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# Strengths, Weaknesses, and Potentials of Pedestrian Malls

By ADRR Board and Guests

Since its inception, members of the American Downtown Revitalization Review's (ADRR) Board have engaged in a near continuous e-mail dialogue about a wide range of issues, trends and opportunities that do not, in our opinions, always receive the attention they need and deserve in other media outlets and industry publications. The vitality of these conversations is evident in the number who join and/or read these back-and-forths more than two years after the ADRR's launch; indeed, over time, non-Board members have added to the ferment with their own observations and insights.

We at the ADRR have followed with particular interest the reimagining of public space that represents one of the welcome developments of the pandemic era. It led us to wonder whether the time was right for a reevaluation of the pedestrian mall experiment which had been roundly dismissed as an abject failure for decades.

With this in mind, our Michael Berne wrote an article in July 2021, entitled "Pedestrian Malls: The Newest Fad?", which was widely read both on the ADRR site as well as Michael's LinkedIn feed. It can be accessed here:

<https://theadrr.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/MJBPedMallsArticleADRRFinal.pdf>

Then, on September 9th, 2022, Bloomberg CityLab published an article, "Lessons from the Rise and Fall of the Pedestrian Mall", by Stephan Schmidt, a Professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University, based on his analysis of 125 of them from the postwar era.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-09-09/why-america-fell-out-of-lovewith-the-pedestrian-mall>

[Why America Fell Out of Love With the Pedestrian Mall - Bloomberg](#)

We were delighted when, in response to an approach by one of our Board members, Dave Feehan , Stephan was willing to engage with us to discuss his findings, our (at times, critical) feedback as well as pedestrian malls more generally. Others joined along the way. The result was an extensive dialogue that grappled with the nuances and complexities of the subject, and that, we feel, would be of interest to others involved in Downtown revitalization. **We have provided excerpts from this exchange in the**

**February 2022 ADRR and you are invited to read and download it at The ADRR's website:**  
<https://theadrr.com>

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