

Civic Alliance Meeting  
Wednesday, June 11, 2003  
Pace University

### Meeting Notes

The meeting opened with a presentation by Beverly Willis of Rebuild Downtown Our Town (R.Dot), on Arts and Culture in Lower Manhattan. She stressed that Arts & Culture opportunities should be incorporated into redevelopment process. Places for events and displays should be established. Events enrich the cultural identity of a community, draw attention to venues, and provide a marketing tool for the area. R.Dot has proposed a series of cultural places, which are distributed equally throughout Lower Manhattan. The complete R.Dot position paper is available at [www.rebulddowntownourtown.org](http://www.rebulddowntownourtown.org)

A brief question and answer session followed the presentation. Beverly reiterated the importance of creating zones of uniqueness that overlay communities. She stated that one of the main obstacles in the implementation of the R-Dot recommendations is the economic battle in City Council. While the recommendations would cost very little the City Council is hesitant to commit to anything at this time. At the conclusion of the conversation Abby Suckle announced that Culture Now has created a new culture map, which is available at [www.culture-NOW.org](http://www.culture-NOW.org)

Following the question/answer session, Frank Sanchis, executive director of the Municipal Art Society delivered a presentation on the Fulton Street Historic Preservation study conducted by the Emergency Historic Preservation Fund. One of his greatest concerns is that old buildings that capture the history of the area but are not necessarily old enough to qualify as historic buildings, will not be preserved. MAS has established "Corridors of Concern," which are areas that have been identified by LMDC for improvement projects. They include Fulton St./Broadway Transportation Hub and Fulton St. MAS would like to see the Corbin Building incorporated into new designs rather than destroyed. Frank envisions Fulton St as a corridor that spans the old and the new. He believes the corridor should reflect the periods in between. There are many old buildings along the corridor that add to history but they are hidden behind signs and street alterations. He also mentioned that an "Image New York" session on community character and historic resources, focusing on the Fulton Corridor is forthcoming.

The members responded favorable to Frank's presentation and put forth suggestions for ensuring buildings are preserved. Preservation is compatible with the Mayor's vision of Lower Manhattan. Old buildings can be used for retail. One concern is that there is not a moral argument to proceed with the findings of the study. The community needs to be convinced that mix/diversity of individual buildings is important.

Bob Yaro summarized by saying the two presentations provide a complementary vision for the whole district, highlighting arts, culture and the unique historic resources of Lower Manhattan. Financial service jobs are declining and we need to think of new, dynamic activities for downtown. We know arts/culture will be important. Revitalization plans are

usually accompanied by preservation plans. It is important that agencies involved in the redevelopment of the Fulton Corridor, including the MTA, the LMDC and the City, pay attention to these concerns now, before planning studies are complete. Bob recommended the Civic Alliance form a committee to strengthen advocacy around these issues.

This concluded the meeting presentations. Petra Todorovich then provided a brief summary of the *Beyond 16 Acres Series* and the upcoming EIS process. The LMDC will begin the EIS process shortly for the World Trade Center site, excluding the permanent PATH station, which will undergo a separate EIS process led by the Port Authority. Everyone agreed the process is critical; the Civic Alliance should intently follow the schedule and be ready to respond. The Civic Alliance will form a joint committee of the regulator working group, the social justice group, and the green buildings and sustainable systems working group to review the scoping document for the EIS and prepare a response. The Civic Alliance will also use the "Listening to the City" email list to get information out to the public about the EIS process.

Moving forward, Bob invited everyone to stay for the press conference and briefly review the images that had been prepared to demonstrate what the World Trade Center site might look like if some of the proposals to alter the Studio Libeskind master plan, such as adding a fifth office tower, and bringing the memorial pit up to grade, were successful. There was a general discussion about the images and the status of the master plan and process for making changes to it. There was some discussion over whether or not the grade of the memorial site undermines the integrity of the Libeskind plans. The meeting then concluded to a press conference at 10:30 AM.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

(Joanne Derwin) Liberty Bond Housing Coalition meeting scheduled before LMDC meeting on June 12. Group is concerned that CDBG funds are not being used appropriately. Subsidizing market rate housing, not affordable.

(Rick Bell) Alex Garvin speaking Tuesday, June 17. AIA conference room. RSVP (212) 683-0023 ext 21

Next Meeting Tuesday, July 8, Location: Pace University