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TIMES SQUARE IN CONTEXT

Reach Out Like an Octopus

Midtown hosts a number of important destinations for residents, employees and tourists alike. Often times it is unclear how these districts connect, and which events and activities are appropriate for each distinct destination.

As Times Square continues to evolve, it is important to solidify its role as Midtown's central destination, and as the world's premier civic square.

To be central implies being connected. Information, signage, and wayfinding can be accomplished in a variety of ways, all of which will help Times Square establish its role in Midtown.

To truly function as a successful destination, Times Square must improve the ground-level experience for each of its various users, including sightseers, Midtown workers, shoppers and theater-goers.



1 Power of Ten Destinations

A great district should have 10 identifiable destinations and each destination should offer 10 unique things to do.

Times Square has a host of identifiable places, such as theaters, destination retailers (such as Toys R Us), restaurants, and Duffy Square.

However, many of Times Square's destinations are underperforming in terms of their ability to provide an array of activities that satisfy residents, employees and tourists of all ages and interests.

For example, Good Morning America struggles to capture its audience on the sidewalk and destination retailers seldom engage the street. Other places

that regularly attract crowds, such as MTV and Virgin Records have no space to handle them, and there is no district management or security plan to deal with impromptu events.

Spaces outside the Bowtie, such as Shubert Alley, are underutilized and could be developed into smaller destinations that extend and diversify the range of experience in Times Square.

Extending the range of activities outside the Bowtie will also ease congestion and allow the district to accommodate more people doing a wider variety of activities.



2 Crowded Corners and Gateways

Intersections are not gateways

The Times Square experience does not currently extend down side streets which could accommodate many more amenities and activities.

Theaters sit quiet most of the day and side streets don't provide opportunities for theatergoers before and after the show.

More active corners, side streets and gateways would allow people to experience more than just the Bowtie, and lead people through and to Times Square in a more engaging and exciting way.

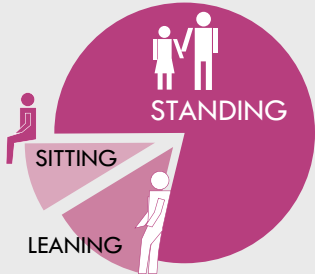


Corners are bulging with pedestrians waiting to cross north-south, but destinations, activities and amenities that could pull them away from the Bowtie and into the surrounding district are either poorly placed or non-existent.

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WHAT PEOPLE DO IN TIMES SQUARE

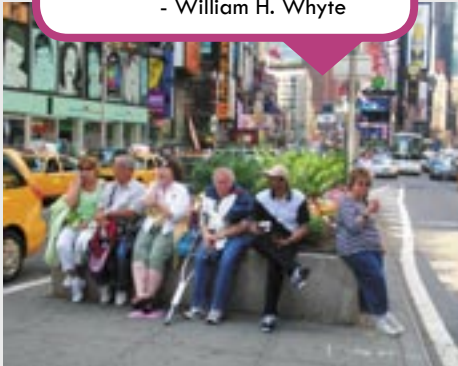
1 Is Times Square Comfortable?



Not enough places to sit

People in the Bowtie act like it is a square—with large percentages of users engaging in stationary activities such as socializing, reading maps, taking pictures, and waiting. However Times Square's lack of amenities and infrastructure for pedestrians make stationary activity uncomfortable.

"This may not strike you as an intellectual bombshell, but, people sit where there are places to sit."
- William H. Whyte

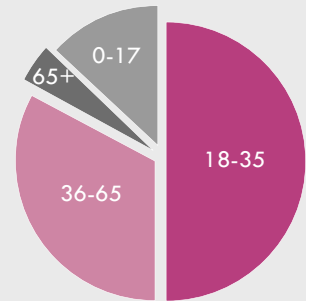


Women, children and elderly avoid spending time in the District



Gender

- A healthy public space usually has at least 60% woman participating in stationary activity
- This breakdown suggests that much of Times square is not a very comfortable place to spend time



Age

- 13.1% of New Yorkers are over age 65 but only 4% are found engaged in stationary activity in Times Square.
- The overwhelming percentage of 18-35 years old suggest that **this is not a place that as inviting to all.**

2 People Come in Groups

People like to socialize

- People want to spend time in Times Square socializing with people in their groups
- Of the somewhat limited stationary activity, the most common activity was socializing



What were people observed doing?

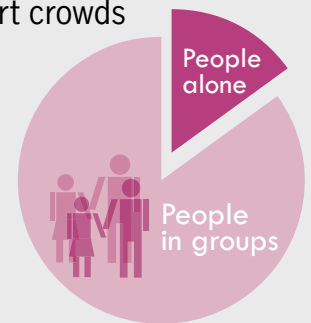
- socializing [24%]
- resting, waiting [21%]
- looking at info/map [8%]
- talking on cell phone [8%]
- window shopping [7%]
- taking pictures [7%] buying from vendor [5%]
- waiting for bus [4%] eating [2%]
- watching performance [2%]

Destinations do not support crowds

Group Activity

Average group size 2.8
Average in Squares 3.1

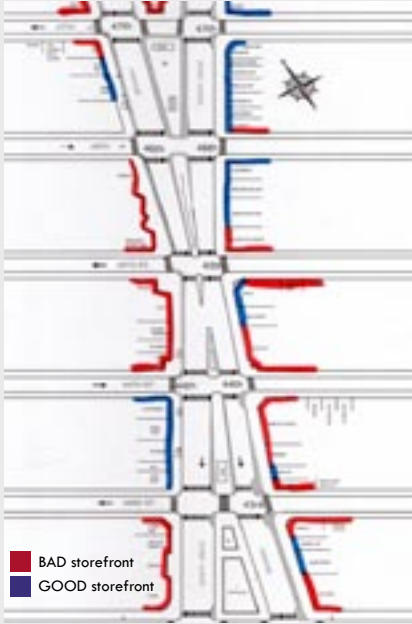
- Most stationary activity in Times Square is as part of a group.
- Sidewalks do not support walking comfortably as a group.



3

WHAT PEOPLE DO IN TIMES SQUARE

1 The Ground Floor Experience



Many storefronts in Times Square lack the transparency and interest to provide a vibrant ground-floor experience that is consistent throughout the district.



Eye-level Entertainment

There is very little to engage the pedestrian at eye-level and window-shopping is a mixed experience at best. Most storefronts are frictionless glass facades with no outward displays. Entries and lobbies turn away from the avenues, and people shelter themselves from the heavy foot-traffic in any available nook.

More shallow retail opportunities, indoor/outdoor spaces, interactive displays and better sidewalk and median amenities could all improve the experience at the ground level, and reinforce the district's many destinations.

4 There's No "Square" There

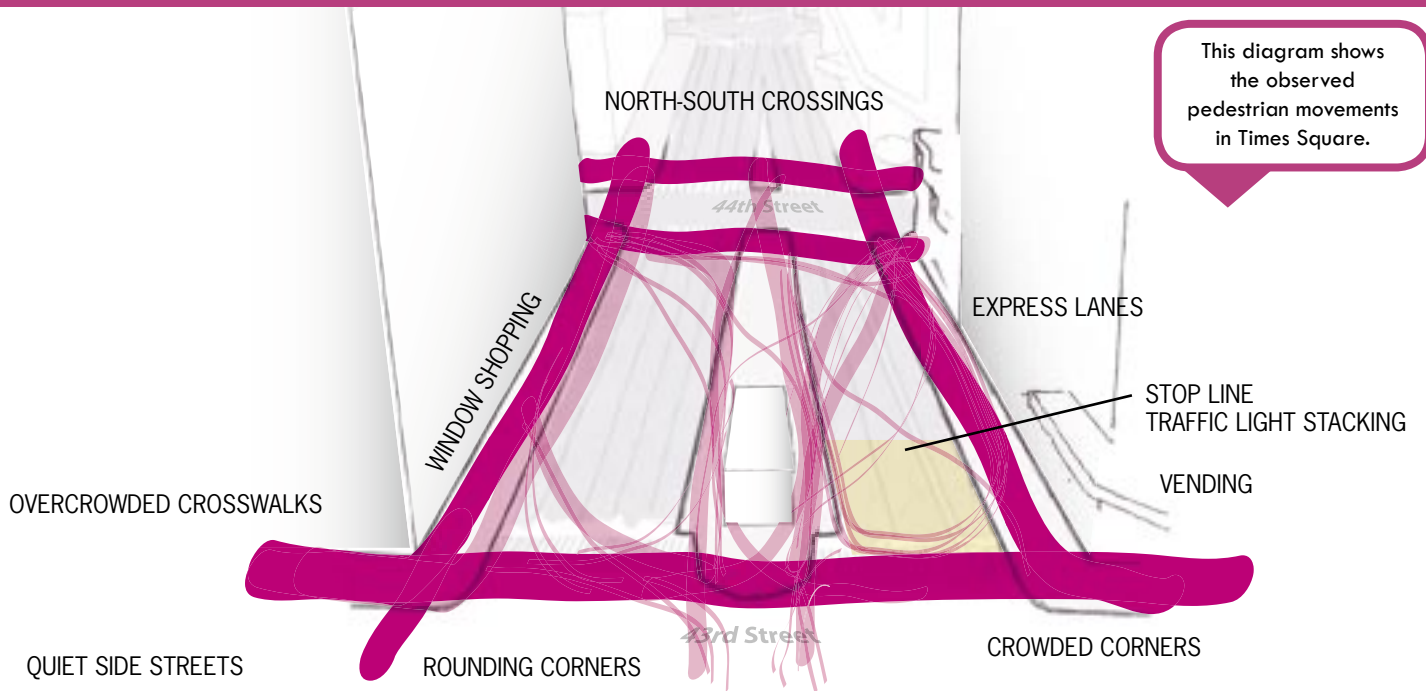
The central medians function as places to stop, wait, meet friends and take in the whole square. However these spaces are scary, crowded and sometimes inhibiting to social activity. Buildings located on the south end of the Bowtie do not support the activities of a square, nor are they flexible or multipurpose.



Major Observed Stationary Activities by Zone

4

HOW PEOPLE MOVE IN TIMES SQUARE



Pedestrians in Times Square behave much like skaters at an ice rink. Window shoppers and lingerers pick their way slowly along the edges, while through-traffic speeds along the “inside track” of the sidewalk closest to the traffic. The performers and people-watching is in the center, exhibited by the extensive and chaotic crossing movements shown in the diagram above.

1 Life in the Fast Lane

While not providing full respect to pedestrians, the temporary sidewalk expansions do allow for “express lane service” for locals and individuals or small groups trying to get through the area quickly.



WHY did you come to Times Square today?

- Work
- Sightseeing
- Theater
- Shopping

2 Living on the Edge

Pedestrians seem to be disengaged in the street-level of Times Square. Blank walls fail to engage the pedestrian or contribute to the public experience. Many storefronts are designed and developed for advertising or as internal destinations. These “frictionless” facades promote a “stampede” condition that forces groups through the district, rather than giving them reasons to be there.



3 Crossing the Street – “I’m walking here”

Pedestrian demand is not accommodated

Pedestrian demand for crossing and moving through Times Square in an expedited manner is much higher than the current infrastructure and traffic patterns allow for. Pedestrians are often crossing through traffic lanes and outside of crosswalks. With this much pedestrian demand, it does not make sense that the space is still managed primarily for vehicular traffic flow.



4 Underutilized Street Space

Time lapse video and observation showed that pedestrians overwhelm the roadway during red-light phases, and cars rarely queue for more than 20% of the block.

Increasing crosswalk widths, and allowing pedestrians more crossing time could ease congestion by facilitating movement from sidewalks to median (and back).

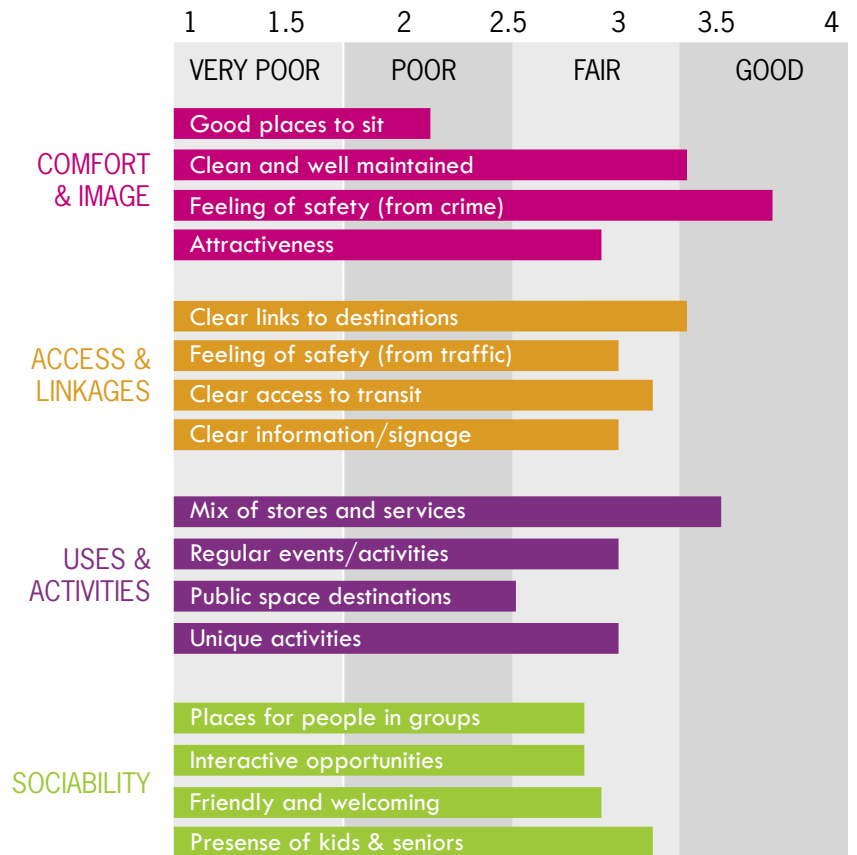


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SURVEY RESULTS

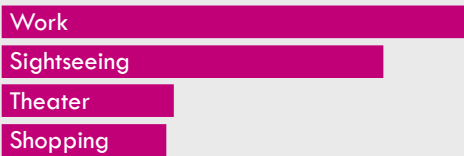
Perceptions

When asked why they came to Times Square the survey found people visiting for specific reasons. When asked to describe what they had done today in Times Square, they described an array of detailed activities.

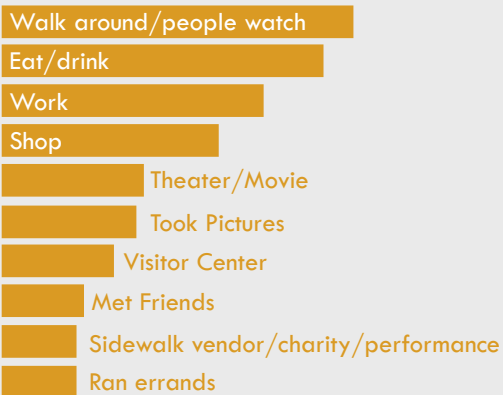


Perceived Activities vs. Actual Activities

WHY did you come to Times Square today?

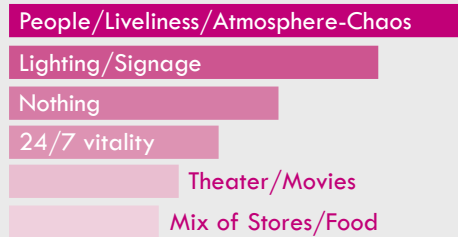


WHAT have you done today in Times Square?



Support and build on what people like

What do you **LIKE BEST** about Times Square?



What **IMPROVEMENTS** would you make?



People like the lively atmosphere of Times Square

