

January 9, 2004

Civic Alliance Statement on the Memorial

To the LMDC and the Memorial Jury:

Since early 2002 the Civic Alliance has called for an integrated process for the planning of the WTC site and a memorial to the victims of 9/11. Instead, the processes proceeded on parallel tracks. While the insulation of the memorial design competition from political pressures was desirable, Tuesday's selection of "Reflecting Absence" confirms the risk of pursuing independent planning processes. The chosen design, in its first public iteration, conflicted with the most compelling and evocative aspects of the Libeskind master plan. It was also in conflict with more basic aspects of the site plan that have been through a process of public review and consultation, as well as the scoping for the draft GEIS. The chosen memorial design, "Reflecting Absence" exhibits strong physical symbolic elements, and the jury should be commended for its courage in selecting such a design within the context of their charge. However, planners and public officials are now challenged with reconciling the strong ideas from these two plans into a powerful and respectful memorial and a successful public space.

The chosen memorial design will undergo significant changes before next week's unveiling and will surely adapt further as the process moves forward. We urge the LMDC and the memorial and master plan designers to adapt "Reflecting Absence" to respect the core symbolic and distinguishing elements of the Libeskind master plan that have captured the public imagination and enjoyed broad support. These include the exposed slurry wall and the presence of civic and cultural uses that buffer the memorial quadrant from commercial activities on the site. Particularly important is the location of these civic uses to the northeast of the memorial quadrant, close to the activity of the transit station and the intersections of Fulton and Greenwich Streets.

The planners and the public agencies must not lose sight of the fact that the most important client for this project is the public. Now that a memorial design has been selected, the process and timeline for revisions should not be motivated by political schedules, but by the time that is needed to ensure a successful outcome and meaningful and continued public input. Officials must articulate how the public will be informed of changes to the master plan and memorial as they evolve. The public process around the rebuilding effort did not end with "Listening to the City." As participants from the earliest stages of the rebuilding process, we look forward to weighing in with the public on the next iteration of an integrated memorial and master plan as it moves forward.

Voting Members of the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York
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Coalition of 9-11 Families
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