

July 20 & 22, 2002, Jacob Javits Center
Preliminary Report

4,500 people from New York and the tri-state area gathered on July 20 and July 22 at the Jacob Javits Convention Center to play a role in rebuilding Lower Manhattan. Over the course of the day-long forums, participants in "Listening to the City" deliberated about options for redeveloping the World Trade Center site and considered issues that must be addressed to help people rebuild their lives in the aftermath of September 11 and memorialize those lost.

This preliminary report summarizes the outcomes of the events, including who attended, how they felt about these issues, and their evaluation of the meetings and the process. Attached to this preliminary report is a transcript of the polling results from the July 20 and 22 events. The results of July 20th and 22nd were remarkably similar. A final report will be available in August that includes a thorough analysis of ideas generated during the discussions, as well as the results of a two-week online dialogue that begins on July 29.

"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. The Civic Alliance was convened by the Regional Plan Association, in conjunction with New York University, , New School University and the Pratt Institute. America*Speaks* joined with the Civic Alliance to organize "Listening to the City." The 21st Century Town Meeting™ methodology used was designed and facilitated by AmericaSpeaks.

Who Attended?

4,300 people from the metropolitan region attended the July 20 town meeting and another 200 people attended a smaller forum on July 22. Overall, the demographics of the two meetings were quite diverse, and very similar. Participants came from all walks of life and all parts of the region 53% of the participants were female and 47% were male, while the region is 52% female and 47% male. In addition, 27% of the participants were 20 to 34 years old, compared to 22% for the region. People 65 and older made up 10% of the forum, close to the regional figure of 12%. 66% of the participants were Caucasian, compared with 64% in the region. Only 7% of the participants were African-American, compared to 20% in the region. A relatively high number of individuals (9%) reported "none of the above" when asked about their race. Participation was distributed fairly evenly among income brackets, with a somewhat higher representation of higher incomes. Residents of Manhattan were significantly more highly represented than the rest of the region. A fuller description of the July 20 and 22 demographics may be found in the addendum to this report. The Civic Alliance will continue to try to ensure that all voices are proportionally represented at future activities.

July 20 participants related to the events of 9/11 and the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan in a variety of capacities:

8.9% had a family member who was a 9/11 victim
19.7% are survivors of the events of 9/11
23.6% lived in Lower Manhattan
41.4% worked in Lower Manhattan
33.5% were at or near Ground Zero on 9/11
21.5% became displaced/unemployed as a result of 9/11
6.2% were rescue or recovery workers
71.1% attended primarily as interested citizens

Hopes and Concerns

Participants were asked to discuss their most important hopes and concerns about rebuilding and remembering. On Saturday, a high priority for many was a memorial that is inspirational and serene and respects the now-hallowed ground where thousands died. At the same time, a significant number of people wanted to restore lost jobs and rebuild the economy. Many cared deeply about ensuring that Lower Manhattan becomes a lively, 24-hour community that contains housing and offers residents, workers and visitors a mix of business, retail and cultural facilities and open space. Achieving this, participants said, requires a better-integrated transportation network. As one participant said, we need to "build a new heart for New York City."

Of course, participants had concerns as well. Some worried that the World Trade Center site would be over-developed, with too much commercial space. Others said that the process is being rushed and is too political. As a result, they feared that important voices would go unheard and that a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a great 21st Century urban space would be lost. Many also cautioned against a memorial that is either too tacky or too somber.

Rebuilding the Site: Advice to Planners

Participants discussed the six site options proposed by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (Port Authority) and were also polled on their preferences in relation to various elements of those options. First, they were asked to accept the program established by the Port Authority and explain which features of the design schemes they liked and disliked. Participants then selected the single most important piece of advice they wished to give the planners from among the themes of that discussion. The top three themes on July 20 were:

1. Preserve the footprints as a "remarkable symbol"
2. Buildings should be visually interesting to the skyline.
3. Build the West Street tunnel: "reconnects the neighborhood, minimizes commercial traffic, opens waterfront."

Additional themes from their discussions included:

- Extended promenade is a good way of using green space to connect community.
- Traffic: Like the interconnected hub, ample pedestrian walkways and restoration of street grid.
- Support cultural uses, including performance venues.

In addition, participants discussed features of the plans they disliked. The ranked themes were:

1. Schemes are not ambitious enough – the buildings are too short; "Nothing here is truly monumental;" "Looks like Albany."
2. Include more non-office uses, including residential (affordable program) and cultural – these schemes will not produce a 24/7 community.
3. Plans are too dense – too many buildings that are too large

The other themes concerning features that participants disliked were:

- Do not pursue "Memorial Square" because it walls off the courtyard – "feels like an open casket."
- Don't cut off the neighborhood with wall of tall buildings, buildings too tall.
- Do not build on the footprints of the WTC towers.
- Promenade is "too skinny" and cuts off Battery Park City.

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

1. Be bold in design, stressing innovative, quality design – perhaps a design competition.
2. Seek other ways to address and solve leasehold requirement – "Cancel the leases. Start fresh."
3. Diversify uses – reduce amount of office space; add schools, libraries, recreation centers; include affordable senior housing.
4. Employ safety and security measures in any design.

LMDC/PA 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. On July 20, more than half (57%) said they believe it is very important to add a major symbol to the skyline. Another 14% said it is important, and 12% somewhat important. Eliminating West Street as a barrier between Battery Park City and the rest of Lower Manhattan was considered very important by 71% of the participants and important by 17%. Most of the participants (53%) thought it was better to have a variety of differently sized open spaces than a single large space. Opinions were more varied on whether it is necessary to restore the street grid through the World Trade Center site, with 35% saying it is very important, 21% saying it is important and 18% saying it is somewhat important.

In reviewing options as potential settings for a memorial, participants were not pleased with any of the plans. On Saturday, none were ranked as good or excellent by more than 42% percent of participants. Only the Memorial Plaza and Memorial Promenade were judged to be at least "adequate" settings for a memorial by more than half of the participants. The Memorial Plaza, Memorial Square, Memorial Garden and Memorial Triangle proposals were all ranked as poor or

unacceptable by a majority of participants. While the Memorial Promenade drew the most positive responses: 23% thought it was excellent and 18% said it was a good setting for the memorial, 41% ranked the it as poor or unacceptable – the same proportion that ranked it good or excellent. The discussions during the day indicate that the plans were all considered poor settings for the memorial because, in part, of the density of buildings and amount of commercial space in each site option.

Asked about the pace of the rebuilding process, 50% of the participants said it was about right, 13% said it should move faster and 29% said it should be slower.

Planning the Memorial

Creating an appropriate memorial to those who died September 11 was a 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. A representative of the victims' families read a mission statement that defines the broad goals of a memorial, saying it should honor those who died and those who carried on as well as the brave people from around the world who joined the rescue efforts. This mission statement was generally received well and drew praise for its simplicity and inclusiveness, although some suggested that it be made more "global" and even more inclusive.

On Saturday, 64% of participants said it was very important and 15% said it was important to link the planning of the memorial to the planning for the rest of the site. Participants said that a great memorial should be designed first, and then planners should map out the area around it to ensure an appropriate overall plan for the entire site.

Rebuilding Lives

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

The top message on housing was to provide affordable and middle-income housing for all ages. The top two messages on transportation were to expand transit service and to improve the existing systems. The top two messages on economic development were to promote business diversity without diluting the character of Lower Manhattan as a financial district and to create jobs and training programs, especially for those directly affected by the events of 9/11.

Conclusion

Responding to participants, LMDC's Lou Tomson and Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff indicated on Saturday that they would re-look at including more uses on the site, reducing the density and addressing the issues created by the leaseholders' rights. The day closed with evaluation questions. On Saturday, 79% of the participants felt very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of the dialogue. Asked if they believe their voices would have an effect on decision-makers, 33% were very confident or confident and 45% were somewhat confident, while 22% had little confidence. On Monday, 100% of participants said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of the dialogue. Nine percent said they were very confident that they would be heard, while 25% said they were confident, 51% somewhat confident, and 14% had little confidence.