

Preliminary Report

July 22, 2002 • Jacob Javits Center



Nearly 200 people from New York and the tri-state area gathered on July 22 at the Jacob Javits Center to play a role in rebuilding Lower Manhattan. Over the course of the day-long forum, participants in "Listening to the City" deliberated over the options for the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site and considered the critical issues that must be addressed in order to help people rebuild their lives in the aftermath of September 11. This forum complemented a July 20th town meeting that followed the same format

The public conversation was attended by many of the decision makers and officials who will ultimately decide the future of Lower Manhattan, including officials from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and representatives from the New York City Mayor's Office. The results of the forum will be presented to these decision makers to guide their work.

"Listening to the City" is a project of the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York, a broad-based coalition of over 85 groups committed to devising strategies for the redevelopment of Lower Manhattan. It has been convened by the Regional Plan Association, in conjunction with New York University, AmericaSpeaks, New School University and the Pratt Institute.

The Civic Alliance sought to represent the rich diversity of the metropolitan region at Listening to the City. It is evident that this goal was reached better in some areas than in others. For example, 55% of the participants were female and 45% were male, while the region is 52% female and 48% male. In addition, 22% of the participants were 20 to 34 years old, matching the percentage for the region. People 65 and better made up 14% of the forum, close to the regional figure of 12%. On the other hand, while the region is 21% Hispanic, 20% African-American, and 9% Asian/Pacific Islander, the room was only 12% Hispanic, 3% African-American, and 4% Asian/Pacific-Islander. Similarly, participation was lower among people in the lowest income bracket and among those who live in Manhattan than is true in the region. The Civic Alliance will continue to address the issue of ensuring that all voices are in the room in future activities.

Forum participants related to the events of 9/11 and the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan in a variety of capacities:

- 11.7% had a family member who was a 9/11 victim
- 21% are survivors of the events of 9/11
- 32% lost a friend or colleague in the events of 9/11
- 20% lived in Lower Manhattan
- 37% worked in Lower Manhattan
- 30% were at or near Ground Zero on 9/11
- 26.7% became displaced/unemployed as a result of 9/11
- 7.5% were rescue or recovery workers
- 80.8% attended primarily as interested citizens

Demographics

Participants in the forum came from all walks of life and represented the rich geographic, racial and income diversity of the metropolitan region. These figures are compared below to the official demographics of the region.

<u>Gender</u>	<u>July 22</u>	<u>Region</u>
Female	55%	52%
Male	45%	48%
Age		
19 and under	7%	27%
20-34	22%	22%
35-54	42%	30%
55-64	14%	9%
65 and better	14%	12%
Household Income		
Less than \$25,000	16%	26%
\$25,000 - 49,999	30%	25%
\$50,000 - 74,999	15%	18%
\$75,000 - 99,999	11%	12%
\$100,000 - 149,999	15%	11%
\$150,000 or more	13%	8%
Hispanic		
Hispanic	12%	21%
Non-Hispanic	88%	79%

<u>Race</u>	<u>July 22</u>	<u>Region</u>
African American	3%	20%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4%	9%
Caucasian	73%	64%
Native American	0%	<1%
Mixed Race	11%	2%
Other	8%	
Immigrant	19%	
Disabled	6%	
Geography		
Manhattan	43%	} 47%
Brooklyn	16%	
Bronx	3%	
Queens	10%	
Staten Island	3%	
New Jersey	11%	30%
Elsewhere in NYS	9%	23%
Elsewhere in the US	3%	
Another Country	1%	

Hopes and Concerns

Among the most common reasons participants attended the forum was to become part of the rebuilding process, support those who lost loved ones, and to help bring New Yorkers together.

Participants were asked to discuss their most important hopes and concerns about rebuilding and remembering. A high priority for many is a memorial that is powerful, peaceful, and dignified. For the surrounding area many said they hoped for something that was grand and uplifting while still on a human scale.

At the same time, many wanted to make sure that rebuilding provides economic opportunities for all. Many cared deeply about building a Lower Manhattan that was more “connected,” had more vibrant neighborhoods that supported people of mixed income, and incorporated sustainable design and “green” buildings. Participants asked that planners “build for the long term, be truly innovative, and go beyond our usual way of thinking.”

Of course, participants had concerns as well. Some worried that the designs for downtown would be “too ordinary” or wouldn’t be inclusive enough of diverse populations. Others feared that commerce would become “too much of a decision driver.” Others voiced concern that the environmental impacts of significant new construction above and below ground would have significant environmental impact. Finally, participants wanted to be assured that the memorial would embody a “divine feeling.”

REBUILDING THE SITE

An informed citizenry is vital to a properly functioning democracy. To help the participants deliberate, representatives of several agencies gave detailed presentations on issues related to six preliminary ideas for rebuilding the World Trade Center site. Senior officials such as the chairman of Lower Manhattan Development Corp (LMDC) and the chief architect and the chief engineer of the Port Authority were on hand to gauge the discussion.

In its presentation, the Port Authority of New York stressed that a proper memorial and the economic revival of Lower Manhattan are its top priorities. The agency noted that it has legal obligations to the site’s leaseholders, which require it to provide office, hotel, and retail space.

The LMDC discussed elements of the six proposals and ideas for the areas surrounding the trade center site, including parks and promenades, cultural institutions, and transit improvements, among them a new “gateway” center. Details of the proposals are available at www.renewnyc.com

Rebuilding the Site: Advice on the Current Options

Participants discussed the six site options in two sections. First, they were asked to accept the program established by the Port Authority, and articulate the features of the schemes that they like and those that they dislike. Participants then selected the single most important piece of advice that they wish to give the planners from among the themes of that discussion.

LIKES

Participants identified eight features that they liked about some or all of the site options. The two features that, by far, received the most votes were: (1) “integrate structures into a unified whole that evokes the sense that the whole thing is a memorial” (42%); and (2) “the promenade concept as a memorial and as a way to connect the site to the surrounding area. The other six were:

1. Street grids are great!
2. The cultural features to make the site 24/7, such as an opera house and museum
3. The focus on the integrated transit center
4. The attempt to make the skyline impressive, not necessarily big

5. Break up the mass of commercial buildings for a better balance with open space
6. Visual connection of the monuments: Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, 9/11, etc.

DISLIKES

In addition, participants discussed features of the plans they disliked.

Participants identified seven features they disliked about some or all of the site options. The three features that received the highest percentage of votes were: (1) Not enough balance of uses – memorial, commercial, housing and community uses -- too much commercial (28%); (2) “Memorial should be primary Develop around it.” (22%); and, (3) Buildings are ugly; designs are not ambitious enough; need to open up to design competition” (19%).

The other features disliked were:

1. Skyline is uninspiring. Don’t like antenna as piece of skyline
2. Don’t use footprints of towers as memorial space
3. Don’t build on the footprints
4. Limit the amount that we open the street grid. “Chops up the space too much.”

Rebuilding the Site: Advice Beyond the Options

In the second discussion segment, participants were invited to offer the LMDC/PANYNJ any additional advice, whether within or outside the program. Themes were distilled from the discussion and ranked through polling with wireless keypads. The results – in ranked order – are as follows:

1. Open up to international competition for design (29%)
2. Multiple uses are critical, including: mixed use buildings, neighborhood services, housing, and youth, senior and health services (28%)
3. Dedication to victims with names attached to memorial (12%)
4. Make spiritual uses in site area (10%)
5. Don't limit ourselves in our vision; less office space (7%)
6. Green building and innovative ecological approaches (7%)
7. Transportation concerns – needs to be a priority (6%)
8. Set aside more land for parks (3%)
9. Reflective pool – use of water (1%)

Rebuilding Lives

September 11 destroyed more than buildings. In response, participants discussed economic development and employment issues, transportation, housing, and neighborhood amenities.

The key messages on economic development and employment was to focus on employment for those effected by 9/11-outreach, retraining, recruitment, extending unemployment benefits (26%), to balance commerce and residential needs (25%), and to diversify businesses by supporting small businesses (24%).

The messages regarding housing/civic amenities focused on creating a 24/7 neighborhood with cultural and educational opportunities, and open space (36%) that included affordable, diverse mixed income housing with consideration for survivors (35%).

The key message about transportation was to emphasize mass transit, pedestrian and bike access over cars and trucks (40%).

Conclusion

PANYNJ's Chief Engineer, Frank Lombardi expressed appreciation to all participants for their comments and assured them that their input would be an important part of the Port Authority's and LMDC's consideration as they continue the review process.

Asked about the pace of the rebuilding process, 39% of the participants thought it should go slower, with 36% stating it was about right. The end of day evaluation question indicated that 34% of the participants were very confident or confident that their voices would have an effect on decision makers, with 51% somewhat confident, and 14% with little confidence.

Polling on Concept Plans

LMDC/PANYNJ authored fourteen multiple-choice questions to obtain information about particular issues in the concept plans. Participants answered the questions using wireless keypads, and the results were aggregated to produce the following results:

Participants were asked to describe which elements of the six plans were most important to them. More than half – 57% -- said they believe it is important to add a major symbol to the skyline.

Opinions were more varied on how important it is to restore the street grid through the World Trade Center site, with 26% saying it is very important, 20% saying it is important and 14% saying it is somewhat important.

Eliminating West Street as a barrier between Battery Park City and the rest of Lower Manhattan was considered very important by 70% of the participants & important by 14%.

Most of the participants, 60%, thought it was better to have a variety of differently sized open spaces than a single large space.

In reviewing the potential settings for a memorial, participants were not especially pleased with any of the concept plans. The Memorial Triangle and Memorial Park both received "poor" rankings by more than half of the participants. The Memorial Square (12% Excellent; 29% Good) and Memorial Plaza (12% Excellent; 26% Good) options received the highest rankings, but more than a quarter of the participants also viewed both of these options as "poor."

Planning the Memorial

Creating an appropriate memorial to those who died September 11 was the top priority of the participants. All of the proposals for the site were designed around the concept of a memorial, but it may be some time before a decision can be made about what a proper memorial should contain.

In response to a final polling question on memorials, 64% said that it was "very important" to link the planning of the memorial to the planning for the rest of the site, and 15% said that it was "important."