

NEWS

- Regional News
- National News
- World News
- NYPOST.COM**
- Home
- Archives
- Last 7 Days
- Breaking News
- Business
- Cartoons
- Classified
- Columnists
- Coupons
- Entertainment
- Gossip
- Home Delivery
- Horoscope
- Learning Center
- Lifestyle
- Lottery
- News
- NYC Rental Listings
- PageSix.com
- Parenting
- Post Opinion
- Post Store
- Puzzles
- Real Estate
- Reviews
- Shopping
- Sports
- Story Index
- Traffic
- Travel
- TV Listings
- Weather

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- Contact Us
- Job Openings
- News Corp Sites
- Online Media Kit
- Print Media Kit
- Privacy Policy
- Terms of Use

REGIONAL NEWS

TUNNEL IS SUNK

By WILLIAM NEUMAN



December 4, 2002 --

EXCLUSIVE

ROAD WORK:
One possible plan eyed by lower Manhattan redevelopers is to turn traffic-heavy West Street into a pedestrian-friendly promenade.
 - Robert Kalfus

Balking at a \$3 billion price tag and the years of construction it would take to bury West Street, downtown planners are now focusing on lower cost options for remaking the street into a pedestrian-friendly promenade.

Final decisions will depend, in part, on the seven Ground Zero design proposals to be released later this month, but the idea of running West Street in a tunnel from the World Trade Center site all the way to the Battery has been all but discarded, development sources said.

Officials still envision, however, turning the street into a grand tree-lined boulevard that would lead from a future Ground Zero memorial toward views of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

Putting the eight-lane West Street in a tunnel to better link Battery Park City with the rest of lower Manhattan was one of the earliest ideas to gain currency among development officials.

But the \$3 billion cost of running the street underground for a dozen blocks - and protests from residents fearing years of noisy roadwork - has made planners think again.

A series of interviews in recent weeks indicates officials are focusing on two lower-cost options, among various scenarios developed by the state Dept. of Transportation.

One involves creating a shallow underpass for the four-block stretch where the street passes the trade center - similar to where First Avenue goes by the United Nations.

A park would than be built on an elevated deck above the underpass, linking the Winter Garden and the WTC complex.

Because it wouldn't require moving a major sewer line that lies 16 feet below street level, the price tag would be \$300 million to \$700 million.

Planners estimate it could be completed in three to five years, compared to the six to 10 years it would take to complete the full-tunnel option.

The second idea planners have found attractive involves not burying the street at all.

Officials have worried that a busy West Street would spoil an adjacent Ground Zero memorial.

But Lower Manhattan Development Corp. board member Roland Betts, who has championed a remade West Street, said that at 270 feet across, planners think the road is wide enough to stay at its current grade and still minimize impact on the memorial.

Keeping West Street at grade would cost an estimated \$150 million and take two years.

Under both scenarios, landscape architects would work to remake the street's appearance.

* One name was added yesterday to the medical examiner's list of confirmed dead in the World Trade Center attack: Kevin Michael Williams, 24.

WASTE WATCH
 Help save the city budget! If you are aware of waste, fraud or mismanagement anywhere in city government, let The Post know. Send an email with details about the problem to govwaste@nypost.com

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Back to [Regional News Index](#) | [Home](#)

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Page Six .com
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