

TO:

Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani
Chief of Staff Elle Bisgaard-Church
First Deputy Mayor-Elect Dean Fuleihan
Transition Co-Chairs and Committees

Public space is the lifeblood of New York City. From Central Park to Pelham Bay Park, Times Square to the Paseo Park / 34th Ave Open Street, and Fresh Kills to the Brooklyn Promenade, our parks and open spaces offer a free communal place to recreate, gather, connect with neighbors, and so much more. The public realm is where *life* happens—on the city's streets, sidewalks, blacktops, greenery, and everywhere in between. And in order for a city to be livable and affordable for all, everyone deserves equal access.

That is why we are calling for the expansion of the Deputy Mayor of Operations' role to include a changed focus and priority: **a Deputy Mayor for Operations *and the Public Realm*.**

Without resources or insider knowledge, it's nearly impossible to create or care for high-quality public spaces. Meanwhile, interagency logjams and silos cause unnecessary delays, leading to sky-high price tags and subpar products. The result is an uneven landscape: thriving parks and open spaces for some, but not all, cutting off countless New Yorkers from the many social, economic, and environmental benefits they offer.

For years, those who manage, activate, and advocate for the city's public spaces—Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), volunteer organizations, conservancies, and more—called for a centralized contact within City Hall; someone who could coordinate an alphabet soup of entities, support good ideas, and streamline processes. In 2022, the Adams administration met this promise, appointing Ya-Ting Liu as New York City's first-ever 'chief public realm officer' under the Deputy Mayor of Operations.

Since then, Liu and her small team led negotiations around a permanent outdoor dining program, scaffolding reform, new license agreements, and capital funding for marquee projects, like Gotham Park, Broadway Junction, Broadway Vision, QueensWay, and more. Yet the Office of the Public Realm lacked institutional support to make substantial progress on the hurdles hindering a holistic vision—one where the City makes it easier, not harder, to catalyze a historic amount of new and expanded public space. But with a realigned portfolio, the Deputy Mayor of Operations and the Public Realm can better execute this new mission.

As a candidate, Mayor-Elect Mamdani expressed sincere interest in the office's expansion. Now, with his inauguration imminent, there is an immense opportunity in front of us to finally deliver the world-class public realm that every New Yorker deserves, no matter where they live. With strengthened support through the Deputy Mayor, elevating this portfolio within City Hall would maximize the moment and help usher in a new era for New York City.

SIGNATORIES

Friends of Cooper Park
Western Queens Public Realm Agenda
31st Ave Open Street Collective
Make McGuinness Safe Coalition
PS 110 Safe Streets Committee
New Yorkers for Parks
Friends of Red Hook Pool
North Brooklyn Parks Alliance
Prospect Heights Streets for People
34th Ave Open Street Coalition
North Brooklyn Open Streets
Open Plans
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Neighbors for a Safer Austin Street
Open Streets Network
The Municipal Art Society of New York
Alliance for Paseo Park
AIA NY
W X Y
Center for Zero Waste Design
Friends of the QueensWay
West Village BID
Gotham Park
Brooklyn Greenway Initiative
Urban Design Forum
Loisaida Open Streets Community Coalition
Newtown Creek Alliance
Regional Plan Association
Queens Economic Development Corporation
Waterfront Alliance
Rebuild by Design
Troutman Open Streets
NYC-DSA Kids Over Cars
Transportation Alternatives
Alliance for Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Park Slope Open Streets