Taking back the Street: the Transformation of Times Square

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Learning Objectives
1. Learn about what the DOT has done to transform New York City’s streets into places of active transportation for bikers and pedestrians.
2. Understand the interconnectedness of policy, design and advocacy in the creation of successful urban space
3. Gain insight into a collaborative design process that integrates multiple viewpoints and creates dynamic social experiences.

Green Light for Midtown: Background
• Major initiative to enhance mobility and safety
• Implementation began in late May 2009, from Columbus Circle to Union Square
• Created new pedestrian areas on Broadway in Times Square and Herald Square
• Extensive safety measures

Green Light for Midtown: Results
• Overall improved motor-vehicle travel speeds
• Injuries to motorists and passengers down 63%
• 74% of New Yorkers surveyed agreed that Times Square improved dramatically over the previous year
NYC DOT Plaza Program

- Streets 27%
- Buildings & Parking Lots 45%
- Parks 13%
- Airports 16%
- Vacant 5%

Plaza Program Goals

- Create destinations to improve neighborhood walkability
- Improve access to transit
- Enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety
- Support local development and build community partnerships
- Preserve and promote neighborhood character

NYC DOT Plaza Program

- Areas located within the public right of way designed for pedestrian use
- Application-based program
- Non-profits apply and demonstrate community support for a plaza
- Priority given to areas with low to moderate income and lacking in open space

Plaza Program Goals

Flatiron Plaza adjacent to Madison Square Park on a cold day (March 13, 2012)
NYC DOT Plaza Program

64 Plazas currently in planning, design, construction, or complete. Of those, 45 Plazas currently open to the public.

Where: Lack of Open Space

Where: Community Partner

Where: Excess Roadway

Fowler Square, Fort Greene, Brooklyn
Temporary Materials

Putnam Plaza, Clinton Hill, Brooklyn

ASLA 2014 Annual Meeting and EXPO

Permanent Materials

Albee Square, Downtown Brooklyn

ASLA 2014 Annual Meeting and EXPO

Outreach: Community Board Vote

ASLA 2014 Annual Meeting and EXPO

Partner: Maintenance

ASLA 2014 Annual Meeting and EXPO
Programming: Cultural Events

Programming: Art

Revenue Type: Subconcessions

More And Better Space

A 2003 survey found that **68%** of Times Square employees cite **congestion** as the #1 reason they would consider working elsewhere.
Define The Reality, Measure The Problem

2004 Pedestrian Circulation Study
Pedestrian mobility is dangerously low

2004 Times Square Traffic Study
Times Square is dangerously crowded and will get worse with new development

2005 Origin Destination Study
Cars don’t use Times Square as a thoroughfare

2007 & 2009 Constituent Attitude Surveys
Congestion identified as biggest neighborhood problem by far

Pedestrian Growth in Times Square
Summer 1999 – 2008

It Ain’t Pretty

Don’t be afraid to explore anything & everything
Comments From Design Trust Workshops

“It would be a big mistake if the streetscape had a sort of dulling effect of uniformity…”

“We need to choreograph the chaos…there has to be a place to appreciate the chaos.”

“It’s really important that we think about scale, really grand scale and then also very human scale.”

“Create a place where Times Square can be observed.”

Imagine Change, Create The Narrative

Imagine change
• 2003 Design Trust Workshops
• 2004 “Problems and Possibilities”
• 2005 NY/London Presentation
• 2006 Project for Public Space Study
• 2007 Times Square 2nd Century Workshop
• 2011 Design Brief for DOT

Identify new & creative partners
Build support inside & outside government

2009: Broadway Pedestrian Plazas

Pedestrian Space: 73%

Vehicles Space 58,833 SF
Sidewalks 80,700 SF
Broadway Plaza 51,500 SF
Pedestrian Islands 26,888 SF

The New York Times

“Old man hits ground in middle of Broadway, in traffic, on his way home from Sony.”

New York, Tuesday, May 26, 2009

New York Times Square

Thankful to be alive.
Prepare To Grab Opportunities & Execute Your Vision

1. Continuously gather information & data to support your core agenda
2. Plan & prepare for a workable political solution
3. Take advantage of changes in leadership
4. Make the case for your stakeholders so they are prepared for change
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These Streets Were Made for Walkin’

20 Years, 20 Principles