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**AN EXPLORATION OF THE CITY'S ROLE
IN LOWER MANHATTAN REDEVELOPMENT**

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As discussions intensify concerning rebuilding the World Trade Center site and economic recovery for lower Manhattan, among the questions commonly asked, and the topic of today's hearing, are – What roles should the Mayor and the City Council play?

While these questions are extremely important ones, they actually signify issues of even greater moment. The lack of clarity concerning who the decision-makers are for the various redevelopment issues, and what process will be used to reach these decisions adds even greater complexity. What we do know is that state agencies and authorities will be largely responsible, and they are generally not subject to city land use rules, city environmental rules, and other requirements for development. They have broad powers to condemn property for public use, and their holdings are exempt from direct city taxation. Even more significant is the ability of such entities to avoid much of the public processes that accompany land use and environmental rules. Review by the Mayor, City Council, Community and Borough Boards, City Planning analysis, and various opportunities for local public hearings are often not required.

New York City, of course, has a storied history of authorities possessing extraordinary powers to facilitate the rapid completion of massive public projects, and to ensure that local concerns do not derail initiatives serving broad needs – important considerations to say the least. Without authorities, it is argued, such projects could never be brought to fruition here. This should not, however, overcome the need to establish a decision-making framework capable of obtaining public input and generating broad public support for resolution of the many problems raised and opportunities presented by the destruction of the World Trade Center. It is critical to the rebuilding effort that we get beyond the era of stalemate among competing interests, such as occurred during the Westway and other development debates.

While some are already spelling out plans for downtown, our first priority should be to identify and address the concerns of all the stakeholders. New York City has always been a leader – crafting innovative solutions in areas from health care to education to civil rights. We now have a unique opportunity to create the first great 21st century urban space, and in so doing make the redevelopment process more democratic. In deciding how to fulfill our collective need to memorialize the now hallowed ground in lower Manhattan, and at the same time restore its place as a vibrant community and paramount business symbol, government must reach out in new ways to all facets of our diverse communities. We are pleased that the responsible entities, from the Governor's Office to the Empire State Development Corporation to the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation to the Mayor's Office have shown strong interest in such a broad based public input process.

One of the goals of the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York, described by Bob Yaro a few minutes ago, is to facilitate the participation of all voices throughout the metropolitan region in the planning for downtown. To advance this interest, on February 7, 2002, the Civic Alliance held "Listening to the City" at the South Street Seaport. More than 650 concerned citizens, civic leaders and public officials from throughout the metropolitan region gathered to commemorate those who lost their lives on September 11

and to chart a bold new vision for lower Manhattan. This daylong event was the first in a series of “Conversations with the City.” Their goal is to provide those who live and work in the region and others whose lives were tragically altered by the destruction of the World Trade Center with the opportunity to influence the rebuilding of Downtown New York. This historic session forged a common vision of the values and principles for rebuilding that represent the aspirations, the memories, and the pride of the city and the region it centers. Future Conversations will evaluate specific ideas and plans for rebuilding and economic recovery as they develop.

With the primary goal of democratizing the rebuilding process, “Listening to the City” brought together a broad cross-section of those affected by the tragedies of September 11. Participants came from all walks of life – residents and workers, survivors and families of victims, emergency and rescue workers, business and property owners, citizens and civic leaders. They reflected a considerable age, income, ethnic, racial, geographic and gender diversity as well. Each brought a unique and important perspective to the dialogue. Also joining the conversation were many of the decision-makers and influencers who will ultimately lay the foundation for the redevelopment process and plans. These included officials and staff of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, New York State, the New York City Mayor’s Office and the New York City Council.

With AmericaSpeaks, a nationally-recognized nonprofit organization, facilitating, we used innovative techniques and the latest and most effective “decision-support” technologies to ensure that all participants’ ideas are captured, and their priorities counted. Discussions began in intimate round table settings, each led by a professional facilitator. These small group discussions were then networked through the use of wireless computer technology to enable each of the 650 participants to share their ideas and recommendations with all those present. Polling keypads allowed the entire assemblage to assess commonality and prioritize the ideas generated through the rich small-group dialogue.

The depth of the exchange among participants was demonstrated both by the way participants listened to one another and incorporated new ideas into their own views, as well as by the extent to which common ground was identified around memorializing the victims and creating the first great 21st century space downtown. Participants recognized the need to balance the tensions between residential and office uses, between the financial sector and a broader economic base, between the urgency to rebuild and the need for deliberative planning. Participants saw the importance of attending to human needs as well as to restoration of real estate. They understood the need to think broadly and inclusively, to take account of all people, all parts of the region, all uses, and future generations. And most of all, participants reflected a common vision for a powerful memorial, integrated into the very fabric of downtown New York: a memorial that would honor the “everyday people” who died there and the heroism, sacrifice, selfless spirit and resiliency that was demonstrated there; one that would reflect the cherished values that were attacked on September 11th.

The public input developed during “Listening to the City” and other such Conversations will be provided directly to decision-makers and other leaders and organizations involved in the efforts to rebuild downtown. Participants will receive feedback that informs them how their input was used. Benefits of this process will also include broad public support for the ultimate plan, and a greater level of satisfaction and trust in the process. These remarkable Conversations will also promote the further use of citizen governance and deliberation, and collaborative partnership-based leadership.

In deciding how to fulfill our collective need to memorialize the now hallowed ground at the World Trade Center site, and at the same time restore downtown’s place as a vibrant community and paramount business symbol, the rebuilding and recovery process must work in such new ways to include all facets of our diverse communities. If all of New York City’s varied constituencies and interests have a role in the development process, the outcome will be a strong plan, and an even stronger community. Those who participate will not only contribute good ideas, but will support the outcome and strengthen their commitment to the city as well. If such a broad-based, organized democratic process does not take shape, we will lose both time and money.

The planning imperative of the 20th century was the need to perfect “building big.” The imperative of the 21st century will be the need to create excellent communities – where business, service, residential and recreational uses are balanced and integrated, where diverse populations can flourish, and where design overlaps with social, economic and environmental concerns. Added to this now is an even greater need for security and comfort. The redevelopment of the World Trade Center site could be a long, contentious and ultimately unsatisfying battle if we do not set a strong framework for consensus building.

The process must start by bringing all of our communities together. New York is the world’s most diverse city. To ensure that our wounds heal, rather than fester, we need the world’s most inclusive process. The best response to an attack on Democracy is to strengthen Democracy.