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CIVIC ALLIANCE CRITICIZES PUBLIC PROCESS

Coalition also releases guidelines for upcoming master plan

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NEW YORK – As the Lower Manhattan Development Corp. prepared to hold its public hearings on the next round of Ground Zero designs tonight, the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York reiterated its call for a more robust public process. In testimony to be read by Ron Shiffman at this evening’s hearing, the Alliance criticized LMDC for hosting a conventional public hearing instead of an interactive, substantive dialogue.

“There is still much to debate, but today we are asked to express ourselves in two minute sound bites,” said Shiffman, Director of the Pratt Institute Center for Community and Economic Development. “Listening to the City and Imagine New York engaged thousands of people in a constructive dialogue about rebuilding over the summer. Now that we have even more substance to debate in nine new plans, LMDC seems to have forgotten what productive public participation looks like.”

Key differences between tonight’s public hearing and this summer’s *Listening to the City*:

- LTC engaged thousands in a two-way, all-day dialogue; tonight’s hearings limit the public to two minutes of one-way speech.
- By seeking areas of consensus, LTC forced public officials to respond to the public will; tonight’s hearings are simply an aggregate of 2-minute speeches.
- LTC allowed participants to debate issues impacting all of Lower Manhattan, not just the site; tonight’s hearings are stuck on nine plans for the site only.

Civic Alliance Guidelines for WTC Site Master Plan

While many issues remain in the rebuilding process – lack of integration with the memorial process, insufficient public participation, unclear decision-making responsibilities and a narrow focus solely on the 16-acre site – it is clear that a master plan will be released shortly. Given that reality, the Civic Alliance provides the following guidelines for land use on the WTC site, based on our Planning Framework and the results of our Planning and Design Workshop:

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- Reserve the 8-acre “bathtub” for civic and public uses only, including a memorial. This civic and memorial uses should be a catalyst for the reanimation of the neighborhood: creating a functional “city on the ground” as opposed to a “city in the sky.”
- Public funds should not be used to subsidize a shopping mall, above or below ground on the WTC Site. New retail is a vital need for the Lower Manhattan community and should be distributed throughout Lower Manhattan. While some retail in the transit corridor is appropriate (commuter-oriented retail, such as the type located in Grand Central Station) destination retail should be restricted to above ground and located around the periphery of the site.
- Allow the memorial to drive the design and tone of plans for the site by delaying final decisions about the site plan until the memorial is chosen and integrated into the plan.
- Incorporate a phasing plan to allow for flexibility in the amount of commercial office space built on the site. Do not use public funds to subsidize commercial development.
- The master plan must reflect and be woven into a broader strategy for all of Lower Manhattan, such as the Mayor’s Vision for Lower Manhattan.
- Leave flexibility in infrastructure to accommodate whichever transit projects emerge from the public debate.

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