

REBUILDING DOWNTOWN NEW YORK

*A "Map" of the Civic Planning Initiatives
to Reconstruct Lower Manhattan and the World Trade Center Site*

Overview

Since September 11, literally dozens of organizations, representing a cross section of New York City's and the region's civic leadership, have initiated efforts to advance plans for rebuilding the World Trade Center site and Lower Manhattan. Chief among these is:

- * *NYC Rebuild*, a joint venture of the New York City Partnership and the Real Estate Board of New York, representing major businesses and property owners, which has completed an economic impact analysis and is advancing infrastructure proposals.
- * *New York New Visions*, a coalition of 16 architecture, planning and design groups convened by the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, representing New York's design community.
- * *Rebuild Downtown, Our Town (RDOT)*, an alliance of downtown residents, small businesses and designers.
- * *The Empire State Transportation Alliance (ESTA)*, a coalition of more than 30 transportation, environmental and business groups, that is preparing interim and long-range transportation strategies for Downtown.
- * *The Municipal Art Society's* Visioning Project, co-sponsored by community planning and advocacy groups, which is convening public forums across the city and region to discuss people's visions for rebuilding downtown. MAS and other groups have reached out to survivors and widows of the 9/11 attacks.

All of these groups represent key stakeholders that must have a role in shaping plans for rebuilding Downtown. They are all beginning their work by identifying principles that will shape a public master plan for the area, which will be prepared by the Lower Manhattan Redevelopment Corporation (LMRC), a subsidiary of the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC). The Port Authority New York New Jersey, which owns the WTC site and PATH transit system, is also expected to play an active role in rebuilding plans. The state of New Jersey will be represented in the process through its leadership on the PANYNJ board.

Providing an "Umbrella" for Planning Efforts: The Civic Alliance

To promote communication and collaboration among these diverse efforts, and to create a common forum for reaching consensus on rebuilding plans, Regional Plan Association has convened the *Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York*. The Civic Alliance is a

coalition of more than 80 business, community, environmental and transportation groups that has come together to create a common vision for rebuilding the World Trade Center site and Lower Manhattan in the aftermath of September 11.

Virtually all of the civic-led planning efforts are active participants in the Civic Alliance, and are represented on the Alliance's steering committee. Working groups are shaping the Alliance's policy and investment recommendations on a full range of technical issues. In addition, ESDC, the Port Authority and New York City Planning Commission are participating in all of the Alliance's deliberations.

The Alliance is being staffed by RPA and a group of academic partners, including New York University, the New School University and Pratt Institute. RPA has gained the support of ESDC for this effort, and is working to establish a close working relationship with the new Bloomberg Administration and LMRC.

Overall Goals

The Civic Alliance has outlined four principal goals for its activities:

- * *Creating an open process:* To create a democratic planning process open to all of the region's civic leaders.
- * *Providing a forum for ideas and consensus building:* To provide an "umbrella" for all of these civic planning initiatives, and to create a common voice for New York's civic community in rebuilding plans.
- * *"Raising sights":* to ensure that rebuilding plans represent the very best practices in urban design, sustainable economic development, transportation, energy and telecommunications technology to transform Lower Manhattan into the world's first 21st century urban center and to make the area and its commemorative spaces a true monument to those who died on September 11.
- * *Providing a vehicle for on-going advocacy:* To shape public opinions and public policies, investments, and short- and long-term actions needed to rebuild Downtown over the months and years ahead.

Outcomes

Redevelopment of the World Trade Center site should be planned in the context of a broader economic and community development and transportation strategy for all of Lower Manhattan and the Region. Fully implementing such a strategy will require years, or even decades. To sustain confidence in the area in the short-term, it will be necessary to rapidly plan and implement a set of highly visible and effective transportation and urban design improvements that can be completed within a 12-18 month period.

The Civic Alliance is committed to producing four key products:

1. An interim transportation plan, and other short-term confidence building measures

2. A mid- and long-range transportation strategy and investment program, including proposals to strengthen transportation links to and within Lower Manhattan, including:
 - ? Transit links to rest of the city and region, including employment and residential centers and airports, through improved transit connections to the regional rail network;
 - ? Improved intermodal connections and transportation hubs, including new links between the ferry and rail transit systems, and improved connections between the PATH and subway lines;
 - ? An improved distribution system within the district, through improved pedestrian circulation and bus rapid transit links.
3. District-wide strategies for economic development for all of Lower Manhattan, that will create a more dynamic and successful mix of advanced professional services, culture and tourism, residential development and other activities.
4. Development, site planning and urban design proposals for the WTC site and commemorative spaces on the site.

Creating a Planning Framework for Downtown

As noted above, a number of the Civic Alliance's member groups are focusing on the development of principles that can guide the redevelopment of the Trade Center site. A set of consistent themes is emerging from these efforts, including broad agreement on the need for transportation investments and strengthening of the district's residential community, creation of a broader mix of economic activities, and reintegration of the WTC site into the fabric of Lower Manhattan.

The Alliance will work to integrate these principles into a broader economic development, transportation and urban design framework for all of Lower Manhattan. This framework will provide solutions to long-standing structural problems that have confronted Lower Manhattan for decades, at the same time that it provides a context for redevelopment of the WTC site.

The overall goal of this effort will be to sustain Lower Manhattan's role as one of the region's and the nation's economic engines, and address the district's structural problems. These include:

- * *Transportation:* Improving Downtown's poor transit links to other commercial centers, major commutersheds in the city and suburbs, and regional transportation hubs including commuter rail stations and airports.
- * *Economic Mix:* Correcting its over-dependence on a single industry—financial services—and the need to create a more resilient, diversified economic base.
- * *Residential base:* Creating a critical mass of residential development in the area, in particular housing for executives, managers and professionals who drive

advanced service industries and who make locational decisions for businesses in these industries.

- * *Quality of Life:* Improving the mix of amenities, including quality parks and public spaces, retail, entertainment, schools, culture and other activities needed to make the area a dynamic 24-hour city attractive to business, residents and tourists.

Conclusion

The Civic Alliance is already succeeding in reaching agreement on important policy and investment issues critical to the future of Lower Manhattan. Synergies are being created among the various planning initiatives now underway. Finally, key public decisionmakers are taking notice of this process and its potential to advance a bold vision for the rebuilding of Downtown New York.