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Green, Ferrer differ on plan for downtown

To disperse center or not?

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Their plans to rebuild New York are more wish lists than detailed blueprints for guiding the city out of its deadliest catastrophe.

Democratic mayoral hopefuls Fernando Ferrer and Mark Green acknowledge that their proposals, drafted during a turbulent campaign, are sketchy.

"The task before us is enormous, and attempting to put forth a detailed plan about exactly how we will rebuild New York at this time is both presumptuous and naive," Ferrer says in "My Agenda to Rebuild New York."

Green said his "Action Plan to Unite and Rebuild New York" is still evolving.

Even with those caveats, the dueling plans have not impressed nonpartisan analysts.

"Both are trying to look in control," said Edmund McMahon, a tax and budgetary expert with the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank. "There's a lot of overreaching, especially in Ferrer's plan."

He and others said the plans overemphasize global objectives and downplay immediate needs.

Both cite the promised influx of emergency federal funds to deal with the World Trade Center devastation.

Green's plan calls for vigorously pursuing discretionary funds from a variety of federal agencies, from the Justice Department to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

McMahon joked that as he reviewed the two rebuilding proposals, he kept looking for the proverbial kitchen sink.

"There must be one in there, and if there is, it must be federally funded," he said.

John Mollenkopf, director of the Center for Urban Research at City University's Graduate Center, was more forgiving.

"*It's a good beginning,*" he said. "[But] there are a lot of discussions to be aired out to make sure this gets done right. We only have one chance at it."

A look at the proposals:

Funding

Ferrer's plan urges reinstituting *the commuter tax, which the* state Legislature repealed in May 1999, draining $360 million a year from city coffers. He would dedicate the revenues to "the needs of commuters in the city."

But while some legislators have begun beating the drums for restoring the commuter tax, it's unlikely. the Legislature would want to reimpose one when the World Trade Center disaster is driving some employers into the beckoning arms of suburban real estate brokers.

Creating an authority

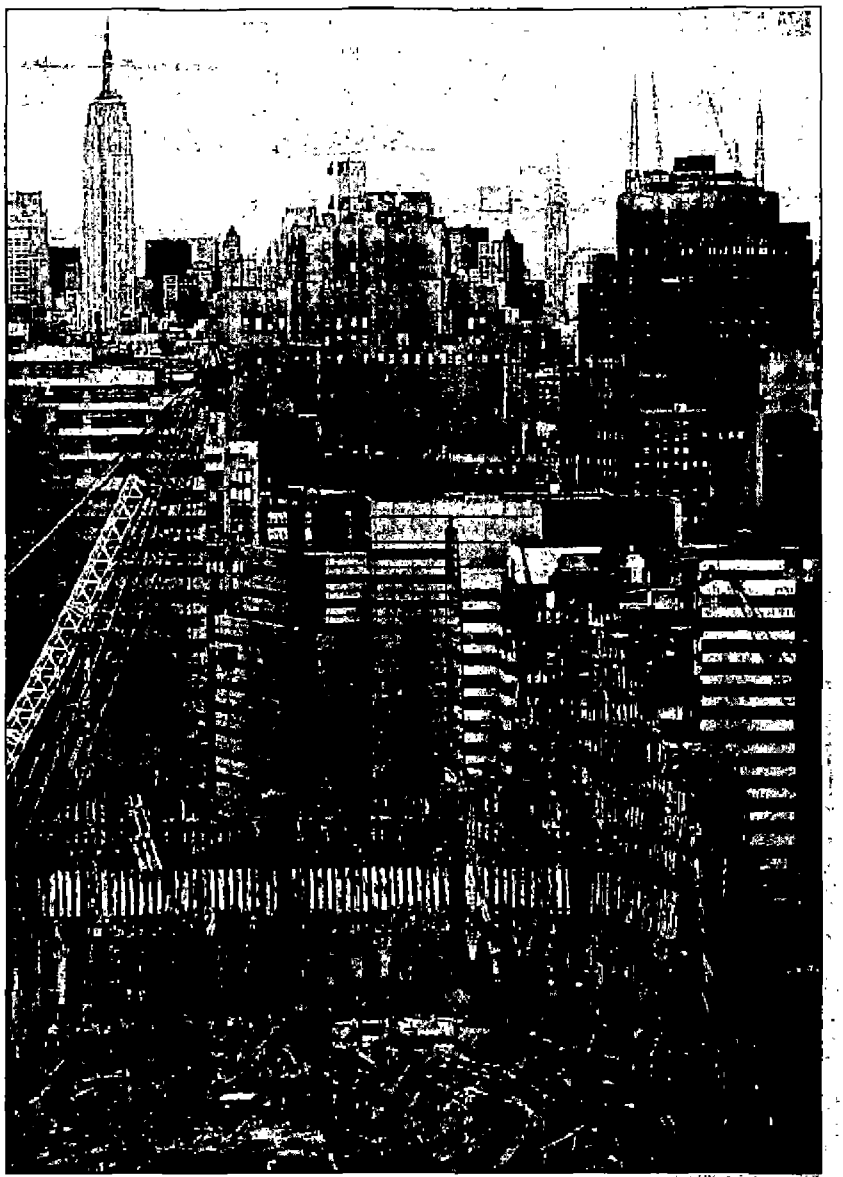
Both urge the creation of a state-city authority or public benefit corporation with "extraordinary powers" to rebuild downtown Manhattan and address other problems caused by the crisis.

Green calls his entity the New York City Emergency Reconstruction Authority. It would have power to acquire private property through eminent domain, to "override time-consuming land use rules" and issue rebuilding contracts.

Ferrer calls his version the New York Rebuilds Corp. It, too, would have the power of eminent domain and the ability to "shorten the time for environmental review."

Mollenkopf was skeptical of creating such superagencies, noting, "If we look at the history of authorities that build things and shortcut procedures, they've been found wanting."

Neither candidate's plan specifies how his new state-city authority would interact with existing authorities with similar powers and functions — the Port Authority, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Battery Park City Authority.



PLANNING FUTURE As the recovery effort continued downtown yesterday, Democratic mayoral candidates Mark Green and Fernando Ferrer outlined their proposals to rebuild the city.

What comes first

Green contends Ferrer's plan urges that commercial development be from lower Manhattan into other boroughs. Rebuilding lower Manhattan must take precedence because the Financial District drives the city's economy, Green says.

Ferrer spokesman John Del Cecato countered that Green was misrepresenting Ferrer's plan, which stresses that "lower Manhattan must be rebuilt to have a critical mass of finance and related industries."

"*It will* take at least a year before you can build on the current [World Trade Center] site," Del Cecato said. "We have to provide additional office space in the meantime."

Green spokesman Joe DePlasco said Ferrer is "backing away" from his decentralization suggestion because downtown business interests are upset.

Security

Green's plan devotes more attention to beefing up security against terrorism. Lending their expertise were two of his backers, former Police Commissioner Bill Bratton and former city Emergency Management Director Jerry Hauer. Green wants greater focus by the NYPD on counter-terrorism and creation of a new post to direct those efforts.

Ferrer's plan assigns the task of formulating security recommendations, among others, to a blue ribbon committee.

Transportation

Ferrer's proposal devotes more attention to transportation issues, including his proposal to reinstitute the commuter tax.

It urges building a rail freight tunnel under New York Harbor to connect Brooklyn with New Jersey — an idea originally proposed in 1920. It would enhance security by cutting down truck traffic. Not mentioned is the tunnel's estimated $2.3 billion cost.

The Ferrer plan similarly urges "renewed attention" to building the Second Ave. subway, another wish-list project that would cost upward of $12 billion.

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