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We Can Do Better Than a Lousy T-Shirt

Now that they have successfully reduced crime, the folks at City Hall think that they can do anything, even make money by selling sweatshirts and trinkets with a New York City insignia. In order to raise revenues, the Giuliani administration wants to mimic, and even compete with, leading designers and retail stores. But even the flashiest "New York City" logo is no match for DKNY or the Polo horseman, much less a baseball cap from Paragon Sporting Goods or a T-shirt signed by David Letterman's neighbors, Mujibar and Sirajul.

Rather than put New York City's name on consumer goods, we should do the opposite and persuade businesses to pay good money to put their names on New York's best-known streets and structures. This would generate substantial revenues and stimulate new marketing campaigns for the city. Here are a few ways to breathe new life and new funds into New York:

At the "The Nobody Beats the Wiz Midtown Tunnel," mega-screens could entertain motorists while they endure the usual 45-minute traffic jam. Drive-thru shopping would be available; purchases would be delivered to drivers as they paid the toll.

Ever since the World Trade Center reopened, it has deserved a new identity. How about the Reebok Twin Towers, featuring an annual in-door vertical marathon? Runners would race to the observation deck on the bomb-proof stair-ways. Not far away would be Evian City Hall Park where an urban survival kit would be sold, with earplugs to shield visitors from the shattering car-alarms, and bottled water guaranteed not to be from the New York City reservoirs.

The Prozac Port Authority would dispense pills to all needy commuters so they can maneuver through the crowded terminal without stress. Swatch's Kennedy Airport would have a clock at every ticket-counter to remind travelers that scheduled departure times are irrelevant at our busiest airport. And Starbucks could certainly add its name to LaGuardia, now that it has saturated every streetcorner in midtown Manhattan.

The Virginia Slims Grand Central Parkway would let smokers know they are welcome on the roads of New York, if not in our restaurants. The Haagen-Dazs Goethals Bridge would demonstrate that this company, founded on Staten Island but now part of a multinational conglomerate, still prefers to be identified with New York. And the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway would be an ideal marketing device for Dial-A-Mattress, since motorists trapped on the Kosciuszko Bridge could order a new bed and box spring from their earphone with a guarantee that it would be delivered by the time they got home.

Many of the city's most prominent locations are named for property owners who have moved or sold out. Since the Rockefeller family has taken most of its money out of Rockefeller Center, why not call it the "Warner Music Center" and have gangsta rappers perform under the tree at Christmas?

Years ago, bridges and highways were named for dead explorers and politicians. That's a luxury we can no longer afford. Let's auction off the names of New York's landmarks to the highest bidder. The city would retain ownership of the properties and could quickly reopen the bidding process if a company went out of business. The Giuliani administration should stick to what it does well fighting crime and let business generate the revenues necessary to improve our credit rating.

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