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CIVIC ALLIANCE OPPOSES PLANS FOR MASSIVE UNDERGROUND RETAIL DEVELOPMENT ON WTC SITE

Coalition recommends adopting a retail strategy for all of Lower Manhattan; Further study also recommended on bus usage and parking downtown

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW YORK – The Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York passed two resolutions today criticizing the Port Authority’s role in rebuilding Lower Manhattan. In the first, the Alliance strongly opposed plans to build nearly a million square feet of retail space on the World Trade Center site. The second resolution called for further study of alternatives before commitments are made for a bus terminal on the site.

The Alliance opposed the current retail plans – both finalists call for at least 900,000 square feet on the site, much of it below grade – on grounds that an underground retail mall at the WTC site would be contrary to the Alliance’s goal of creating a robust retail environment throughout Lower Manhattan. On-site retail should be concentrated at ground level, with some limited commuter and convenience retail appropriate underground. The Alliance expressed support for a district-wide retail strategy, similar to plans prepared by the City of New York and Rebuild Downtown Our Town.

“We need a retail master plan for all of Lower Manhattan that revitalizes the entire district,” said Beverly Willis, co-chair of Rebuild Downtown our Town and a Civic Alliance member.

“Building close to a million square feet of retail space at Ground Zero would destroy any chance we have of creating a robust retail market downtown.”

The Alliance supports efforts being made by the City and LMDC to explore development options throughout Lower Manhattan, and examined some of these options in its recent Planning and Design Study. The Alliance fears that Port Authority plans on the site will undermine strategies for revitalizing the entire district, and will damage the integrity of the final design for civic and public space at Ground Zero.

“The Port Authority planning is based on the assumption that tourists will visit Lower Manhattan for a total of three hours, not stepping foot beyond Ground Zero,” said Robert D. Yaro, chair of the Civic Alliance and President of Regional Plan Association. “Given the billions of public dollars that will be invested in Lower Manhattan, we should encourage visitors to utilize improved transit links and patronize downtown shops, restaurants, nightlife and hotels.”

The Alliance also passed a resolution calling for further study of how to accommodate buses downtown before plans move forward for a bus terminal. Both resolutions follow:

Civic Alliance Resolution on Lower Manhattan Retail Development

The Civic Alliance supports the creation of a robust retail environment throughout Lower Manhattan as a vital step to the revitalization of the district. However, we believe that the creation of a large underground enclosed shopping mall is contrary to that goal. We understand the need for commuter/ convenience related retail activities around the station area, and support limited retail for that purpose in the transit station.

Civic Alliance Resolution on Bus Parking in Lower Manhattan

The Civic Alliance calls for further study of a range of options for accommodating buses in Lower Manhattan. In general, the Alliance asks the rebuilding agencies to encourage tourists to access the WTC site by means other than tour buses. We acknowledge that there is an urgent need to address the ongoing concerns of residents related to idling buses on residential streets. Both of these issues should be addressed in a street management plan that considers the impacts of tourist and commuter buses on the entire district and examines potential alternatives to bus parking at the WTC site.

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