

## Part II:

# Improving the Public Realm

Americans have more options in choosing where to live than ever before. The free flow of information on the internet and the low cost of air travel mean that New York City's existing and prospective residents can live wherever they like while still having easy access to work, friends, and family across the country. With greater mobility, citizens often choose places that offer the highest quality of life. On the one hand, this means New York City now has more competitors than ever. On the other hand, it means that the city can attract and retain even more residents—especially immigrants, young professionals, and middle-class families. Yet for New York to retain its competitive advantage in attracting a mobile population, the city must offer more than affordable housing—it must also offer a higher quality of life with active squares and plazas, beautiful parks, and enjoyable streets. It must offer a desirable public realm.

One of New York City's great strengths has always been the quality and variety of activities on its streets. A mixed-use public realm must include not only a balanced mix of stores, residences, offices, community facilities, and parks, but also a balance of multiple modes of transportation—pedestrian, bicycle, car, and mass transit. Whereas zoning regulations were once designed to isolate different uses, today the liveliest and most desirable places effectively balance these various components of urban life.

*Left: The mixed-use public realm created on Augustiner Strasse in Vienna carefully balances space for residents, sightseers, diners, retail customers, bicycles and motor vehicles.*

In many parts of the city, the relationship between street-life and traffic is disorganized and imbalanced. Conventional traffic standards traditionally isolated each mode of transit. Today, however, the most desirable corridors include a balanced mix of pedestrian and vehicular mobility, or "mixed-mode" transportation—a key component to a mixed-use public realm. Just as developers have used mixed-use development in the past 15 years to make projects better and more attractive, so too must cities embrace a mixed-use public realm that balances these various modes of mobility and integrates them to create a vibrant urban environment.

The opportunities to increase New York City's housing supply, as outlined in Part I, should all be developed around such a mixed-use public realm. The mayor's office must coordinate city agencies, developers, planners, architects, engineers, and community stakeholders in creating a unified and well-balanced public realm around which new projects and communities can grow and flourish.

Meanwhile, there are numerous opportunities to improve the public realm in existing communities. Part II of the report highlights several initiatives that will dramatically improve the city's public realm, and thus, help ensure that New York City's growth continues well beyond a population of 9 million.

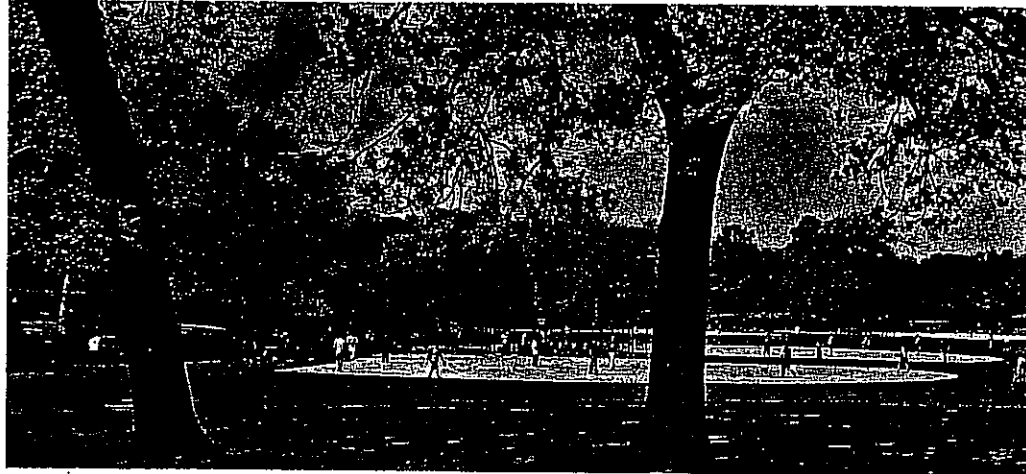
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## Public Realm Opportunities

Most people think only of parks and open space when they think of the public realm. Yet the public realm also includes the streets, sidewalks, and plazas that connect a city's open space system. No matter how great a city's park system, the overall public realm can be compromised by unattractive streets, unbalanced modes of transportation, or undesirable pedestrian conditions.

In too many places, this is the case in New York. The city offers one of the world's best park systems, yet these parks are often isolated islands, separated from the communities around them. As much as one can feel comfortable, safe, and serene within a city park, one can feel equally unpleasant and unsafe on the street two blocks away.

These undesirable, and sometimes unsafe, street conditions are one reason that residents—especially families—move away from the city. Instead, they choose suburbs or other cities with safer sidewalks and streets where children can reach the neighborhood park under safer, more pleasant conditions. The benefits of improving connections to parks, and street conditions in general, extend far beyond families. When over 63 percent of



*New York City's park system include first-class facilities, including these fields in Central Park's North Meadow.*



*Connections to and between the city's parks, however, are often unpleasant. Many streets, such as Vernon Boulevard in Queens, lack trees or attractive landscaping.*



*Right: Streets like the Stuben Ring in Vienna balance the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and delivery vehicles.*

the population walks to mass transit or directly to work, that walk should be safe, pleasant, and desirable for the entire population. And as the number of elderly increases, pedestrian conditions become even more important.

Therefore, improvements to the public realm should focus on improving pedestrian conditions, especially connections among and ease of access to New York City's remarkable parks. This chapter proposes four types of public realm opportunities that build on existing city programs:

- Greening Boulevards
- Protected Bike Lanes
- Sunday Closings
- Pedestrian Reclamations

These methods are street-based initiatives that will make streets more attractive to visitors, the trip to the park safer for families with children, and the everyday experience more pleasant for all residents. In sum, they improve the quality of life, and thus, make it more desirable for people to live, work, and visit in New York City.

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*Claremont Avenue at 116th Street, 1998*



*Within two years the Green Streets Program transformed Claremont Avenue into a handsome part of the public realm.*

## Existing Efforts

Several city agencies are already working to improve the city's public realm. The Parks Department has done a remarkable job improving and maintaining over 29,000 acres of parkland (ranking third in the nation in the percentage of the city's territory devoted to parks). With repeated success, the department continues to improve both the size and quality of the system through new investments and renovations. Large capital improvements are in development for the Fresh Kills Land Fill, Brooklyn Bridge Park, and the Bronx River Greenway. At the same time, smaller playgrounds and neighborhood parks are undergoing renovation across all five boroughs. Because the Parks Department has achieved such a high level of success, the public realm opportunities included within this chapter consist largely of connections among and access to parks, rather than proposals for new facilities.

The Greenstreets program, a combined effort by the Parks Department and the Department of Transportation, has reclaimed and transformed over 2,000 traffic triangles

and medians from barren concrete islands into landscaped enclaves with trees and flowers across all five boroughs. Some are purely decorative, others offer seating and shade under trees, but all improve the quality of the public realm.

The Department of City Planning is currently drafting zoning regulations that would require that trees be planted around new housing developments and new parking lots. Furthermore, the department is engaged in several planning efforts that would dramatically improve the quality of the public realm, most notably along the East River Waterfront. As highlighted later in this chapter, the plan will enhance the pedestrian experience en route to the waterfront, under the FDR Drive, and within East River Park.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) has also sought to improve the quality of the public realm as a component of traffic reconfigurations. Some of the department's efforts—including the Grand Concourse near 161st Street, Hunts Point, and Astor Place—will be highlighted in this chapter.

Yet a fundamental shift needs to occur in planning and capital investment for streets. Currently, the DOT includes public realm improvements as a subsidiary of traffic improvements, but only when the public realm improvement does not limit projected traffic flow. Vehicular traffic is one component, albeit an essential one, of the mixed-use public realm. It does not always deserve the highest priority. Sometimes a more pedestrian environment actually promotes greater economic development, trumping traditional traffic capacity requirements.

Although many of the proposed opportunities will supplement and improve existing traffic reconfiguration plans, other opportunities will require that the city government view the street as a mixed-use public realm, as opposed to a right-of-way exclusively for vehicles. While the role of cars, taxis, and delivery trucks is vital to the city's economy, a more balanced public realm will promote economic development more successfully than a single-minded focus on motor vehicles.

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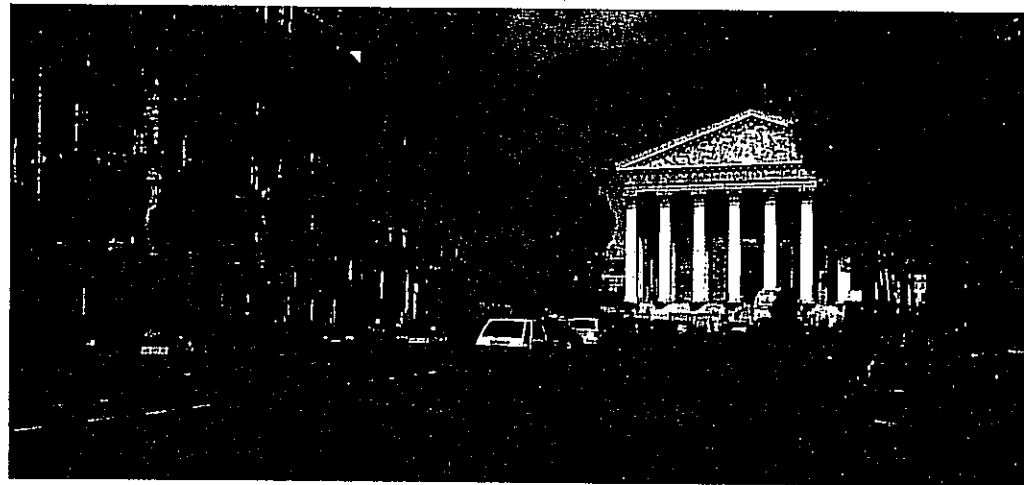
### Greening Boulevards

Relatively inexpensive capital investments in new trees and flower beds on existing streets offer tremendous "bang for the buck." Trees provide shade in the hot summer months, radiate warm colors in autumn, transform into sparkling sculptures in the winter, and announce the coming of spring with flowering blossoms. When planted along an entire street corridor, trees can transform a concrete environment from a vehicular artery into a welcoming and scenic destination.

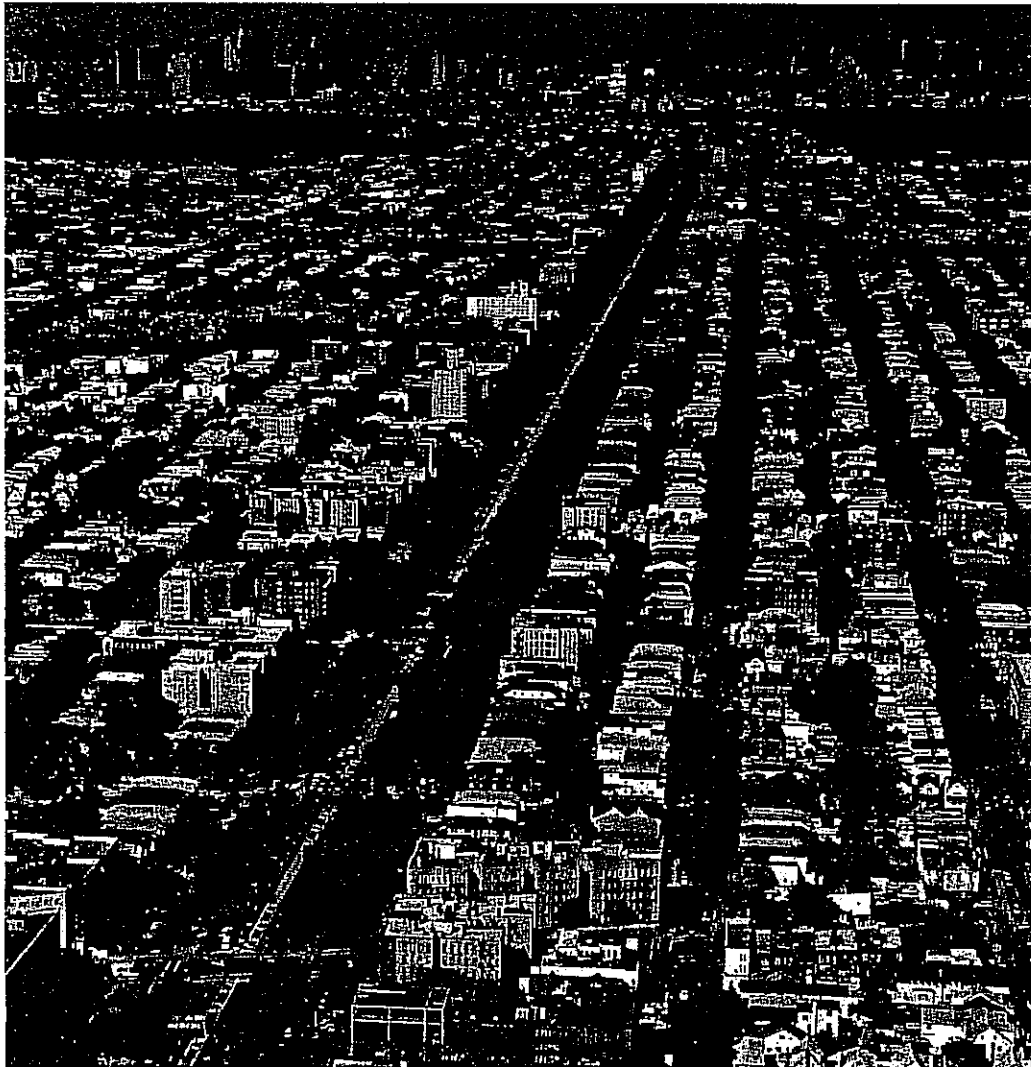
Greening Boulevards with trees and landscaping is not a new idea. Cities throughout the world have been improving their boulevards for centuries. Paris, perhaps the city most famous for its street trees, and, more recently, Chicago, illustrate the impact that street trees can have. In 1980, Paris's Rue Royale lacked a single tree. By 1998, more than 15 years after trees were planted along the sidewalk, the street had been transformed from a barren roadway into a landscaped haven (see images at right). In Chicago, Mayor Richard Daley has made a well-publicized effort to green city streets. Along Michigan Avenue new trees and flowers have enhanced the shopping experience on this premier retail street (see image on page 66).



*Rue Royale, Paris, 1980*



*Rue Royale, Paris, 1998*



*Right: Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn is a model for Greening Boulevards.*

The city's proposal to require trees as part of zoning regulations, while laudable, will only improve areas where property owners seek a building permit. While the city cannot afford to plant trees on every single street, it can strategically invest in planting trees where they maximize impact on the public realm. Those streets that yield the greatest benefit to the public must be targeted first.<sup>1</sup>

Dozens of parkways and boulevards already offer scenic green landscapes: Pelham Parkway, Moshulu Parkway, and Ocean Parkway, to name just a few. These streets do not require major expenditure; they simply need a few trees to fill in gaps. Dozens of other boulevards, however, could benefit from similar landscaping. The map on page 65 shows the potential opportunities for Greening Boulevards in each borough. Notable opportunities include the Grand Concourse and Boston Post Road in the Bronx, Queens Boulevard in Queens, Kings Highway in Brooklyn, and Broadway in Manhattan.

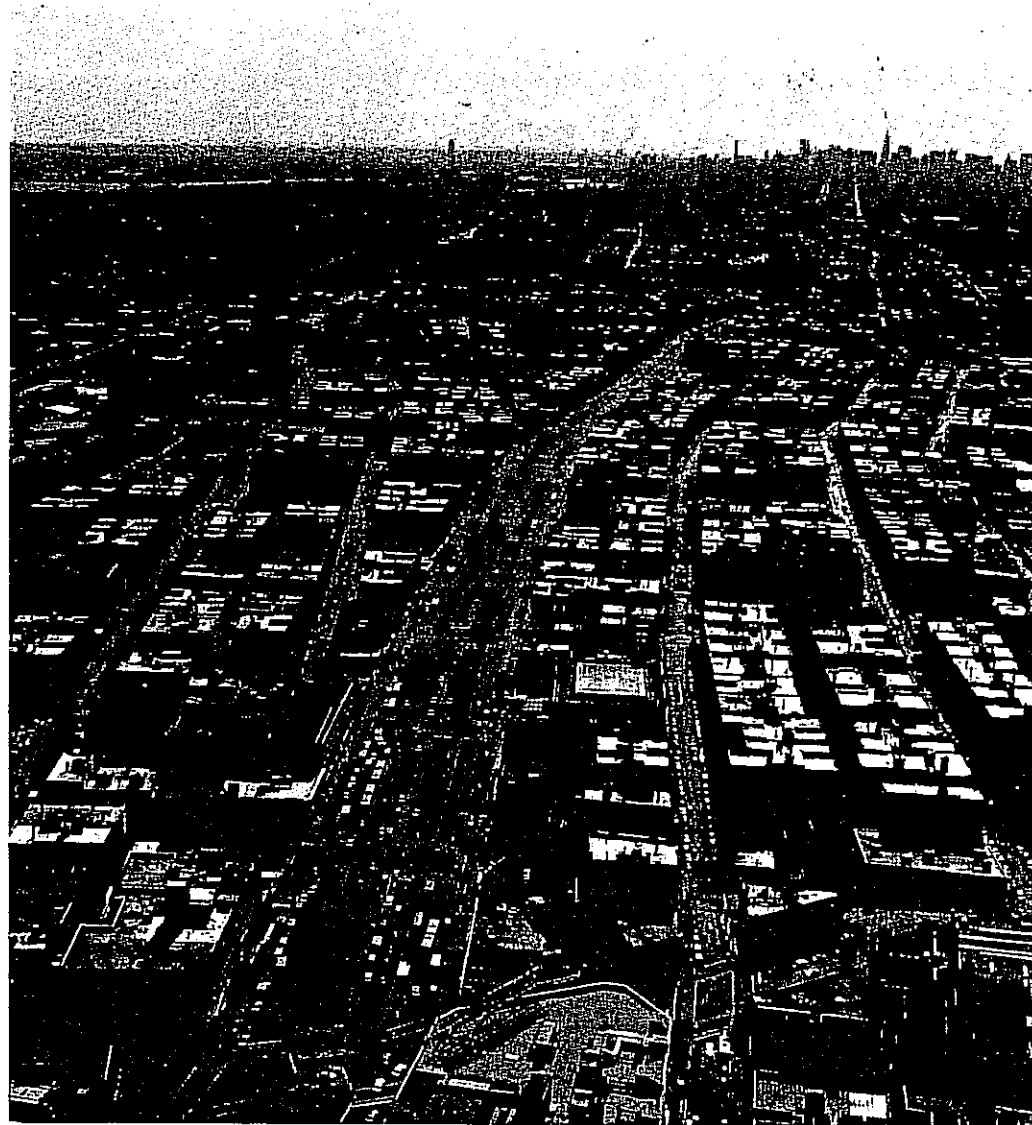
The capital cost of greening a boulevard is relatively low when compared with acquisition and construction costs for a new or renovated park, a resurfaced street, or a sidewalk reconfiguration. Yet transforming a paved thoroughfare into a mixed-use public realm



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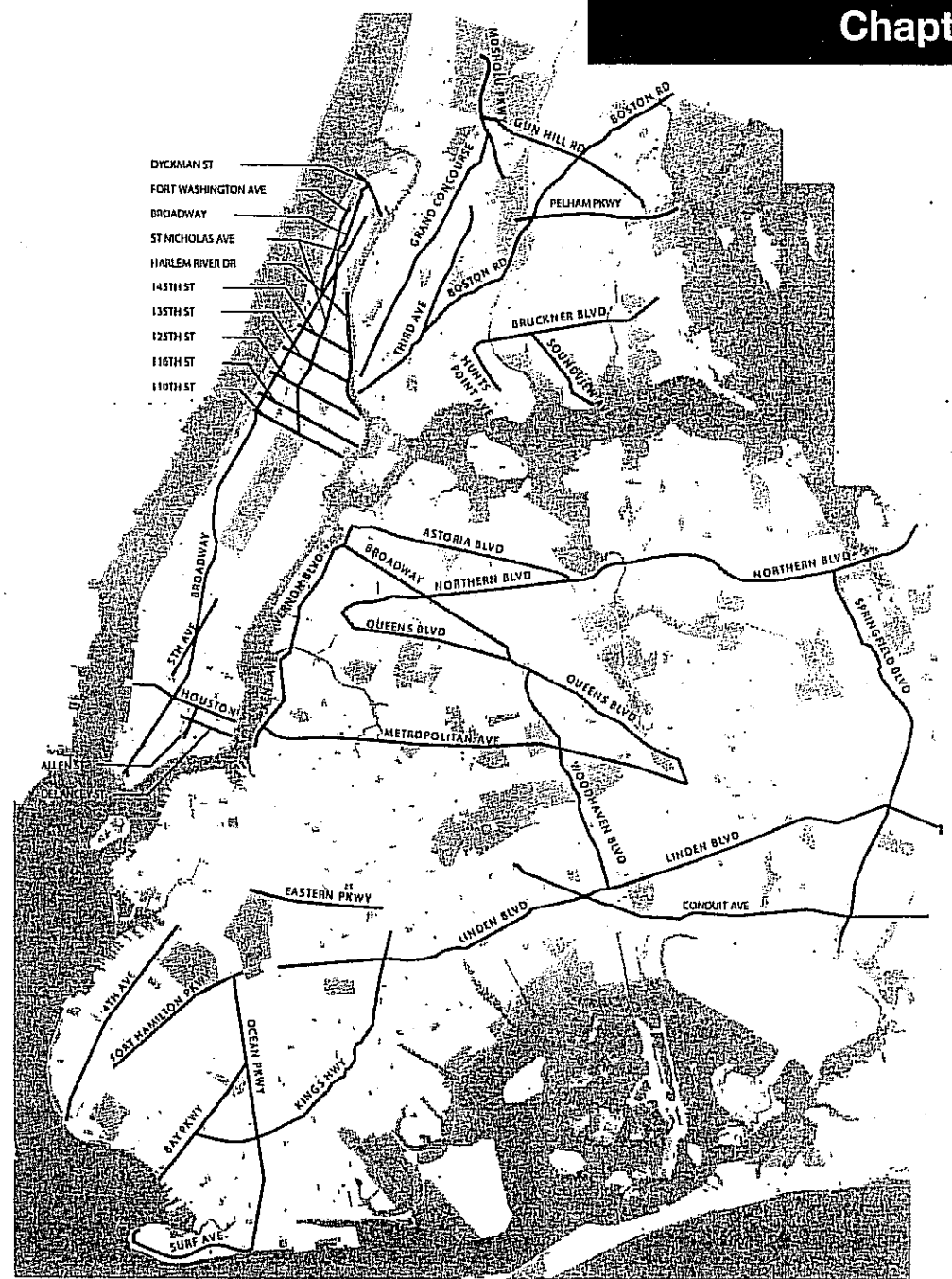
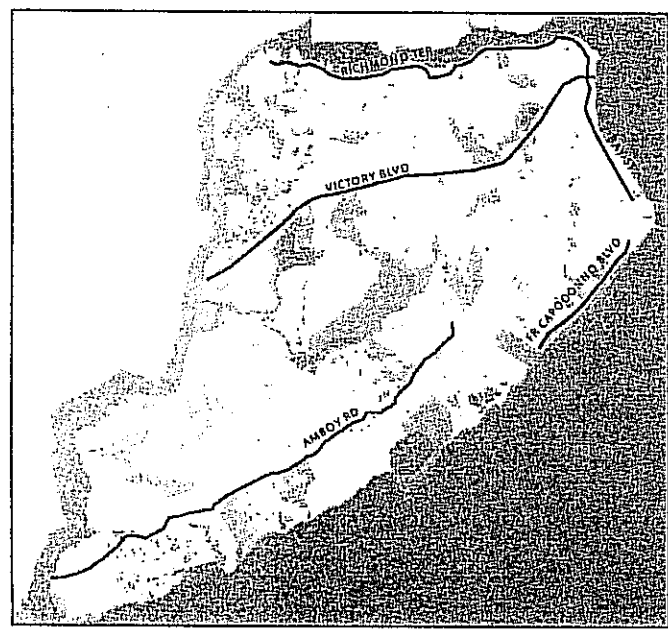
can have a similar effect on the area. A 2 ½- to 3-inch New York City tree costs around \$1,100, and when the labor cost and the tree guard—essential to the tree's survival in the city—are included, the cost becomes around \$2,000 per tree. Tree spacing can vary depending on the location and age of the tree. The typical 25-foot spacing would cost \$32,000 to line both sides of the average 200-foot block, or \$650,000 per mile.

Tree planting is a manageable one-time capital expense, especially when city funding is combined with private resources from business improvement districts, special service districts, or neighborhood associations. A critical issue is securing the maintenance funding. The city plants roughly the same number of trees that it cuts down (roughly 7,000 per year). Many trees are dying because adequate resources are not available to maintain the city's trees. Consequently, the City must ensure that trees receive greater maintenance—especially those trees currently being planted. One way to accomplish this is to transfer responsibility for maintenance to the business improvement districts, special service districts, or neighborhood associations that help pay for the capital cost of installation. Another is to levy an annual surcharge on the real estate taxes paid by adjacent property owners.



*Left: the Grand Concourse in the Bronx is an ideal opportunity for greening.*

# Greening Opportunities



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A final issue to consider is the effect of trees on retail shopping. In some cases, retail stores require visibility; lining the street with trees could potentially hurt businesses instead of promoting them. Consequently, the type, size, and location of trees must be carefully considered. For example, trees on 80-foot-wide Madison Avenue in Manhattan would undermine the visibility and marketing efforts of the stores. On the other hand, in the case of Banana Republic on Chicago's much wider Michigan Avenue (see photo at right), the trees create an attractive experience that draws pedestrian traffic and does not detract from business.

The list of recommended boulevards on page 64-65 is meant to be a starting point from which the city can select, prioritize, and implement. Some may be added, and some may be dropped. But any effort to green the boulevards will improve neighborhood landscapes, improve the public realm, and improve the quality of life in New York City.



*Left: Flowers and trees protected by planter guards have enhanced the attractiveness of North Michigan Avenue as a retail destination.*

### Protected Bike Lanes

The on-street bike lanes in New York City—along with those in most U.S. cities—are failing to achieve their objective of providing a dedicated and safe lane for bicycle travel. Instead, New York City's on-street bike lanes serve as turning lanes for cars, increased margin of error for taxis and buses, and double parking lanes for trucks. When cars pull in or out of parallel parking spots, it only increases the danger imposed upon cyclists.

In 2005, 21 cyclists were killed in New York City. 20 were hit by motor vehicles—an alarming increase of 25% over the past 5 years. If New York City is to improve its safety record in regards to cyclists, it must not only improve enforcement of bike lanes and speed limits, it must also improve the conditions for cyclists.

New York City requires safer conditions to accommodate commuters biking to work, children biking to school, or families biking to the park. Transportation Alternatives, a non-profit advocate for walking and biking, estimates that 120,000 New Yorkers ride a bicycle on a daily basis, and up to 3 million residents ride at least once a year.

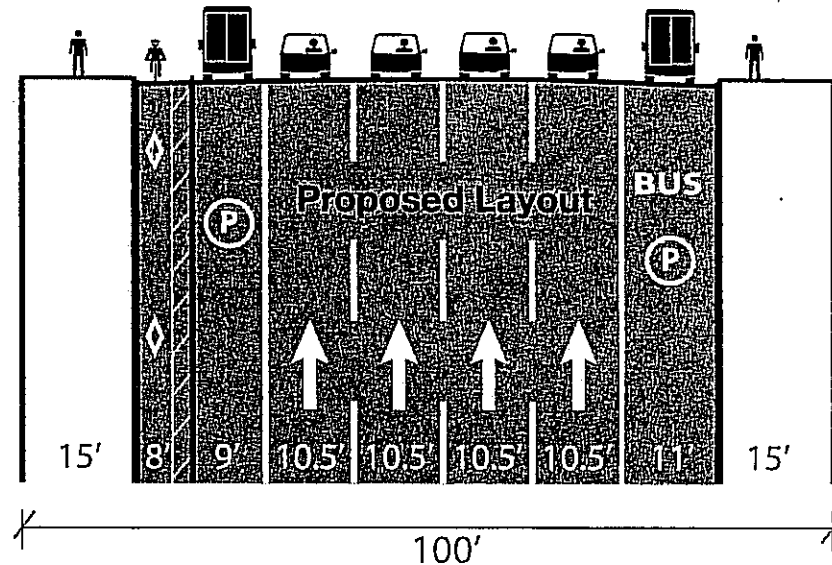
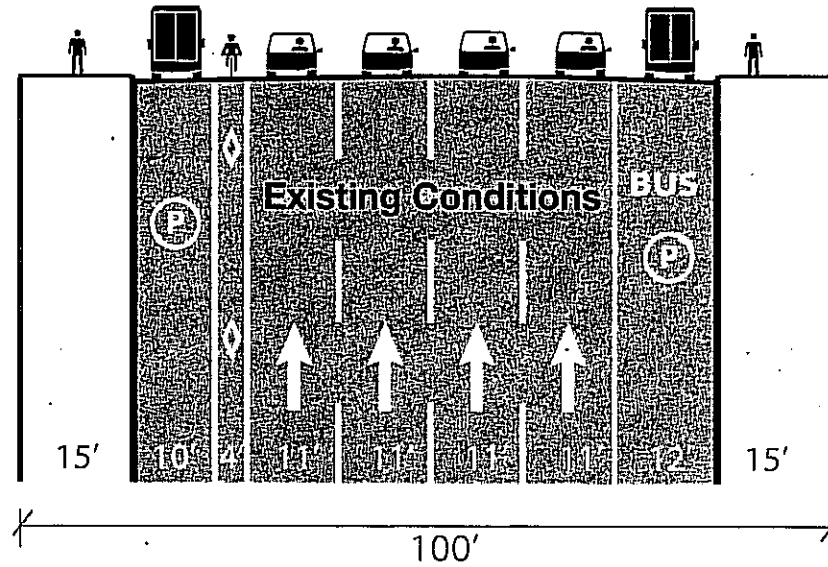


*Right: Sixth Ave bike lane  
in New York City.*

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The percentage of residents participating in these activities on a regular daily basis is currently low (1.5% of the population). This is the case for logical reasons: of those who seek these qualities in a community, some have already moved to the suburbs or different cities, some find a safer means of transit, and some simply choose to bike under the existing hazardous conditions. A model already exists to turn the nominal bike lanes of today into legitimate, safe bike lanes of tomorrow. The model is called "protected" bike lanes.

Protected bike lanes use curbs, bollards, or other barriers to physically separate bicycles from motorized vehicles. Instead of simply reserving a portion of the roadway between parked cars and traffic, as is the case in most U.S. bike lanes, the parked cars are located between the bike lane and traffic, thereby "protecting" the cyclists. In addition, a curb or other barrier prevents the parked cars from intruding into the space of the bike lane (see diagram at right).





*Protected bike lanes  
in Barcelona (left) and  
Montreal (right).*



The benefits of protected bike lanes are very straightforward. Cars cannot enter the bike lane, trucks cannot double park in them, and buses cannot drive in them. Equally important, the row of parked cars creates a buffer between the cyclists and the fast-moving traffic that frequently move at speeds above 40 mph—a speed at which cyclist's chance of surviving an accident is greatly reduced.

The Europeans were first to use the protected bike lane model, with notable examples in Copenhagen and Amsterdam. The

model spread to Berlin, Barcelona, and as far as Melbourne, Australia. But perhaps the most relevant model for New York City is Montreal. Unlike many of the European examples, which use only striping to delineate the bike lane, Montreal uses a physical barrier between the bike lane and the street. Striping will simply not prevent parked cars from intruding into the lane in New York City.

There are abundant opportunities throughout the city for protected bike lanes. The easiest examples are those where on-

street bike lanes already exist —particularly on residential streets. Traffic lanes would not be altered at all; the bike lane would simply switch locations with the parking lane. The relatively low cost includes only re-striping the street and installing bollards or a raised curb between the relocated bike lane and parking lane.

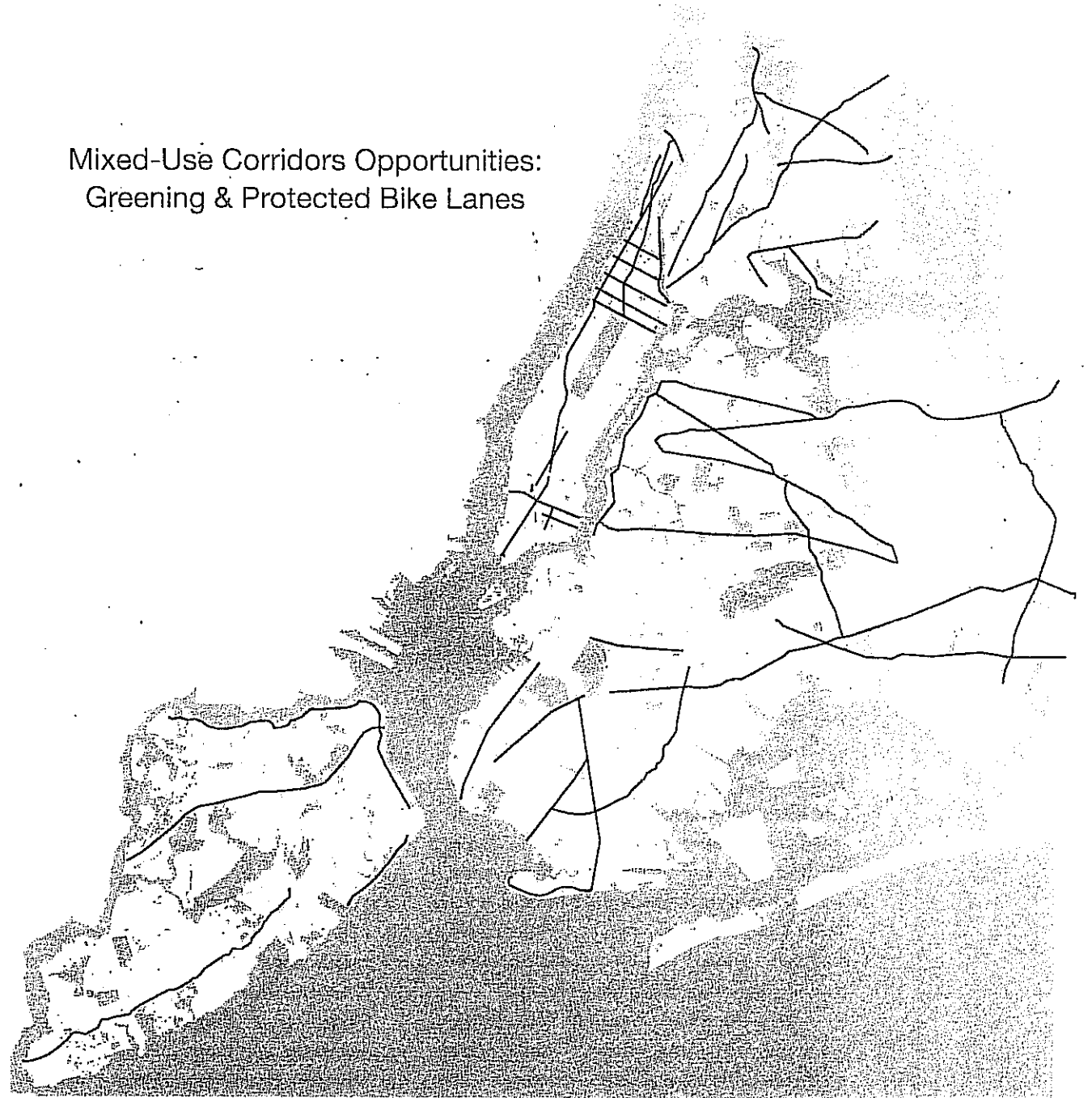
These changes may be difficult to implement in some commercial districts, especially in Manhattan, where sidewalks are overcrowded and trucks make frequent deliveries. In these cases, not only must the

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### Mixed-Use Corridors Opportunities: Greening & Protected Bike Lanes

cars be physically prevented from entering the lanes, but so must pedestrians, who would use an adjacent bike lane as a widened sidewalk. The situation was perfectly illustrated in the 1980's, when the Koch Administration installed bollards along the Sixth Avenue bike lane. The bike lane was ineffective because pedestrians and deliverymen walked down its path. Eventually, it was removed.

Where necessary, various design solutions could limit pedestrian access, including elevated tree planters or attractive fences, with only limited crossing points for occupants of parked cars and deliverymen. Similar variations in design could be used for the separation between the bike lane and parked cars. In some areas, curbs may make sense, and in other areas, metal bollards. These issues are site specific, however, and will depend on local conditions.





*Right: Existing protected bike lane in New York City on Tillary Street (left) and proposed at Sand Street (right), both in Brooklyn.*



One challenge to the transformation of existing bike lanes is that the city would lose 1-2 parking spaces per block. The parking spot closest to the intersection must be removed to allow cyclists and drivers to see one another as they approach the intersection. Another drawback to this model is double-parking. Currently, double-parked cars and trucks block only the bike lane. Under the model of the protected bike lane, these vehicles would at least partially block one lane of traffic. Both challenges are worth overcoming, however, because the protected bike lanes would dramatically increase cyclists' safety, thus

creating new and improved connections between homes, schools, workplaces, shopping, and recreational destinations.

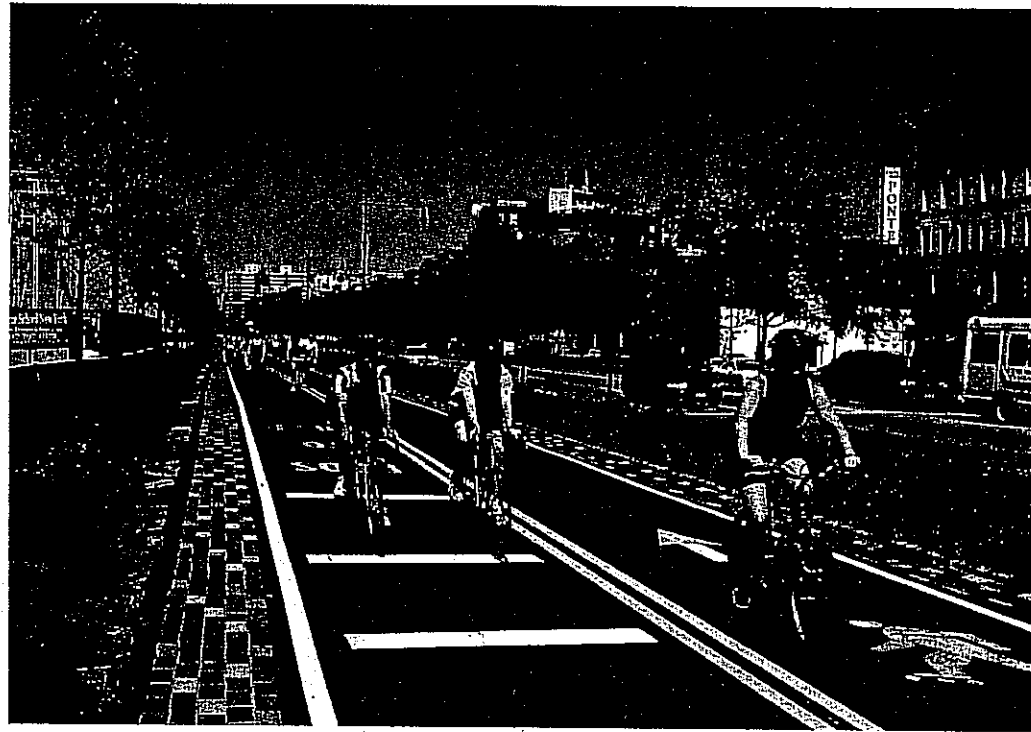
In order to demonstrate the effectiveness, safety, and feasibility of protected bike lanes throughout New York City, the city should implement one or two demonstration projects—with at least one in Manhattan, where conditions are worst. Several business improvement districts, particularly along Broadway, have expressed interest in creating protected bike lanes within their district. Traffic studies will determine whether the best demonstration

projects should be on Broadway or Sixth Avenue, both of which already have bike lanes.

The DOT has taken small steps to create protected bike lanes on Tillary Street in downtown Brooklyn, in front of Waterside next to the FDR drive, and on Sands Street as it approaches the Manhattan Bridge in Brooklyn. These three examples, however, are each less than one-third of a mile long and impractical for use throughout the city. Instead, the city should pursue more effective protected bike lanes, as proposed earlier, to create a mixed-mode public realm along an entire corridor—a model



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*Left: West Street and Hudson River Park combine to create a model mixed-use, mixed-mode public realm.*

that can be implemented citywide.

Once a demonstration project has proven the proposed protected bicycle lane effective, it could become a model for all on-street bicycle lanes throughout the city. As Hudson River Park has successfully demonstrated, the key to a successful revitalization of neighborhoods and open space relies not only on a mix of uses, but also a mix of modes. West Street used to be strictly a vehicular corridor. Now, it is packed with runners, roller-bladers, and cyclists. The new West Street has increased the quality of life for

area residents, and, not coincidentally, has generated a dramatic increase in real estate development in the area, and hence, tax revenue for the entire city.

The mixed-mode model along Hudson River Park—with vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians side-by-side—should be implemented on boulevards throughout the city. Just as car and truck drivers seek the arterial roads for the fastest and most direct route, so do cyclists. Not only would this mixed-mode, mixed-use public realm improve residents' ability to bicycle to parks,

work, and shopping, it would also improve the city's ability to compete with bicycle-friendly cities like Seattle, San Francisco, Denver, and Chicago.

Bronx's Grand Concourse, Queen's Northern Boulevard, or Brooklyn's Fourth Avenue could all offer the same mixed-mode transportation in the outer boroughs that West Street offers Manhattan. In fact, all of the boulevards listed earlier in the "Greening Boulevards" section should be considered for mixed-mode transportation with protected bike lanes. Instead of serving



*Right: 4th Avenue in Brooklyn is an ideal candidate to become a mixed-use, mixed-mode public realm.*

vehicular traffic only, these corridors could effectively serve as bicycle and pedestrian corridors as well, promoting economic development in the process.

There are several opportunities to build on the city's existing efforts (see pp. 74-75) to create mixed-use public realms. In lower Manhattan, both Houston and Delancey Streets are heavily used corridors that lack trees and safe bicycle access. Houston Street was the location of several well-publicized pedestrian and bicycle accidents. Delancey Street directly connects to the

Williamsburg Bridge, the most heavily used bridge on the East River for cyclists, but it offers no connections to nearby bike lanes or to East River Park. Both could become greener for pedestrians and safer for cyclists while maintaining the traffic flow.

Perhaps the two greatest opportunities to create mixed-use public realms are the entire corridors of the Grand Concourse in the Bronx and Broadway in Manhattan. The DOT is currently transforming one section of the Grand Concourse from 161st Street to 166th Street. Although their work could use

protected bicycle lanes and more greening, it is a strong step in the right direction. The city should continue the effort further north along the Grand Concourse.

Transforming Broadway is a more difficult undertaking, but as Manhattan's premier boulevard, Broadway could grow as a shopping and tourist destination not only at Times Square, but throughout Manhattan. North of 59th Street, the transformation is simpler. Despite the obstacles south of 59th Street, this transformation might well yield an even greater impact.

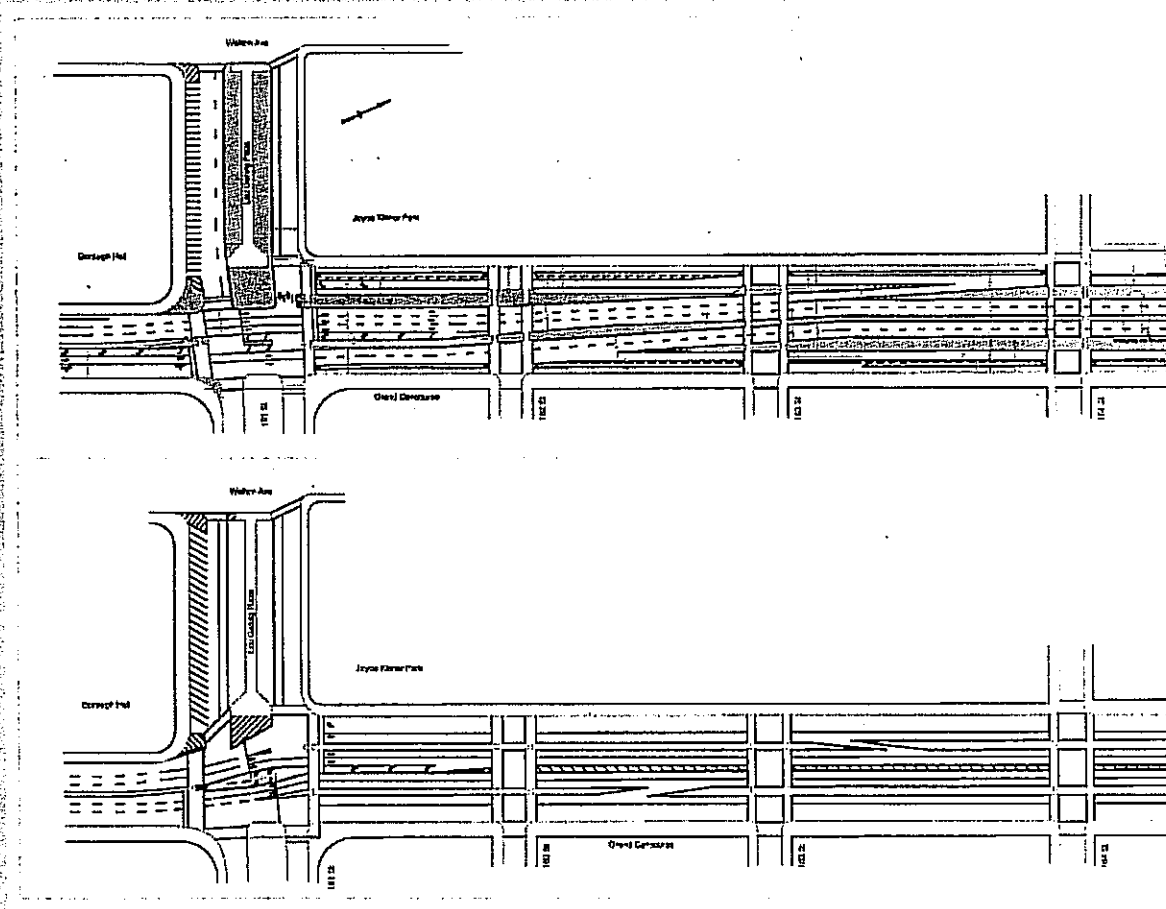
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### Forthcoming Mixed-Use Public Realms

Two projects are underway that create mixed-use public realms with new bicycle lanes and streetscape improvements, including new trees and landscaping.

#### Grand Concourse: 161st-166th St.

The Grand Concourse is undergoing a transformation from E. 161st Street to E. 166th Street. The improvements include reducing the width of the service road, widening the median to include trees and landscaping, and adding a bicycle lane in both directions.





### **Hunts Point**

*Hunts Point Avenue in the Bronx is also being reconfigured, but the level of improvement goes even further with new trees on the median and on both sides of the sidewalk. As is visible in the rendering, Hunts Point Avenue will be much more attractive for residents of the community. Both here and at the Grand Concourse, protected bike lanes could further improve safety.*

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### Sunday Closings

Sunday Closings are another initiative already in place outside of New York City. Cambridge, MA and Washington, D.C. have two of the most successful Sunday Closing efforts. On the edge of Boston, Cambridge's Memorial Drive is a four-lane, heavily trafficked artery that runs parallel to the Charles River. On Sundays from April to mid-November, a one-mile section of the road is closed to traffic from 11 am to 7 pm, and accessible only to pedestrian recreation. Similar to Central Park's and Prospect Park's Park Drives on the weekends, Memorial Drive transforms into a popular destination for runners, walkers, rollerbladers, and cyclists.

The same transformation occurs on Washington, D.C.'s Rock Creek Parkway from 7 am Saturday to 7 pm Sunday every weekend. Although the parkway is also a heavily trafficked thoroughfare, the city's residents accept the minor inconvenience of a detour because of the remarkable recreational opportunities it provides.

Central Park and Prospect Park offer examples closer to home. Every weekend, they provide families, residents, and visitors the



Left: Memorial Drive in Cambridge, MA during a Sunday Closing

*Courtesy of the Charles River Conservancy*

liberating experience of running, walking, and biking on a wide road. However, not everyone lives near these parks, and not everyone is able to take advantage of their weekend Park Drive closings.

In New York City, dozens of streets are regularly closed throughout the year for parades, street festivals, the Marathon, city-wide bicycle tours, and numerous other special events. From Fifth Avenue to Eastern Parkway, the NYPD and DOT are highly skilled and practiced at safely closing streets. Now imagine if those large-scale (frequently citywide) closings were

implemented on a community scale—not on behalf of a single special interest, but on behalf of all residents in the community.

Instead of walking to the nearest park or recreation facility, the street becomes the park and recreation facility. Neighbors could mingle, children could safely learn to ride a bicycle, and the elderly could comfortably stroll without the pressures of heavy pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

To expand recreational opportunities to more residents, to promote exercise as a healthy habit, and to improve overall quality



Right: Central Park Drive during a Weekend Closing

of life, the City of New York should pursue recreational Sunday Closings throughout all five boroughs on a regular basis.

The map on the following page highlights potential roads for Sunday Closings. Several, including Pelham Parkway and Moshulu Parkway, could be implemented immediately. They have very few intersections, and parallel service roads could handle the minimal traffic displaced on a summer Sunday. Others, such as Ocean Parkway and Eastern Parkway, have many more intersections, and alternate routes may need to be considered for the displaced

traffic. Ideally, all intersections would be blocked for a continuous street closing. For a street as long as Ocean Parkway, though, one or two intersections may have to remain open.

Streets parallel to the waterfront do not have cross traffic, and therefore are easier to close. Some, including Kent Avenue in Brooklyn, Vernon Boulevard in Queens, and Harlem River Drive in Manhattan, could be closed on Sundays without causing major traffic disruptions. Finally, two major thoroughfares—Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn and the Grand Concourse in the Bronx—could

potentially serve multiple neighborhoods and become overwhelmingly successful, but will require careful planning. All Sunday Closings will require coordinating a variety of community stakeholders and city agencies.

In fact, a section of the Grand Concourse was closed for a day as a trial during the summer of 2005 at the behest of Borough President Adolfo Carrion, Jr. Working with the DOT, the NYPD, and Transportation Alternatives, the Borough President's Office is seeking to implement the same closing again this summer.

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The Grand Concourse Sunday Closing will be an effective demonstration project again this summer. Pelham and Moshulu Parkway Sunday closings can also serve as demonstration projects due to minimal traffic displacement. Any additional Sunday Closings should be required to meet stringent standards, and they should be selectively chosen to yield the greatest benefit.

Broadway in Manhattan is one street where certain sections may be appropriate for Sunday Closings. Other sections of Broadway may be appropriate for a one-time 24-hour closing, or possibly even recurring closings during peak pedestrian hours. Broadway through Times Square could serve as a test case for such a 24-hr closing during a summer weekend.

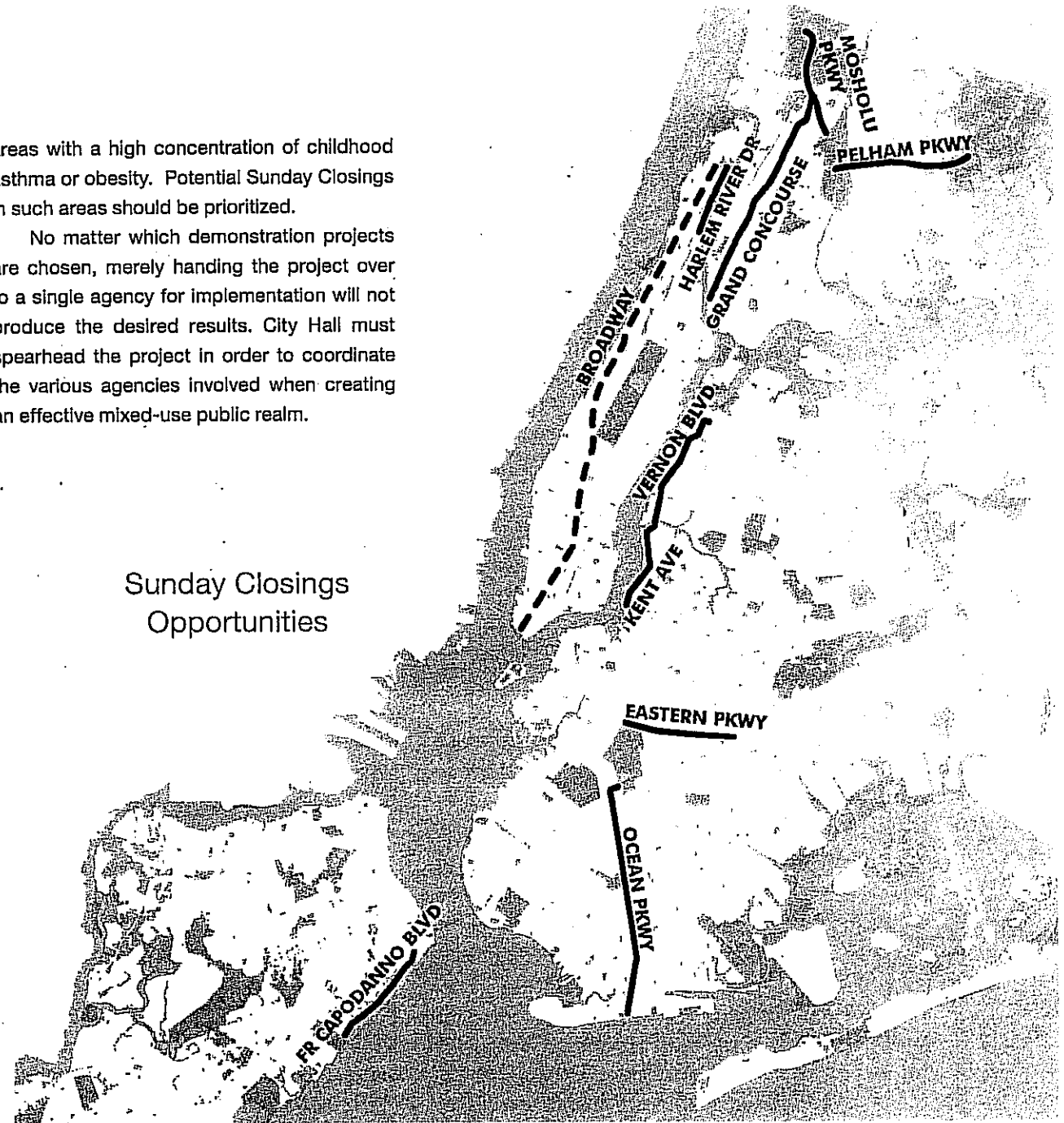
Potential Sunday Closings, especially along Broadway, highlight the ability for public streets to serve different modes of transportation at different hours of the day or different days of the year. During most times, cars and traffic should predominate, but at other times, carefully planned closings will enable pedestrian activity to stimulate economic development.

Several studies in different city agencies will help determine which Sunday Closings will have the greatest benefit. The Parks Department has identified target areas where residents are underserved by parkland, and the Department of Health has identified target

areas with a high concentration of childhood asthma or obesity. Potential Sunday Closings in such areas should be prioritized.

No matter which demonstration projects are chosen, merely handing the project over to a single agency for implementation will not produce the desired results. City Hall must spearhead the project in order to coordinate the various agencies involved when creating an effective mixed-use public realm.

### Sunday Closings Opportunities





*Above: A substantial portion of the right-of-way of Orchard Street in Singapore has been set aside for public use.*

### Pedestrian Reclamations

Pedestrian reclamations present a new and exciting way to improve the public realm for pedestrians and surrounding communities. A pedestrian reclamation is an improvement to the public realm in which redundant streets, frequently diagonal, are closed to vehicular traffic for the benefit of the community around them. Much of New York City is laid out on a rectilinear street grid. Diagonal streets that intersect the grid often produce redundancies in the vehicular traffic system. Traffic on those diagonal streets can sometimes be diverted to and absorbed by the adjacent avenues. Where appropriate, closing the street and eliminating the vehicular redundancy can create a whole new public realm for pedestrian use.

A pedestrian reclamation is different from wider sidewalks. New York City can and should widen sidewalks around the city, particularly in those areas where pedestrians regularly spill onto the street. There are many excellent initiatives to remedy these types of situations, and the city should continue to support these efforts.



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### Forthcoming Pedestrian Reclamations

The Department of Transportation and Department of City Planning have several plans in place for Pedestrian Reclamations:

#### Astor Place

At Astor Place, cross-traffic will be redirected and the traffic island with the cube will be connected to the south sidewalk (see before and after at right). Just south of this intersection, Fourth Avenue at Cooper Square will also be reconfigured to create a second new public plaza. This \$5 million project is scheduled for FY 2007-2008.



Existing



Proposed

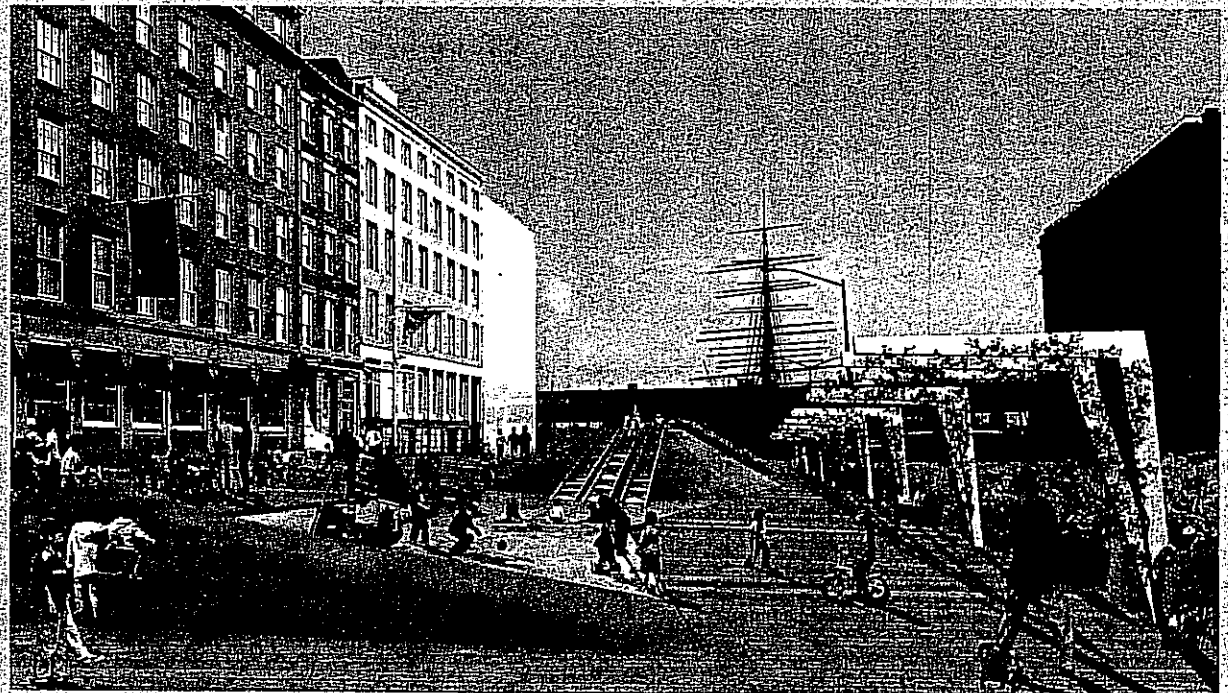
Images courtesy of Projects for Public Spaces



Courtesy of 34th Street Partnership

### Herald Square

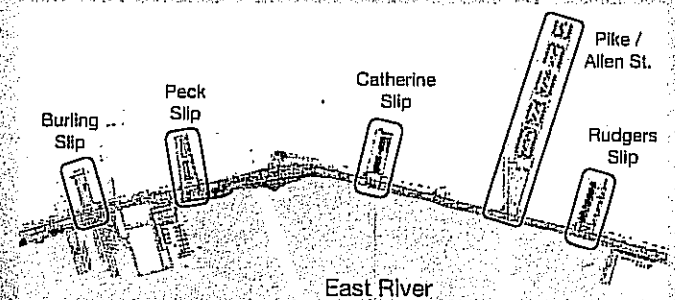
Herald and Greeley Squares, in Midtown Manhattan, are not closing the streets entirely to traffic, but they are reclaiming portions of the streets for pedestrian use. As visible in the rendering above, both triangle parks are widening their perimeter sidewalks to accommodate the high number of pedestrian users. The \$4.5 million pedestrian reclamation is scheduled for FY 2007.



Above: Rendering of Burling Slip. Below: Map of East River Slips.

### East River Slips

As part of the Department of City Planning's East River Waterfront Plan, the agency has included five "slip projects" that reclaim former slips (now paved streets) for the public realm. These pedestrian reclamations will serve as gateways to draw people from the adjacent neighborhoods to the East River.



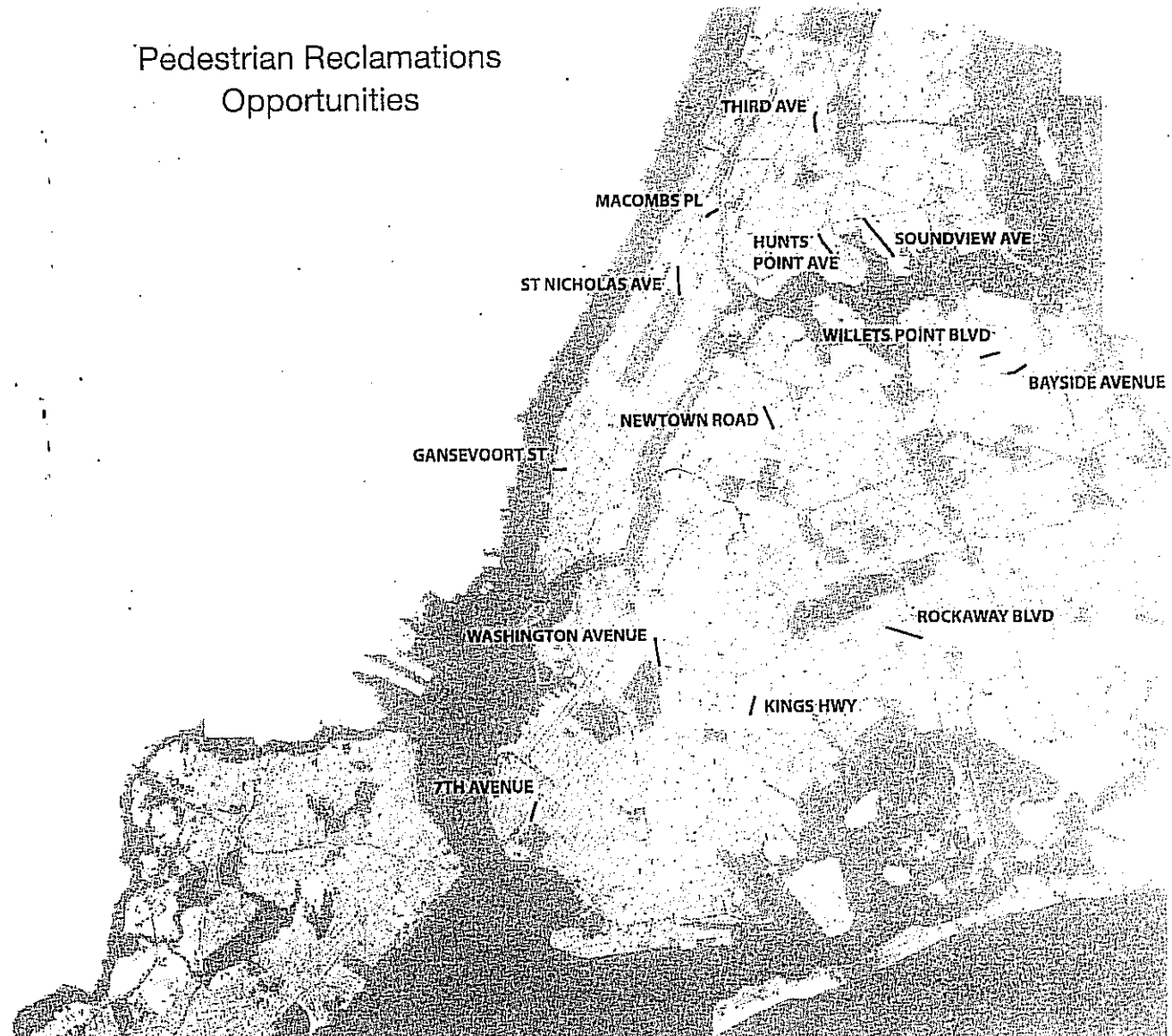
Map and rendering courtesy of New York City Planning Department

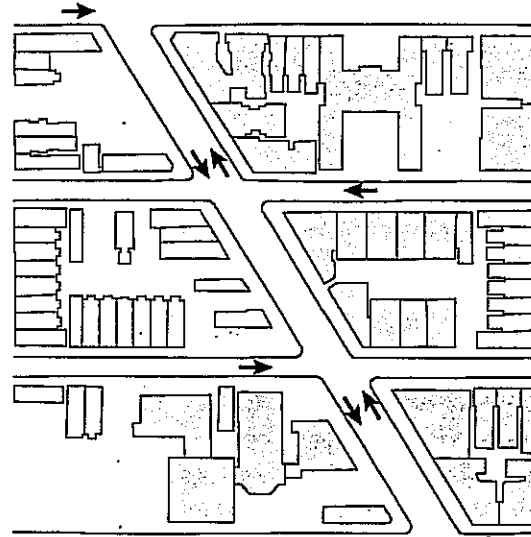
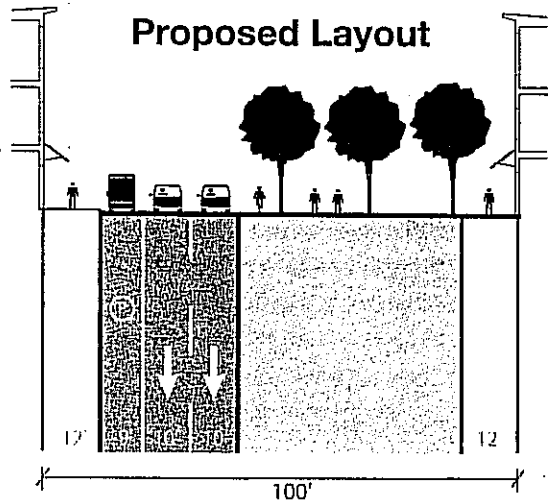
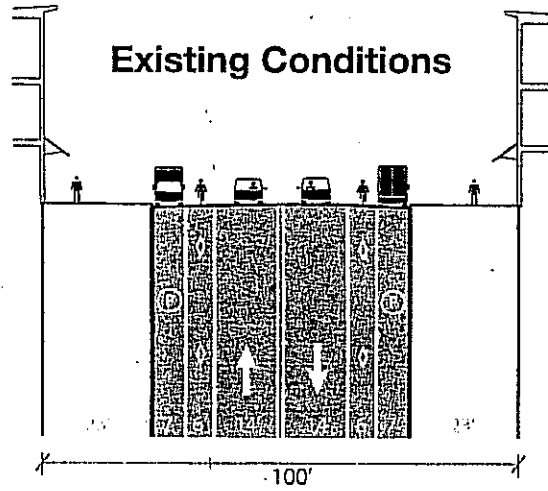
## Chapter 4

A pedestrian reclamation goes far beyond wider sidewalks. Its purpose is to create a completely new experience and to generate an immediate and measurable private market reaction where market conditions are ripe. The model is similar to Sunday Closings—where the street becomes the park and lifeblood of the community—except now the scale is smaller, and the situation creates a permanent and landscaped pedestrian environment.

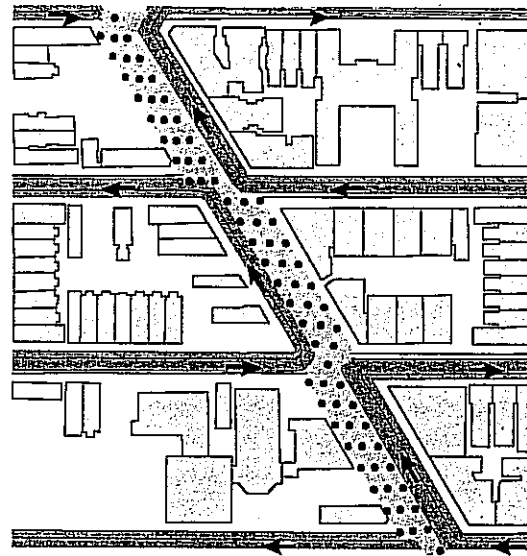
Potential opportunities for pedestrian reclamations exist throughout the city, as shown at right. St. Nicholas Avenue between 117th and 120th Streets in Harlem is a good example. Here, the diagonal street could be closed, and the cross streets could be rerouted in order to create a continuous pedestrian corridor. As shown in the diagrams on the opposite page, the route of the diverted traffic allows continued truck service and deliveries to the existing buildings. In essence, the design creates a modified version of a pedestrian mall.

### Pedestrian Reclamations Opportunities





*The existing street layout of St. Nicholas Avenue in Harlem.*



*The proposed pedestrian reclamation of St. Nicholas Avenue would create a continuous promenade with 59 feet of tree-covered pedestrian space on alternating sides of a 29-foot-wide service road.*