

## When Does a Mall Pall?

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It's hard to keep a bad idea down. The proposal for a Broadway Mall keeps popping up with relentless regularity. It is the kind of dated window dressing that boosters embrace, and someone seems to love at City Hall.

The proposal to pedestrianize Broadway from 45th to 48th Streets, diverting traffic to Seventh Avenue, has now been revived with the possibility of a Federal start-up grant of \$500,000. It is a misguided effort doomed before it starts. We are promised trees, benches, cafes and fancy paving. The better, no doubt, to enjoy the surrounding views. Or to browse pleasantly in bookstores. There will be potted plants in season. (Seasons in Times Square? Its tawdriness is timeless.) It could, of course, create a nice pimp and prostitute promenade.

And it will certainly aggravate an existing bottleneck where the Traffic Department says none exists, by choking off an alternate route that saves the crossroads of the world from certain chaos. At that point, Seventh Avenue congeals.

But chiefly, a Broadway plaza simply couldn't survive. Those planners' clichés would be engulfed by the area's special brand of ground-in grime and litter and visual and social pollution. After the initial grant for "planning," street signs and traffic signals, the permanent installation would rely on part of a \$4.8 million Federal mass transit grant that New York hopes to get, with the city providing 20 percent of costs in "in kind" services. Cosmetic boondoggles cost money. This is not planning; it is fancy fiddling while Times Square rots.

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