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At Hearing, A Resolve To Rebuild Twin Towers

By EDWARD WYATT

Given a chance to tell the people who will oversee the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan what they want to see there, hundreds of New Yorkers and others responded on Thursday with a surprising answer: rebuild the twin towers.

"Please do not diminish the memory of all of the people who died there by building 50-, 60- or 70-story mediocre buildings on the site," said Jonathan Hakala, a Hoboken, N.J., resident who worked on the 77th floor of 1 World Trade Center, at a public hearing sponsored by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

Citing a Quinnipiac University poll in February showing that three out of four New Yorkers favored rebuilding on the site, Mr. Hakala said, "If you're going to put buildings on that site, build one of the seven modern wonders of the world, and please give us a skyline that will once again cause our spirits to soar."

The exhortation brought cheers from 750 people who filled an auditorium at Pace University for more than three hours. Proponents of putting up one or more very tall towers at the site brought with them drawings, pictures, poems and other items to illustrate their desire for the restoration of something monumental in Lower Manhattan.

Daniel Looney and Kenneth Kunken, lawyers in the Nassau County district attorney's office, brought drawings by Anna Blazejczyk of a large tower on a pentagonal base surrounded by grassy fields, representing each of the three places that Americans were killed on Sept. 11.

"It is first and foremost a monument to America," Mr. Looney said. "It will show that the American spirit endured, that it rose from this destruction and ultimately triumphed."

While that sentiment is widely shared, conceptions of its manifestation differ widely, especially in the corridors of power. On Jan. 4, John C. Whitehead, the chairman of the development corporation, stood next to Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg at City Hall and stated, "I think there is a developing consensus — among everybody I've talked to — that it is not either practical or appropriate to build another 100-story building."

After Thursday's hearing, Mr. Whitehead sounded a bit less certain, at least opening the door for such a consideration. "Whether it is practical to do, I just don't know," Mr. Whitehead said. "But I think it's still an open subject."

Not all the speakers addressed the idea of rebuilding tall towers. Several talked about a memorial, and what shape and function it should take. Others spoke of the need for more support by the development corporation of small businesses and low-income workers, or of rebuilding the transportation system that is essential to Lower Manhattan.

The development corporation's planning expert, Alexander Garvin, said he thought the feedback would be quite valuable to his staff and to Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners, the firm that will help design options for the site. "I heard a lot of new things tonight that were very valuable," Mr. Garvin said after the meeting.

But the Port Authority's chief engineer, Frank Lombardi, said he thought the interest in rebuilding the twin towers was based more on emotion than on practicality.

"I think some of the people want to make a political statement, to say that the terrorists didn't win," Mr. Lombardi said in an interview after the hearing. "They see the towers as a symbol of the strength of America, and they want them back."

"If the resources are there, I don't see a problem," Mr. Lombardi said. But he added that Lower Manhattan was unlikely to need that much office space anytime soon, and that a developer would have to be certain that he could rent out the top 30 or 40 floors of a 110-story tower — no small feat, despite the show of support at the hearing.

Mr. Hakala, the Hoboken resident, gave developers at least one place to look for occupants: "If you do that," he said, "please save a little bit of space on the 77th floor."

Other speakers said they thought the idea of dreaming up something new for the site was misguided. "If the Brooklyn Bridge were destroyed in a terrorist attack, we would not be discussing the re-envisioning of East River crossings," one speaker said. "We would rebuild it."

Another speaker said the memorial itself should be placed on top of a rebuilt tower. He added, "One of the most spiritual places I can ever remember being is at the top of the World Trade Center."

Robert Siegel said his message was "in support of verticality."

"When we rebuild, it must not be with bunkers in which to cower," Mr. Siegel said. "And never change the name. It's the World Trade Center and it always should be."

Stamford Journal

Diner Stands

By The New York Times

STAMFORD, Conn., May 23 — For the last three years, a tiny diner named Curley's has stood in the way of the latest phase of a huge urban renewal project here among the corporate office towers that dominate this city's downtown business district.

Now, after a successful court fight saved their 61-year-old restaurant from the wrecking ball, the two owners, immigrant sisters from Greece, may find that all the plans for urban redevelopment are working out to their benefit.

After nearly being forced to relocate, Maria Aposporos and her sister, Eleni Begetis, now have a critical voice in the future of the project, an 11-story building that would include stores and 316 apartments, most of them high-rent units. They can stay where they are on West Park Place, but are negotiating with the developer about a possible move elsewhere on the property — on their terms. The diner might be moved, or they might get space in the new building.

"I don't want to kill the project," Mrs. Aposporos said during a break from the cash register during a bustling lunch hour, "but I don't want them to rob me, either."

An outgoing woman whose English is still slightly broken, Mrs. Aposporos is an unlikely participant in Stamford's four-decade downtown redevelopment program. The work has helped turn an old factory town into a corporate magnet, but it also led to the demolition of hundreds of businesses and displaced thousands of people, most of them poor.

The diner, which Mrs. Aposporos and her sister, both former waitresses, bought in 1976 from the original owner, Herluf Svenningsen, known as Curley, has long attracted an array of customers who find it indispensable for its inexpensive food, homey atmosphere and the taste of a forgotten Stamford.

The diner seemed doomed when the Stamford Urban Redevelopment Commission condemned it in 1993 to clear the way for the new building. Using its powers of eminent domain, the commission offered the sisters \$233,000 for the diner and its land. They insisted that their property was worth much more, though, and in

Student Made L

By JACOB H. FRIES

A Long Island teenager charged with stealing metal shavings from his high school chemistry lab had compiled a list of materials to build a bomb and had even fashioned a detonator from a disposable camera, Suffolk County investigators said yesterday.

The police said they believed that had the teenager, Arthur Lundquist, 16, not forgotten his backpack in the school cafeteria on Friday, he might have carried out a secret plan to construct an explosive device. Investigators said yesterday that the evidence indicated that the boy had every intention of building a bomb.

However, he denied having such plans and said he was not angry at any particular person, the police said. "He claims that he likes to burn things, or watch them burn," said Sgt. Jim Kearns, a Suffolk County police investigator. "But this was more than that."

Security officers at Ward Melville

Subway Card

By RANDY KENNEDY

When they were introduced in the subway system three years ago, Fun Passes — which cost \$4 and offered a whole day of unlimited rides — were only slightly easier to find around the city than a cheap rent-stabilized apartment.

Transit officials worried that there would be a huge demand for the cards and the system would suffer an equally huge financial hit by offering such a deep discount. So the cards were not widely advertised and could not be bought at token booths, but only at newsstands and other businesses, which were often sold out of them.

But quietly and steadily, as the cards became available at MetroCard machines and word about them spread, sales mounted and part of what some transit officials feared has come to pass. The cards have become a hugely popular way to ride the subway.

Sales have more than tripled over the last two years, to 2.2 million per month by December of last year, from 660,000 per month in January 2000, according to figures from New York City Transit. In fact, demand for the one-day card has been so strong that sales have almost caught up with those of the \$17 weekly card.

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