



Streets: Utilitarian Corridors or Livable Public Space

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In just the last year and a half, Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan has begun a dramatic transformation of New York City's streets from mere utilitarian corridors into livable public spaces.

This is no happy accident. It took advocates (and bloggers!) years and years of hard work to make this possible. Only three years ago Mayor Bloomberg proudly stated that traffic was a side effect of the city's growing vitality. Now he's leading the charge on putting into place practical ideas that make the city less dependent on automobiles, more livable, more desirable and inviting to new families that would otherwise choose to live in exurban developments.

This may seem like just a feel good story about something that just increases quality of life for some people in NYC that doesn't have much implication for the rest of the country, but consider this: As the Commissioner states, NYC is planning on a million new residents over the next 20 years. Think about how many square miles of suburban/exurban development that will save for farming. Think about how many fewer cars will be produced if those million people come to NYC. What if every city across the country were a more desirable place to live, work, play, shop than its surrounding suburbs?

As we think about our future, we will need to be very conscious of how we can make low energy consumption urban areas more desirable than high energy consumption suburban areas.



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