

CIVIC ALLIANCE TO REBUILD DOWNTOWN NEW YORK

Minutes

Monday, January 14, 2002
New York University
Bobst Library
70 Washington Square South, New York
John Ben Snow Dining Room

1. Introduction and Welcome

Bob Yaro opened the meeting and thanked our host, Arthur Fried of the Center for Excellence in New York City Governance of NYU.

2. Announcements

The RPA Regional Assembly, Friday, April 26 was announced and the “Listening to the City” Conference will be held on Thursday, February 7 at South Street Seaport (brochures were handed out).

3. New York New Visions Presentation

- Rick Bell began the New York New Visions PowerPoint presentation, which focused on both short-term assistance and long range planning. Short-term goals include business retention and streetscape issues. Long range planning would be governed by *seven guiding principles*. These principles are the framework for a memorial process, transportation connections, preparing for a mixed-use future, recognizing downtown as part of a multi-center city, concentrating on east-west and north-south connections to adjacent neighborhoods, sustainability in redevelopment, and tax incentives to encourage development and investment in the area. The New York New Visions report can be downloaded at www.newyorknewvisions.org.

4. Urban Design

After this introductory presentation the focus was shifted toward urban design. Mark Strauss and Mark Ginsberg presented some of the urban design work that appears in the New York New Visions report. Highlights of the presentation are as follows:

- The area was formerly the 3rd largest retail center in the country in total sales.
- Connections to Lower Manhattan are key and should be provided through the improvement of the Fulton/Broadway inter-modal connection point for all public transportation.
- An inter-modal transit hub should be erected on the scale of and with architectural expression equivalent to Grand Central Station as the entrance into Lower Manhattan.
- West Street should be revised to better integrate Battery Park City. It is a critical North-South connection.
- 7 World Trade, which is currently being redesigned, should incorporate a pedestrian corridor to extend to Greenwich Street.
- Broadway should be a pedestrian oriented main street to accommodate visitors to the area.

- East/West corridors are Chambers Street, Fulton Street, and Wall/Rector Street; Vesey & Liberty streets offer opportunities for east west corridors.
 - Open space should be developed for 24/7 activity, including cultural activities. The whole area should be a mixed-use residential/educational/institutional/cultural place, which supports this 24/7 idea.
 - Technology for performance is key in building for the future. High tech security systems, etc will play a huge role in the designs of future buildings.
 - Design excellence is of utmost importance in the planning process for the benefit of New York's greatest asset, human capital. Attractive places with a variety of office spaces are key as is taking advantage of the 270-degree waterfront.
5. Beverly Willis from RDOT, a community group in lower Manhattan, spoke on supporting all proposals that put people first. Currently Pace University and RDOT are researching what is necessary for the design of the new area. Highlighted points include:
- Making the former site a hub and still preserving historical buildings
 - Sustainability is an essential element of new buildings and development
 - Using technology for the improvement of the design and process
 - Construction and the removal of materials should not disrupt life and work for the people of Downtown.

6. **Open Discussion**

After the presentations, there was a discussion regarding issues surrounding urban design. General comments and main ideas brought up in the session are as follows:

- Pedestrian circulation is of paramount importance in the rebuilding of the downtown streetscape.
- Is there a way of structuring State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) in a way to give incentives for good design? Sustainability should exist during the construction process and in the end product.
- Clarification and visualization of issues have been well illustrated by the New York New Vision publication as it provides for scale, open space, links to transportation, design and sustainability.
- Is there really a need to replace the 15 million square feet of office space? How do you replace the office space in a way that a social/ environmental/ economic justice person would agree with? How and what do we rebuild and can that much new construction be sustained in regards to waster, energy, and water? And what is the impact of the reconstruction process itself?
- Civic Amenities such as landmarks and historical destinations, streetscapes, and waterfront parks and recreation should be addressed. The question of the rising water levels was also raised in response to the general consensus of developing the waterfront. The Center for Climate Research has proven that Manhattan is effected by global warming and rising sea level.
- How does the memorial process begin? There is no model besides Oklahoma City and that is on a tremendously smaller scale. The Oklahoma model was a task force of 350 people; if we did that in New York, it would have to be a task force of 35,000 people. Do we address the possibility of a design competition?

- Economic development should be framed more broadly than building office space and creating jobs. Lower Manhattan should be sustained as a financial hub as well as a hub for retail, residential and historical industries. How can this area be attractive to businesses? How much office space we build is not as important as the question of how we configure it. Economic inequality was also addressed.
- How much money will be available for redevelopment and who will decide how it is used? Who will set the priorities? There should be a finance committee of the Civic Alliance to address these issues.
- How does the New York New Visions report reach the community? Should hard copies of a summary of the report be dispersed to area businesses and citizens? How can the issues be accessible to everyone?
- Should the need for office space in the future be a deciding factor in what is built now?
- The regulatory process must be reformed not just to expedite the process, but to increase citizen oversight.
- How will the streetscape be redeveloped? 32 miles of streets need to be restructured for pedestrian and mass transit use.

7. “Conversations with the City”

At the end of the meeting Arthur Fried of NYU and Carolyn Lukensmeyer of AmericaSpeaks presented information about the upcoming event on February 7 at the South Street Seaport. The conference will aim to get public participation into the process of the Civic Alliance and will serve as the first in a series of outreach components of the Civic Alliance’s work. It was also mentioned that due to a positive outlook for funding, the \$25 fee for the conference will probably be waived for some, if not all, of the conference participants.

8. Recreation Bubble

Just before the end of the meeting it was moved that the Civic Alliance write a letter in support of the temporary Indoor Recreation Bubble on Site B in Lower Manhattan, bordered by West, Greenwich, Murray and Warren Streets. The community of Lower Manhattan was hit hard by the events of September 11 and as a result have no safe space for the local children to recreate. Funding has been secured for this project and Community Board One has passed a resolution to spearhead a campaign for the erection of this bubble.

The Civic Alliance moved unanimously to support the recreation bubble and to send a letter of support to the Michael Carey, president of the NYC Economic Development Corporation and Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

9. The meeting adjourned at 10:35 PM

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Attendance

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John Ben Snow Dining Room

Ruth	Acker	Women's City Club
Richard	Anderson	New York Building Congress
Jonathan	Ball	Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton
Deborah	Beck	Real Estate Board New York (REBNY)
Rick	Bell	American Institute of Architects
Barry	Benepe	Fine Arts Federation of New York
Genie	Birch	University of Pennsylvania
Joan	Byron	PICCED
Marcia	Bystryn	New York League of Conservation Voters
Colin	Cathcart	Kiss & Cathcart
Vishaan	Chakrabarti	Skidmore Owings & Merrill
Rocky	Chin	Chinatown Resident
Carol	Clark	
Ethan	Cohen	City College Architectural Center
Tara	Colton	Center for Excellence in NYC Governance
Andy	Darrell	Environmental Defense
Susan	Deutsch	Capital Initiative, Limited
Mary	Dierickx	Fine Arts Federation of New York
David	Dyssegaard Kallick	Fiscal Policy Institute
Paul	Elston	NY League of Conservation Voters
Paul	Epstein	Epstein & Fass Associates
Madeline	Fletcher	RPA
Arthur	Fried	Center for Excellence in New York City Governance
Margaret	Fung	Asian American Legal Defense Fund and Education Fund
Jean	Gardner	Parsons-Architecture
Roland	Gebhardt	
Mark	Ginsberg	Curtis and Ginsberg Architects
Jill	Gross	Hunter College
Ashok	Gupta	Natural Resources Defense Council
Jayson	Haedrich	
Eva	Handhardt	Municipal Art Society
Bonnie	Harken	APA NY Metro Chapter
Jennifer	Hoppa	Manhattan Borough President's Office

Sandy	Hornick	NYC Department of City Planning
Tracey	Hummer	Art in America
Ernie	Hutton	Hutton Associates Inc
Amos	Ilan	Ilan Consulting
Karen	Kahn	Port Authority New York New Jersey
Richard	Kaplan	RPA
Gail	Karlsson	Citizens Network for Sustainable Development
Ellie	King	Womens City Club
Drew	Kirziades	Manhattan Borough President's Office
Sue	Labourie	Studio L'Image
Charles	Lai	Asian American Federation of New York
Patricia	Lancaster	Patricia Lancaster Associates
Rob	Lane	RPA
Jennifer	Lara	ICIS
Chris	Lasch	
Beth Cooper	Lawrence	Women in Housing and Finance
Holly	Leicht	Municipal Art Society
David	Levy	
Sharon	Levy	YMCA
Barbara	Lizzenberg	Peterson Lizzenberg
Carolyn	Lukensmeyer	AmericaSpeaks
Kimberly	Miller	Citizens Housing & Planning Council
John	Mollenkopf	Center for Urban Research
Suzanne	O'Keefe	Alliance for Downtown New York
Nancy	Owens	Community Board 1
Michael	Payne	Columbia University
Steven	Peterson	Peterson Lizzenberg
Marion	Poessl	
Sumner	Rosen	Five Borough Institute
Caroline	Samuels	NY Mortgage Coalition
Melissa	Saunders	University of Pennsylvania
William	Schacht	Lockwood Greene
Kate	Schmidt	Manhattan Borough President's Office
Josephine	Schwartz	NYCHA
Shirley	Secunda	American Planning Association
Ethel	Sheffer	New School
Ron	Shiffman	PICCED
Peggy	Shiller	Milano Graduate School, New School University
Bill	Shore	NYU Institute of Public Administration
Jeremy	Soffin	Jasulca Terman
Ann Marie	St. Germain	Jasulca Terman
Linda	Stone Davidoff	Citizens Union
Mark	Strauss	Fox & Fowle Architects
Susan	Szenasy	Rebuild Downtown Our Town (RDOT) / Metropolis Magazine
Marilyn	Taylor	Skidmore Owings & Merrill

Petra	Todorovich	RPA
Jim	Tripp	Environmental Defense
Ann	Van Ingen	NY State Council on the Arts
Alex	Viado	Citizens Union
Tova	Wang	Century Foundation
Steve	Weber	RPA
Joe	Weisbord	Housing First
Toya	Williford	RPA
Beverly	Willis	RDOT; Architecture Research Institute
Madelyn	Wils	Community Board 1
Tom	Wright	RPA
Robert	Yaro	RPA