

## **CITY POWER / Don't Just Give Downtown Residents the Shaft**

By Thomas S. Goodkind

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In clumsily painting over the picture of a well-balanced community with the broad strokes of a giant outsider, architects looking to rebuild downtown Manhattan seem to be all thumbs.

With New York's Gov. George Pataki not allowing anything to be built on the footprints of the former World Trade Center, there doesn't appear to be enough room for a new World Trade Center on the 16-acre site. And so planners are now looking at West Street for further development.

As a resident of Battery Park City, I can see West Street from my bedroom window. It is the main artery of the Battery Park City residential community.

Why would planners for the World Trade Center extend their planning to our community? Wouldn't further building require the bulldozing and disruption of existing neighborhoods like ours?

For the past five years, residents of lower Manhattan had to put up with the noise, congestion, and removal of park space to make way for the last West Street plan. It was completed shortly before 9/ 11.

It is easy to understand why downtown residents might be disturbed at the idea of having 10 more years of West Street construction going on around them. It is also easy to understand that this prolonged construction, which would make it harder for ambulances and fire trucks to serve the community, could be a safety issue.

And let's not ignore the dismal prospect of a "misery mile." Having mourners coming nonstop into Battery Park City via a link above the new sunken West Street might be awful for the spirit of a community trying to move on.

Still, Pataki has asked the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the Lower Manhattan Development Corp. to "look beyond just the 16 acres" of the World Center site, as he and everyone else now looks at West Street in lower Manhattan for development. The governor also said that "one of the things that struck" him as a good idea was to link the residential community to the memorial. How did the governor get "struck" with that idea?

It might be a better idea to allow the residential community to speak for itself.

As a long-time Manhattan resident, I have always been amazed by the development of Tribeca, now recognized as one of the world's premiere urban neighborhoods. Tribeca, once a neighborhood of small businesses and factories, has evolved into a wonderful place with a small-town feel. Tribeca was planned from the ground up, by its own residents. Over the years, the City of New York has seen many plans to commercialize and build up Tribeca come and go, as the community has protected its residential and small-business stronghold.

This type of growth gained prominence with the downfall of big urban planners such as Robert Moses and the rising influence of neighborhood advocates such as Jane Jacobs. Jacobs' influential book, "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," was recently re-released to coincide with the first anniversary of 9/11. The book is an attack on common methods of city planning and rebuilding. It originally helped spawn the modern community boards and local planning rules that hold in check the eminent-domain behavior once common in New York City governance.

With emotions still running high, the moneyed real estate interests behind the LMDC are worrying downtown New York City residents like me. When the LMDC begins looking "beyond just the 16 acres," it raises the hackles of many downtown local residents. Most of us enjoy the small-town ambience our communities offer and we want it to be preserved.

When our country was attacked last year, 30,000 downtown Manhattan residents were displaced. Many of them were not allowed to return to their downtown homes for months. Basic conveniences like telephones and grocery stores were not available. Returning to this environment where the World Trade Center fires were still burning and toxic debris was still airborne raised serious health questions. Still, most residents returned, many with their families, to rebuild and reclaim their lives.

If any project concerning the redevelopment of the World Trade Center tries to spread itself into the redevelopment of downtown New York, it must be approached with the greatest level of scrutiny and care.

The residents of downtown Manhattan should be allowed to grow their communities in their own way. After all, they're the ones who made it home.

[Illustration]

Caption: Photo - Thomas S. Goodkind

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