

# Pandemic leads hundreds of cities around the globe to explore 'open streets'

by [Tristan Cleveland](#) in the [June 17, 2020](#) issue



Some streets in New York City have been closed to traffic under an Open Streets program to facilitate social distancing. (Rainmaker Photos / MediaPunch / IPX)

When COVID-19 cases started popping up in Colombia in mid-March, Bogotá mayor Claudia López realized her city had a head start on at least one response: car-free streets.

For years, the city had been closing its main roads to cars each Sunday as part of a program called La Ciclovía, a breath of fresh air in the crowded and chaotic capital.

But as the virus bore down on the city, La Ciclovía took on a more urgent value. The World Health Organization had advised that walking and cycling were the safest means of travel during the coronavirus outbreak, so López and her fellow city officials decided to effectively scale up La Ciclovía as an emergency pandemic mitigation measure.

Within days, Bogotá opened nearly 47 miles of new temporary bike routes, adding to 340 miles of paved protected paths. The city also converted almost 17 miles of automobile lanes to bike routes overnight.

*This story is part of the SoJo Exchange of COVID-19 stories from the Solutions Journalism Network, a nonprofit organization dedicated to rigorous reporting about responses to social problems. [Read the full original here.](#)*