

## **Implementing a High Performance Lower Manhattan**

**Presented by Regional Plan Association and Urban Agenda**

**Monday, July 19, 2004**

### **Summary Report**

“Implementing a High Performance Lower Manhattan”, sponsored by the Regional Plan Association and Urban Agenda, was a part of the Beyond Sixteen Acres series. Moderated by Bruce Fowle, of Fox and Fowle Architects, panelists included:

- Randy Croxton, Croxton Collaborative;
- Janno Lieber, World Trade Center Properties;
- Nancy Anderson, Office of NYC Comptroller William Thompson; and
- Ed Ott, NYC Central Labor Council AFL.CIO.

Using the sustainable design guidelines for the World Trade Center site as a launching point for discussion, the panel explored how we can implement the vision for environmental sustainability in Lower Manhattan. Overwhelmingly, panelists and audience members agreed that we have a tremendous opportunity to become a global showcase for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century city by pioneering sustainable development but that the details have yet to be decided and we must have the political will to make it happen.

Bruce Fowle opened the meeting by stating that the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> have provided us with an opportunity to implement environmental sustainability in Lower Manhattan, and thus to create the infrastructure that supports urban life. To allow us to reach these goals he posited a number of questions for the panelists:

- Do we have the financial will to make it happen?
- Do we have the political leadership?
- Does the construction industry recognize the potential?
- Do we have sufficient incentives and mandates in place?

After the panelists spoke, Mr. Fowle offered follow-up questions. Details of opening comments and further responses are included below.

As the first respondent, Randy Croxton spoke directly about his experience drafting the sustainable guidelines for the World Trade Center site as a consultant to the LMDC and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. He stressed the need to look regionally and concentrate on whole systems, resisting the desire of architects to view buildings as isolated objects.

Mr. Croxton discussed his history of working on the World Trade Center site sustainable design guidelines: first for the PATH terminal, and then with Libeskind on the larger site guidelines that were included in the Environmental Impact Statement. Mr. Croxton reminded the audience that some regulations and guidelines already exist to support

sustainable design at this time, including LEED (a national high performance building rating system), Governor Pataki's Executive Order 111, the state's green building tax credit, and the Transit Authority's sustainability guidelines.

The sustainable guidelines for the site are organized around intent and action, some of which are site-specific and will rely on a yet to be developed supporting manual to guide their implementation. Thus, in Mr. Croxton's opinion, the guidelines have not been fine-tuned and given the politics at play and the strong civic dialogue, opportunities still exist to shape their development and implementation. Through this process, Mr. Croxton is hopeful that the "whole systems" approach is coming back to the table.

One challenge Croxton identified is that tenants – not solely the operators – must reap the benefits of the buildings' lower operating expenses, and that the towers on the WTC site should be designed with the ideal, "exemplar" interior fit-out in mind. For example, the building architects should plan for how conference rooms and interior spaces can be designed with acoustical privacy while still permitting day lighting. This integrated approach to designing the building core and shell will enable the incorporation of green building design by the tenants at less cost.

The next speaker, Janno Lieber, asserted that the Lower Manhattan redevelopment process already embodies core principles of sustainability. He mentioned that 7 World Trade is at the forefront of sustainable design, and that on a regional scale, the transit model being developed embodies principles of smart growth: reinvesting in our urban core, promoting a 24/7 live/work community, and providing transit linkages to the region's other commercial and residential centers.

Mr. Lieber mentioned that Silverstein was developing rules to promote energy efficiency in Lower Manhattan. For instance, he made several concessions with 7 World Trade Center – he scaled back the size of the building so that Greenwich Street could run through it and thus connected TriBeCa to the World Trade Center site and Lower Manhattan. Mr. Lieber indicated that he also created a surface park that would be irrigated by collected rain water. Furthermore, in collaboration with the Natural Resource Defense Council, construction vehicles on the site used Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel Fuel (ULSDF) as part of a pilot program.

Mr. Lieber stated that the high performance features used in World Trade Center Seven would be carried over to subsequent buildings on the WTC site, such as sophisticated systems for high quality indoor air, and maximum day lighting of interior spaces. Silverstein was trying to create a framework where tenants can champion energy conservation (and thus also save money), and where high quality, high value added work can be promoted. Such an approach will create the "21<sup>st</sup> Century work environment", he explained. Doing so will also entice domestic and international businesses to locate here, and help the city retain its competitive edge and Lower Manhattan retain its premier business location.

Next, Nancy Anderson urged the panelists and the audience to take the concept of sustainability to a broader level, and to ensure that we creatively legislate sustainable design into Lower Manhattan. Ms. Anderson urged that we transition to cleaner, greener power and distributive energy sources, and that we seek to defray the up-front costs associated with

new technologies. In doing so, she expressed concern that we would not realize our potential for sustainable building, design, and construction in Lower Manhattan, as the urge to rebuild our premier business location is not necessarily in line financially with our urge to ensure sustainability. Creative financing solutions, she suggested, such as using Liberty Bonds for additional high performance buildings should be sought.

Ms. Anderson explained that after the World Trade Center tragedy, government subsidized electric power for businesses in Lower Manhattan but did nothing to reward those employers choosing sustainable energy sources. To push this market, Ms. Anderson recommended that we consider the formation of a purchasing co-op to negotiate good rates on renewable energy from the NY Power Authority, thus promoting a “green bubble” in Lower Manhattan.

In addition, Ms. Anderson stressed the necessity to look beyond the World Trade Center site – the 16 acres – and to continue to solicit public feedback to determine the future of downtown Manhattan, especially its transit infrastructure which has broad implications for the economic vitality of the region. Ms. Anderson also proposed that the city consider ways to change its zoning and building codes to incorporate sustainable goals and standards.

The final speaker, Ed Ott, addressed issues of economic diversity and social equity in Lower Manhattan. He stressed that high performance buildings provide an opportunity to bring suppliers and manufactures closer to market, and potentially create good jobs for thousands of workers. The business community has been quicker to adopt such change on a larger scale, while labor and government have been timid. Mr. Ott explained that high performance buildings provide an opportunity to build the social fabric of the city. New and incumbent worker training programs – potentially linked to CUNY – can facilitate this process.

Mr. Ott also suggested that economic, social, and racial diversity is key to the city’s future, and that we must translate this vision to Lower Manhattan. Schools, affordable housing, mass transit, and job opportunities are key parts of this discussion, and will ensure that Lower Manhattan becomes a 24/7 community where our city’s workers and their children can live. Mr. Ott noted, however, that organized labor will build whatever is decided needs to be built, and thus stakeholders should collaborate to determine what it is they want to build, and what type of community they want to create.