



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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**MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES MAJOR SECTIONS OF CENTRAL PARK AND
PROSPECT PARK WILL BECOME PERMANENTLY CAR-FREE, DEDICATED
SOLELY TO RECREATION**

*Changes will make two of NYC's crown jewel parks safer and healthier, enhance
public space and encourage New Yorkers to get active*

Central Park Drives north of 72nd Street will be permanently car-free starting June 29

Prospect Park West Drive will be permanently car-free starting July 6

BROOKLYN, NY—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced permanent improvements to Central Park and Prospect Park that will make the majority of each park car-free, with park drives dedicated solely to recreation for the first time in more than a century. The changes will restore major sections of two of the city's crown jewel parks to their original vision as recreational paths, making the parks healthier, safer and more accessible to millions of New Yorkers.

Central Park's entire loop drive above 72nd Street will be permanently car-free. Prospect Park's West Drive between Grand Army Plaza and Park Circle, previously open to motor vehicle traffic for two hours during weekday afternoons, will likewise be permanently reserved solely for recreation. With these changes, more of each park will be car-free than at any time since the first automobiles were introduced to them at the turn of the 20th century. Combined, more than 45 million people visit Central Park and Prospect Park each year.

"Prospect Park has always been my family's backyard. That's a sentiment New Yorkers in every borough feel about their parks. Making the loop drives in Central and Prospect Parks permanently car-free for the first time in more than a century will make these great spaces safer, healthier and more accessible to the millions who flock to them," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

The Department of Transportation conducted extensive traffic analyses of both parks' loop drives and surrounding streets prior to undertaking these improvements. Neither change is projected to impact travel times or congestion in nearby neighborhoods. In Central Park, this change is consistent with the seasonal car-free summer hours of the past two years, which have proven to have had no adverse impacts.

The four Central Park Transverse roads will remain open to motor vehicle traffic. Emergency and parks maintenance vehicles will continue to have access to the loop drives as necessary. To further improve mobility in Manhattan communities adjacent to Central Park, the DOT will extend the Fifth Avenue bus lane north to 110th Street from 7-11 a.m. on weekdays. Fifth Avenue is one of the heaviest travelled bus routes in the City, with over 74,000 local and express bus riders each day.

“This is great news for the millions of people who come to walk, bike, and enjoy Central Park and Prospect Park every year,” said **DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg**. “Thanks to Mayor de Blasio's leadership, this expansion of car-free parks will create a greener, safer and more serene experience for all.”

“Prospect Park and Central Park are known throughout the world as classic urban parks that have evolved to serve 21st century cities,” said **NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP**. “Thanks to Mayor de Blasio, these great parks are now on the verge of the next stage of their evolution: a cars-free vision that will improve air quality, safety, and the park-going experience.”

“Central Park Conservancy has supported a car free park for many years and we think this is a fantastic step forward,” said **Doug Blonsky, President and CEO of Central Park Conservancy**. “Fewer cars in Central Park will not only make it safer for recreational use, it will also make it more of a natural retreat from hectic the pace of city life which was the original intent of its creators Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. They would be very happy today as are all of us at Central Park Conservancy.”

“The Prospect Park Alliance supports the Mayor’s decision to reduce vehicular traffic in Prospect Park,” said **Sue Donoghue, Prospect Park Administrator and President of the Prospect Park Alliance**. “The Alliance works closely with the community, our agency partners and stakeholders to balance the needs of the diverse users of the Park Drive, and is consistently working to promote a safe environment for the cyclists, runners, walkers and other Park visitors who depend on the Park Drive for recreation and outdoor enjoyment.”

“The closure of West Drive to car traffic is a tribute to the residents and advocates who worked tirelessly to highlight the challenges to street safety in and around Prospect Park. We are one step closer to ensuring that parks are for people, and we can be assured that step will be taken across a car-free street. I look forward to riding my bike down West Drive with other Brooklynites enjoying the beauty and tranquility of Prospect Park,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**.

“Closing the Central Park loop to cars would make a huge difference in helping New Yorkers enjoy the greatest public park in the world, while having a minimal impact on traffic,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “Freeing these large parks from the intrusion of traffic is the right move for the parks themselves and the New Yorkers who visit them, which is why I’ve been working toward this goal for years.”

"Central Park is a beautiful, serene, and cultural oasis in the middle of the greatest, and busiest, city in the world. People from all over, including myself, enjoy the jogging, picnicking and recreational opportunities this historic park provides. Today's announcement that our beloved park is moving one step closer to being completely car-free will provide for a much safer, quieter and healthier environment for all to enjoy. I applaud Mayor Bill de Blasio's commitment to a greener and healthier New York City," said **State Senator José M. Serrano**.

"Public parks are for people and other living things, not automobiles, traffic, and car exhaust. I applaud the move by Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Department of Transportation to limit cars permanently and year-round from Central Park and Prospect Park. In a dense urban environment like New York City, our communities need and deserve car-free parks," said **Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried**.

"Protecting pedestrians in our parks is an essential piece of Vision Zero. Making two of our biggest parks nearly entirely car-free is in keeping with the original vision for our parks as an escape from the city landscape. I'm happy that Mayor de Blasio has committed to this change, prioritizing pedestrian safety in our parks," said **Assembly Member Dan Quart**.

"Closing the Central Park Drive at 72nd Street is in keeping with Vision Zero and will make the park safer for pedestrians and cyclists alike," said **Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal**. "I applaud this decisive step and look forward to continuing to work together toward making our City streets and parks safe for all users."

"I commend the administration's commitment to Vision Zero in Central Park, closing the loop north of 72nd Street to vehicles and, last year, lowering its speed limit to 20mph and adding barricades to separate pedestrians from cyclists. In 2014 two pedestrians lost their lives while crossing the Central Park Loop, and removing vehicles from the northern part of the loop will give pedestrians and cyclists room to coexist safely on the path. I look forward to working with the administration to extend this policy to the southern part of the loop in the near future," said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**.

"Our city's precious green spaces should be a refuge. New Yorkers shouldn't have to worry about looking over their shoulder for on-coming traffic if they are out for a run, or a stroll, or a bike ride in the park. For decades, park and open space advocates have called for both Central and Prospect Parks to be car-free. Today, I'm proud to stand with them, Mayor de Blasio and New Yorkers across the five boroughs as we make that dream a reality," said **Council Member Mark Levine, Chair of the Committee on Parks**.

"Our parks belong to our children. By closing the loop we are making sure that the children of our city are protected from traffic. Congratulations to my colleagues, Council Members Rosenthal and Levine, as well as Mayor de Blasio, who have worked so hard to achieve today's victory," said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Chair of the Committee on Transportation**.

"In light of both the strong and growing support from my constituents and the long-term success of the Prospect Park Drive reconfiguration in 2011 that significantly reduced traffic in the park,

as well as the City's continued work together toward Vision Zero, I agree: the time has come to reduce rush-hour traffic in Prospect Park,” said **Council Member Brad Lander**. “I am glad to support Mayor de Blasio’s decision today, and thank him for his leadership making our city’s parks a safer place for New Yorkers to enjoy.”

“Avoiding cars in certain sections of Prospect Park was as exhausting as the cars’ emissions. Making our parks car-free is going to make our air cleaner and safer for New Yorkers,” said **Council Member Mathieu Eugene**. “I commend Mayor Bill de Blasio for taking the wheel on this important issue.”





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