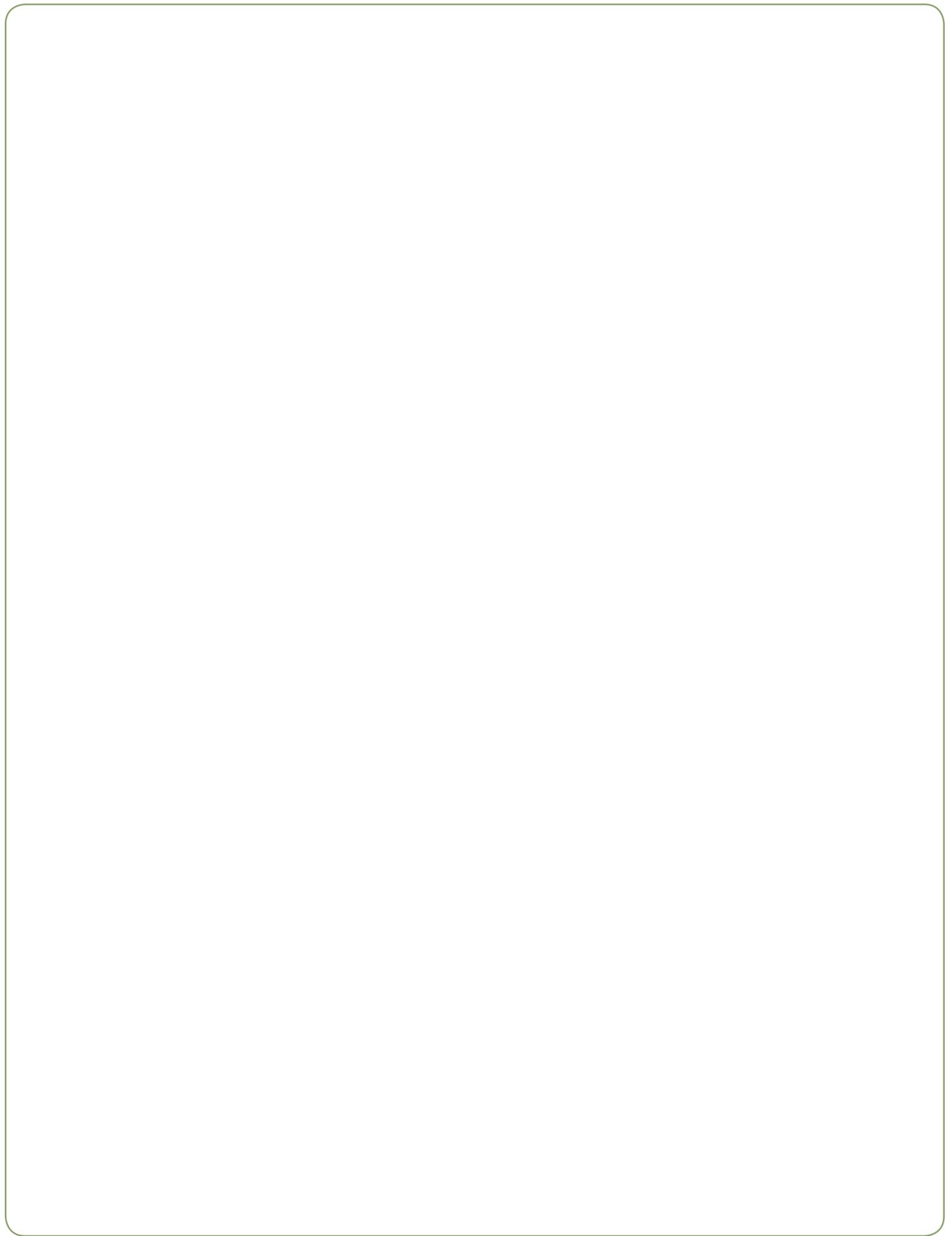


World Trade Center Memorial Museum Programming Workshops

Summary Of Proceedings

**September 19 &
October 11, 2005**

CivicAlliance To
Rebuild
Downtown
New York
Convened by Regional Plan Association



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Credits & Acknowledgements

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Convened by **Regional Plan Association**

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Introduction

Over 100 downtown residents, concerned citizens and victims' family members attended two interactive workshops on the evenings of September 19 and October 11, 2005 to review preliminary programming concepts for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum. Sponsored by the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York in partnership with the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) and the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation, the workshops used a focus-group format to evaluate initial ideas for the content of the museum that will tell the story of 9/11 at Ground Zero for generations to come. Held at the NYU School of Continuing and Professional Education in the Woolworth Building, the workshops generated a range of detailed comments on the Museum's preliminary programming ideas, which are summarized in this report.

Background

The World Trade Center Memorial Museum is a new institution at the World Trade Center site devoted to commemorating the events of September 11 through a multi-layered exhibition that will draw on the power and authenticity of its setting. The Museum's objective is to educate, inform, and inspire visitors by telling the individual stories of the victims and the contributions from around the world toward the rescue, recovery, and relief efforts. Artifacts and exhibits in the Memorial Museum will range from personal objects marking everyday life in the Twin Towers to steel rescued from the wreckage of the site to witnesses' accounts of the devastation. A central exhibition will weave together the story of September 11, drawing on multiple perspectives and documentation to

recount life in the towers leading up to the disaster, the events of September 11, the immediate aftermath and the world-wide response. The museum will also accommodate a resource center, temporary exhibitions, and educational programs.

The Memorial Museum's programming has been shaped by guidelines developed by the Memorial Center Advisory Committee – a select group of victims' family members, survivors, residents, first responders, historians, preservationists, and curators, who worked from April to July 2004 to draft and revise a set of recommendations for the Memorial Center, finalized in August 2004 after receiving comments from 400 members of the public. The Final Recommendations, along with the complete record of the public comment, have served as a resource for the institutional planners, the LMDC, and the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation in developing the Memorial Museum's preliminary program – the subject of these workshops.

Who Attended

In order to assemble a diverse group of participants for the Memorial Museum Workshops, meeting organizers worked through a variety of channels to generate interest in the meetings, including downtown newspapers, Community Boards, the LMDC's Advisory Committees, the memberships of civic, community and professional organizations, and by posting flyers throughout Lower Manhattan. The majority of participants who attended the workshops had some stake in the Lower Manhattan rebuilding process. "Concerned citizens," "affected residents" and "other" formed the three largest individual categories.

Forty participants attended the September 19 workshop and 63 attended on October 11. Asked to identify their relation to 9/11 when registering for the workshops, the largest groups of participants on September 19 identified as "concerned citizen" or "other." On October 11, the two largest groups of participants were "concerned citizen" or "affected resident." The remaining participants, smaller in number but spread over a larger number of categories, identified themselves as "family member or dependent of 9/11 victim," "rescue, recovery and reconstruction worker or their family member," "service provider or professional," "displaced worker," "evacuee," "public official/ civic servant," or "student."



Methodology

Participant feedback at the September 19 and October 11 workshops was documented in four ways:

- Notes taken on large flipcharts by participant "scribes" in each small-group discussion
- Oral reports at the end of each workshop by the group "spokespersons"
- Notes taken by LMDC and Memorial Foundation staff observing each small group discussion
- Comment forms completed by workshop participants who chose to fill them out

Of these four methods, the most attention was given to the flipchart notes taken in the small group discussions, and specifically the noted "consensus points", and the oral reports given at the end of the workshops. Notes taken by staff and individual comment forms were reviewed to verify and provide context to the flipchart notes and oral reports.

To document the small group discussions, the authors of this report typed every comment recorded on the flipcharts and reported orally during the report-back session into a MS Excel spreadsheet, summarized and pared down. The repetition of each comment was then counted and sorted by the number of times it appeared. Points of consensus reached by the small groups were highlighted in bold. Comments on similar themes were then grouped together under major subheadings, with consensus and repetition noted. The summary of the discussions was written by referencing the grouped and ranked comments, discussing the most prevalent themes first and working down to the least-repeated comments and comments that were only noted once. Observations that did not fit under a particular subheading were noted in the "Additional Topics" section.

Format & Discussion Questions

The workshops on both evenings followed a similar format, dividing time between a formal presentation of the Museum's proposed programming and face-to-face small group discussions. Jeff Howard, principal of Howard + Revis Design and consultant to the LMDC, presented the preliminary programming concepts for the Memorial Museum with an animated slide show. He noted that the preliminary concepts for the Museum had been influenced by the Memorial Center Advisory Committee Recommendations, which were made available to all the workshop participants for reference.

Workshop participants then broke into small groups to share their ideas about the Memorial Museum, responding to a series of questions that specifically addressed Jeff Howard's presentation. Discussions were led by professional volunteer facilitators experienced in guiding small group discussions. The facilitators led the groups during the hour long sessions towards points of consensus that were recorded on large flip charts. These consensus points were reported back to all the assembled participants at the end of each workshop and given the greatest consideration in writing this report. The small groups also recorded general notes of their conversations on the flip charts. Strongly held views of a minority of the group that played a strong role in the discussions were also noted as "outlier opinions."

As a result of the discussions, a variety of opinions were collected on various aspects of the proposed programming. Throughout this report, "points of consensus" are frequently referred to, and describe the points of agreement reached by the small groups and noted on their flipcharts or in the reporting back session. These points of consensus represent the agreement of small groups on specific issues at various times, and not the consensus of all the participants in the workshop. The small groups ranged in size from the smallest group on the first night – three people – to the largest group on the second night – about nine people.

The questions guiding the discussions varied slightly between the two workshops. On September 19, the groups were asked to discuss three specific questions relating to the presentation. The first question addressed the proposal by museum planners that two different options for experiencing the events of 9/11 should be offered to museum visitors: an "immersive" and potentially more upsetting technique that would incorporate audio and visual recordings of 9/11, and a more traditional method of exhibition design that would draw mostly on photos and

text. Workshop participants were asked whether they agreed that offering "two paths" in the museum was an effective way of presenting potentially upsetting material.

The second question on September 19 was more open-ended, asking participants to comment on whether anything important to the story of 9/11 had been omitted, or if there was anything included that should not have been. Finally, participants were asked to review the Memorial Center Advisory Committee Guidelines and comment on whether the proposed programming concepts met the recommendations.

In response to feedback that some of the questions on September 19 were difficult to understand, the questions were simplified and

reduced. On October 11, the first question led off more generally, asking participants what content was missing, in their opinions, or should not be included. Follow-up questions were also posed to elicit additional discussion if the lead question did not provoke sufficient response. The second question addressed again the "two paths" for experiencing the events of 9/11 and asked participants which path they would choose and why.

Discussion Questions September 19, 2005

- 1 Jeff Howard had described two experiences of "Events of the Day": one is an immersive experience that draws extensively on audio and video footage of the tragedies, while the second is fact-based, using less intense images and artifacts. For you, is this an effective way to present potentially difficult and upsetting material?
- 2 Are there any topics important to the 9/11 story that you feel have been omitted from the preliminary programming concepts? Topics you think should not be explored in as much depth?
- 3 How well do you think the proposed programming concepts meet the recommendations of the Memorial Center Advisory Committee?

Discussion Questions October 11, 2005

- 1 What is it about the presentation you just saw that you feel most strongly (either positively or negatively) about?

Follow-up: Are there any topics important to the 9/11 story that you feel have been omitted from the preliminary programming concepts? Topics you think should not be explored in as much depth?
- 2 Jeff Howard had described two experiences of "Events of the Day": one is an immersive "you were there" experience that draws extensively on audio and video footage of the tragedies, while the second relies on more traditional methods of exhibiting the materials, using less intense images, text and artifacts. Which path do you imagine you would choose and why?

Follow-up: What material related to the 9/11 tragedy do you personally find too difficult or upsetting to look at in a museum? If you came to the museum with your family, what specific experiences might you want to be sure you shared and/or were able to skip? Are there specific images and artifacts you would want to see if you brought friends from out of town or out of the country to the museum?

Reaction to the Preliminary Programming Concepts

Representing The “Events of the Day”

The most-discussed topic at the workshops was the proposed bifurcated approach to experiencing the “events of the day” section of the exhibition. Participants were directed to consider the effectiveness of offering two paths: one “immersive” in which potentially upsetting audio and video clips would be shown and one “non-immersive” in which visitors would view text, images, and artifacts that recounted the events of September 11. Participants responded to the bifurcated approach with strong feelings on both sides of the issue. Those in favor of having two paths felt that visitors should be allowed to choose how best to experience the Memorial Museum. Another advantage would be that different perspectives would be provided if both the immersive and non-immersive routes were offered. There was concern, however, that having the two paths made an “artificial distinction” in the events of the day.

Some participants suggested creating one path that contained alcoves to house the more intense material, offset from the main path. This could protect children and individuals not wanting an immersive experience. Others suggested that merging the immersive and non-immersive paths would also solve the problems posed by the bifurcated approach.

Ultimately, more groups reached consensus in favor of having two paths, as an effective way of presenting sensitive content to diverse audiences. Along these lines, numerous groups reached consensus in favor of a bypass option, even though there was some confusion about its management. The bypass was considered a positive way to handle highly emotional content and was especially important for those closest to September 11.

Consideration of the intended audience, including the acknowledgment of international visitors and children, was a significant issue for participants, regardless of the route preferred for the events of the day. For those who favored the non-immersive path, the sentiment was that there was “no need to relive the horror” for people who experienced September 11 directly. Complementing this view, there were a number of responses that indicated that the difference between those who learned of and those who experienced September 11 should be respected.

There were divergent opinions about the benefits to be gained from the immersive experience. Lauded as a way to “stun” people and



“avoid complacency,” three groups reached consensus that the events of the day should not be “sanitized” or “sugarcoated.” Contrarily, some participants expressed concern that the immersive experience would only elicit anger and provided no opportunity for growth beyond September 11. Another fear was that the immersive path could not accurately represent the events of the day and was susceptible

to being “Disney-like” and having a “theme park” feel. Even with these reservations, many still felt that the immersive path had more potential than its non-immersive counterpart.

There were many impassioned yet divided opinions on how the material should be represented in order to maintain an accurate account of the events of the day. Many wanted the “real,” “factual” experience to be expressed, while an equal number of participants questioned whether there was one true event to be represented. Complementing this issue was the repeated opinion that since an interpretation of the event

is inherently subjective, the descriptions should be “open-ended” and “allow visitors to arrive at their own conclusions.”

The Question of Context

Numerous groups reached consensus around the necessity for the broader context of September 11 to be discussed in the Memorial Museum. Many participants requested an unfettered sequence of events with both positive and negative political responses to September 11.

Alongside the call for an unbiased series of post-September 11 events, participants spoke of the need to highlight the worldwide political and socioeconomic impacts. This would include both a range of different international perspectives as well as discussions of how the world has changed since the attack. Additionally, participants agreed that discussing September 11 as an historic, world-changing event was essential.

Participants continuously reinforced the importance of September 11 to New York and the tri-state area. A significant recommendation was to include the history of Lower Manhattan and its economy in the Memorial Museum, the importance of the World Trade Center and the Twin Towers, and an attempt to answer the question of why this site in particular was attacked. Many stressed that stories of the neighborhood, the community built around the World Trade Center, and the “small town feel” of New York should be emphasized. Two groups reached consensus urging the narrative of the attack to include more than just the day after, noting that “the aftermath was too limited” in the

presentation. Participants agreed that the process of people rebuilding their lives and stabilizing financially was missing from the proposed programming, as was the story of how the Lower Manhattan community supported rescue workers and construction workers after 9/11.

Impressed by the presentation's ability to address the key concepts and "emotional aspects" of September 11, participants also urged museum planners to highlight the evacuation process, including the stories of the first responders. One group expressed a strong desire for the story of the human remains left at the Fresh Kills landfill to be acknowledged in the Memorial Museum.

Audio/Visual Methods of Presentation

Numerous groups praised the presentation of the material by Jeff Howard, noting the use of "visually moving, poignant imagery," and its ability to evoke the events of the day. Participants found the use of audio "compelling and effective." Some groups reached consensus around the use of multimedia to stimulate visitor interaction.

Participants supported the addition of a space where visitors could indicate how they have changed, both within the Memorial Museum and since September 11. A key recommendation was to include first-person testimonials as part of the exhibit. The participants noted that "communication and an inability to communicate" was a "big part of September 11" and, if not too upsetting, cell phone conversations from the planes and the Towers deserved a space in the museum.

Four groups reached consensus surrounding the need for a temporary exhibit space. Participants agreed that this space should provide flexibility for the Memorial Museum and should be maintained until political climates have changed and historical perspective could be achieved. Alongside this issue, the importance of having a dialogue within the museum was a repeated theme throughout the workshops. While it was acknowledged that having a true dialogue would be difficult given today's political and emotional environment, two groups reached consensus that creating a place for a "multiplicity of views" should be included. The provision of a space for interactive dialogue within the museum would permit more perspectives to be shared and "sensitive issues" to be discussed.

A general concern for future generations' understanding of September 11 was further emphasized when it was agreed that the museum



should "bring alive the past."

A number of questions emerged about the educational content of the museum. Consensus developed around the need to have a "long-term educational layout" with a clear description of the "lessons learned." Additional concerns surrounding the age-appropriateness of the museum arose from the participants' desire to simultaneously educate and protect children.

The need for a comprehensive library was a point of consensus for one of the groups. Participants stressed that the Memorial Museum should exist as "a central place for scholarship about September 11" and a "repository to other collections." Additionally, participants requested more "outreach for public documentation" both within and outside of New York.

Treatment of Artifacts

Significant questions were raised about the use and preservation of artifacts in the museum. Some participants also stressed the need for families to have their own semi-private location within the Memorial Museum. The importance of preserving the site, including the slurry wall, the footprints, and the Vesey Street staircase, was a repeated theme among participants.

Many participants wanted to be sure that the artifacts were "used sensitively" and "not misused to



tell a certain story." Some participants felt that not enough pieces were being used while others wanted artifacts to be displayed in conjunction with personal testimony. Participants also urged the specific inclusion of children's responses to September 11 be incorporated in the Memorial Museum, and the inclusion of art and artists in the Memorial Museum.

In conjunction with artifacts from the victims and the towers, two groups reached consensus around the need for both the survivors and their artifacts to be acknowledged. Additionally, the narratives of the survivors of both the 1993 bombing and the September 11 attack should be told. One group reached consensus that the victims' families should play a strong role in the administration of artifacts and the archives.

Museum Goals

Two groups reached consensus that the fundamental objective of the museum remained

unclear. Questions arose about how the Memorial and the Memorial Museum related to each other at the site. Participants were divided as to whether the “museum should take its cue from the spirit of the memorial” or if it should “walk the line between documentation and commemoration.” Participants were also concerned as to the balance between the memorial and the commercialism of the area and how the site would be able to provide “retail with dignity.”

A large number of participants felt that the museum should be “more about the people than the buildings.” Highlighting the loss of life and the personal experiences of the victims and survivors was considered essential. Notably, one group achieved consensus around creating a “snapshot of society” which would include the narratives of a large range of individuals affected by the attack.

There was also worry that the Memorial Museum was “sterile” and “not original.” These negative views are especially problematic considering that participants reinforced the importance of having the Memorial Museum be “life changing” and unique.

Participants cautioned that the material may not be easily digested by the audience. Many responses indicated that the Memorial Museum may be too “comprehensive,” “overwhelming,” or “fragmented” to be suitably absorbed.

Alongside these concerns was the question of how much time the visitor will be allotted in the Memorial Museum. Many participants were apprehensive about access to the museum, including whether large crowds could be comfortably accommodated and how the flow of traffic would be effectively maintained. The suggestion was also put forth that part of the museum should be located above ground.

Other Consensus Points

Some consensus points recorded by the small groups did not fit into the larger discussion topics. These questions and comments are provided here.

- Tell the transportation story – Manhattan was sealed off after 9/11.
- There should be a contemplation room of uplift and hope.
- Forty percent of the Memorial Museum

should be left empty to convey the emptiness of September 11.

- The museum should make provisions for tour groups – and consider their experience in the exhibition design.
- Tell the aviation story – the people on the planes and the grounding of every US flight.
- Focus on recovery.
- Don't be too guided by the recommendations. The Memorial Museum should follow its own internal logic.
- It's too early to talk about the content of the Memorial Museum.

Additional Topics

Many of the comments that were documented without repetition or were noted as “outlier opinions” concerned the victims of 9/11, the museum's physical space and the ongoing effects of September 11.

One comment addressed the need to “talk about the victims in order to discuss the recovery” from September 11, while another urged that the museum tell the story of the evacuation process on 9/11 by ferryboat. Several comments addressed remote sites, one suggesting the creation of an international cemetery, possibly on Governors Island, and another addressing the need to keep the land at Shanksville, Pennsylvania clear from any future development.

Questions about the physical design of the museum and its layout at the site comprised some of the minor topics. Questions ranged from who will have access to the tombs in the memorial to how the chaos of September 11 will be communicated in such a short time. One participant suggested using the Holocaust Museum as a model. Two comments about the central icon for the museum recommended “universal design” and a representation of “a larger totality without being too reductive.” There was also a concern that real estate development may be “scared away” by the Memorial Museum.

Participants commented on the public health impact of September 11. One participant suggested including the air pollution studies done by the Environmental Protection Agency while another wanted to convey “what was in the dust.” Another participant wanted to incorporate the New York Mental Health studies about the effect of September 11 on New York residents.

Next Steps

This report is intended to serve as a record of public feedback on the preliminary programming concepts for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum and to assist the LMDC, the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation, their programming consultants, and future exhibition design consultants as they continue to refine the programming and design of the museum. The report will be distributed to workshop participants and public agencies working on the rebuilding process, and made available for download on the website of the Civic Alliance.

These workshops represent one step in an ongoing process of refining the museum's content and exhibitions. The LMDC and the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation are now conducting a national search to hire a Museum Director to manage the continued curatorial and content development of the museum. They are also in the process of identifying an exhibition designer, who will design the physical presentation of the programming ideas discussed at these workshops. The LMDC continues to coordinate the architectural design process for the Memorial Museum, working with the architecture firm Davis Brody Bond. The Foundation will assume responsibility for the museum during construction, which is estimated to start in Spring 2006, with hopes to open the museum's doors to the public by September 11, 2009. The Foundation will own the museum, with long-term responsibility for programs and operations.

The World Trade Center Memorial Foundation is leading a \$500 million fundraising campaign for private donations for the construction of the Memorial, the Memorial Museum and the cultural program at the World Trade Center site to match \$300 million in public funding. The Foundation announced in October 2005 that it has already raised over \$100 million towards that goal.

The Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York remains committed to public participation in the rebuilding process and will continue to seek opportunities to provide forums for public discussion of evolving Lower Manhattan plans. The Civic Alliance will also follow up with the LMDC and the Memorial Foundation to ensure that the discussions documented in this report are given strong consideration.



The Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York is a broad-based coalition formed after 9/11 to provide an “umbrella” for civic planning and advocacy efforts in support of the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan. The Civic Alliance promotes ongoing participation by the public and the civic community in the rebuilding process, and advocates public accountability and sustainable and equitable development. The Alliance sponsored the pivotal “Listening to the City” town hall meetings in the summer of 2002, where 4,500 people came together and demanded from their public officials more imaginative and ambitious plans for the World Trade Center site.

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