



Penn Station's Lesson: If At First You Don't Succeed...

Jan 8, 2016 · by [Matthew Schuerman](#)

Gov. Andrew Cuomo's [promise](#) to overhaul Penn Station is like déjà vu all over again. WNYC's Kate Hinds and Matthew Schuerman say the idea of leveraging private sector investment failed in the past, though the economy may have picked up enough to work this time. Listen to the accompanying audio for their interview with All Things Considered host Jami Floyd. See below for a quick history lesson.

1910's

1910

Original Penn Station Opens

Designed by McKim, Mead, and White, the station took after the Baths of Caracalla in Rome as well as the Gare D'Orsay in Paris. At its peak in the 1940s, 100 million passengers pass through it in a year.



Library of Congress

1963

Original Penn Station Demolished

The Beaux-Arts masterpiece that let air and light from the sky to reach railroad waiting rooms is knocked down, after a failed campaign by Jane Jacobs and others to save it. The station is covered by a modern basketball and hockey arena. Architectural historian Vincent Scully would say, "One entered the city like a God. Now one scuttles in like a rat."



Walter Daran/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

EARLY 1990'S

Senior Senator from New York Proposes New Penn Station

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Democrat and enthusiast of good design and architecture, comes up with idea of converting the Farley Post Office into an extension of the train station.



Marion S. Trikosko

1992-93

Amtrak Draws Up Blueprints to Transform Farley

The US Postal Service's plans to vacate most of the Farley building provide an opening to move some train operations in the Beaux-Arts building. Architecture firm Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum designs a 120-foot high "sweeping parabolic arch that would form a skylight over the central court of the Farley building," according to David Dunlap of The New York Times. Estimated cost: \$315 million.



Ben Hider/Getty Images

JUL 18, 2005

Public-Private Partnership to Transform Farley Announced

Then Governor George Pataki and a state development corporation award the right to renovate the Farley Post Office to Vornado and Related. But within months, developers are negotiating with Madison Square Garden for an even more profitable deal, and Pataki leaves office before he's able to hold a groundbreaking.



Getty Images

2006

Private Developers Draw up Grand Plan

Vornado Realty Trust and the Related Companies **strike tentative deal to move the Madison Square Garden arena one block west** inside the Farley Post Office. That would allow for the complete redevelopment of Penn Station, finally rescuing it from the cellar of the Garden and restoring some of its former grandeur.



New York Daily News Archives/Getty Images

MAR 27, 2008

Madison Square Garden Withdraws from Grand Plan

Two weeks after Gov. Eliot Spitzer resigns, **Madison Square Garden's Jim Dolan** decides against moving from its location between 7th and 8th avenues, above Penn Station. Architects and planners had heralded the swap as the best way to open up the crowded labyrinth of corridors and platforms that commuters and long-distance train passengers currently have to contend with.



Steve Mack/Getty Images

OCT 18, 2010

Ground Broken on Limited Plan

Officials call on \$300 million in government funds to add entrances on the 8th Avenue side of the Farley Post Office, right New York from Penn Station. The staircases will bring passengers Madison Sqd to the same train platforms that run under Madison where Penn is currently located. Farley and the subterranean Penn Station are similar in style. development rights to pay for it.



Joseph/Flickr

2008-2015

Private Developers Seek Other Tenants to Propel Project Forward

Vornado Realty Trust and The Related Companies toy with moving the Borough of Manhattan Community College to the 9th Avenue side of Farley Post Office. The college's valuable property in Tribeca would be sold and profits would be used to build Moynihan Train Station. But the deal fails for reasons that remain unclear.

JAN 06, 2016

Cuomo Revives Grand Plan for Penn Station

New York governor suggests moving the 5,600-seat Theater at Madison Square Garden underneath the Garden's arena, which would allow for higher ceilings and a better entranceway to the subterranean Penn Station. He proposes selling retail development rights to pay for the cost of redoing the concourses and lobbies. Cost estimate: \$2 billion.



Kevin E. Coughlin/Office of NYS Governor