

CITY BEAT

The phoenix factor

Activist spurs revival of lower Manhattan

By CLEM RICHARDSON
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

The way Madelyn Wils sees it, the city has two years to re-create lower Manhattan in a way that makes people want to live there.

More people live below Canal St. now than called the area home before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Wils said.

Occupancy rates are at 95%, and more than half the people in the section's major housing area, Battery Park City, are newcomers, according to figures provided by the Alliance for Downtown New York.

But most of those are students or young professionals living dormitory-style, or several to an apartment, who can afford the rents — an average \$2,065 for a studio and a whopping \$5,651 for a three-bedroom — only because of the Lower Manhattan Development Corp.'s Residential Grant Program.

The \$500-a-month subsidies, created to bring people into the community after 40% of them left following the terrorist strike, will expire in two years.

"When the subsidies end, many of the people who are here now will leave," said Wils, chairwoman of Community Board 1. "We'll need other people to move in — people who can afford to live here. So we have to make sure that we have something to offer in this neighborhood to attract those people."

Whatever lower Manhattan becomes, Wils, a member of a number of civic and governmental boards, will have had a large part of its creation.

Her roles as community board head, trustee with the Alliance for Downtown New York and member of the LMDC make her a major player in what will rise from the ruins of the 16-acre World Trade Center site.

Her position that the land be developed and memorial space dedicated to the victims be limited has angered relatives of those killed in the attacks, many of whom want nothing built on the footprints of the towers.

"The people who live down here were running for their lives on Sept. 11," Wils said. "They lost friends and family and neighbors. We are in mourning, as well — mourning for our community. We deserve to see our community rebuilt."

For all its horror, the trade center disaster is also an opportunity for Community Board 1 — which covers Tribeca, Battery Park City, SoHo, Wall Street, South Street Seaport and Governors Island — to translate the national focus on that site into improvements for the entire neighborhood.

The community needs the same things it did before 9/11, Wils said: parks, an enclosed recreation facility, stores, schools and cultural institutions.

"We don't have one large grocery store down here," she said. "We have to go out of the community to shop for food."

Parks and green space have always been at a premium in a neighborhood with some of the highest-priced real estate in the city. Wils said more must be done to develop park space and highlight the area's attractions — the Hudson River, East River and Battery Park — as recreation areas.

Having more families means the need for more schools, Wils said. She was a driving force behind the creation of the Millennium High School, which opened its doors last month to 220 students on the upper floors of a Financial District building at 75 Broad St. It was the first new school to open in lower Manhattan since Sept. 11.

On the shopping front, if retail giant Century 21 could get some company — say, a Nordstrom department store, Wils said — the two could anchor the downtown retail market.

With neighborhoods of moneyed clientele already in place, Wils envisions a shopping district that would attract customers from across Manhattan, Brooklyn Heights and New Jersey.

Wils also wants to see a large space where cultural events could be staged.

"We have many cultural institutions, the American Indian Museum, the Holocaust Museum and many little galleries and art spaces, but we need a cultural center that will bring people in so that they leave there and go visit all the other places," she said.

She doesn't see Ground Zero as a potential draw, partly because, given the many agencies and politicians involved, Wils believes it will be another 10 years before anything is built at the site.

"We can't wait for that," she said.

And though thousands of people already are coming to Ground Zero, most leave the area without visiting shops and restaurants.

"They may buy a T-shirt or a hat, but they don't shop here," she said.

The strength of the community is the people who were there before 9/11 and are still there, Wils said.

"All of us have to be a little crazy to live in a city that is the prime terrorist target in the country," Wils said. "I don't think about it. You can't. If you did, you wouldn't be able to function."

Community Board 1 Chairwoman Madelyn Wils envisions parks, stores and cultural institutions sprouting up in lower Manhattan.

BATTERY CHARGE

Here are the average rents in lower Manhattan for the second quarter of this year:

Studio:	\$2,065
One bedroom:	\$2,421
Two bedrooms:	\$3,695
Three bedrooms:	\$5,651

Source: The Alliance for Downtown New York



'Primary' libel ruling: Case closed

A Harlem librarian who sued "Primary Colors" author Joe Klein for libel won't be seeing any green.

A judge has tossed out her \$100 million lawsuit alleging she was trashed in Klein's 1996 fictional best seller, a thinly veiled account of former President Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign, the New York Law Journal reports in today's edition.

Daria Carter-Clark had argued she was the inspiration for the librarian who romps with the book's Gov. Jack Stanton.

In the book, Stanton and "Daria Baum," a librarian, meet during his campaign stop at a Harlem library, where she runs an adult literacy program and is on the board of the teachers union.

Candidate Clinton did visit the library, and the physical description of Baum bears some similarity to Carter-Clark, Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Richard Braun noted in his decision last week. But Carter-Clark did not work with a teachers union.

Carter-Clark subpoenaed Clinton to testify last year about his actual visit. Clinton never had to show up because the real-life librarian and the ex-President agreed they had never nuzzled.

Jane H. Farrow

Park crimes on pol's radar

Crime in city parks should be tracked and mapped more intensively, a City Council committee and park advocates said yesterday.

And parks enforcement officers should report to the NYPD, not the Parks Department, City Councilman Bill de Blasio (D-Brooklyn) said.

Park crime is down when compared with the corresponding period last year, according to the Parks Department.

But a recent spate of violent incidents — including a Sept. 12 beating and attempted rape in Brooklyn's Prospect Park — has renewed calls to double the 240-member park police force and transfer the unit to the NYPD.

"When any unit is pulled out of the NYPD, it changes the entire atmosphere," said de Blasio. "It leads to a much more vigorous response."

Advocates with New Yorkers for Parks argue that the police crime-tracking system, which is not specific enough to pinpoint dangerous areas in parks.

Parks Commissioner Arthur Benepe said Comptroller Andrew Cuomo's plan to track park crime and establish mapping is unnecessary. Transferring park enforcement to NYPD control would limit the ability "to enforce quality-of-life issues," Benepe said.

David Handschuh