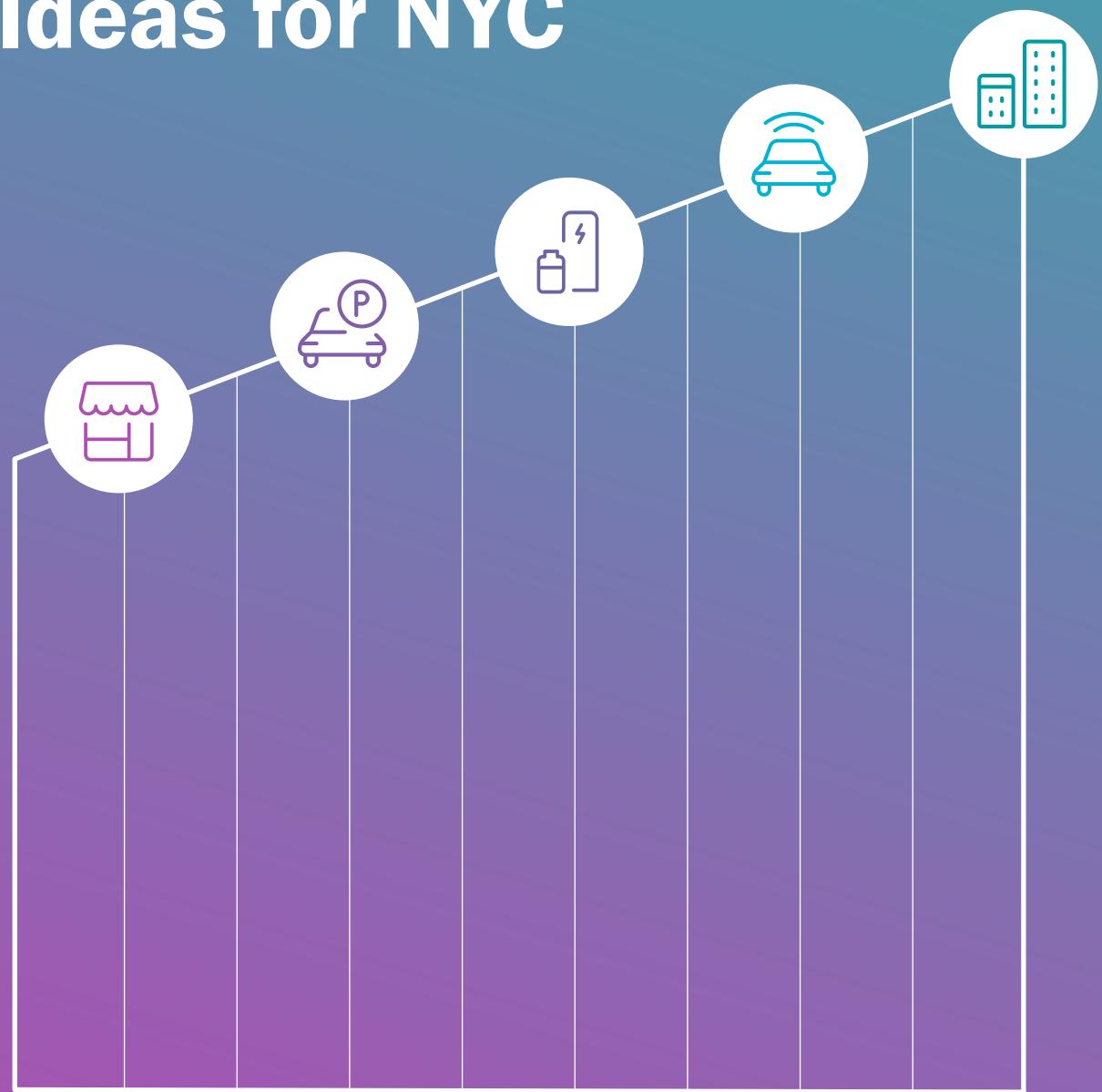


5

Center for an  
Urban Future

# Revenue-Raising Ideas for NYC



# Center *for an* Urban Future

**5 Revenue-Raising Ideas for NYC** is a publication of the Center for an Urban Future.

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Center for an Urban Future (CUF) is a leading think tank focused on building a stronger and more equitable economy in New York City, and expanding economic opportunity for all New Yorkers.

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# Introduction

## **MAYOR ZOHRAN MAMDANI BEGINS HIS TERM WITH AN**

ambitious agenda aimed at making New York City more affordable. But paying for these bold new initiatives while sustaining core services and programs will be challenging at a time when the city and state face widening budget gaps and massive cuts in federal funding. As the mayor himself put it in response to Governor Kathy Hochul’s State of the State address, “There is no question that New York City requires additional recurring revenue.”

The mayor has already floated ideas, including a proposal to raise taxes on high earners and corporations. But given that this and other ideas require approval from Albany—and that Governor Hochul has ruled out tax increases—city leaders would be wise to consider multiple new options for generating dedicated revenue, especially those that are firmly within the city’s control.

This report does just that. It puts forward five concrete ideas to generate new recurring revenue for the city. Taken together, our five ideas would raise more than \$1.4 billion in new revenue each year—or \$5.6 billion over the next four years. Importantly, each revenue idea would also advance other critical policy goals at the same time.

There’s no question that new revenues are needed. Mayor Mamdani is inheriting a city budget marked by persistent structural gaps and little room for creative reallocation. Most of the city’s spending is already locked into fixed cost categories such as employee compensation, education, healthcare, and social services. In recent years, the city has spent billions more than it has collected, while underbudgeting current and future expenses.<sup>1</sup> And the risks only grow if and when the next economic downturn hits, with just \$2 billion saved in the city’s Rainy Day Fund.<sup>2</sup>

Despite better-than-expected revenues in fiscal year 2025, the city’s fiscal outlook remains precarious. The City Comptroller projects a \$4.2 billion budget gap in FY 2026, and city and state officials estimate that the gap could widen to \$10 billion by FY 2027 and \$13.6 billion in FY 2029.

Compounding these challenges are federal policy changes under the Trump administration that are expected to place massive new strains on the city’s budget. Federal cuts to Medicaid and SNAP will add an estimated \$952 million to New York State’s FY 2026 expenditures, and billions more in the years ahead—much of which could ultimately be borne by the city.

Raising new revenue should not be the city’s only response to this budget predicament. The new administration will also need to be laser-focused on boosting efficiency, spending city dollars wisely, and ensuring that public programs generate the maximum possible impact. That includes cutting red tape that inhibits entrepreneurship, small business growth, and housing production, as well as investing in proven economic opportunity and social mobility programs that expand pathways into the middle class and strengthen the city’s economic foundation. But even a more disciplined approach to spending will not be sufficient on its own. Navigating the challenges ahead will also require new, dedicated sources of revenue.

This report presents five practical options that city leaders should consider as part of the FY 2027 budget. The proposals include levying an impact fee on autonomous vehicles; opening public land for battery storage to strengthen the energy grid; expanding paid street parking; producing new housing on CUNY campuses;

and expanding parks concessions and sponsorship opportunities to help fund quality open spaces. Together, these ideas are designed to boost housing supply while funding economic mobility; reduce traffic, crashes, and emissions; and position New York City to succeed as new technologies mature.

As these initiatives scale over the next four years, they could generate approximately \$5.6 billion in cumulative revenue. Over the longer term, the proposals for CUNY infill housing and city-sited battery storage could generate more than \$5 billion in total lease revenue, a portion of which could be leveraged to support approximately \$400 million to \$700 million in bond financing for critical capital investments. Together, these revenues would help shore up the city's finances at a moment when New York will need to protect vital services, expand opportunity, and keep the city strong for working- and middle-class New Yorkers during a uniquely challenging time.

Taken together, our five ideas would raise more than \$1.4 billion in new revenue each year—or \$5.6 billion over the next four years. Importantly, each revenue idea would also advance other critical policy goals at the same time.

# 1

## Develop infill housing on portions of CUNY's campuses to fund critical infrastructure and economic mobility programs.

**THOUGH IT HAS MADE A STRONG RECOVERY AFTER THE** pandemic, the City University of New York (CUNY)—one of New York City's most powerful engines of economic mobility—continues to face steep unmet needs. These range from expanding key college and career success programs like CUNY ACE to modernizing the university's deteriorating infrastructure. CUNY relies on a mix of city, state, and federal funding; with federal support under growing threat and increasing fiscal pressure on city and state budgets, New York will need new, sustainable ways to support its flagship public university system.

One promising option is to unlock underutilized land on CUNY campuses for infill housing—generating dedicated, recurring revenue for the university while also adding much-needed homes in residential neighborhoods across the city. Many CUNY campuses abut residential areas and include surface parking lots or other underused parcels that could be redeveloped through long-term ground leases. This approach mirrors the infill housing model now being deployed on NYCHA campuses, in which public land is retained while generating recurring revenue. This strategy could also be combined with the transfer of existing, unused air rights to unlock additional housing and revenue potential. All told, these steps could generate between \$30 million and \$55 million in annual lease payments—and \$3.0 to \$5.4 billion over a 99-year lease period, providing a stable revenue stream that could support bond financing.

The scale of the opportunity is significant, even with conservative assumptions about how much development could be unlocked without significant upzoning. Six CUNY campuses exceed 40 acres in size, and collectively

CUNY controls more than 80 acres of surface parking.<sup>3</sup> Even a modest redevelopment strategy—focused on campus edges and underutilized parcels—could deliver millions of dollars in recurring annual revenue and create housing, while strengthening one of the city's most important assets for the long term.

A brief survey of several campuses reveals their potential. At Queens College in Flushing, 12 percent of the campus area is currently used for 17 parking lots. Two lots along 61st Road—15N and 15S—sit directly across from residential zoning and near a larger interior parking facility. With a combined area of 2.2 acres, these sites could support more than 200 new homes with a modest, contextual upzoning aligned with surrounding development—and generate approximately \$1.2 to \$1.9 million in recurring annual revenue, while requiring Queens College to give up only a small share of its existing parking supply.<sup>4</sup> Additional upzoning could more than double the number of homes—and the revenue potential—from the site.

At Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, roughly 15 percent of the campus is devoted to parking, including several lots near Pembroke Street adjacent to residential blocks and located within a mile of the B and Q subway lines. Redeveloping just a portion of these sites could add new housing and generate on the order of \$800,000 to \$1.4 million in recurring annual revenue, with minimal impact on core campus operations.

At the College of Staten Island, which spans roughly 204 acres, more than 25 acres—over 10 percent of the campus—is currently devoted to surface parking.

Portions of the South Campus parking areas, which abut residential neighborhoods and vacant parcels, could be redeveloped for infill housing. Even under conservative density assumptions, redevelopment of a single five-acre site could generate roughly \$500,000 to \$900,000 in recurring annual revenue, while preserving the vast majority of campus parking. The campus could easily accommodate four of these projects, generating anywhere from \$2 million to \$3.6 million in annual revenue.

Similar opportunities exist at other large campuses, including Lehman College, York College, Brooklyn College, City College, Bronx Community College, and Queensborough Community College, many of which sit in residential neighborhoods with growing demand for housing and underutilized campus land along their edges.

Rather than treating infill as a series of isolated pilots, city and university leaders should pursue a more systematic strategy. As a starting point, redeveloping roughly one-third of CUNY's existing surface parking, along with at least one additional infill site on each campus larger than 30 acres—and some modest, neighborhood-appropriate upzoning—could generate approximately \$30 to \$55 million annually in recurring revenue, while adding thousands of new homes and preserving public ownership of campus land. Actual revenues would vary by site and design, but even under cautious assumptions,

the fiscal potential is substantial. Across a 99-year lease period, these projects could generate up to \$5.4 billion in new revenue from lease payments alone.

Revenue generated through long-term ground leases could be dedicated to expanding proven economic mobility programs such as CUNY ASAP and CUNY ACE, which have significantly improved graduation rates but still serve only a minority of CUNY students. Additional funds could be directed toward addressing aging campus infrastructure—an especially urgent priority given CUNY's approximately \$7 billion backlog in unmet capital needs.<sup>5</sup>

The Mamdani administration has already taken one key step toward realizing this opportunity by creating the LIFT Task Force, with the goal of identifying city-owned land that could be turned into housing.<sup>6</sup> Pursuing infill development on CUNY campuses stands out as a practical, scalable opportunity that could generate meaningful benefits for the colleges and the New Yorkers they serve. By coordinating with CUNY and the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY), City Hall can help transform underutilized campus land into a long-term, income-producing asset—strengthening one of the city's most vital institutions while helping New York meet the fiscal challenges ahead.



**Estimated annual revenue:**

**\$30-\$55**  
million

**Who acts:**

Mayor; CUNY; DASNY; City Council

**What's required:**

Executive leadership to prioritize campus infill; coordination with CUNY and DASNY to structure long-term ground leases; targeted land-use approvals for individual sites and contextual upzoning to maximize housing potential

**Timeline:**

Near- to medium-term, with revenue ramping up as projects come online

# 2

## Generate revenue from autonomous vehicles by establishing impact fees before the market grows

### IT IS STILL VERY EARLY DAYS FOR AUTONOMOUS

vehicles in New York City. But the technology has the potential to advance the city's street safety and climate goals—and, if permitted to operate here, to generate a significant new revenue stream at a moment when the city will urgently need it.

Driverless ride-hailing services are already operating at scale in several major U.S. cities, and state lawmakers in Albany are actively considering legislation that would allow autonomous vehicles to operate in New York. Waymo is currently testing autonomous vehicles on New York City streets under temporary permits issued last year by the Department of Transportation. In January, Governor Hochul announced plans to advance the next phase of the state's autonomous vehicle pilot program by allowing limited commercial deployment outside New York City—underscoring the pace at which this technology is moving, even as New York City retains separate authority over whether and how autonomous vehicles operate here.

Unlike with ride-hailing in the early 2010s, city leaders have an opportunity this time to get ahead of a major transportation shift by putting a revenue framework in place before the market takes off. When ride-hailing services first arrived in New York, the city allowed them to scale rapidly while relying largely on existing taxi regulations.<sup>7</sup> Trips grew from zero to nearly 800,000 per day by 2019, yet the city captured relatively little revenue from the emergence of a massive new industry. Autonomous vehicles present a similar inflection point, but with one critical difference: city leaders now have the benefit of hindsight and the chance to act earlier.

And city leaders would be wise to do so: autonomous

electric vehicles have the potential to increase passenger and traffic safety, reduce emissions, and close transit gaps. But to realize this opportunity while mitigating the risks, the city should learn from past mistakes and act now to establish the rules that will shape this emerging technology and its impact on New Yorkers.

The mayor and City Council can lay the groundwork by establishing clear rules for how autonomous vehicles can be licensed and regulated in New York City, including an autonomous vehicle impact fee—combining a per-trip surcharge with annual permit fees—to ensure this new technology helps fund public priorities, including electric vehicle charging infrastructure, streetscape improvements, and support for drivers who do these jobs today.

If New York establishes an autonomous vehicle fee structure early, the revenue potential is substantial. An initial deployment of roughly 1,000 to 1,500 vehicles, providing 20,000 to 25,000 rides per day, could generate between \$15 million and \$25 million annually. This estimate assumes a \$2 per-trip impact fee on autonomous vehicle rides and an annual permit fee of \$250,000 per company operating driverless ride-hailing services in the city. Introducing autonomous delivery fleets could add substantial additional revenue. And these fees need not pose a cost burden on customers. Today, driver earnings comprise about 75 percent of a typical Uber or Lyft fare, before expenses. Without those costs, autonomous vehicle companies should be able to keep fares consistent without passing along a surcharge to the rider.

Over time, the opportunity becomes far larger. If autonomous vehicles were to capture even half of New

York's current ride-hailing volume—approximately 650,000 daily trips—the per-trip fee alone would generate roughly \$237 million per year, creating a significant recurring revenue stream.

There is an increasingly compelling public-health case for doing so. Independently analyzed data from Waymo's operations—covering nearly 100 million miles of driverless trips across multiple U.S. cities—shows “91 percent fewer serious-injury-or-worse crashes” than human drivers.<sup>8</sup> In 2024 alone, TLC-licensed vehicles were involved in more than 10,000 reported crashes, resulting in thousands of injuries across New York City.<sup>9</sup> In a city where vehicular crashes continue to claim hundreds of lives each year, autonomous vehicles could support long-standing Vision Zero goals. Electric autonomous vehicle fleets could also help reduce transportation-related emissions and improve air quality, particularly in neighborhoods that have long borne the brunt of pollution from cars and trucks.

At the same time, the economic risks are real. Nearly 180,000 New Yorkers hold licenses to drive taxis, for-hire vehicles, or ride-hailing cars, and thousands more drive delivery vehicles—most of whom depend on this work as

a primary source of income. If autonomous vehicles are allowed to operate in the city, a meaningful portion of the resulting revenue should be dedicated to supporting workers affected by the transition.

To do this, the city should consider establishing a Driver Support Fund to help for-hire drivers access career training programs, entrepreneurship support, and pathways into growing fields such as electric vehicle maintenance, logistics technology, and green infrastructure. Revenue could also help fund electric vehicle charging infrastructure, street safety improvements, and public transit investments, ensuring that the benefits of automation are broadly shared.

New York should embrace a future that includes autonomous electric vehicles—but it should insist on getting it right. By establishing an impact fee framework now, the city can harness the benefits of this emerging technology while ensuring it generates meaningful revenue, makes the streets more welcoming to innovation, and supports New Yorkers’ economic, transportation, and public-health needs.




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**Estimated annual revenue:**

**\$15–\$25**

million initially; up to \$237 million as autonomous vehicles scale

**Who acts:**

Mayor; City Council; NYC Department of Transportation; Taxi and Limousine Commission

**What's required:**

Local legislation establishing an autonomous vehicle impact fee and permit structure; agency rulemaking to license and regulate autonomous fleets; coordination to dedicate revenue to key public priorities

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**Timeline:**

Medium-term, aligned with state authorization and early commercial deployment

# 3

## Generate revenue and strengthen the energy grid by siting battery storage facilities on city property.

### **NEW YORK CITY WILL NEED DOZENS OF NEW BATTERY**

storage facilities in the decade ahead. Building out this vital new energy infrastructure will be crucial to meeting New York's clean energy goals, modernizing the city's aging electrical system, and adding much-needed resiliency to the grid at a time when demand for power is skyrocketing from the boom in artificial intelligence and the electrification of vehicles and buildings. But the rollout of battery storage facilities across the five boroughs has the potential to help the city in another important way: providing tens of millions of dollars in new revenues.

City leaders can reap this revenue boost by taking steps to ensure some of the new battery storage facilities developed in the coming years are built on city property.

Achieving this is not an abstract notion. In 2023, the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) concluded that there are "numerous City-owned locations that could provide opportunities for siting battery storage throughout the city." In fact, MOCEJ identified 47 city-owned sites—including unused vacant land and parking lots—that could be used to deploy approximately 400 megawatts (MW) of storage, about 300 MW of which has passed initial land review by relevant city agencies.<sup>10</sup>

To date, the city has not even begun to capitalize on the opportunity identified by MOCEJ. Since that 2023 report, the Department of Citywide Administrative

Services (DCAS) (the agency that oversees city property) has not put out a single RFP soliciting bids for energy storage.

The potential for new revenues is not insignificant. One developer working on battery storage projects in the city estimated a 10,000 square foot parcel would bring in around \$200,000 per year in rental payments to the city—or \$5 million over the course of a 25-year lease. Leasing the 609,000 ground square feet identified by MOCEJ at lease rates on the order of \$200,000 per 10,000 square feet would generate up to \$15 million in new city revenues per year.

"Energy storage makes the city's grid more affordable, more reliable, and cleaner, and also can be a significant source of revenue when located on city-owned property," says Sam Brill, vice president for strategic development at NineDot Energy, one of the city's leading developers of battery storage facilities. "There are dozens of these sites identified by the city as appropriate for energy storage projects, and the city could earn hundreds of thousands of dollars in yearly lease revenues on each of these."

Taking these steps would also help the city make critical progress in creating a cleaner and more reliable energy grid. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) has detailed a need for 2 gigawatts (2,000 MW) of energy storage across the five boroughs by 2030 (out of 6 gigawatts statewide). The city is currently far short of those targets, with just

under 100 MW currently installed and online today.<sup>11</sup> But reaching these energy storage milestones will be key to achieving the state's lofty climate goals, which include achieving 70 percent of its electricity from renewables by 2030 and a zero-emission electric grid by 2040.

Expanding energy storage would also strengthen the resilience of New York City's often strained electric grid by providing a critical power reserve that can be deployed during periods of peak demand—on the hottest summer days when air-conditioning use spikes and in winter as more households rely on electric heat pumps instead of gas or oil. At the same time, battery storage can reduce the need to operate gas-fired peaker plants during these demand surges. Although peaker plants run only

intermittently, they are among the city's dirtiest sources of electricity and impose disproportionate health burdens on nearby communities, which are overwhelmingly low-income communities of color.

The Mamdani administration should move aggressively to expedite the siting of battery storage across the city. One of the clearest paths to achieve this is to advance projects on city-owned lots and vacant land, a step that would enable the city to make crucial progress on climate goals while adding millions of dollars in new revenue. Mayor Mamdani should direct DCAS to issue RFPs for at least 40 of the 47 city-owned sites that MOCEJ identified in its 2023 report.



**Estimated annual revenue:**

**\$15**

million

**Who acts:**

Mayor; Department of Citywide Administrative Services; Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice

**What's required:**

Executive direction to issue RFPs for battery storage on city-owned land; lease agreements with private developers; interagency coordination to expedite siting and approvals

**Timeline:**

Near-term, with revenue generated as projects are leased and brought online

# 4

## Expand paid street parking, adding more parking meters and piloting new paid street parking options.

**OF ALL THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO POLICYMAKERS** that do not require state action or new taxes, arguably none has more potential to raise revenue than an expansion of paid street parking.

New York City has more than 12,000 miles of curb, encompassing over 3 million street parking spaces. But just 80,000 of these are metered, or fewer than 2.5 percent. That's a costly missed opportunity: the city's current parking meter program generates about \$258 million in revenue annually—a figure that is essentially flat over the past decade after adjusting for inflation. If the city were to meter just 25 percent of existing free street parking spaces, it could generate at least \$1.21 billion in additional annual revenue—enough to close roughly a quarter of the projected \$4.2 billion gap in the city's budget for FY 2026.<sup>12</sup>

In expanding, the city could prioritize parking spots along commercial corridors and major avenues, where metering even a few more blocks could lead to substantial increases in revenue. In Brooklyn, for example, the four-block stretch on Nostrand Avenue between Halsey Street and Madison Street does not have metered parking, despite boasting multiple businesses and being directly adjacent to the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID.<sup>13</sup> The block directly below—between Halsey and Macon—is a Zone 2 metered parking area; extending it just four blocks north, to Madison Street, could generate roughly \$300,000 annually.

Crucially, small businesses stand to benefit. In areas with metered parking, spaces turn over more frequently and drivers spend far less time searching for a spot.

That saves drivers time, improves customer access for local businesses, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions by cutting down on circling and idling. The deployment could preserve free street parking in many residential areas where New Yorkers depend on their vehicles for day-to-day transportation, while focusing on commercial corridors and denser areas with good access to public transportation.

Riding on the success of congestion pricing, the city could also implement dynamic or peak-time pricing for street parking. Since 2018, parking meters citywide have been priced according to a six-tier system that sets hourly rates by an area's demand for parking, and charges more for each consecutive hour of parking—but without differentiating between peak and off-peak times. The city has tried this before: between 2008 and 2013, NYC DOT piloted PARK Smart, which introduced peak/off-peak pricing in five pilot areas across three boroughs. In all pilot areas except the Upper East Side, the program increased parking availability—18 percent more drivers were able to find legal metered spaces—but the effort never got out of the pilot phase.<sup>14</sup> Amid recent proposals at the local level to implement dynamic pricing, now is an opportune time to revive PARK Smart.<sup>15</sup>

NYC could follow models like Seattle and San Francisco, which use meter transaction receipts to measure occupancy and turnover rate, determine where parking is most/least in demand, and adjust rates accordingly three or four times a year.<sup>16</sup> In addition to revenue, dynamic pricing offers tangible benefits for drivers: in San Francisco, the average hourly rates outside the busiest areas actually dropped during the pilot, with 17 percent

of meters offering hourly rates of \$1 or less, and cruising while looking for parking dropped 50 percent.<sup>17</sup>

One common complaint among the city's drivers could be addressed in a way that also generates new revenue: the creation of a residential parking permit system. In many neighborhoods, residents struggle to find on-street parking while seeing curb space taken up by commercial vehicles and cars registered out of state. In San Francisco, Residential Permit Parking in 31 city areas charges residents \$215 for an annual parking permit, generating approximately \$22.8 million annually. In New York, implementing a \$75 parking permit fee for just 10 percent of car-owning households could raise more than \$132 million dollars annually.<sup>18</sup>

Expanding street parking offers significant revenue opportunities and proven positives for residents, drivers, and businesses—and can be accomplished without approval from Albany. In the upcoming year, the DOT could take several steps: it could identify unmetered corridors and create a plan to expand metered parking there; launch dynamic pricing in central business districts; and pilot residential parking permits. With the enthusiasm growing around the benefits of congestion pricing, the mayor should leverage this moment to modernize and expand paid street parking—generating substantial revenue while helping to make the city more livable.




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**Estimated annual revenue:**

**\$1.3**  
billion

**Who acts:**

Mayor; NYC Department of Transportation; City Council

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**What's required:**

Local legislation to expand metered parking and authorize residential permits; agency action to identify unmetered corridors, implement dynamic pricing pilots, and phase in new meters

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**Timeline:**

Near-term, with phased implementation and rapid revenue impact

# 5

## Expand parks concessions and sponsorship opportunities to help fund quality open spaces.

**NEW YORK CITY'S PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES ARE** seeing record levels of use. Visitation surged during the pandemic and has continued to grow, as more New Yorkers rely on parks, plazas, and open streets as a free, communal backyard. This growing demand poses new challenges: more wear and tear, rising maintenance costs, and increased pressure on already-stretched budgets. But it also presents an opportunity: with more people spending more time in public space, the city is well-positioned to expand concessions and sponsorships in ways that improve the visitor experience while generating dedicated, recurring revenue.

There is significant room to expand concessions in ways that enhance how New Yorkers use parks today. Cafés near playgrounds could allow families to eat together while children play. New recreation rentals could activate waterfronts, greenways, and large parks, supporting activities like biking, boating, and skating. Seasonal facilities—such as bathhouses that now operate only in summer—could be adapted for year-round use as spas or wellness destinations. Small food halls or community-oriented vendors could turn expanses of asphalt into neighborhood anchors.

Other cities offer useful examples. In recent years, Minneapolis brought the James Beard Award-winning restaurant Owamni to its waterfront park; Chicago expanded beachside bars, eateries, and recreational rentals along its lakefront; and Philadelphia found success with its mobile beer garden, Parks on Tap. New York City has begun to move in this direction, with recent additions like McCarren Parkhouse and the Queensboro Oval.

A targeted expansion of concessions at well-chosen sites could generate \$15 million to \$25 million in new annual revenue, while expanded sponsorship agreements could generate an additional \$10 to \$15 million annually. Flexible approaches—including modular or seasonal structures—would allow the city to test concepts, respond to neighborhood context, and support a wider range of operators.

There is plenty of unmet need today. Across more than 30,000 acres of parkland in the five boroughs, the city licenses just 15 restaurant concessions—two of which operate only for private events and three of which are located on golf courses or at marinas—and only seven cafés. More than half of all park concessions are mobile carts or trucks, like pretzel or hot dog vendors, and the city has added relatively few new recreational concessions in recent years.

At the same time, conservancies, nonprofit partners, and neighborhood groups are playing an ever-larger role in maintaining and programming public space, from parks to plazas and open streets. Yet many of these organizations struggle to sustain their work with city dollars and grants alone. Expanding concessions and sponsorships would help close this gap, strengthening public spaces while making their stewardship more financially sustainable over time.

Too often, however, these efforts are constrained by inconsistent rules and limited mechanisms for generating recurring revenue. Organizations report wide variation in what they are allowed to fund, how long sponsorships can last, and what forms of recognition are permitted.

Insurance requirements further complicate innovative partnerships, increasing costs for nonprofit partners and discouraging long-term commitments. As a result, many groups willing to take on stewardship responsibilities struggle to sustain their work.

In the near term, City Hall could take several concrete steps to unlock this potential. First, the mayor should launch a new effort to significantly expand concessions and sponsorships across parks and other public spaces, with the dual goals of improving the visitor experience and generating meaningful, recurring revenue. As a starting point, the city should commit to creating at least 20 new destination concessions in parks across the five boroughs, which could generate an additional \$15 million or more in annual revenue while meeting demand from park-goers. Sponsorship agreements—for instance, a major professional sports league adopting the city's basketball courts or soccer fields—could net another \$10 million or more.

To ensure that parks and public spaces retain the benefits of this new revenue, city leaders should distribute concession and sponsorship dollars through one or more designated “trusted partners,” with funds directed toward maintenance, operations, and programming needs citywide—including in parks where the underlying economics may not support new concessions. Building

on this approach, City Hall should explore launching a Concessions Investment Fund, in partnership with New York City Economic Development Corporation, to attract private capital to help revitalize underused park and public-space assets. At the same time, NYC Parks could pilot more flexible concession models—including prefabricated structures or mobile facilities—to lower upfront costs, expand access for smaller operators, and allow new concepts to be tested more quickly.

Finally, City Hall should spearhead an effort to standardize the rules governing concessions and sponsorships across agencies and their nonprofit partners. Clarifying what private funding can support, how long agreements may last, and how revenue is shared would give conservancies, BIDs, and other stewards of public space clearer expectations—and make it easier to scale successful models across parks, plazas, and open streets citywide.

There's no question that public parks and open spaces will require dedicated public investment to thrive. But a thoughtful expansion of concessions and sponsorship agreements can generate millions in recurring revenue, create amenities that New Yorkers want, and help the city reinvest in the green spaces that contribute to physically and economically healthy communities.



**Estimated annual revenue:**

**\$25–\$40**

million

**Who acts:**

Mayor; NYC Parks; NYC Economic Development Corporation; nonprofit park partners

**What's required:**

Executive initiative to create new destination concessions; standardized rules for concessions and sponsorships; creation of trusted revenue-sharing mechanisms and a Concessions Investment Fund to channel private capital and retain revenue for public spaces

**Timeline:**

Near-term, with revenue growing as concessions and sponsorships scale

# Conclusion

Mayor Mamdani is inheriting a city budget with persistent structural gaps and limited room for creative reallocation. With major spending already locked into core services—and with federal funding under increasing threat—the need for additional, recurring revenue is clear. Yet many of the most frequently discussed options depend on approval from Albany, including tax increases that the governor has declined to pursue.

The five ideas in this report focus instead on revenue tools that are largely within the city's control. Each is designed to generate dedicated, recurring revenue while

advancing other critical policy goals, from expanding housing and economic mobility to improving parks and public space, increasing street safety, and strengthening the city's electrical grid.

Taken together, these proposals show that New York City has practical, locally actionable options for strengthening its fiscal position. Pursuing one—or all—of these ideas would give the new administration greater flexibility to sustain core services, invest strategically, and navigate a challenging fiscal landscape in the years ahead.

## Ideas to Generate Dedicated, Recurring Revenue for NYC

Revenue Idea	Estimated Annual Revenue	Primary Decision-Makers	Requires Albany?
Infill housing on CUNY campuses	\$30–\$55 million	Mayor, CUNY, DASNY, City Council (land use)	No (coordination with DASNY required)
Autonomous vehicle impact fees	\$15–\$25 million (near term); up to \$237 million as AVs scale	Mayor, City Council, DOT, TLC	No (local authority)
Battery storage on city-owned land	\$15 million	Mayor, DCAS, MOCEJ	No
Expand paid street parking	\$1.3+ billion	Mayor, DOT, City Council	No
Expand parks concessions & sponsorships	\$25–\$40+ million	Mayor, NYC Parks, EDC	No

## Endnotes

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- 2 Office of the New York State Comptroller, *Review of the Financial Plan of the City of New York*, Report 18-2026, December 2025, <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/reports/osdc/pdf/report-18-2026.pdf>.
- 3 City University of New York, “Space Usage Statistics Fall 2021,” <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/budget-and-finance/services/capital-budget/Statistics-2021.pdf>
- 4 Center for an Urban Future analysis based on a modest, contextual upzoning consistent with surrounding development and a long-term ground-lease model. Recurring revenue estimates assume annual lease and PILOT-style payments of approximately \$5 to \$8 per buildable square foot, consistent with public-land infill housing precedents in New York City. Actual revenues would vary by site and project design.
- 5 City University of New York, “Five Year Capital Plan FY2025-26 through FY2029-30,” <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/fpcm/Complete-Book-Request-2.pdf>
- 6 New York City Office of the Mayor, “Executive Order 04,” January 1, 2026, <https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/news/2026/01/executive-order-04>
- 7 Annie McDonough, “Could self-driving cars be on a collision course with Zohran Mamdani?,” City & State New York, December 12, 2025, <https://www.cityandstateny.com/policy/2025/12/could-self-driving-cars-be-collision-course-zohran-mamdani/410149>
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- 10 PowerUp NYC, Mayor’s Office of Climate & Environmental Justice, “Energy Storage: Reducing Reliance on Fossil Fuel-Fired Power Plants,” September 2023, [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/climate/downloads/pdfs/PowerUp\\_ResearchandFindings-Memo\\_Energy-Storage.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/climate/downloads/pdfs/PowerUp_ResearchandFindings-Memo_Energy-Storage.pdf)
- 11 Center for an Urban Future analysis of data from NYSERDA, through November 30, 2025.
- 12 Center for an Urban Future, “5 Ideas to Advance Economic Mobility in NYC Amid Harmful Federal Policies,” July 2025, <https://nycfuture.org/research/5-ideas-to-advance-economic-mobility-in-nyc-2025>
- 13 Data from the NYC Metered Parking Map (<https://nycdot.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=a786e79ea512421baecd3bbd1c5619d6>).
- 14 U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration Office of Operations, “Parking Pricing,” last modified February 11, 2022, [https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestionpricing/strategies/not\\_involving\\_tolls/parking\\_pricing.htm](https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestionpricing/strategies/not_involving_tolls/parking_pricing.htm)
- 15 On the UWS, Community Board 7 already recommended dynamic pricing for meters in the area in June 2024 (<https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/smart-curbs-upper-west-side-jun2024.pdf>). A local law has been filed with the City Council to establish at least one dynamic pricing zone per borough (<https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6558077&GUID=094A6B07-B153-4DE2-A89B-4024257E3CE3>).
- 16 Purva Kapshikar, “PARK Smarter: Lessons in curb pricing for New York City,” UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies, June 2023, [https://escholarship.org/content/qt58819232/qt58819232\\_noSplash\\_6aea47c666fc5a654c29c8932268accf.pdf](https://escholarship.org/content/qt58819232/qt58819232_noSplash_6aea47c666fc5a654c29c8932268accf.pdf)
- 17 Adam Millard-Ball, Rachel R. Weinberger, and Robert C. Hampshire, “Is the curb 80% full or 20% empty? Assessing the impacts of San Francisco’s parking pricing experiment,” *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice* 63 (May 2014): 76-92, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2014.02.016>.
- 18 Center for an Urban Future analysis of data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2024.

