



Draft Meeting Notes
Tuesday, March 28, 2006
8:30 – 10:30 a.m.
St. John's University

The meeting was brought to order at approximately 8:30 a.m. Petra Todorovich opened the meeting by providing an introduction to the Civic Alliance for new participants, and invited everyone to introduce themselves. She also gave an update on Civic Alliance's position on development at the World Trade Center site, including favoring resolved negotiations, activities at the World Trade Center site that can be supported by the market, developing retail at the street level, and raising questions about the viability of the Freedom Tower.

Tom Healy, President of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC), presented to the group an overview of the LMCC's State of the Arts study for Lower Manhattan. He began with questions of the cultural health of Lower Manhattan, including how to define culture and healthy culture and what culture in this area should be compared to, as well as what policies can be enacted to help to produce the desired result.

Continuing, Tom gave a background of LMCC and presented its mission, connecting cultural organizations and the community and the arts. He introduced two consultants working with LMCC, Jon Meyers from HR&A Consulting, and Alexis Frasz from AEA Consulting.

Jon Meyers explained his view of looking at culture as it is connected to the broader health of Lower Manhattan and the importance of generating street level activity at all times of the day and evening. He is studying the LMCC's activities from an economic perspective, exploring how art and cultural activities can generate economic activity in a neighborhood.

Alexis Frasz of AEA Consulting highlighted her exploration of the definition of culture and what types of culture can contribute to the vitality of Lower Manhattan. Tom continued by emphasizing that LMCC is involved in an ongoing process that considers the most appropriate strategy for Lower Manhattan.

Tom outlined this process, which includes interviews with stakeholders in Lower Manhattan, such as members of the corporate and cultural communities as well as school principals, parents and residents, case studies of cultural development in other cities, community forums and a downtown survey.

LMCC has targeted 120 cultural organizations below Canal Street for a survey to gain a better understanding of their activities, their audience, their employees and their feelings

about the community. To date, two-thirds of the targeted organizations have been surveyed.

Early survey results show that 60 percent of the organizations have open-ended leases while only 5 percent own their property; 44 percent have no financial plan; and over 60 percent having no five-year strategic plan. These percentages indicate that there is a lot that can be done in order to stabilize these organizations. Additionally, most surveyed organizations feel that the growing residential population will have the most impact on the area.

Jon also observed that in terms of the impact on the economy or vitality of Lower Manhattan, the quality of culture makes little difference. It is more important that people are engaging in art and cultural activities, which contribute to the cultural vibrancy of Lower Manhattan. He highlighted one problem in the study, which was the difficulty of comparing Lower Manhattan to other places to understand where it stands.

Alexis added that the survey's importance comes from its ability to measure the progress of Lower Manhattan arts groups over time and thus its ability to influence policy decisions. Tom concluded his presentation by posing the question: how the efforts of the whole cultural community be leveraged for maximum effect?

Next on the agenda, Petra Todorovich introduced Robin Keegan from Center for an Urban Future to provide the New York City context.

Robin began by describing Center for an Urban Future's recent study, *Creative New York*, of seven neighborhoods that acted as creative engines, observing that collaboration of the arts and cultural community did not necessarily take place in Lower Manhattan immediately after September 11. Since then, however, there has been a new, refined creative core of nine different industries.

Within the creative sector, there is a mix of non-profit, for-profit and individuals working. Of the 300,000 "creative workers" there are 11,000 firms and 79,000 sole proprietors, proving the need for a focus on the individuals.

Robin emphasized that New York's loss of market share in many industries is due to competition from other cities. Additionally, she cited high real estate and business costs coupled with a lack of helpful strategies for self-employed individuals as challenges for culture in Lower Manhattan.

Robin observed that interaction and clusters are very important for the creative sector. A balanced approach that provides opportunities for artists to develop art, as well as present it is necessary to ensure the cultural vitality of Lower Manhattan.

Roger Herz began the discussion period by asking who should do what in this process and whether Center for an Urban Future had a status report available.

Robin replied by mentioning that the City is partnering with Center for an Urban Future to hold an upcoming conference on this subject.

Ted Berger asked how the information is gathered about the health of New York artists, to which Tom replied that this was the aspect with which LMCC needed the most help.

Ned McGuire asked about the order of magnitude of the various cultural disciplines in Lower Manhattan. Tom answered that performing arts was the largest, but he was waiting until the completion of the survey to provide more details.

Peter Marcuse observed that the rent levels were the biggest factor in determining the location of artists. He then asked whether LMCC has a position on the Freedom Tower or affordable housing.

Tom responded that it had no position on the Freedom Tower, but they did support affordable housing. He acknowledges that LMCC cannot affect macroeconomic policies, but it can create collaborations, fiscal sponsorships and financial and technical assistance.

Roland Gebhardt questioned the custodianship of existing culture. Tom confirmed that the historical places in Lower Manhattan were very important and LMCC was not only about new culture being introduced.

One participant observed that small businesses do not understand culture as an economic driving force. He also noted the need for public policy interventions to elevate culture. Tom observed that having the artists and small businesses interact, as in their swing-space program, helped alleviate the disconnect between artists and businesses. Jon added that small businesses understand the change in their customer base that results when more visitors come to the area to patronize the arts.

Tom mentioned that Lower Manhattan must be considered in the context of the rest of the region so that the artists and real estate can be considered together.

Norma Munn inquired as to how the entrepreneurs will be organized. She also added that the arts groups themselves need to be high quality in order to improve the regions economy.

Robin responded by noting the importance of the support infrastructure since the intermediaries need to be strengthened so that they can have tools to interact with investors. Tom added that LMCC hired two different consultants to attempt to strengthen the comprehensive effort, both from the economic and arts perspective.

Bob Yaro continued to the next item on the agenda, introducing Stefan Pryor, president of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC), and his presentation on cultural grants and the performing arts center.

Stefan began by speaking about the performing arts center, which is at the core of the cultural program of LMDC. Additionally, he mentioned the importance of the Memorial and the Memorial Museum to culture in Lower Manhattan.

The performing arts center, designed by Frank Gehry, will act as a destination for culture with the Joyce and Signature Theaters as the resident organizations, hopefully having a catalytic effect on the rest of Lower Manhattan. Stefan emphasized that the \$50 million in funding has been made available for the project by the LMDC.

Stefan also discussed the Lower Manhattan culture marketing campaign, which highlighted 15 Lower Manhattan museums. As a result of this campaign, visitation to these museums has already increased by two million people.

LMDC recently launched its cultural enhancement grant program for Lower Manhattan, which is directing \$35 million towards different cultural organizations downtown and \$10 million towards the Drawing Center. Thus far, \$27 million in grants were given to 63 institutions which have life-long investments in Lower Manhattan and were chosen by an advisory panel of city and state art agencies. The remaining funds are being reserved for groups who received planning grants and will likely request capital grants when their planning is completed.

Organizations received funding in four categories: capital projects, planning projects, events and programs, all of which can act as economic drivers and sources of energy.

After Stefan concluded his presentation, Cliff Chanin, of the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation, spoke briefly about the World Trade Center Memorial Museum. The Memorial Museum will be a major cultural institution at the World Trade Center site and a large, interpretive space. Additionally, the museum is part of an ongoing process to create cultural opportunities in Lower Manhattan. The LMDC and the Memorial Foundation recently selected Alice Greenwald to be director of the Memorial Museum, who worked previously as associate director at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

One participant commented that there are growing opportunities for Chinatown to integrate more with the rest of Lower Manhattan by exhibiting the rise of Chinese artists, as well as highlighting the work of Asian American artist in China and internationally.

Rick Bell asked Stefan whether there will be more information available on the Snøhetta Visitors Center soon. Stefan responded that the footprint of the Visitor Center has been scaled back in size, and that a conceptual design will be exhibited to the public in the future.

Roland Gebhardt asked what the cultural identity of Lower Manhattan will be and where the new art scene will originate.

Tom replied that the overall ecology of the area and creating a dialogue to create unanticipated opportunity was important to Lower Manhattan's new creative community.

Bob Yaro observed that one of Lower Manhattan's challenges is that it has been a monoculture for many years. The goal now is to create diversity in the area. As such, the LMDC grants are intended to strengthen this diversity and help cultural activities permeate the district.

Norma Munn observed that expensive real estate will prevent new individual artists from moving to Lower Manhattan. Another participant mentioned that affordable housing is important and cross-pollination between artists and real estate knowledge is needed.

Roland added that exhibiting the works is important since the presence of artists has a synergetic effect on other industries.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 am.

Participants:

Meredith Ballew, Wall Street Rising
Tad Barnes, The River Project
Rick Bell, American Institute of Architects
Ted Berger, New York Creates
Robert Blackman, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council
Jodi Carter, Signature Theater
Suany Chough, WTC Memorial Foundation
Alexandra Conley, SOHO Rep
Kevin Cunningham, 3-Legged Dog
Jon Dembrow, SOHO Rep
Gary Dycus, British Memorial Garden Trust
Lauren George, Citizens for New York
Alexis Frasz, AEA Consulting
Megan French, Pace University
Michael Haberman, LMDC
Tom Healy, LMCC
Roger Herz, TIME
Robin Keegan, Center for an Urban Future
Hilary Kitasei, Neighbor
Tracy Knuckles, NYC CA
Annie Kurtin, NYNV
Peter Marcuse
Ned McGuire, Civic Alliance Memorial Committee
Jon Meyers, HR & A
Helen Mi, NY CCC

Deborah Morris, Downtown Alliance
Miles Morton, Downtown Community Television Center
Norma Munn, New York City Arts Coalition
Dana Ann Prushansky, Signature Theater
Stefan Pryor, LMDC
Jan Ramirez
Etta Sanders, Tribeca Trib
W.F. Schacht, Architect/Urban Designer
Omar Semidey, Manhattan Borough President's Office
Linda Shelton, Joyce Theater
Regina Silvers, Tribeca Open Artists Studio Tour (TOAST)
Jonathan Struthers, WTC Memorial Foundation
Petra Todorovich, RPA
David Watson, Pace Universtiy
Martin Wechsler, Joyce Theater
Bob Yaro, RPA
Henry Ye, CACAA