

CIVIC ALLIANCE TO REBUILD DOWNTOWN NEW YORK
Minutes

Green Buildings and Sustainable Systems
Monday, February 11, 2002
8:30 AM
New School University
66 West 12th Street
Orozco Room

1. Bob Yaro, President of Regional Plan Association opened the meeting at 8:30 A.M. The first item on the agenda was an update on the Listening to the City event held on Thursday, February 7 at the South Street Seaport. Bob acknowledged the hard work of the organizers of the conference, thanking especially Arthur Fried and Tara Colton, of the Center of Excellence in New York City Governance at NYU's Wagner School.

2. Steve Weber of RPA described the February 7 event in a little more detail for those who were unable to attend. Six hundred people attended on Thursday, where they sat at roundtables of about ten people each, and participated in facilitated discussions around principles of rebuilding downtown. At each table, one person recorded the ideas generated by the table into a networked laptop computer. The data was then fed to five central computers where members of the "theme team" extracted broad themes from the discussion and posted it on the screens in front of the room.

Steve stressed that the purpose of Thursday's event was to ask citizens attending the event to frame their thinking around principles of rebuilding, not details or specific plans. Of the focused discussion on principles, the top three priorities for rebuilding were as follows:

1. Create a vibrant, 24-hour community
2. Reconnect downtown to the transit network
3. A memorial should be an integral component of the rebuilt downtown.

Ed Blakely, Dean of the Milan Graduate School at New School University, and our host for the day, followed up by saying that Thursday was a fine event, although it was not representative of the different levels of income and racial demographics of New York City. He mentioned that the upcoming "Imagine New York" events sponsored by MAS will actually go to people's neighborhoods around the metropolitan area to get input on the rebuilding process, which will help outreach.

Comments:

- One concern: When we prioritize the issues that came out of the brainstorming, some of the very important issues dropped off that were mentioned at the event on Thursday such as affordable housing. There is no need to prioritize the data.
- Suggestion: We should report all eight priorities that were summarized by the theme team going forward.

- Steve Weber replied that all eight priorities are indeed listed in the conference proceedings, which are available at www.civic-alliance.org.
- There needs to be a more delicate analysis of the data.
- The theme team did a good job, but sometimes their analysis simplified the rich amount of ideas coming out of my table, for example. I would like to see the raw data.
- The raw data should become available soon.
- Again, than you to Arthur Fried, Tara Colton, and all that worked on the event.

3. Next, Bob Yaro introduced some old business. The Civic Alliance has drafted several letters, the first two of which are ready to be sent out in the next couple of days.

- The first letter urges Mayor Bloomberg to keep in place the carpool rule that restricts single occupancy vehicles (SOVs) from crossing bridges and tunnels into Manhattan during the morning rush hour. This rule alleviates vehicular traffic in Manhattan and is especially important while downtown streets are occupied with emergency vehicles and construction vehicles. We urge the mayor to keep this rule in place for the near future while reconstruction efforts are ongoing. Civic Alliance members may sign on to this letter by contacting Petra Todorovich until Tuesday, February 12.
- The second letter, addressed to Andrew Alper, president of NYC Economic Development Corporation is in support of building a “recreation bubble” downtown at site 5B, located at West, Greenwich, Murray and Warren Streets. This bubble would provide much-needed recreation space for downtown residents and especially children, who have lost much of Hudson River Park to the staging of vehicles connected with the clean-up effort downtown. This letter is also open to sign-ons until February 12.
- The third letter, a new item of business, is addressed to Governor Pataki and supports the restoration of Floatbridge #4 located on the upper West side at 69th street to become a Ferry landing. The new ferry landing would enable high-speed ferry service to Lower Manhattan. The Civic Alliance supports this letter because it is in line with our goal to improve transportation links to Lower Manhattan. Civic Alliance members interested in signing on to this letter should get in touch with Petra Todorovich, before the next meeting on February 25. We will review the letter again on that date.

4. Ashok Gupta introduced the topic for the day, “Green Buildings and Sustainable Systems.” He emphasized that this topic does not stand alone but in fact permeates all the subject areas that the Civic Alliance is working on.

- Ashok brought to the attention of the Civic Alliance the fourth and final letter that we considered. This letter, addressed to Governor Pataki and written by the U.S. Green Building Council urges the governor to consider an amendment to the Green Buildings Tax Credit. The amendment would make development in Lower Manhattan (South of Canal Street) exempt from the \$25 million cap on funds for this credit. This would enable every eligible

renovation and construction project in Lower Manhattan that is built in compliance with strict guidelines to receive the tax credit.

Ashok also mentioned the L.E.E.D. voluntary system for defining green buildings. New York New Visions, in their draft recommendations report for Lower Manhattan also outlines some standards of design excellence which are very good. The American Institute of Architects has also done some great work on this issue.

In short, this working group has a strong foundation to build on. The working group has focused on both standards of green buildings, and infrastructure systems including energy, waste transfer and water usage. This also connects to the greater issue of climate change. Ideally, we can rebuild Lower Manhattan to have a net output of zero CO₂ emissions.

5. Hillary Brown of New Civic Works, then gave a PowerPoint presentation introducing the issue. Some points she raised included:

- A. The presentation aims to exchange views on how downtown redevelopment can catalyze high performance buildings and sustainability
 - Why build conventionally when you can build high performance?
 - Though this method may cause a slight increase in cost and the beginning, ultimately it affects your bottom line positively.
 - Current development conditions lead to suburban sprawl, urban heat islands, and pollution
 - We have a chance to convert liabilities to opportunities.
 - The principles of green building include:
 - Climate responsive design: reflective of topography, vegetation, solar position, etc.
 - Ecological accounting
 - Natural processes made visible: i.e., building users can open windows, feel fresh air, wind, see sunlight, etc.
 - Design is a participatory process: benefit from social knowledge and place-based thinking.
- B. Methods of Green Building and High Performance Buildings
 - We also aim to channel development to existing infrastructure.
 - Alternative means of transportation
 - Reduce urban heat island effect
 - Conserve potable water
 - Reduce building energy usage
 - Use high performance lighting
 - Natural convection
 - Integration of systems: heating and cooling systems working synergistically
 - Renewable energy is cost effective: fuel cells/ possibility of using ground source heat.
 - Recycled building materials or materials that have recycled content.
 - Locally manufactured materials.

- Human resource issues: green buildings improve well-being, reduce absenteeism, job turnover
 - C. Why should the rebuilding effort include high performance buildings?
 - a. Sound financial management
 - b. Improved health and wellbeing for workers
 - c. Environmental stewardship
 - The highest environmental performance can demonstrate energy autonomy and economic efficiency.
 - We do not have to look far to find examples of high performance buildings. Battery Park City was built to fit high performance building guidelines. Also: 4 Times Square
 - D. What are the conditions of the World Trade Center Site?
 - Good sunlight on site at ground level
 - High wind speed: how can it be calmed to improve pedestrian conditions?
6. Joan Byron, of Pratt Institute then spoke on regional equity issues connected to high performance buildings.
- The status quo in New York building is to externalize building costs and locate negative externalities offsite or in other boroughs, such as power facilities, sewage treatment facilities, etc.
 - To achieve regional equity, air quality and land in outlying communities should be freed up for more productive uses.
 - Currently the sites of power facilities, sewage treatment plants, and waste transfer stations correspond with the location of low income communities in New York City.
 - The goal is to reduce burdens on low income communities when rebuilding in Lower Manhattan.
 - If we aim for high-performance buildings, there will be less negative externalities.
7. Steve Campbell, of the Design Trust for Public Space continued the presentation:
- A sustainable process is a participatory process. Outreach is extremely important.
 - Stakeholder participation must occur throughout the process. There needs to be an organizational framework which will ensure participation in the beginning, middle, and following up after buildings have been built.
 - Battery Park City is a great example: those interested should look at the project for design details.
 - If you do not involve the public at the beginning of the process, it will slow down the project because they will find a way to make their voices heard in the end and possibly delay the project.
8. Comments from the Civic Alliance:
- Performance metrics are very measurable for high performance buildings. I challenge the committee to hold developers to this: keep measuring these environmental and social concerns. It's hard to argue with hard data. We must meet these standards.
 - We should invite FEMA to one of our Civic Alliance meetings to be involved in this process. Also, I challenge the Port Authority to meet high performance building guidelines when rebuilding the PATH train.

- A capital investment in green building means a long-term reduction in costs. This sort of design downtown could reduce the city's operating budget. Let's use subsidies for the infrastructure of this city to reduce costs later.
- We need to develop a base line in order to measure our future efforts. An other point: was there any follow-up from our transportation meeting on the movement of goods? ESTA focuses on people movement but not on goods movement.
- Are we working to integrate all the committee reports into one report of the Civic Alliance to go to Whitehead and others?
- Bob Yaro: we are planning to compile the reports of the working group into one large development guidelines report of the Civic Alliance.
- Downtown should be rebuilt as a symbol to the world about environmental sustainability.
- Concerned that the design to facilitate recycling will fail because of flaws in the recycling legislation. It should be changed so that the contractor must be required to recycle the goods.
- The Governor has asked for exemption to the Clean Air Act for transportation after 9/11. We should oppose this.
- There are only two functionally garbage facilities North of 50th Street. We should aim for "Borough Self Sufficiency."
- The challenge to the Civic Alliance is to make sure that policy is implemented (not just vetted) at these meetings. How do we take this synergy and not lose it?
- We need aim to for self sufficiency and not shift the burden to other communities. I would like to see a public dialogue on this at the Community Board Level.
- We need to reform regulations on construction and design. Currently the building codes are outdated and inefficient. This is a big issue with the real estate community—we should work with REBNY, etc.
- APA has been developing smart growth policy on the issue of governance. The question is: how do reconcile the fragmentation of regional government with the regional impacts of these issues.
- We need place-based planning. In lower Manhattan we have wonderful historic and land marked buildings and street systems. Opportunities exist for adaptive reuse.

8. Finally, Bob Yaro introduced Dan Polin of Great Projects Film Company who is doing a documentary on the rebuilding process and wants to focus on the Civic Alliance. He asked whether the Civic Alliance would mind having a stationary camera at our future meetings, and it was generally agreed that this was a good idea for this process to be documented. We also set a new press policy. It was decided that press can attend Civic Alliance meetings but on an "off the record" basis. If the press wants to quote someone, they must contact that person directly and get their permission.

9. The meeting adjourned at 10:35 AM.