

ENDPAPER by Margaret Helfand, FAIA, president of the AIA New York Chapter

It has been an exceptional year for the AIA New York Chapter. Long before September 11, the leadership of the AIA New York Chapter and the New York Foundation for Architecture made a commitment to proactively engage with the civic and cultural life of this city by creating the Center for Architecture. Events this year supported the Center's goals. Mayoral forums were hosted last summer by the Chapter, in collaboration with the Architectural League, Municipal Art Society, Van Alen Institute, and Design Trust for Public Space. Last month we hosted a symposium, "1 = 5: Creating a Multi-Centered City," which used a multidisciplinary lens to examine innovative development initiatives in each borough which can illuminate the path as we rebuild our city.

In the ninth month of this year, the unthinkable happened to New York and the World Trade Center, and thousands of lives were lost. Within days, we reached out to our membership for volunteers and organized a coalition of professional and civic organizations called New York New Visions (visit www.aiany.org or www.newyorknewvisions.org to find lists of those involved and updates on the work). More than 300 people have been working since September to produce recommendations for principles and process to guide the reconstruction effort in Lower Manhattan. This coalition has taken on a life of its own, with links to the New York City Partnership and the Real Estate Board of New York's NYCRebuild effort. This is an unprecedented commitment of the architectural community and the AIA to civic engagement, collaboration, and social conscience.

The enormous task that remains ahead of us, however, is to balance the need to move quickly and astutely to rebuild this pivotal part of our city and the aspiration to bring the highest level of innovative thinking to the process. This is the challenge of the decade for the design community and the eyes of the world are upon us.

I feel tremendously privileged to have been the president during this important time in the city's history and now I am pleased to pass the baton to Leevi Kiil, our next president. His enthusiastic efforts will be supported by our exceptionally committed Board, committee chairs, staff, and our extraordinary new executive director, Rick Bell, all of whom I thank for their immeasurable contributions this year, instilling vitality in our mission.

As we move forward in 2002 with the need to balance our professional activities with our increased investment in civic engagement, let us carry forward lessons we've learned in the last few months about the rewards of collaboration in the public interest. The challenges facing New York did not begin on September 11, nor will they end after the World Trade Center site is rebuilt. I hope that our newly energized voice will be heard with greater frequency and resonance as the dialogue about our city continues to unfold.