



Car Free Central Park

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"Erosion of cities by automobiles entails so familiar a series of events that they hardly need describing. The erosion proceeds as a kind of nibbling, small nibbles at first, but eventually hefty bites. Because of vehicular congestion, a street is widened here, another is straightened there, a wide avenue is converted to one-way flow, staggered-signal systems are installed for faster movement, a bridge is double-decked as its capacity is reached, an expressway is cut through yonder, and finally whole webs of expressways. More and more land goes into parking, to accomodate the ever increasing numbers of vehicles while they are idle. No one step in this process is, in itself, crucial. But cumulatively the effect is enormous."

-Jane Jacobs 1961

And now the tide is turning against cars. One way we can start fighting back against cars in the urban areas is to reclaim our large parks. Help make Central Park Car Free on Sunday March 26, 2006 at noon at City Hall. [RSVP Today for the event with Transportation Alternatives](#) so they can give the media a good idea of how many people are coming to the event.

Quotable Quotes after the jump...

"The primary objective of the park is as a rural resort where the people of all classes, escaping from the glare, and glitter, and turmoil of the city might find relief for the mind, and physical recreation."

-- Egbert L. Viele, Chief Engineer of Central Park, 1861.

"Do we really have to say again, and yet again, that automobiles deteriorate and degrade not only the park but our lives and larger landscape? In this period of evolving environmental consciousness, in an era in which cities become more and more attractive as recreation centers, and an epoch when sprawl and global warming require us to enhance our greenery and livability, it is worse than myopic of city officials to allow New York's great public space to become a brutalized race track."

-Jane Holtz Kay, author of Asphalt Nation and Architecture Critic for The Nation.

"I enthusiastically endorse the campaign to close Central Park's loop drive to regular automobile traffic. We had the same sort of fight in Washington Square Park in the late 1950s and in my neighborhood here in Toronto a couple of years ago: same prediction of traffic chaos, same result of no chaos, diminished traffic counts and no counts increased elsewhere in consequence. A trial, with traffic counts on the Central Park perimeter streets, will be more persuasive than any amount of talk, letter-writing, resolutions, and other endless wheel-spinning."

-Jane Jacobs, author of the classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which the New York Times has described as "perhaps the most influential single work in the history of town planning."

"Central Park was intended to be a landscape of tranquility set apart from the dynamism of the great city around it. Introducing motor cars to its original carriage drives, and then altering the road geometries to suit them, was one of the great blunders of civic design in the 20th century. The good news is that the 20th century is now over, and we no longer have to feel any undue proprietary investment in the stupid decisions of previous generations. We could hardly make a better statement of purpose in this new century than to ban cars from Central Park."

-James Howard Kunstler, noted author of *Home From Nowhere*, *The Geography of Nowhere*, and *The City in Mind*.

Olmsted and Vaux went to great lengths to ensure that commercial traffic could cross the park with the least visual impact, by sinking the four transverse roads. Today, the presence of cars on what were intended to be leisurely carriage drives within the park seriously compromises their vision of a place to escape the bustle of the city. Cars are simply too large, too noisy, and too fast.

-Witold Rybczynski, author of *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century*.

Statement of the American Lung Association of the City of New York

Each day, thousands of New Yorkers exercise along Central Park's Loop Drive.

Unfortunately, vehicles are still permitted on the Loop Drive during the workweek, forcing park users to exercise within dangerous proximity to cars emitting harmful pollutants that include ozone, carbon monoxide, fine particles, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide.

These pollutants are particularly dangerous when people are exercising, because more air is being breathed and the air is drawn deeper into the lungs. Furthermore, during heavy exercise, people breathe more through their mouths and therefore bypass the body's first line of defense against pollution - the nose. As a result of these increased dangers, the American Lung Association has long recommended that people avoid congested streets and rush hour traffic when exercising, as pollution levels can be elevated a significant distance from the roadway.

For these reasons, the American Lung Association of the City of New York supports Transportation Alternatives in their effort to eliminate car traffic from the Central Park Loop Drive. Doing so will return the drive to its original purpose: a healthier, cleaner place where New Yorkers can exercise and enjoy the city.



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