

## Seize the Time for Times Square

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# Seize the Time for Times Square

After trying for more than a decade to refurbish Times Square in various ways, New York may finally be on the verge of success. The viability of a 42d Street plan by the city and Urban Development Corporation now depends on the requested proposals of developers. If demand for commercial space remains strong and if signs of regeneration around Times Square continue, the rebuilding of the midtown West Side looks like an inviting target for investors.

The plan's guidelines are excellent and demonstrate the value of public leadership in development. They call for revitalizing 42d Street as a theater and entertainment district, and developing the area's office and retail potential. They emphasize preserving the historic 42d Street theaters — as theaters rather than porn palaces. Subway and street improvements would be integrated with new construction, and the ties with the garment center and the Clinton neighborhood would be strengthened.

This plan is clearly superior to the earlier private proposals, particularly the much-debated City at Forty-Second Street. The new guidelines incorporate the earlier project's sound real-estate judgment by

grouping new office towers along the Broadway-Seventh Avenue axis. And it retains the earlier plan's merchandise mart, which would challenge the barrier of squalor and decay that now separates the garment center from Times Square.

But the new plan would not demolish the landmark Times Tower, as the backers of the earlier project suggested. We are not alone in seeing this structure as the symbolic focus of Times Square, even in its present, architecturally mutilated condition. The new plan would also sensibly use the area's theaters for drama and films, rather than the "World's Fair" exhibits contemplated in the earlier proposal.

The 42d Street plan calls for a wide range of investing and operating expertise and will require a complex collaborative effort among developers. Whether they will respond as enthusiastically as they did to similar guidelines for Battery Park City is not yet clear; ultimately, the success of both undertakings will depend as much on the market as on the plans.

But for the moment, both plan and market look very good. The time for renewal in Times Square may be right at long last.

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