



DO SOMETHING GEORGE

New York's legendary moxie — displayed vividly in its vows to rebound, and rebuild, after 9/11 — is being tested.

Alas, New York is failing that test.

The Post's Steve Cuozzo tells the tale in the adjacent columns: Some 3 1/2 years after the attacks that leveled the World Trade Center, reconstruction work at Ground Zero is virtually at a standstill.

Basic, cornerstone projects slated to spearhead the work — the new PATH station, the tunnel under West Street and even the Freedom Tower itself — appear stuck in the mud.

Meanwhile, many of the key players — Gov. Pataki, in particular — don't seem to give a hoot. Instead, officials are locked in turf wars, design squabbles and financing feuds.

Just this week, Goldman Sachs ditched plans to build a \$2-billion, 40-story headquarters for some 10,000 employees across the street from Ground Zero because of the tunnel's design.

And Ground Zero itself, the symbol of America's vulnerability to terror in 2001, is slowly evolving into a searingly painful monument to the terrorists' initial triumph.

Here's the worst news: At this rate, the site is likely still to be that way, as Cuozzo says, "10 years after the attack — and maybe 15."

Does anyone consider this in *any way* acceptable?

Cuozzo recalls the warnings from business leaders in '03 — that their willingness to put up with blight, inconveniences, the area's uncertainty would last only so long.

Let's face it: New York's continued reign as the Financial Capital of the World — and the economic engine of the Empire State — remains in doubt, as long as the rebuilding lags. As is, it's a drag on the economy.

There's an even more vital reason to have pursued a quick rebirth Downtown: Pride.

In the fact that New York is a city (and America, a nation) that might be hit hard — but can still bounce back. *Fast.*

And in the fact that Gotham — Downtown, in particular — will always be an international home for trade and commerce. And that New Yorkers mean to keep it that way.

Think about it: Within two years after the 1991 Gulf War, Saddam Hussein had re built nearly all the 134 bridges hit in the war, hundreds of miles of roadway and railway track, numerous electrical grids, oil wells and military facilities.

New York, by contrast, has built a *temporary* PATH station and is finishing its first building, 7 WTC. (And *that* speaks only to the dedication of developer Larry Silverstein.)

That's *it*.

Sure, there's plenty of blame to go around. One of the key players is the Port Authority, an elephantine bureaucracy controlled by two states, New York and New Jersey. Needless to say, it's hard to get the PA to move fast on *anything*.

Certainly, rebuilding Downtown isn't a priority for the Garden State. But Pataki & Co. were given a golden opportunity to advance New York's interests at the PA when Gov. James McGreevey resigned in disgrace, creating a power vacuum.

What did New York's gov do?

So far, not much. Not Downtown.

It's not too late. Pataki can still light a fire under the bureaucrats. End the squabbling. Force the issue.

What will it be, governor?

Ground Zero Reborn?

Or Pataki's Pit?

It's your call.

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