



THE CIVIC ALLIANCE TO REBUILD DOWNTOWN NEW YORK
TRANSFORMING LOWER MANHATTAN INTO THE FIRST 21ST CENTURY METROPOLITAN CITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regional Plan Association has convened **The Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York** to develop strategies for the redevelopment of Lower Manhattan in the aftermath of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center. The Civic Alliance is a coalition of more than 85 business, community and environmental groups representing a cross-section of New York and the Region that is providing a broad umbrella for civic planning and advocacy efforts in support of the rebuilding of Downtown New York. The Alliance is working closely with the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the Empire State Development Corporation, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and the City of New York to create a bold vision for a revitalized downtown.

The Civic Alliance has five goals:

- To create an open, democratic process to advance rebuilding plans.
- Provide an umbrella for all of the groups engaged in this process to share ideas and reach broad consensus on strategies and necessary actions.
- “Raise the bar” for public debate over Lower Manhattan’s future; and
- Promote an expedited process for rebuilding and an ongoing advocacy process to ensure necessary public and private follow through.
- Ensure that issues of equity and social justice guide all aspects of the rebuilding process.

The Civic Alliance will hold a series of public forums over the next several months, addressing critical issues related to the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan, including transportation, urban design, economic development, memorials, regulatory considerations, public amenities, green building and sustainable systems and social justice considerations. These meetings, both large forums and smaller roundtable sessions targeted toward decision-makers, will include presentations by Alliance partners and outside groups with unique perspectives on how the new district should be planned.

Building on these forums, and RPA’s Regional Assembly in the spring, the Alliance will create a new Development Program for the district, incorporating the best concepts and building public consensus for the program. This program will include strategies to improve transit links to Lower Manhattan; create a long-range economic development strategy for the entire district; and

provide a detailed program for rebuilding the World Trade Center site as a vital new area of the city and as a monument to the victims of the September 11 attack.

BACKGROUND

The September 11th terrorist attack on the World Trade Center elicited a fresh realization of the role played by Lower Manhattan in the economic and social interdependence of the metropolitan region and brought together the region's often fractious interest groups and political jurisdictions. It also placed a responsibility upon government and the civic community to put aside divisive issues of the past and forge a consensus to rebuild for the future.

Our goal is to create the world's first 21st century urban center from the ashes of the World Trade Center. This will be a place that represents the best practices in urban planning, transit systems, energy efficiency, communications, green architecture and public safety. Leaving behind the old paradigms of planning and development, this new district will exemplify everything we hope American civilization will become in the new millennium. It will embody the very ideals that we are fighting to protect.

Approximately 13 million square feet of office space was permanently destroyed in the attack, and approximately 17 million has been damaged. This represents one third of the commercial floor area of Lower Manhattan. Despite the height of its two towers, the Trade Center was actually built out at FAR 14 (a floor area ratio of 14 times the underlying land area), slightly less than the density of the Midtown district (FAR 16) north of Grand Central Terminal. This means that it could be possible to recreate an intensively developed, mixed-use district on the Trade Center site, without the extreme high rise buildings. By implementing a bold new vision, we can create an inspirational addition to the Manhattan skyline while reconnecting this district into the historic fabric of Lower Manhattan and the Region.

We believe that the best monument honoring those who died at the World Trade Center site would be the reconstruction of the area as a beautiful and livable new district of the city and a revitalized center of the regional economy. RPA has convened the **Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York** with more than 85 business, government, community and civic groups in New York and New Jersey, to ensure that the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan meets the highest standards of urban design, addresses regional infrastructure issues and represents the collective wisdom and vision of a cross-section of the city and region's civic, community, environmental and business leaders.

The Civic Alliance will maintain an active dialogue with city and state agencies to insure that civic initiatives support the work of the public rebuilding efforts. The Civic Alliance will have the independence, flexibility and long-term perspective to provide well reasoned solutions to economic, transportation, community, security and urban design concerns. The Alliance will coordinate the advocacy and planning efforts of its participants, promote common action on key policies and investments, and speak with the authority of all of the participating groups in dealing with the city and states.

RPA will staff the Civic Alliance and carry out key research and advocacy elements of this process with Alliance partners. Rebuilding Lower Manhattan to create the first 21st century metropolitan city will be our principal focus for the next two years.

ACTION AGENDA

The Action Agenda for the Civic Alliance is organized in three tiers of activities, depending on their time frame. These tiers are necessary to ensure that the Alliance builds public support and input before moving on to establishing guidelines, recommendations and a development program for rebuilding Lower Manhattan.

Tier One: Early and On-going Activities

The first set of agenda items, many of which have already started, aim to coalesce the broad civic community and demonstrate an early and visible commitment to improving Lower Manhattan. These steps are critical to ensuring that plans for the area do not favor a narrow agenda for specific industries or interests. Items in this category include:

Civic, Business and Government Coordination

Through the Civic Alliance, RPA is creating a forum for ongoing communication among civic organizations to address common concerns, coordinate agendas, and develop consensus when needed. This will insure that a broad range of perspectives have access to the process, and will also help develop a stronger voice for the region among political and business decision-makers. Several meetings in New York and New Jersey have already been held.

Products

In addition to the administration of meetings, working groups and events sponsored by the Civic Alliance, products will include the following:

- *A Database* of private and public planning activities for rebuilding Downtown Manhattan to facilitate communication among civic, business and government organizations, and to help coordinate their agendas; and
- *Internal Communication Media*, including an email newsletter and website links among Alliance members.

Ongoing Expert Advice

RPA has been working closely with key state transportation, economic development and other agencies on this effort. In particular, Alliance members have collaborated with transportation agencies to develop an interim transportation strategy for early action improvements of a low-cost/high-value nature. Many of these ideas are being implemented by the MTA, NYC Department of Transportation, the Port Authority, NJ TRANSIT and other agencies to restore access to the area. At Governor Pataki's request we have proposed long-term transportation investments for downtown, which have been included in the state's request for federal recovery funds. RPA is also coordinating a parallel effort in New Jersey with ongoing meetings with civic groups and public officials.

Public Communication Campaign

The Civic Alliance will develop and execute a public communications strategy to develop a broad-based consensus for the initiative's planning concepts. This strategy will include outreach to media, publications and research papers, and digital products as outlined below.

Products

The communications strategy will need to be highly flexible to respond to rapidly changing events. Early communication media includes a website for the Alliance that provides updates of Alliance activities, announcements of public forums, and links to our alliance partners as well as related documents and reports.

Later products are likely to include articles, media alerts and briefings, issue papers and public events. These may also include paid advertisements to support an advocacy campaign or public outreach effort. A strategy for the timing and release of products will strive to maximize effectiveness.

Tier Two: Developing and Evaluating Alternatives

The second set of agenda items, which would begin in November and run through February 2002, will build public consensus, educate constituencies and work cooperatively with the institution designated to oversee development plans for Lower Manhattan. Each of these items will contribute to the creation of a bold vision and master plan. Items in this category include:

Issues Forums

Working groups of the Civic Alliance have been formed to address specific areas related to the redevelopment of Lower Manhattan and rebuilding the region. These groups are identifying issues and principles for the plans, convening public forums and smaller roundtable sessions to provide consensus on these issues and educate constituencies in their importance, and overseeing work on specific sections of the Development Program.

Specific issues that have been defined for working groups to focus on include:

- **Urban Design**: How the district could be redesigned to maximize its livability, beauty, safety and convenience. Issues to be addressed would include the layout of streets and public spaces, options to achieve density without great building height, and strategies to maximize public safety.
- **Economic Development**: How the changing economic geography of the region and the global economy should guide the design and infrastructure investments for Lower Manhattan and access to the rest of the region. How a reconstructed district can best support a city and regional economy.
- **Transportation and Circulation**: How the existing transit and ferry network could be adapted to make Lower Manhattan even more accessible to residential and employment centers across the region. Explore strategies to improve pedestrian and transit circulation within Lower Manhattan, including a traffic-free area.
- **Regulatory Framework**: Mechanisms to ensure that a thorough and open environmental review process does not unnecessarily delay the redevelopment of the area, to ensure high quality planning and design, and to cut through red tape and bureaucratic delays.
- **Green Buildings and Sustainable Systems**: How the new district can incorporate principals of green building design to increase energy efficiency and decrease negative

environmental impacts. How public health goals, including active communities based on pedestrian lifestyles, can be achieved through sensitive plans.

- **Memorial:** How the site, which is now a sacred place, as well as one of pilgrimage, can honor both the people from 60 countries whose lives were lost, those who struggled to save them, and the community ravaged by these horrific events.
- **Social, Economic and Environmental Justice:** How the regeneration of downtown can be part of a program that lifts and benefits the whole city and metropolitan region. In particular, how the needs of low-income communities and workers can be met.
- **Civic Amenities:** How different uses and activities can rejuvenate Lower Manhattan as a neighborhood and destination, such as waterfront access, public space, cultural institutions, and others. How can safety concerns, including new design standards and evacuation considerations, be reconciled with a democratic society's need for openness and free access to information

Products:

A different *Issue Forum* will be held at each Civic Alliance meeting following the issues outlined above. These forums will lead up to RPA's Regional Assembly on April 26, where some of the feedback and information gathered at the forums will contribute to the program of the Regional Assembly.

Roundtables will be held as described in the Action Agenda. Each roundtable will produce the following products:

- A *Scoping Document* to summarize existing information and ongoing analysis;
- Commissioned *White Papers* from national and international experts; and
- A *Report of Findings* that will summarize conclusions from the white papers, roundtables and other analysis conducted by Civic Alliance members. These reports will provide the foundation for the Development Program.

Public Forums

In addition to the forums on specific issues outlined above, the Civic Alliance would co-sponsor a series of public forums with the region's universities that would address broader policy questions for the development program, such as the changing role of global cities, the emergence of a "regional central business district" that incorporates outer borough and New Jersey locations, the relationship between the redevelopment of Lower Manhattan and suburban sprawl, and the impact of redevelopment on low-income neighborhoods and community development.

The first of these forums will be a "Conversation with the City", which is being convened with NYU's Center for Excellence in New York City Governance. This forum is expected to involve 600 people representing a cross-section of the populations affected by the September 11 tragedy in a facilitated discussion on the principles that should guide the redevelopment effort. The conference will make use of America Speaks, a non-profit organization that organizes large forums and supports them with computer technology that links small group discussions together.

Products:

Forums will be held on issues related to the roundtable topics described in the Action Agenda. Some may address a topic related to a specific roundtable, such as economic development or transportation, while others may relate to a cross-cutting theme related to several roundtables.

Tier Three: Producing Master Plan Guidelines

The third set of agenda items would begin in spring 2002 and run through the summer. Building on the accomplishments of the earlier components, items in this category include:

Regional Assembly, April 26, 2002

RPA will focus the annual Regional Assembly on rebuilding downtown, providing a broad public forum on this issue. Noted urban designers, economists, planners from the U.S. and Europe will discuss ways that the above elements must come together to create a prototype 21st century city and region. This would be open to the public and designed to stimulate public debate on these ideas.

Products

The assembly will include presentations and workshops on the *Reports of Findings* from the Issues Forums. The proceedings will be incorporated into the Development Program described below.

Community Design Workshop

The results of the roundtables and forums would be summarized and provide the basis for a public community design process. Through this intensive planning process, an expert multi-disciplinary team will develop a concept-level plan in a period of 3-7 days. The workshop would bring together a team of planners, urban designers, real estate experts and stakeholders to develop this plan in a public process.

Products

The workshops will produce the following:

- *Graphic Representations of Alternative Development Programs*, including different activity mixes, circulation patterns, and public amenities.
- *A Summary of Outcomes* that will describe the results of the workshop in text form and provide context for the graphic representations.

Development Program

Synthesizing the work of the Alliance partners, a small team would further prepare a Development Program for the area. This could guide, enrich and inform the master plan that would be developed by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. The Development Program will have components addressing all the issues covered by expert roundtables.

Products

The Development Program will provide a set of recommendations for infrastructure investments, funding mechanisms, design proposals, economic development policies and workforce development programs. While the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation will be the primary audience for this report, it will also be directed to public officials and agencies at all levels of government.

TIMELINE

We foresee an intense process culminating in the release of a Final Report and Recommendations in September. We also expect a less intense effort in the following year to support the implementation of these recommendations. A summary schedule for the first year is shown below and a preliminary budget is shown on the next page.

First Year Schedule

