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Opposition To West St. Plan Grows

By **Graham Rayman**
Staff Writer

September 18, 2002

Resistance is emerging among Battery Park City residents to proposals that would submerge West Street as part of lower Manhattan's redevelopment.

Under preliminary proposals reviewed by the Lower Manhattan Development Corp., a stretch of West Street as far north as Chambers Street could be submerged with a park created on the top, at an estimated cost of \$2 billion.

The measure would also create additional land for redevelopment.

"There seems to be widespread support among people who don't live in or know the area, but not that much among the people who live here," said Joanne Taylor, a 12-year resident.

The resistance comes as something of a surprise because there has been a perception that West Street project was one of the few elements of the LMDC proposals where there was agreement.

There was also the perception that residents would support the plan because it could better integrate the community into the rest of the area.

Lawyer John Dellaportas, a longtime resident who is a member of the Coalition to Save West Street, said residents were never formally consulted.

"There wasn't any effort to measure the views of Battery Park City folks," said Dellaportas. "The neighborhood is running 10-to-1 against, based on conversations I have had."

Messages on Battery Park City computer bulletin boards indicate there is substantial opposition to the proposal.

Opponents say the plan will cause years of construction dislocation, cut off access to the FDR Drive and the West Side Highway, and draw tourists into the neighborhood, increasing traffic congestion, said Battery Park City resident Richard Joffe.

"A lot of residents view the neighborhood as a sort of oasis in the city," said Robin Forst, an aide to City Councilman Alan Gerson and a resident of Battery Park City. "There is a concern that the area could lose its identity. I'm not sure there ever was a big push from residents to be closer to the rest of lower Manhattan."

Under the West Street proposal, a promenade with parks would be created on the top of the submerged West Street with a two-lane access road.

The project would also give planners more land and, thus, more options for placement of the Sept. 11 memorial and other buildings.

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