

## **Starting Over in Times Square**

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Too much is already being read into the joint plan of New York City and the state's Urban Development Corporation for the renewal of Times Square. This is not a plan — at least, not yet. It is only a statement of intent. But the intent is serious and the action, while too long delayed, is right. It joins the expertise of the state corporation with the city's planning resources for a comprehensive approach to the Times Square area, and it asserts the city's control over policy decisions that will affect the future of the entire West Side.

But all the actual work lies ahead. No one has determined how to proceed; even the memorandum of agreement is still to be signed. The first announcement was thus less a blueprint than an expression of hope that Times Square can be rebuilt through the collaboration of public and private organizations in ways that

exploit its traditional strengths, the theater district and tourism.

This approach is significantly different from inviting developers to appear with their own plans. The groups that have made private proposals will be consulted early in the process, but the objectives, clearly, should be broader than those of any individual builder. All sources of assistance, including Federal and state funds and local renewal powers, and all the resources of the area are to be explored. If nothing more is achieved than a pastiche of existing schemes, the joint effort will have failed. Economic realism has to be primary, but the capabilities of the city's planners are also on trial. A timetable has been established and the scope of the project has been defined. There is a commitment to action. This is a start, and a good one.

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