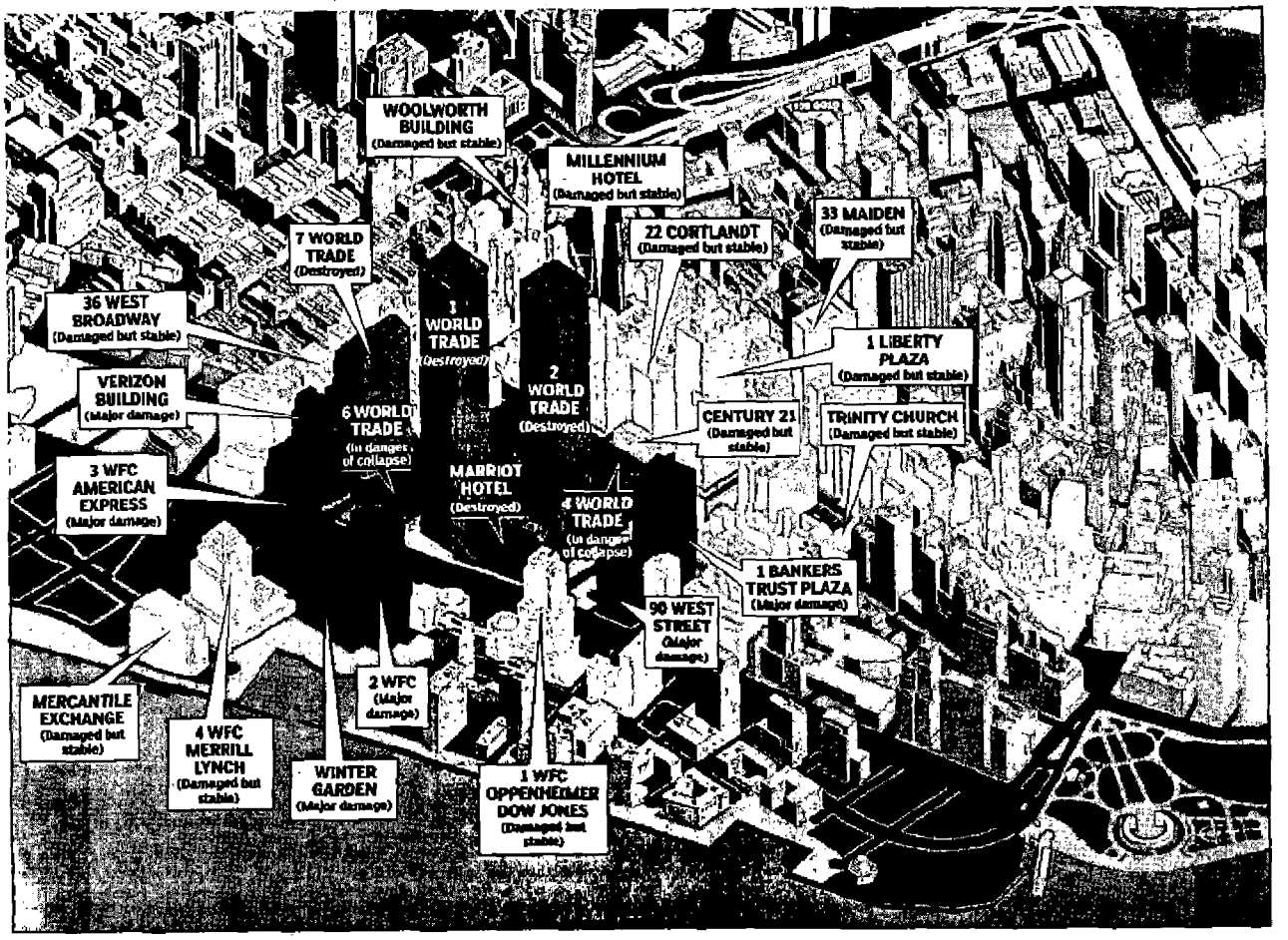
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Sideways fall would have been worse

By DAVID SEIFMAN
City Hall Bureau Chief

The tolls of the dead and missing in the attack on the Twin Towers would have been far higher if the 110-story skyscrapers had toppled sideways instead of collapsing on themselves, officials said yesterday.

"I am amazed they came down the way they did," said Deputy Mayor Joseph Lhota, who toured the devastation from the air on Wednesday.

"It truly was an implosion. It didn't explode. It imploded."

Although numerous buildings surrounding the World Trade Center suffered damage to their facades, a preliminary survey of more than 200 structures found virtually every one structurally intact.

Assistant Buildings Commissioner Sheldon Licht said even five buildings with isolated structural damage could be repaired.

They include the Bankers Trust building, 30 West Broadway and 3 World Financial Center.

Licht said a column seven stories high was ripped from the Bankers Trust building, now occupied by Deutsche Bank.

Still, he said, "It's very stable. No distortion. I'm sure they'll be able to fix it."

Renovations began Thursday to 1 Liberty Plaza, which was rumored for days to be on the verge of falling down.

The Millenium Hotel, another on the casualty watch list, was also found to be structurally sound, although it needs window and facade work.

Licht said most of the buildings facing the Twin Towers were constructed with "curtain walls" on their facades, which absorbed much of the energy expended in the dual collapses.

"These buildings aren't coming down so fast," he said.

But that doesn't mean they'll be ready to re-open immediately.

Extensive cleaning, installing new windows and replacing heating and cooling systems could take months in some of the hardest-hit towers.

Century 21, the discount department store that is a prime downtown draw for tourists and office workers, could be back in business directly opposite the trade center within weeks.

"We were very lucky the way the towers came down," Licht said.

He said fuel from the jetliners that struck the Twin Towers usually burns at 750 degrees Fahrenheit.

"Inside the building, it probably crept up to 2,000 degrees," he went on. "At 1,000 degrees you're tearing away the fireproofing. Essentially what happened is the steel melted. The top floors collapsed with a force 10 times what the structure could take."

Engineers said because the Twin Towers were built on granite and not sand, they fell down without falling over, averting what could have been an even greater catastrophe.

More apts. reopening downtown

By DAVID SEIFMAN
City Hall Bureau Chief

Most — but not all — of the residents evacuated from the southern end of Battery Park City will be allowed back into their apartments over the next five days, officials said yesterday.

Seven buildings are reopening today: Liberty Terrace, Battery Point, Liberty Court, South Cove Plaza, River Watch, Cove Club and The Regatta.

On Monday, the Soundings, Liberty View and Hudson View East will be back on line.

Residents will be admitted to the high-rise at 330 Rector St. on Tuesday.

And Liberty House will be ready for occupancy Wednesday.

But Mayor Giuliani said yesterday that four residential structures in the glittering complex across from the World Trade Center — The Gateway, Hudson Towers, Hudson View and Park Place — are "not yet ready."

Giuliani encouraged residents to return, saying conditions have improved greatly.

"If the reality is they feel they can't live there, I'd ask them to try," Giuliani said.

He suggested residents of those buildings contact the various management offices to determine when they might be allowed back.

Most of those living in the northern end of the development have already returned home.

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