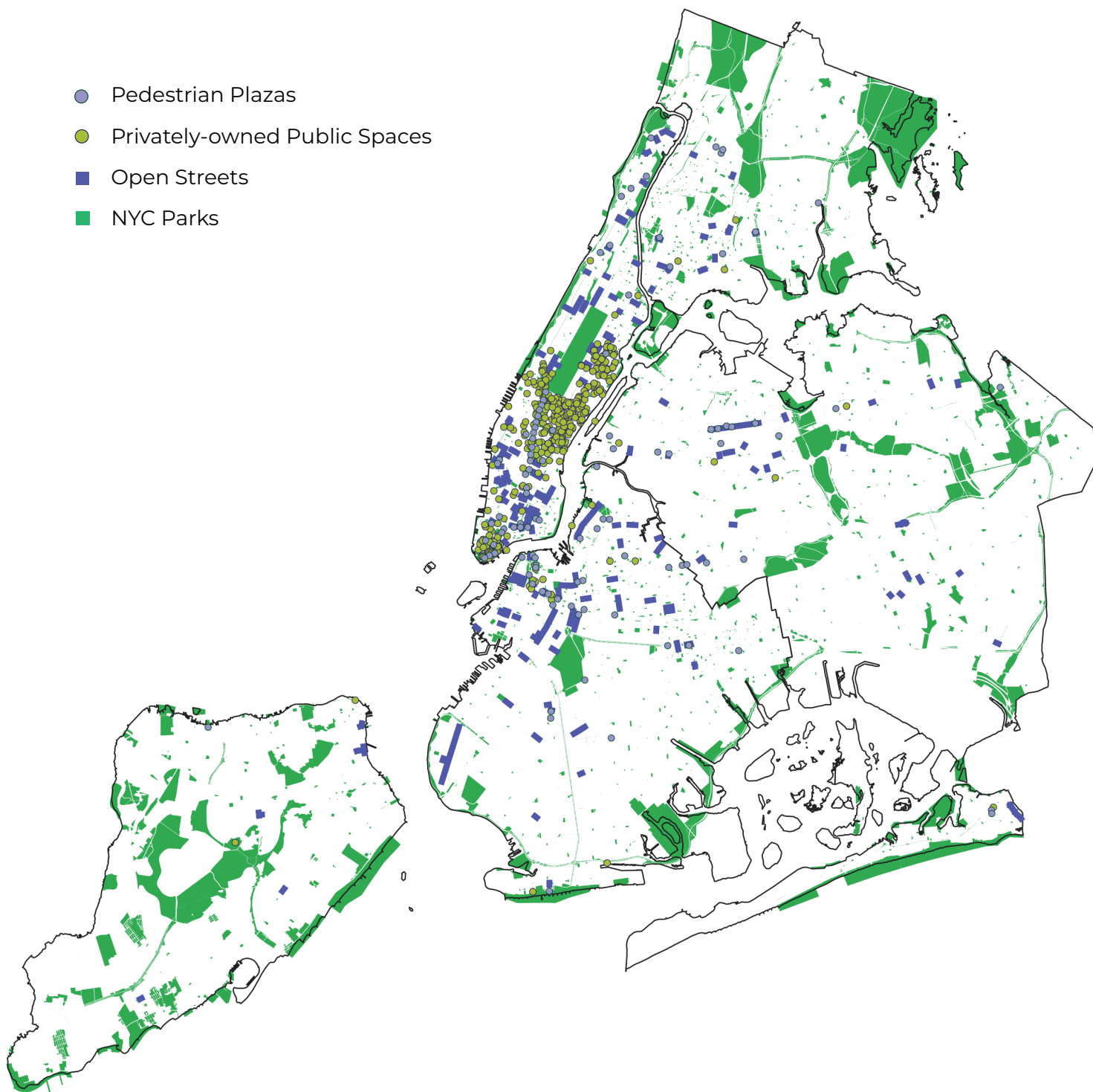


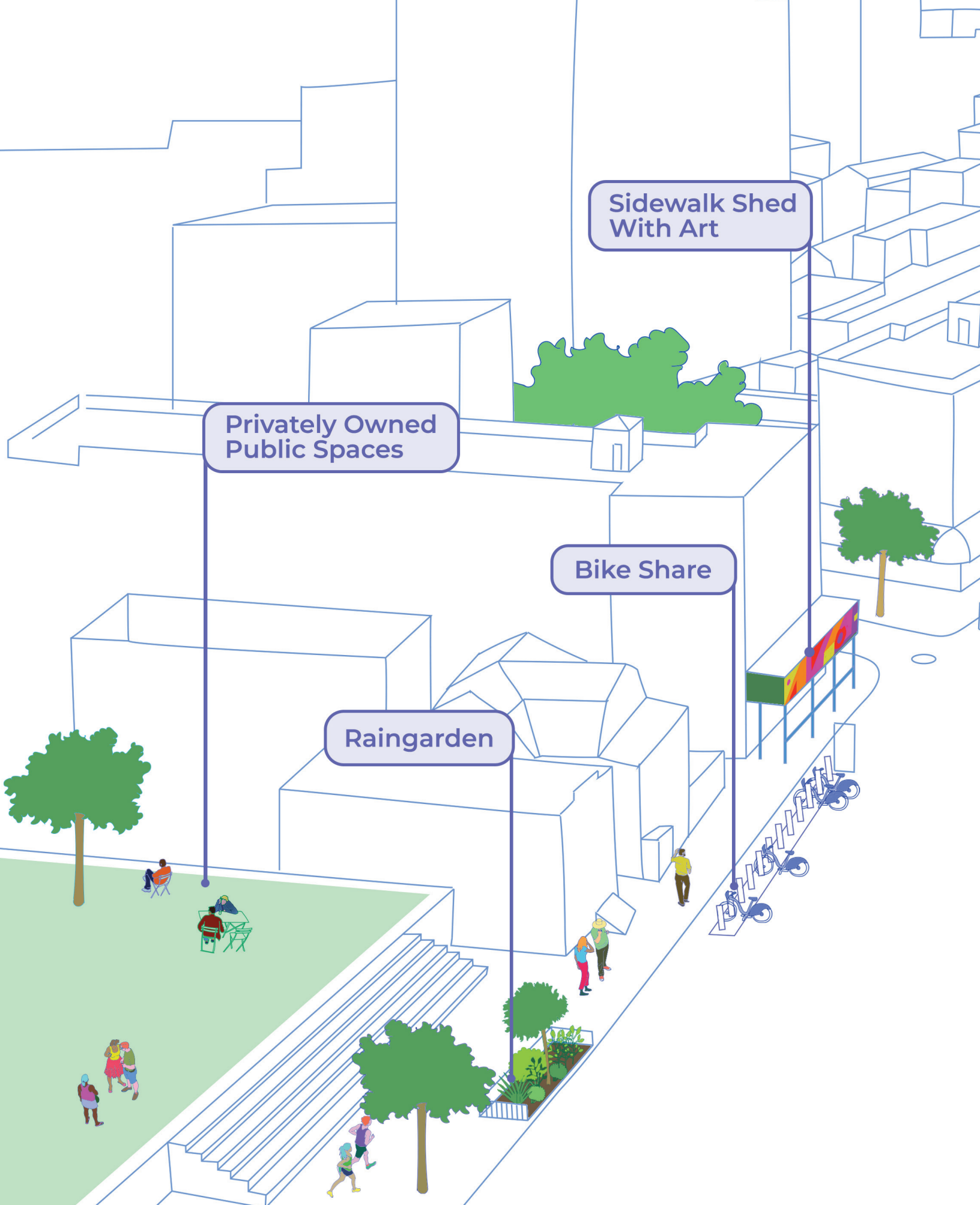
Nearly **1,000** public restrooms



Map of Public Spaces in New York City

- Pedestrian Plazas
- Privately-owned Public Spaces
- Open Streets
- NYC Parks





Privately Owned
Public Spaces

Sidewalk Shed
With Art

Bike Share

Rain garden

Improve the Way People Experience Public Space Throughout the City

1. Implement the country's largest outdoor dining program

Our city's outdoor dining program was a lifeline for New Yorkers at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which more than 12,000 roadway dining set ups were created across the five boroughs. Outdoor dining positively changed how New Yorkers engage with our streetscape and saved 100,000 jobs.

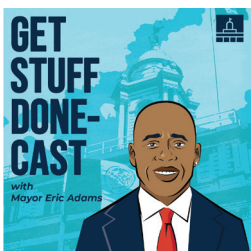
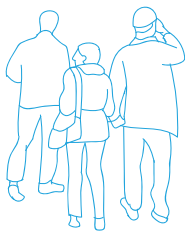
But now, many dining sheds have been abandoned, and others are in varied states of disrepair. Established without clear guidelines or protocols, too many have become an eyesore instead of the oasis they were originally intended to be.

There is nothing inviting about shabby sheds. It's time for the program to mature — to ensure that it is safe, clean and cohesive and allows city services to continue to function. New York City is launching the first-ever permanent outdoor dining program in the country, with clear design guidelines and tested, pre-approved and customizable roadway setups that are affordable for businesses.

The New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) opened enrollment for the permanent program in Q1 of 2024, with the first new outdoor dining setups appearing on city streets as early as summer 2024 with the first full season of Dining Out kicking off in 2025.

The City will improve access for restaurant owners to participate and create a cohesive, safe, clean and beautiful outdoor dining program for all New Yorkers to enjoy.

[See more about Dining Out NYC here](#)



[Listen to Chief Public Realm Officer Ya-Ting Liu's interview with Mayor Adams on the **Get Stuff Done-Cast**](#)

Open Restaurants, an innovative idea that blossomed during the COVID-19 pandemic, helped keep a critical component of New York City's economic engine in place. Now, with a new bill that was signed into law by Mayor Eric Adams, NYC will reinvent outdoor dining citywide.



Designing the Dining Out NYC Set-Up Menu

The cornerstone of the City’s permanent outdoor dining program is its new “Set-Up Menu” — cohesive, customizable, and interchangeable dining setup components designed to bring a more seamless look and feel to outdoor dining in NYC. In partnership with designer WXY and fabricator SITU, the City worked with four restaurants to erect different prototypes on diverse street typologies and evaluated these prototypes for their performance. The final prototypes are designed to comply with the permanent program, keep away unwanted pests, and ensure easy installation and storage for business owners. DOT shared tested, pre-approved drawings (the final “menu”) with the public in early 2024.



2. Remove longstanding sidewalk sheds

Sidewalk sheds are a reality in New York: building owners are required to protect the public from unsafe façades and falling debris during construction, façade repair, and maintenance. But too many building owners leave them up in perpetuity without addressing the underlying repairs that the façades require.

The existing regulatory framework incentivizes property owners to delay conducting façade repairs. Instead they leave sidewalk sheds up for years, even decades, as part of the cost of doing business. There are about 8,937 active, permitted construction sheds with an average age of nearly 482 days.

In July 2023, Mayor Adams announced a sweeping package of policy proposals for sidewalk sheds that will remove these eyesores from city streets, while redesigning and reimagining the ones we need. The administration is working with City Council on graduated fines to help encourage the removal of these stubborn eyesores, improving lighting and creating new, more attractive designs for future installations. New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) will also explore options for owners who are unable to afford repairs but want to comply, such as phased shed removal and penalty waivers.

But the City must practice what it preaches: an interagency taskforce, led by the Deputy Mayor of Operations, will task city agencies with removing their own longstanding sheds, and increasing the use of art on longstanding sidewalk sheds at New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) buildings. These strategies will help improve public safety and quality of life on our sidewalks.



Emmanuel Lemi

3. Plant thousands of new street trees at a lower cost

Over 666,000 street trees contribute to our city's urban tree canopy. With the PlaNYC goal of 30% tree canopy coverage, there are opportunities to plant more street trees, especially in underserved communities most vulnerable to extreme heat. However, planting trees on New York City sidewalks can be cost- and time-intensive, with one street tree once costing up to \$3,550. The City is implementing a suite of initiatives to keep up with the demand, increase our tree canopy, and make our neighborhoods cooler.

The Adams Administration committed \$136M for new tree planting in 2022, enabling New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) to increase the rate of tree planting, focusing on neighborhoods with high Heat Vulnerability Index scores. To make the money go further, faster, NYC Parks is:

1. Launching an in-house tree planting pilot program in Spring 2024, projected to decrease the cost of tree planting and get trees into the ground quicker
2. Encouraging city tree planting contractors to use the City's soil bank to reduce the need for contractors to buy soil from elsewhere
3. Increasing bid competitiveness, including expanding the number of M/WBE contractors conducting this work

With the help of these initiatives, the cost of tree planting has already decreased by 7% from \$3,550 per tree in fiscal year 2021 to \$3,300 in fiscal year 2024. NYC Parks also projects 16,500 street trees will be planted in fiscal year 2024, higher than the 14,834 street trees planted in fiscal year 2023 and the 5-year tree planting average of 9,898 per year.



Our Infrastructure is Doing Double-Duty

Increasing the tree canopy is just the start in the Adams Administration's efforts to protect local neighborhoods from the impacts of urban heat and rain events. It is also ensuring that infrastructure investments do "double-duty" — trees, rain gardens and green roofs are built not just to beautify and cool communities, but to help absorb and store stormwater before it enters the sewer system.

In coordination with Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), DOT, NYC Parks, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), New York City Department of Design and Construction (DDC), and other agencies, the City has installed more than 13,000 rain gardens and other green infrastructure assets as well as 94 bluebelts in the public realm. These assets improve New York Harbor water quality and reduce flooding, especially in environmental justice neighborhoods. In the last two years, DEP has built over 795 rain gardens and 619 infiltration basins city-wide. There are plans to add 1,600 more green infrastructure assets through 2025. In total, New York City Green Infrastructure Program is managing over 1.5 billion gallons of stormwater per year, which is over 2,300 Olympic swimming pools filled with water. We are finding opportunities to implement green infrastructure into as many public spaces as possible.



4. Increase access to public restrooms

New York has got to go! Access to public restrooms is an equity issue that this administration is committed to addressing. New York City has nearly 1,000 public restrooms; we can do better.

And Ur in Luck! Through collaboration with NYC Parks, DDC, and New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC), the City will continue to build and complete 82 public restroom projects in parks across all five boroughs over the next five years.

- The City will install 46 new parks restrooms — five of these new restrooms will pilot modular technology and six of them will use design-build to speed up project delivery and cost
- The City will also renovate 36 existing restrooms in parks citywide

The City created an official Google map layer (on.nyc.gov/restroom) and Open Data source to display all public restrooms in New York City — including restrooms in parks, libraries, and the subway system - to increase awareness and improve access to existing public restroom facilities in New York City.

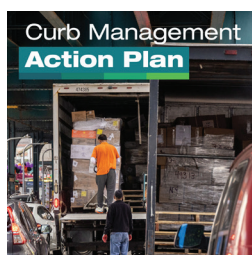
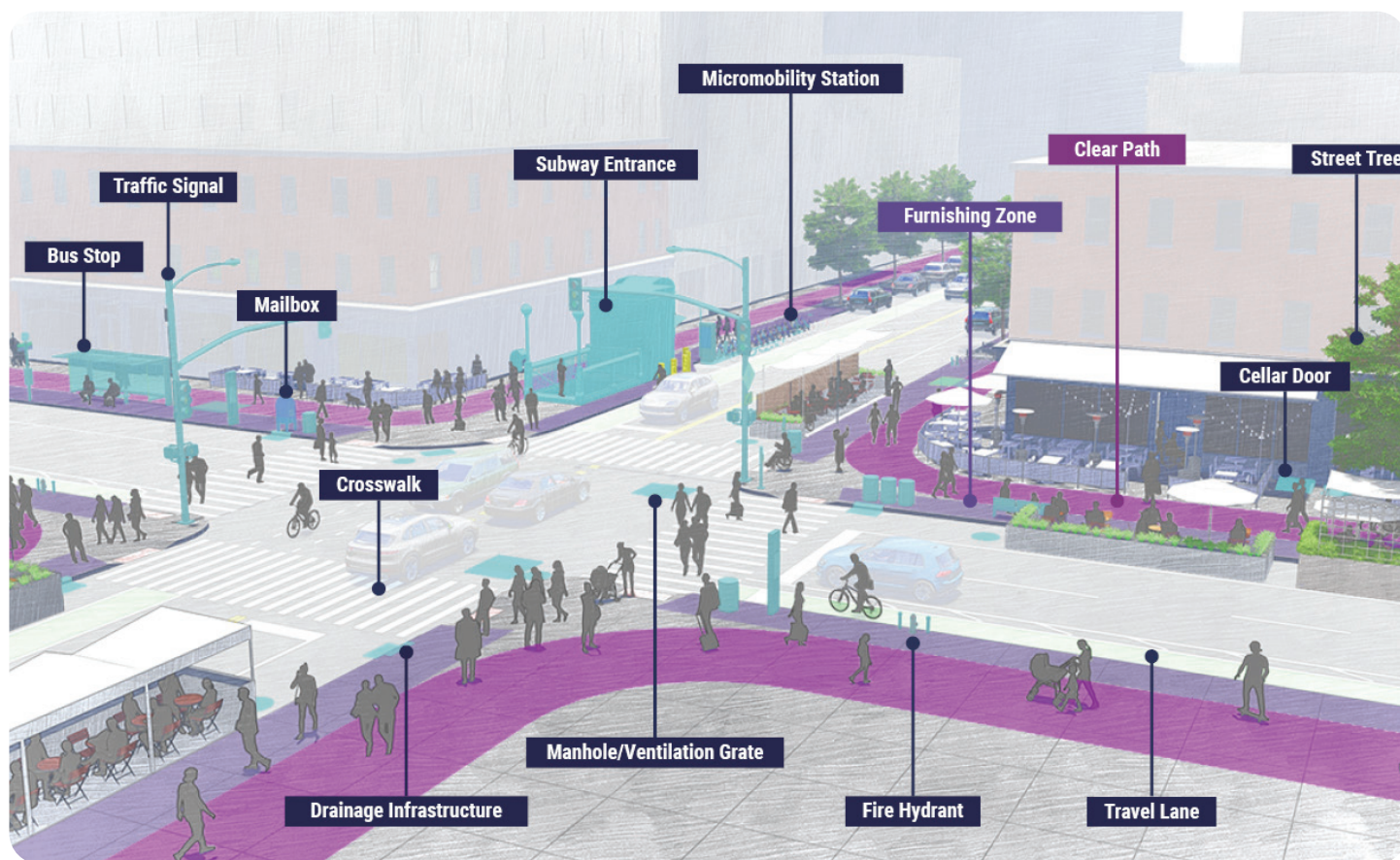
The City is also establishing a joint taskforce — which will bring city departments together under the leadership of the Chief Public Realm Officer — to assist in siting and fast-tracking approvals for 14 new high-tech, self-cleaning automatic public toilets on city sidewalks and plazas in high foot-traffic areas and restroom deserts.



5. Prioritize our curb space for public uses

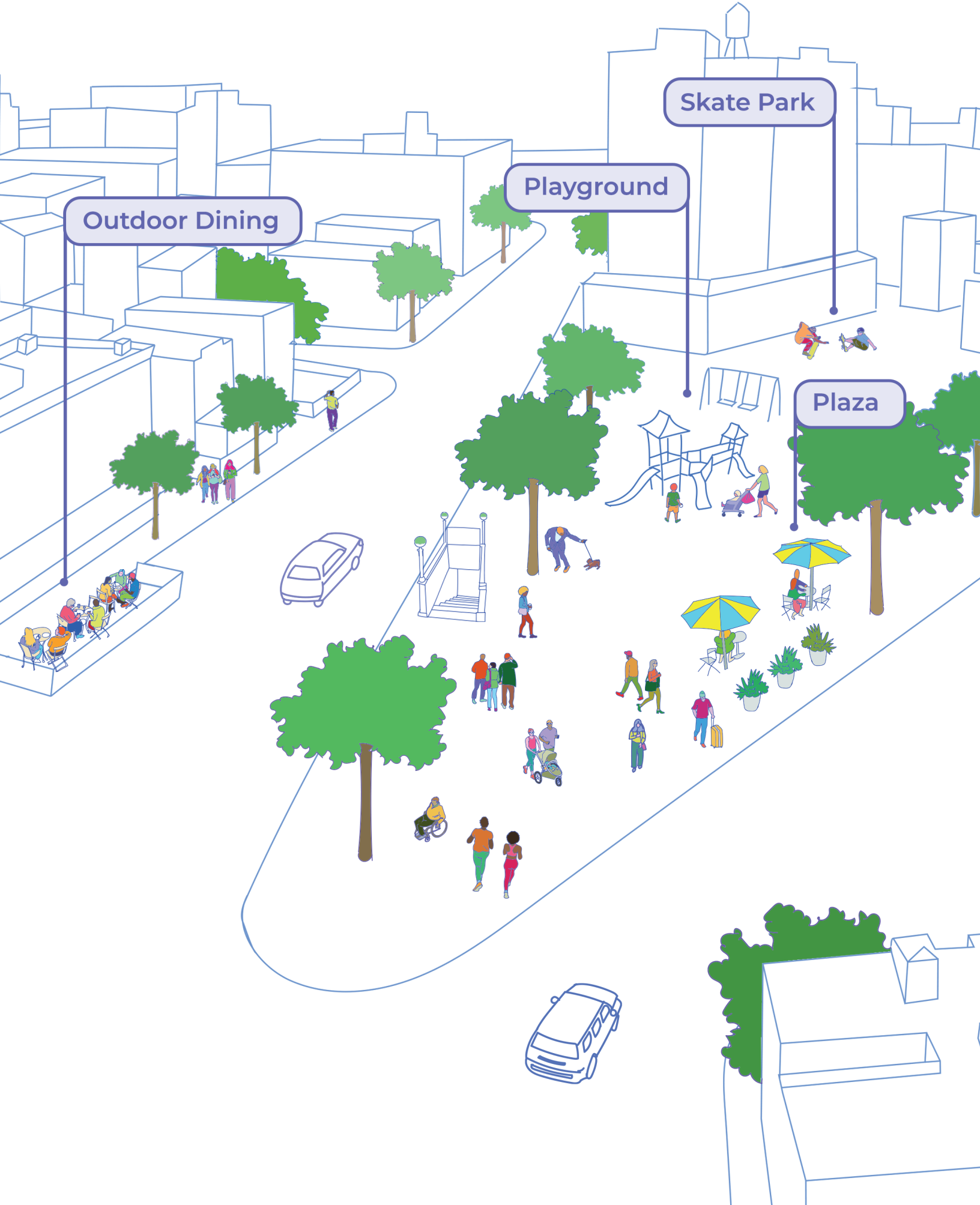
Most curbs around the City are dedicated to long-term free private vehicle storage, a fact of New York City life that has not been revisited in decades. Our curbs do not fully accommodate demands of the modern economy like outdoor dining/seating, public plazas, bike parking, waste containerization, online shopping, food delivery, and ridesharing.

The City will transform the streetscape by prioritizing pedestrians and residents through its Curb Management Action Plan. As part of the broader plan, the “Smart Curbs” initiative will take a comprehensive blank-slate approach to rethinking curb regulations and programming in partnership with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). DOT is in the process of launching a pilot with the Columbus Avenue BID, which will provide a model for how the curbside experience could be improved in other neighborhoods through comprehensive curb planning in 2024. The City will use public engagement and a data-driven approach to install new curb uses, with the goal of improving the overall transportation and lifestyle experience in each area.



Read more on the [Curb Management Plan](#) for other public space initiatives including, but not limited to:

- Expanding secure bike parking to make traveling by bike more convenient
- Providing space for outdoor dining, waste containerization, and street furniture in the curb lane
- Making deliveries more sustainable and efficient by launching microhub freight facilities



Deliver More Quality Public Space in Less Time in All Five Boroughs

6. Create a Public Space Incubator to complete public space capital projects in underserved communities within a 5-year timeline

Since the start of the Adams Administration, capital agencies have delivered more than 40 football fields of public realm improvements. These efforts have been further bolstered through the administration's allocation of \$375 million in public space projects for New Yorkers.

However, far too often, the City's capital projects take too long to complete and end up costing more than originally budgeted. In response to this, the Mayor convened the Capital Process Reform Task Force with leaders from industry, labor, and M/WBE to undertake a comprehensive review of the City's capital process with the goal of reducing timelines for capital project completion, achieving taxpayer savings, enhancing participation and inclusion in the process, and increasing the City's capacity to address emerging needs. In 2024, the NYS Senate and Assembly authorized alternative delivery methods to give City agencies more flexibility to build faster and cheaper. While we await the Governor's signature and implement new procurement tools at DDC, we are being creative and leveraging our current toolbox to create impact now.

Building off the recommendations of the Capital Process Reform Task Force, the City will expedite the building of public space projects in underserved communities through the creation of a Public Space Incubator at EDC. The Incubator will deliver a set of 10 fully funded public space projects by 2028, including parks, playgrounds, public restrooms, and plazas in communities that are most in need.

As a quasi-governmental agency, EDC is able to use alternative-delivery methods, like "Construction Manager Build", to get the work done more quickly than would be typical for a city project—allowing site work and early construction to begin while the design is still being developed, fostering collaboration between designer and builder and reducing lengthy procurement processes.



Delivering Street Improvements Quickly

In the last two years, DOT has delivered more than one million square feet of new pedestrian space, including a record 588,785 square feet in 2023 through a combination of capital projects and the Street Improvement Projects (SIPs). By creating SIPs, DOT is able to quickly and affordably deliver about 100 public realm improvements a year. The SIP Program uses paints, posts, planters, granite blocks, and moveable furniture to temporarily enhance corridors and bring public realm improvements to areas in need. These projects set the stage for future permanent capital projects, to be advanced through the incubator program.



7. Establish a Public Space Avengers interagency team to better coordinate planning and project delivery

The lifecycle of public space projects involves review and approval through multiple City, State, Federal, and private entities. Even fully funded public space capital projects can sit in the project pipeline for years, languishing in interagency no man's land. City capital agencies need support and direction on prioritization, coordination, and decision making to break the logjam.

The Chief Public Realm Officer and Chief Infrastructure Officer will convene a monthly interagency working group focused on ways city agencies can expedite the existing pipeline of funded public space projects.

The task force will review public space projects in the pipeline, prioritizing initiatives in underserved communities. The City will support comprehensive holistic planning across agency jurisdictions as well as identify the community benefits of concurrent projects to maximize impacts.

Measuring Twice, Cutting Once

It's all too common in New York City to see a road get ripped up by one entity, paved over, and then ripped up again soon thereafter by another entity. The Public Space Avengers interagency working group will work to synthesize interdepartmental street planning efforts to develop shared benchmarks and goals for infrastructure. For example, the City will incorporate greening for cooling and water absorption in our capital project improvements to ensure climate resilience and equitable access to green spaces. Improving coordination and planning between DEP infrastructure and DOT's right-of-way will also mean projects are completed quicker, and with fewer street closures.



8. Ensure privately-owned public spaces are open and inviting to New Yorkers

New York City has 598 privately-owned public spaces (POPS) across 393 buildings that provide over 3.8 million square feet of public spaces for New Yorkers and visitors to enjoy.

Primarily created via land use actions, in which developers secure taller buildings in exchange for the creation and maintenance of these public spaces, POPS should be open and available to New Yorkers. That is not always the case — with some POPS lacking the proper signage, hours of operation, clear entrances, and promised amenities. In the last inspection cycle, 90 out of the 598 POPS were not in compliance with the program.

DOB's proactive enforcement efforts, which include inspections of all POPS in a three-year cycle, has helped increase the compliance rate by 83% since 2017. But it's time to do more: the City is working with DOB, Department of City Planning (DCP), and the Mayor's Office of Operations to conduct an audit of out-of-compliance POPS in 2024, ahead of the official DOB three-year inspection cycle — and combine it with a review of City Planning filings to ensure that developers are delivering on their promises. DOB will also ramp up enforcement efforts, including regular inspection of POPS to ensure they are compliant with their commitments.



Making it easier to acquire land for future parks

The City is looking to deliver new parks in communities that lack access to public space: one mechanism is to buy land from private landowners in these communities.

In order for the city to acquire land for a new park in an underserved community, NYC Parks goes through the city's land use review process (ULURP) in coordination with the New York City Department of City Planning. But submitting a new, individual application for each new parcel proves prohibitive in terms of both time and cost. In addition, vacant and underutilized land is extremely scarce. If a property becomes available, the duration of the land use review process for each parcel often discourages property owners who might otherwise sell to the City.

Instead, the city will advance applications at a neighborhood scale for the first time, cohesively planning across neighborhoods to identify potential new green spaces at once — meaning the City can more efficiently unlock access to additional green space that New Yorkers need and deserve.



Read about New York City's [Principles of Good Urban Design](#)

Ever wonder what good design looks like? The Principles of Good Urban Design is an illustrated guidebook that makes NYC's urban design principles clear and accessible so that they can be understood and acted upon by New Yorkers from all walks of life — whether they're planners, developers, or community members. This resource serves as a tool to ensure that our public realm remains vibrant, open, and connected.

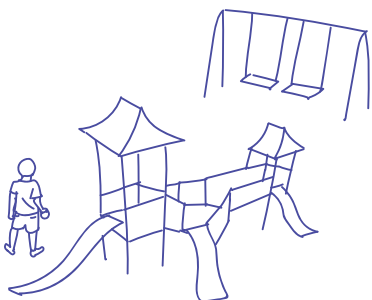
9. Open more schoolyards to the public after hours

While creating new parks in a dense urban environment can be challenging, the City is looking at all options, including how to expand the use of our existing recreational spaces. Transforming schoolyards to publicly accessible playgrounds is a key strategy to expand the city's public space footprint, especially in communities that lack adequate open space.

Working with NYC Parks, New York City Department of Education (DOE), New York City School Construction Authority (SCA), and the Trust for Public Land, the City will address gaps in community access to parks in high-need neighborhoods by opening school playgrounds to the public when not in use by the school. The City will open schoolyards in neighborhoods with less access to open space, prioritizing areas with multiple compounding vulnerabilities: race, socioeconomic status, health, and climate change factors like flooding and extreme heat. The City will continue to look for private funding opportunities to support this initiative.

Ensuring our Schoolyards Go Green

In partnership with DEP, DOE, New York City Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ), the Trust for Public Land recently opened a new "Green" Community Schoolyard at the Pacific School, which serves the Wyckoff Gardens NYCHA property among other residents in Gowanus, Brooklyn. This schoolyard serves a dual purpose: serving local kids and families while supporting the neighborhood's climate resiliency by including permeable pavers, subsurface storage and other green infrastructure in its design. Open after hours, the schoolyard will now be accessible to thousands of additional residents.

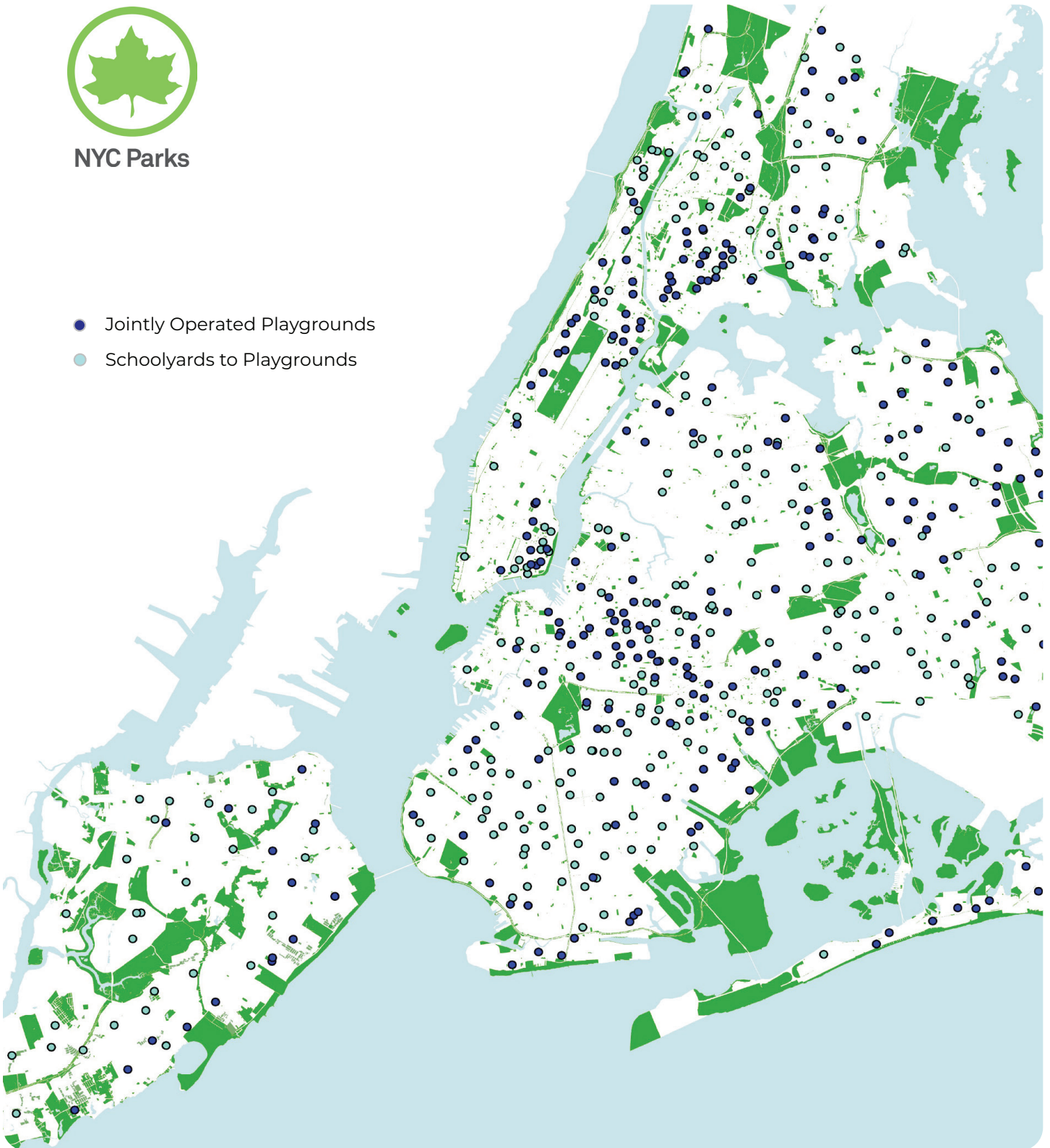


Map of NYC's Schoolyards to Playgrounds



NYC Parks

- Jointly Operated Playgrounds
- Schoolyards to Playgrounds



10. Establish NYC as the most skate-friendly city in the world

New York City is experiencing a post-pandemic skateboarding boom. Skateparks offer inclusive spaces for learning and perfecting skills on inline skates, skateboards, and bikes.

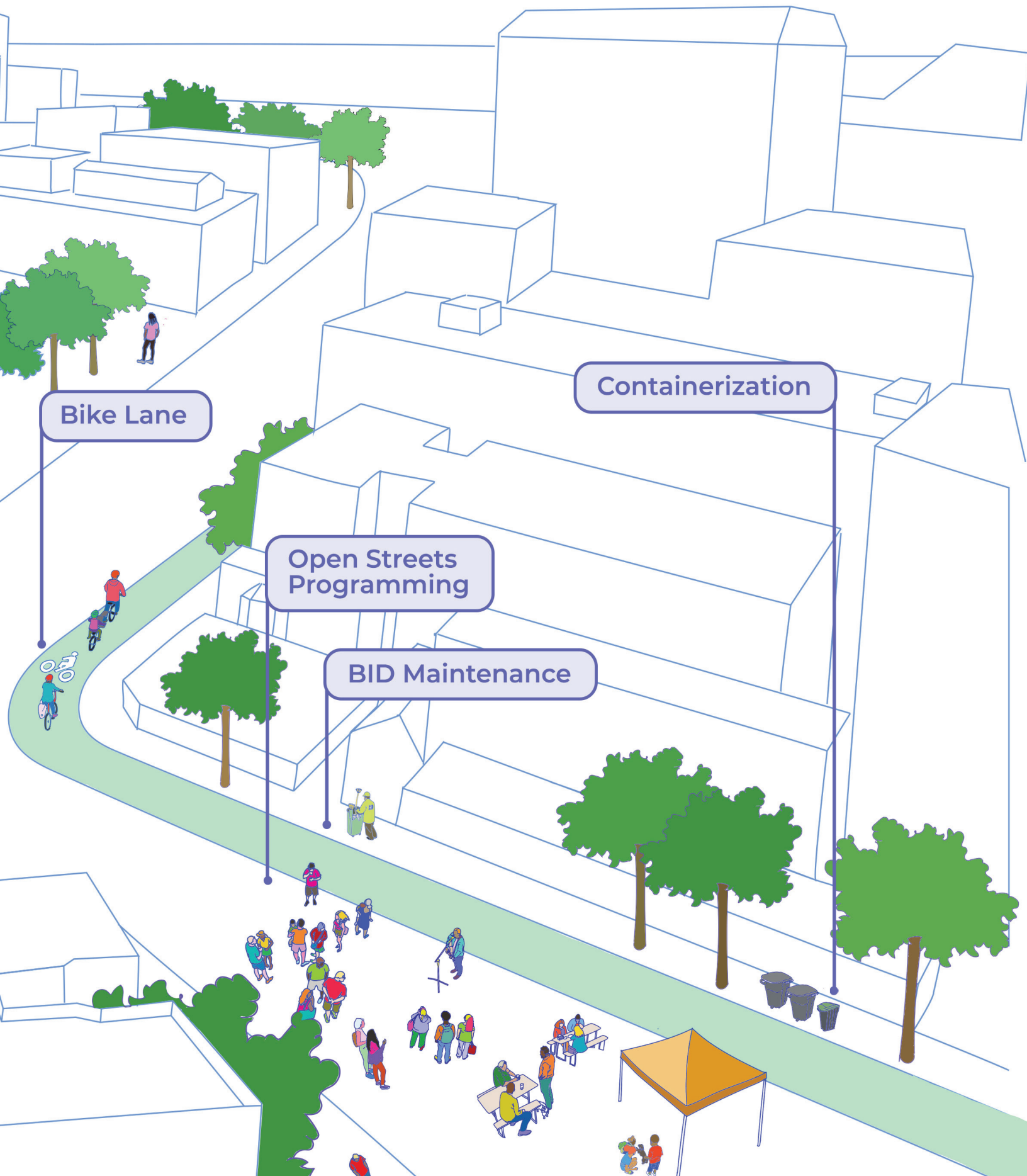
We are delivering new skateparks in underserved neighborhoods, creating and updating space for people of all backgrounds, ages, and culture to come together to build a community of diverse skaters, in partnership with The Skatepark Project, founded by skateboarding legend Tony Hawk, EDC, and NYC Parks.

In the next two years, we will open four world-class skate parks in the Bronx and Brooklyn, to promote safety, inclusivity, access, and wellness for New Yorkers on wheels. This initiative will include the renovation of Bronx Park Skate Park and Brower Skate Park in Brooklyn, and the creation of two new skate parks: Brooklyn Skate Garden in Mount Prospect Park and Soundview Skate Park in the Bronx.

Restoring the Brooklyn Banks

In May of 2023, the Adams Administration announced the reopening of “the Arches” — formally known as the Brooklyn Banks. The skatepark was an international and local destination for skaters in New York City until the area was closed off due to construction. Thirteen years later, the area has been reopened with the support of skaters and local community members. By adding more public spaces in neighborhoods like Chinatown, the City is working to provide additional opportunities for community gathering to encourage greater foot traffic and economic activity in the area.





Cut Red Tape for Partners Who Help Activate and Maintain Public Spaces

11. Establish a Public Space Academy to train partners on best practices

From parks to streets and plazas, the City relies heavily on partners to activate public spaces and bring them to life with creative programming, but that often involves a steep learning curve.

In collaboration with DOT, New York City Small Business Services (SBS), and New York City Street Activity Permitting Office (SAPO), the City will establish a *Public Space Academy* to provide technical assistance to new and existing Public Space Partners — like plaza partners, BIDs, Open Streets, and community-based organizations. The Academy will create a roadmap for public space management by community organizations and identify the city resources available to them. After training, participants will qualify to be considered “trusted partners,” making it easier for them to secure permitting for street activations.

Opening More Capacity for Better Maintenance

Maintenance and management of public spaces can be financially and operationally challenging for community-based organizations, but they are some of the city’s most important partners in creating beautiful, active spaces. The City will continue to build the capacity of local groups through tools and funding streams like SBS’s Neighborhood 360 program — which provides funding and support to perform an assessment of the public and commercial spaces in the district and activate a long-term plan to address identified challenges. During the Adams administration, organizations have received more than \$27 million in grants, including in new programming to improve lighting in commercial districts to enhance public safety and draw foot traffic to their corridors. The Public Space Academy curriculum will include information on these grants opportunities for partners.



12. Streamline permitting process for public space activations

The City's street activity permitting process can be long and arduous for partner organizations, especially smaller organizers with limited capacity and staff.

SAPO will update its website to improve both the user experience of obtaining a permit as well as communication between organizing partners and city agencies. In addition, SAPO will provide an updated agency directory to help partners navigate any additional permit requirements creating a clearer user-friendly Open Streets and Open Culture permitting process.

Streets for the People

As part of the Adams Administration's commitment to reimagining the public realm, DOT has doubled down on successful programs and created new initiatives that have been adopted across the country.

In 2023, for the first time in its 15 year history, New York City's popular Summer Streets program expanded to all five boroughs. This expansion followed a recommitment to equity to ensure that all corners of New York City can benefit from our reimagined public realm, public safety, and open space. In addition, DOT has continued to expand their Open Streets program over the last two years and launched the first ever "Trick-or-Streets" initiative in 2022, opening up streets throughout the five boroughs so children can safely enjoy Halloween and parents can experience our streets in a new way, laying the groundwork for future public realm projects.

Finally, as the city continues to advance a new vision for Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, DOT, in concert with city partners, launched Holiday Open Streets to repurpose Fifth Avenue from 48th to 59th streets in Manhattan as a pedestrian haven for three Sundays through the holiday season.





13. Reduce legal and financial burden of Public Space Partners maintaining and activating public spaces

The City will work to revise maintenance agreements for our streetscapes, plazas, and parks, so that partners can more easily become stewards of public spaces within their communities.

First, the City is consolidating and standardizing its maintenance agreements across BIDs, city parks organizations, and nonprofit groups for a more seamless and consistent experience, as recommended in Initiative 11 of the [New New York Action Plan](#).

Concurrently, the City is reducing insurance requirements on low touch, low risk activities to make the maintenance and activation of plazas, curb extensions, green and open streets more financially realistic in the medium- and long-term for partners. By right-sizing insurance requirements, the City hopes to incentivize more local organizations to take ownership of their public plazas and help public spaces flourish across the boroughs.



14. Mobilize a Clean Team to provide additional cleaning and maintenance efforts for critical public space connectors

BIDs and other neighborhood organizations are critical partners in providing maintenance to many commercial corridors across the five boroughs, ensuring public spaces across the five boroughs are clean, beautiful, and well-maintained. To support community partners on the ground, DOT created the Public Space Equity Program to address the needs of public spaces in under-resourced neighborhoods where community-based partner organizations need support in maintaining a high-quality public space. More than 100 plazas, Open Streets, and other public spaces receive operational, maintenance, and technical support through DOT's partnership with the Horticultural Society of New York and Street Lab.

But there are places these partners do not reach — such as step streets, bridge paths, and roadway medians — that provide critical connections to commercial corridors and other public spaces in our communities. The City is picking up its slack and designating a Clean Team, mobilized by DOT to provide targeted litter removal to clean up these critical connectors. All of this means more clean, vibrant, and active public spaces that communities rely on to get around every day.

Cleaning Up NYC

The Adams Administration is leading a Trash Revolution, making massive, generational changes to the centuries-old practice of leaving trash in New York City's public spaces. In April 2023, Mayor Adams changed the set-out time for trash from 4pm to 8pm, or 6pm if placed in a container. The Department of Sanitation (DSNY) has also mandated the use of containers by all businesses in the City, and is extending containerization requirements to residential buildings with 1-9 units in the fall. Taken together, this means 70% of trash will be off the streets and in containers, with a strategy announced in February 2024 to containerize the remainder. This administration has also funded record levels of litter basket service, with baskets emptied 50,000 times more per week than in previous years.



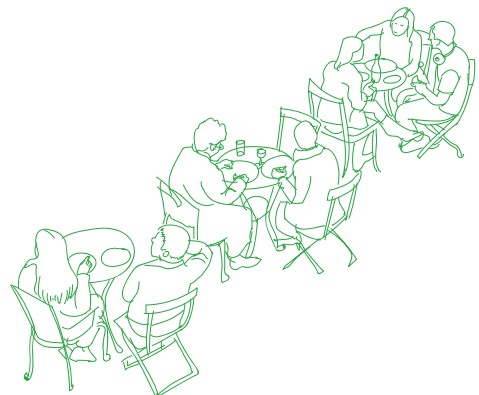
15. Establish metrics for measuring impact of public space projects and activations

What impact do public space improvements have on all of us? We know instinctively that more public space is a net positive for our city's economy, environment, and our mental and physical health. But so far, we haven't been able to quantify impact.

The City will work with the private sector and academic institutions to use quantitative metrics to assess the efficacy of our public space investments, focusing on summer streets, open streets, sidewalk sheds and plaza improvements. The data will guide our priorities for public spaces throughout the city, and allow us to make more informed public space investment decisions and reach the New Yorkers who need it most.

Making Data-Driven Decisions

In 2023, the Office of Technology and Information (OTI) and Mastercard collaborated to analyze the economic impact of the 2022 holiday season Open Streets initiative, which transformed 11 city blocks into pedestrian-friendly public spaces along the iconic Fifth Avenue corridor. Analyzing transactional data over the month-long Holiday Streets initiative, they found that merchants on the corridor saw a 6.6% increase in spending — \$3 million dollars — over the previous year.



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A special thanks must also be extended to agencies and partners who authorized the use of their photos included in this report:

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