



## **AIA New York Chapter Position on the Memorial Program** *for release and presentation: 14 January 2003*

The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects strongly supports the New York New Visions comprehensive evaluation of the memorial aspects of the nine innovative site plans prepared for the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The AIA has been a part of the New York New Visions design and planning coalition. AIA members have been integrally involved in its plan review task force. Rather than repeat the conclusions or summary of the New York New Visions analysis, there are five specific points to be highlighted here.

### **Open Memorial Process**

Thanks are due to the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation for holding the hearing today in regard to the newly issued draft mission statement and program principles for the World Trade Center Memorial. As previously and repeatedly suggested by New York New Visions and the AIA, the process by which the memorial is achieved needs to be open, public and transparent. Some criticism has been directed at the LMDC for developing this statement and the program behind closed doors. While the time constraints are palpable if the memorial is not to be an afterthought to the planning process, it is imperative that public comment from hearings and other public forums be incorporated into the final mission statement and program, preferably with the involvement of the independent committees that drafted the documents.

### **Integration of Memorial**

There are three very important sentences in the preface to the memorial program addressing how the new site plan for the World Trade Center can be revised by the memorial design competition winner. It is commendable that the LMDC will also use the memorial approach, attitude and concept as major criteria to help narrow down the broad range of ideas presented. The full integration of the memorial in a meaningful, clear and realizable manner is critical to the success of the urban planning on the World Trade Center site. A memorial cannot be simply “plopped” down on set-aside land without connection to the organization of the site. The memorial is well-integrated in several of the schemes. How the memorial becomes part of the planning process needs more attention in regard to the schedule. At the point when the competition winner is announced, the site planning, including transportation planning, should not be complete. The artist, landscape architect, architect or other entrant who wins the competition must be able to help change a plan that may have developed significant momentum.

### **Mission Statement**

In regard to the Memorial Mission Statement issued by LMDC, it should be clarified whether the text mission statement text will itself be included as a design element in the memorial. That is, will the words themselves be “carved in stone?” We feel that this should not be a pre-condition, although we commend the LMDC and the independent committee that wrote the Mission Statement, for the statement’s power and spirit. The words “eternal beacons”

used in the third paragraph are too specific. The beacon metaphor is overused, even if it is meant to conjure the very positive images of the much-appreciated Tribute in Light temporary memorial.

### **Memorial Program**

The LMDC should also be praised for the relative lack of specificity concerning the exact size and location of the memorial site. This positive ambiguity demonstrates a flexible approach that will allow for the greatest degree of creative freedom for all competition entrants. We must trust the artists, landscape architects and architects who will enter the competition to achieve something extraordinary.

### **Lessons Learned**

The AIA participated in a series of workshops that it organized on behalf of New York New Visions and Council-member Alan Gerson, Chair of the City Council's Select Committee on the Redevelopment of Lower Manhattan. Many lessons can be learned from the common ground achieved when family members and neighborhood residents sat down without the glare of television cameras or the bombast of boom microphones. Perhaps the most important of these lessons was that the site is large enough for both "sacred ground" and a "living memorial" to co-exist on a site made sacred by tragic loss. Sacred space in a secular society speaks to our age-old need for ceremony and for sequence. Ceremonies, including civic or civil ceremonies, can mark anniversaries and rites of passage. Processional toward a memorial or memorializing exhibit, must necessarily link the process to a path of movement, along which there are quiet spaces for contemplation and reflection. The attention of the memorial program to these lessons is especially appreciated.

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