



**City Council Committee on Lower Manhattan Redevelopment  
March 9, 2006**

Testimony of Roland Gebhardt on behalf of the  
Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York

Good Afternoon. My name is Roland Gebhardt and I am a member of the Steering Committee of the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Council on the status of World Trade Center site redevelopment.

The Civic Alliance has been closely involved in the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan since 9/11, acting as an "umbrella" for civic planning and advocacy efforts in support of the rebuilding process and a sponsor of countless forums for public participation, including the 2002 Listening to the City.

I'd like to address four points in my testimony that the Civic Alliance deems critical to the rapid rebuilding of the World Trade Center site and the recovery of Lower Manhattan's economy and neighborhood fabric.

The first is the renegotiation the Silverstein lease. The Civic Alliance supports the efforts of the Port Authority and the City of New York to renegotiate the Silverstein lease to allow multiple developers to rebuild the World Trade Center site. By opening up sites 3, 4, and 5 to new developers and new capital, we think construction can move forward more quickly, particularly in the marketable Church Street Corridor. We have serious concerns about the security risks, market viability and design of the proposed Freedom Tower, and don't feel that all the development at the World Trade Center site should be held up until this tower is completed, which may be the case if Silverstein Properties is the only developer at the WTC site.

We also have reservations about the City's proposal to include 700,000 square feet of residential space in Tower 4, in order to finance this building's construction. While the Civic Alliance has long advocated the mixed-use redevelopment of the World Trade Center site, we feel that the better place for housing development is in Tower 5, south of Liberty Street (the former Deutsche Bank building). In light of the rapid conversion of office to residential uses throughout the financial district, we should preserve Tower 4 as one of prime locations for private commercial office development.

Second, I'd like to talk about the importance of looking at the revitalization of all of Lower Manhattan, not just the World Trade Center site. The Civic Alliance supported the Mayor's 2002

vision for Lower Manhattan, which emphasized off-site revitalization projects like improvements to the East River Waterfront.

We are pleased that this project is now moving ahead. We recently called on the City of New York to launch a retail strategy for all of Lower Manhattan to encourage better retail in the district and animate the streets. The Civic Alliance opposes the Port Authority's proposal to enclose Cortlandt Street into a retail "galleria" but would support their efforts to encourage retail in storefronts at the ground level throughout the site. We feel that retail should be studied at the district-wide level, and a strategy should be implemented that incorporates the Port Authority's on-site plans with off-site retail throughout Lower Manhattan

My third point concerns the Commercial Design Guidelines for the World Trade Center site, which have been over two years in the making. A set of design guidelines are essential to ensure the implementation of a cohesive Master Plan at Ground Zero. We urge the City Council to push the LMDC and the Port Authority to adopt these as soon as possible. Also, the LMDC and the Port Authority need to adopt a surface public realm plan for the World Trade Center coordinated with the rest of Lower Manhattan. This public realm strategy is essential in knitting together the street-level fabric of Ground Zero with that of Lower Manhattan. We would like to see the Port Authority, the LMDC, and the City, work together on a street-level public realm strategy as soon as possible.

Furthermore, the Civic Alliance is concerned about the plans for Culture at Ground Zero and in Lower Manhattan. The LMDC's plans to bring a performing arts center to the site are well-intentioned but poorly funded at this time. These cultural institutions will need major assistance in raising the necessary funds for their capital costs and programming. The LMDC together with the cultural institutions and the Memorial Foundation must demonstrate how it will make this ambitious plan work.

Off-site, we are pleased by the LMDC's announcement of \$27 million in grants to Lower Manhattan cultural, arts and educational institutions. We are also pleased that the Mayor and the Governor announced last May that \$45 million would be allocated for community enhancement and local economic revitalization, and hope to see a process set in place soon to review proposals and allocate those funds.

In this matter, we advocate for a process run by professionals and guided by people who know the community and economic revitalization issues of Lower Manhattan. We advocate that this be implemented expediently for the benefit of our community and City.

Thank you for opportunity to testify today.

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