

CREATIVE DOWNTOWN

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN REBUILDING LOWER MANHATTAN

A word cloud of terms related to creative downtown and rebuilding Lower Manhattan. The words are arranged in a roughly rectangular shape, with some words oriented vertically and others horizontally. The words include: MEMORY, REVITALIZE, REFINERY, INNOVATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, PORTAL, RECOVERY, CULTURAL, ASSETS, HUB, DIVERSE, INCUBATE, GORATTE, CREATIVITY, REBUILDING, and REINVENTION.

MEMORY
REVITALIZE
REFINERY
INNOVATION
INFRASTRUCTURE
PORTAL
RECOVERY
CULTURAL
ASSETS
HUB
DIVERSE
INCUBATE
GORATTE
CREATIVITY
REBUILDING
REINVENTION

Creative Downtown is a publication of the New York City Arts Coalition (NYCAC), developed on behalf of the New York Arts Recovery Fund of the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA).

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Map of Lower Manhattan courtesy
New York New Visions

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Norma P. Munn

Chair
New York City Arts Coalition

Theodore S. Berger

Executive Director
New York Foundation for the Arts

The report in your hands is a publication of the New York Arts Recovery Fund, which was formed in the days after September 11 to assist affected artists and arts groups with financial and technical aid and advocacy. The cultural sector and its concerns about rebuilding Lower Manhattan are the focus of this report. We are indebted to The Rockefeller Foundation, whose generous support made this publication possible. The New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) spearheaded the effort and focused on the provision of financial aid and technical assistance. The New York City Arts Coalition (NYCAC) developed the advocacy component.

Our partner and colleague, Liz Thompson, Executive Director of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC), has provided a unique perspective throughout these past months. She and the LMCC have been stalwart leaders in representing the cultural sector, in spite of the devastating losses that the LMCC itself sustained on September 11.

In addition to the 200 cultural organizations located below 14 Street, there were 2,200 artists living in that area on September 11.¹ Nearly 600 artists and almost 200 arts organizations applied for aid from NYFA's New York Arts Recovery Fund from around the city. It is impossible to know how many eligible artists and arts groups chose not to apply, but it is clear that there remain many unmet needs.

Creative Downtown: The Role of Culture in Rebuilding Lower Manhattan was ably and tirelessly managed by Kinshasha Holman Conwill as a consultant to the New York City Arts Coalition. Her historical and in-depth knowledge, most recently employed in

Culture Counts: Strategies for a More Vibrant Cultural Life for New York City,² contributed greatly to this project, and we are deeply grateful.

For their eloquent essays, we thank Liz Thompson, and also Roberto Bedoya, who adeptly facilitated three of the meetings upon which the report is based. Gratitude is owed as well to Gregory Kandel, who led the discussion with cultural sector allies at the Howard Gilman Foundation, and to Holly Sidford and Arlene Shuler of the Foundation, who made its hospitality available to us.

Most significant to *Creative Downtown* were the contributions of artists, arts and culture administrators, civic and business representatives, and concerned citizens who shared their thoughts frankly and generously with us, not only in formal conversations we convened but in e-mail and phone communications as well. This report would not have been possible without them.

¹ A statistic based on the numbers of artists living there who recently applied to the Artists' Fellowship Program of the New York Foundation for the Arts. Over 700 resided below Canal Street.

² See Appendix II

FOREWORD

Kinshasha Holman Conwill

Project Manager and Consultant
to the New York City Arts Coalition

In the wake of the tragedy of September 11, the world's attention is on how we will rebuild Lower Manhattan. But in the midst of the vital discussions with those affected—and especially with survivors and family members—the voice of the artist and the arts and cultural community is perhaps not as clearly heard. With this concern, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) and the New York City Arts Coalition (NYCAC) convened four meetings and a town hall discussion this spring on the role of arts and culture in a revitalized Downtown (see Appendix I for participants).

Dynamic. Entrepreneurial. Risk-taking. Innovative. Pioneering. These are some of the words that participating artists and arts professionals and their supporters used to describe their role and that of cultural organizations—past, present, and future—in the birth, life, and rebirth of Downtown. From historic sites and museums that are a part of the City's earliest heritage, to contemporary artists and groups that act as incubators for today's cutting-edge ideas, New York's cultural sector, they asserted, is integral to defining the identity of Lower Manhattan. The arts and culture are who we are.

What follows here, in *Creative Downtown: The Role of Culture in Rebuilding Lower Manhattan*, are evaluations of the scope of needs and strengths in the cultural community below Canal Street: how its arts groups and artists have been affected by September 11 (Liz Thompson); what assets they retain and what synergies with other sectors of the City they have to build on (Roberto Bedoya); and what concrete actions City and State leaders, along with the private sector, can take on behalf of arts and culture in rebuilding and revitalizing Downtown (Norma Munn). Their essays are based

on the findings of the meetings held by the LMCC and the NYCAC and enriched by the many exchanges and publications about rebuilding Downtown sponsored by civic and government organizations (see Appendix II). The “call-outs” in the margins are selected from the first-person testimonials of meeting participants, especially those of the pioneering visual artists who transformed Lower Manhattan into a vibrant cultural community some 30 years ago.

Creative Downtown is a project of the NYCAC, as part of its advocacy for the New York Arts Recovery Fund. It is intended as a resource for policy makers and government, business, and civic leaders, as they make the critical decisions about a renewed Downtown.

The actions recommended here are urged on the basis of both immediate and long-term needs in the cultural community. For the events of 9/11 have worsened chronic conditions for the arts in New York City—particularly the real estate crisis. Yet rebuilding Downtown also presents a unique opportunity to tackle these and other issues for culture, which is integral to New York’s economic health and quality of life. Norma Munn’s chapter “Proposals for Culture in a Re-Imagined Downtown” offers four overriding recommendations:

- (1) Develop affordable real estate to retain artists and nonprofit arts groups in Lower Manhattan
- (2) Use tax incentives, exemptions, and credits to help solve the real estate crisis for Downtown arts
- (3) Re-energize Downtown by designating it a culture zone, commissioning new art and cultural events and giving arts groups the money-saving opportunities of City agencies

- (4) Market a renewed Lower Manhattan with wider public information about its cultural activities, capitalizing on national and international concern for New York and interest in its arts.

As this report goes to press, several other efforts are continuing, including The Alliance for the Arts' major marketing campaign, "The Arts Rebuild New York," the Arts & Business Council's national media campaign, "Arts for Hope," and the publication by the Municipal Arts Society of *Imagine New York*, based on the public workshops it convened throughout the tri-state region with its civic and cultural partners. These and other projects have enriched this report, as well as the region's larger civic life.

Our recommendations are based on the facts that the arts and culture have played critical roles in New York's life from its beginnings, that its Downtown artists and arts organizations are currently in critical need, and that they have never been more needed—by New York and our nation—as we plan a rebuilt and re-imagined Downtown.

All City-planning deliberations, from today and henceforth, from Lower Manhattan to the tri-state region, need to incorporate the arts and culture. As Norma Munn puts it, "The arts community, as an economic engine and as a collective of creative skills, has earned a seat at this table." At this critical juncture in New York history, culture and those who create and support it stand ready to join with others to renew and rebuild our great city.

RENEWING THE VALUE OF THE ARTS

The morning of September 11, I was having breakfast at Windows on the World with Geoff Wharton, an executive of Silverstein Properties, which holds the lease on the World Trade Center. We were talking about LMCC's relationship with them and about our studio and performance programs. Geoff had to cut the meeting a little short. We walked out of the elevator on the ground floor, and as the doors closed behind us the first plane hit. Miraculously, no flames raced down our elevator shaft as they did on the elevators on the other side of the lobby.

I don't remember walking there, but I got to the foot of the escalator and took it to the World Financial Center and went out through the Winter Garden (I found out later that Geoff had walked from Building 1 to 2 and eventually escaped through 4). I looked up and saw the second plane hit and then my gaze was drawn to the floors on fire where I knew we had artists' studios. My heart dropped to my stomach. I started walking uptown where I was fortunate to meet a friend who had a loft nearby and took me in. I sat in his loft watching the tragedy unfold and tried to find out what was happening to our tech people who were working at our stage at the base of Tower One.

Trisha Brown found me and I spent the night at her house. At first we couldn't find one of the members of our stage crew and we hadn't heard from Michael Richards, who had a studio in our program. I think it was the next day that I learned that he had been lost.

Four days later the staff came to my house. We got an e-mail account and I bought a cell phone, and we started working from my living room. We had lost everything—LMCC artwork, records, and everyone lost personal items. I still keep looking for things and remember, Oh that was in the office. I've only now begun to realize the altered state I was in at the time. But we still worked 12 to 15 hours a day. We felt compelled. What was very important for us, and made it possible, is that so many people reached out in a caring way to make sure we were okay.

Liz Thompson

Executive Director
Lower Manhattan Cultural Council

Over the past 30 years, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) has been bringing artists from throughout New York and the world into Downtown to create, perform, and share their work with the public. For the last five years LMCC's efforts, in partnership with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, were focused

on enlivening the World Trade Center area through visual and performing arts programs. Our free performance series, “Evening Stars,” and our Festival of Creative Communities transformed one of the city’s great public plazas into a world-class center for music and dance, presenting artists such as Celia Cruz, Hugh Masekela, Twyla Tharp Dance, and Ronald K. Brown. Our artists’ residency programs, “World Views” and “Studioscape,” gave studio and exhibition space to 140 artists from 1997 to 2001, bringing local and international artists together with all those who lived and worked Downtown.

Much of what LMCC lost on September 11 can be understood in a physical context; we lost our offices, archives, and performing and studio space. Our most significant loss was Michael Richards, a “World Views” artist who was in the 92nd floor of Tower One when the first plane hit. Many of the losses of the at least 200 cultural organizations located below 14th Street are less easily quantifiable, less tangible, but of equal importance. All of our losses and hardships are wrenching, but LMCC and the larger cultural community have reaffirmed their dedication to the arts and the essential role they play in City life.

Many ordinary citizens became artists in the days following 9/11, creating and finding meaning in the spontaneous memorials that grew all over the city. The great power of a poem, a drawing, or an arrangement of objects became clear to everyone. Downtown’s museums, performance spaces, and community organizations rallied together, creating a place to go and reflect or mourn, and perhaps briefly, to forget and to celebrate life’s continuity. Despite their own troubles, cultural groups collected donations for survivors’ funds and organized fundraising benefits.

The vision and imagination of artists in our community is not a luxury, but a necessity. And now, more than ever, the artist's voice is an essential element in a free, questioning, and self-conscious society. As we seek ways to deal with the events of September 11 and the aftermath, we need to recognize that the current discussion of the place and power of art in our society is neither new nor unique. What is unique are the circumstances surrounding the discussions.

The eyes of this country and the world are on us. The rebuilding of Downtown can facilitate a more universal recognition of the importance of the arts and artists to our society. Through insightful planning and thoughtful rebuilding we can demonstrate that Downtown is not only the center of world finance, it is also a cultural center. We now have the opportunity to show that creativity and risk-taking are equally respected as elements in the "art of the deal" and in the making of art.



LMCC's free performance series, "Evening Stars," at the World Trade Center Plaza. Photo courtesy Lower Manhattan Cultural Council

POST 9/11: TAKING STOCK OF LOWER MANHATTAN CULTURE

Roberto Bedoya

Arts Consultant

Poets, public servants, immigrants, inventors, businessmen and women, millions of citizens—they continue to define Lower Manhattan as a place rich with possibilities, and with a history of belief in them. Against this background the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) and the New York City Arts Coalition (NYCAC) convened four meetings and a town hall discussion this spring regarding the role of arts and culture in the rebuilding of Downtown New York. This project is part of the advocacy effort of the NYCAC as a partner in the New York Arts Recovery Fund.¹

The goal of each meeting was to tap the wisdom of key cultural leaders and their allies in the broader community to generate both guiding principles and concrete ideas for the rebuilding and renewal of Downtown New York. Our conversations did not focus on the memorial, beyond affirming the overwhelming need for it. Rather, the core of each discussion was both philosophical and concrete: what assets and skills do members of the cultural community bring to the table as reconstruction proceeds? What are the roles of artists, cultural workers, and cultural organizations in a rebuilt and re-imagined Downtown?

This report takes no position on the nature of the memorial, or on the appropriateness of any one group or facility as central to rebuilding on the World Trade Center site. Instead, this report focuses on the whole of Lower Manhattan—not only below Canal Street, but also below 14th Street—and its redevelopment as a dynamic community. Our focus is on the larger questions of how culture and the arts should be supported Downtown and better integrated into its fabric.

Our meetings concerned three interdependent areas of culture: The

¹ See Appendix I for participants in the meetings.

**“A million people — manners free and superb — open voices —
hospitality — the most courageous and friendly young men!
City of hurried and sparkling waters! City of spires and masts!
City nested in bays! My city!”**

— Walt Whitman, 1860

assets of the cultural sector; its synergies with other sectors of the city; and its role in long-term policies fostering citywide cultural, financial, and social capital.

THE ASSETS OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR

How do we measure the assets of the cultural sector? How do we demonstrate art’s impact on society? Audience figures, the number of arts organizations in an area, and other significant statistical data are available from the many arts organizations that serve New York City. Yet that is just part of the picture. Following September 11, the value of the cultural sector was demonstrated repeatedly as the dialogue on cultural assets traveled from the facts and figures to the stories of transformation that illuminated the psychological and spiritual impact of the arts.

It would be a serious mistake to assume that the psychic wounds of 9/11 will be healed in a few more months. Those who live and work Downtown will continue to need, in countless ways, the comfort, laughter, and insight that the arts provide. If for no other reason than this, rebuilding Downtown must encompass the arts in expanded forms.

“Culture is what makes a neighborhood civilized,” said a participant in one of the meetings. Culture is “central to community development.” An understanding of community “cannot be reduced to buildings,” said another participant. “You need offices, residences, and a third component—artists and artistic activity. This gives a dimension that adds to the quality of life. Culture is what makes a neighborhood civilized.”

“The arts remind us of our courage and our vision.”

— Town Hall Meeting Participant

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Even more philosophically at this moment of renewal, many discussed America’s ideals of liberty and freedom and the qualities of courage and leadership so important to our cultural heritage and democratic practices. This cultural heritage is an asset of Lower Manhattan, one that needs to be asserted in rebuilding efforts. The free market economy, the freedom of democracy that immigrants associated with Ellis Island and Lower Manhattan, and the freedom of imagination that the creative community has explored in the work/living spaces of Downtown—all are a testament to the most basic tenets of this country. Here is one example where “the past is future.”

At the same time, a diminishing asset of the cultural sector is affordable living/work space Downtown. Before 9/11 the changing real estate economics of Downtown had made it too expensive for emerging artists to reside in the area, and a challenge for others to remain in the neighborhood they had originally brought back to life. The arts community has always revitalized neighborhoods in New York: Soho, the East Village, and Tribeca have seen the positive results of their presence over the last 30 years. As rebuilding takes place Downtown, artists hope that their place in it can be assured, and that the ability of the arts to enliven neighborhoods—and respond to their diversity—can be affirmed and sustained.

SYNERGIES BETWEEN CULTURE AND OTHER SECTORS

In addition to the humanitarian impact that culture has on our lives, the cultural sector was—and is—an engine that feeds the economic development of Lower Manhattan. Artists are inventors and risk-takers, and they have much in common with small business people, start-up company leaders, and venture capitalists. “Downtown is a

“The circumstances that allowed for the development of a creative downtown don’t exist anymore. If anything is to be revisited, it is the spirit that formed that moment in time. The essence of the engine of revitalizing downtown is spiritual. The essence of this spirit is freedom.”

— Ming Fay, Sculptor

community of creativity,” said a participant in one of our focus group meetings. As a “manufacturer of culture,” the arts community of Downtown has a special opportunity today to enhance its connections to its peers—the business world, academic institutions, and other workers in the area. Participants in the meetings agreed: Rebuilding will be most successful both economically and socially if it fosters this connection.

Seen more futuristically, Downtown has the opportunity to learn from Times Square, a “networked node” where entertainment, media, and information economies have come together to produce a site alive 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Lower Manhattan, too, can become a 24/7 community. The synergies between transportation, financial, and cultural sectors can produce another networked node, which will enhance both commerce and culture.

Urbanists have confirmed that a “Creative City” of 24/7 vitality is actualized when culture takes a leading role in rebuilding efforts. Participants spoke of the dynamic ways in which artists, arts organizations, and audiences can intersect and provide means of dialogue between social groups, channels for the self-expression of citizens, and ways to imagine the future. These are forms of social cohesion necessary for a vibrant urban life.

“Rebuilding and renewal is not one idea,” said a participant. She was referring to the multiple efforts needed to revitalize the public life of Lower Manhattan. The opportunity is here to work in new kinds of partnerships with other sectors, to reestablish Downtown as a center not only for the coordination of finances but also for the coordination of New York’s cultural and nonprofit sectors.

“Artists as activists enlivened Chinatown and made it a national focus for Asian American art.”

— Bob Lee, Curator

Participants also identified the importance of attracting and keeping a labor pool of “knowledge workers” Downtown. These are the employees needed for innovative industries such as new media technologies and research and development facilities and for arts organizations themselves. For them a 24/7 community is more than a bonus. To build and retain this talented population requires a lively and diversified environment. One with both penthouses and affordable houses, larger museums and incubator art centers, as well as corner groceries, multi-ethnic restaurants, and all-night cafés and clubs. Downtown once had—and needs to have again—that attractive blend of many economies, cultures, and services.

At the heart of any 24/7 community—and any successful society—is an acknowledgment of our mutual need for each other. An important aspect of Lower Manhattan was its smorgasbord of small businesses, especially such artist-centered enterprises as art supply stores, photo labs, and music shops. Both Chinatown and the Lower East Side demonstrate that the dynamic intersection between commerce and the cultural community typified them before 9/11. In the future, neither artists nor other self-employed workers in related professions will be able to function successfully if those business people are not sustained during the rebuilding effort.

LONG-TERM POLICIES FOR DEVELOPING CITYWIDE CULTURAL, FINANCIAL, AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

The passionate discussions in our meetings of how to renew Downtown are themselves an affirmation of the democratic process. All agreed that open discussion and debate, as complex and contentious as they may be, affirm a democracy that is alive. The civic

“In the late 70’s artist-activists were organizing to do homesteading, turning abandoned buildings into live/work space. Not only Downtown, but also in other areas like Spanish Harlem. Artists start things that transform neighborhoods.”

— Nitza Tufino, Painter

challenge of rebuilding and renewal is how to create balanced strategies to integrate the social, economic, and cultural development of Lower Manhattan and how to devise ways to measure success fairly.

All our participants celebrated the potential of this moment for innovative urban planning and advanced thinking about civic life. The desire seems universal to envision urban experience in new dynamic ways and forms, thanks to the wide press coverage of ideas from politicians, cultural critics, and futurists. Participants spoke of the importance of creating models of innovation that can be used by other New Yorkers who are rebuilding their neighborhoods. Downtown has the potential to be a model for the rest of New York, and our nation’s cities.

Once the model is created, how can its effectiveness be measured? What are the indicators of renewal? Do they center on an Olympic village of the arts, a new large museum, several community arts facilities, an amplified presence of what was once in the area, or other projects?

The democratic process is essential for rebuilding Downtown. But whatever its outcome, our participants concurred that the arts must be fully represented in that process. The arts are central to a revitalized Lower Manhattan. For they have demonstrated that they bring order and solace to our lives in times of crisis; reflect our communities and foster community development; function as economic engines, like many other small businesses; and epitomize the risk-taking, freedom, and imagination of Lower Manhattan, and New York as a whole.

PROPOSALS FOR CULTURE IN A RE-IMAGINED DOWNTOWN

Norma P. Munn

Chair
New York City Arts Coalition

Artists and arts groups are unanimous in believing that rebuilding Downtown presents an opportunity for re-imagining and re-inventing. The good will of the past few months offers a unique moment. This is one of the messages from the focus groups and town hall meeting convened this spring by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) and the New York City Arts Coalition (NYCAC). Many may see the civic processes associated with rebuilding as only talk. But those in the arts see the civic dialogue as an important outcome of the tragedy and urge us to honor the memory of September 11 by truly listening to one another. Equally important, artists and those working in the cultural sector urge that all involved make room for the new ideas that have arisen from this ferment.

Those in the arts community see themselves as risk-takers, and believe that they share this trait with other professionals working and living Downtown. They also share a sense of urgency; we must not let this opportunity slip away. It must not be dragged down by bureaucracy and infighting.

For those in the arts, Lower Manhattan once represented great diversity. This is the oldest part of the City; and it was for the better part of two centuries genuinely a port, with all its activity, variety, and vitality. The past offers us some lessons for today, and one of them is that we need to make room again for that energy and diversity if we are to re-create a viable, thriving Lower Manhattan.

The arts and cultural industry is a growth sector of the City's economy. Our purchasing power within the City is enormous, and our contribution to the global reputation and attraction of the City as a place to live, work, and visit is unmatched. Lower Manhattan was

“Thirty years ago artists below Canal St. literally ‘lived in the cracks’ of abandoned lofts and between paper, rag, and fabric wholesalers. We practiced our art in a spirit of breaking down the gates of high art. Today the challenge is to nurture and sustain a physical and psychic space for subcultural activity.”

— Yvonne Rainer, Filmmaker, Choreographer

once the center of a much larger and more vibrant arts scene. Bringing back that energy and excitement will reinvigorate Downtown.

Cultural groups and artists in Lower Manhattan are insistent that the renewal process not ignore what is already in place. They believe the surviving infrastructure and the existing human capital should be respected and strengthened. In the words of one artist, the process should “make visible what already exists.”

There is also great concern among artists that the renewal of Lower Manhattan is creating pressure to increase rents. For the thousands of artists who have lived in this area for decades, anxiety about September 11 is giving way to anxiety about being forced out of the area by rising living costs.

Similar concerns are being heard among organizations that must renew their leases or find new space. Apparently some property owners are convinced that the renewal of Lower Manhattan will permit greater profits, and there are anecdotal reports that only short-term leases are being offered and that property is being held off the market altogether.

In short, real estate concerns are slowly beginning to dominate almost every discussion about Downtown’s recovery and renewal. This is not surprising since it has been evident for some time that real estate costs are slowly forcing artists out of the City, preventing younger artists from moving here, and eroding even minimal standards of stability for small and mid-sized nonprofit arts organizations.

“It is important to see the arts community as part of the entrepreneurial community.”

— Conversation Participant

Will Lower Manhattan keep its artists and mid-sized and smaller arts groups, or will it become “Midtown South”? How the City, State, and real estate industry address the vexing problem of assisting moderate- and low-income artists and nonprofit arts groups in the area will determine the answer to that question. New York City will not remain a living cultural center, or a destination for creative people, if they cannot afford to live here, or find work spaces at a realistic cost. Artists generally work two jobs—one for cash income on which to live and one in which they create their work. If they must commute two to three hours daily, there is no time left for producing their art. They must, and will, leave New York, taking their creative capital with them.

Texas has oil in the ground; New York City has artists. They contribute daily to the economy of the City, and they are a primary source of long-term wealth for the City. Much of what exists in the studios of painters, on the desks of writers and playwrights, in the rehearsal spaces of choreographers, in the cutting rooms of filmmakers is our future wealth. Somewhere in this City today, there is a future Jackson Pollock, a new Martha Graham, a young Louis Armstrong. For them, finding affordable housing and work space is not simply an issue because they are moderate and low income people. It is also an issue of whether New York City has the will to protect and nurture its arts and cultural industry.

The arts are already a successful part of the City, albeit a financially fragile one. The reputation of New York City’s artists and arts groups is unparalleled nationally and internationally. We are comparable to blue-chip stocks, as well as start-up businesses; we are also mid-sized and mega-size corporations. The artists in this City are

“We were pioneers not only of real estate development Downtown but also of multiculturalism. Part of the re-envisioning of the World Trade Center is that it be a hub of diversity.”

— Benny Andrews, Painter

cutting-edge innovators, as well as names known throughout the world. This economic sector possesses every characteristic that a sophisticated investor would look for in a diversified portfolio, including an extraordinary abundance of human capital of great talent, energy, and high education. We are an investor’s dream.

Much has been written about the benefits of developing Lower Manhattan as a center for bio-tech companies. The merit of capitalizing on the talent of the academic and medical professions in the City seems obvious, and both government and business readily accept the argument for designating space, subsidizing developmental aspects of the bio-tech industry, and providing it with tax breaks.

We urge those involved in the revitalization of Lower Manhattan to view the arts and cultural sector in the same economic terms. We believe that the public sector’s current “nickel and dime” approach to investing in the arts is a poor model and should not be emulated in Lower Manhattan. A more comprehensive approach is needed if the renewal of Lower Manhattan is to include arts and culture effectively and if we are to take steps toward eliminating the constant state of financial fragility. The arts and cultural sector needs stability, and like all business enterprises, sufficient capital to plan, retain good employees, and utilize technology for increased productivity.

Ultimately, however, philosophical ideas and social concepts must move to concrete proposals. What follows are recommendations from a number of sources, among them the participants in our four group meetings and our town hall discussion, as well as the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York, the Arts Advisory Committee to the City Council Select Committee, and the Steering Committee of the New

“Be as visionary and as imaginative as De Witt Clinton.”

— Town Hall Meeting Participant

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York City Arts Coalition. Some proposals tackle urgent current needs; others respond to needs that have been identified in the arts and cultural sector for many years. All the recommendations are pertinent to Manhattan below Canal Street, but they apply as well to the areas south of Houston and of 14th Street, which deserve attention in any long-range planning.

DEVELOP AFFORDABLE REAL ESTATE

Simply put, neither artists nor most nonprofit arts and cultural groups can remain in any area of the City unless adequate, moderately priced space is available in which to work and live. Only large cultural institutions, with their own buildings (many of which are heavily subsidized by City funds), are viable unless this issue is faced.

- 1. Establish an Arts and Cultural Land Trust**, to assist artists and nonprofit arts groups in purchasing, long-term leasing, renovating, and maintaining property in Lower Manhattan.

One of the models for this is the national nonprofit Trust for Public Land, which works closely with property owners and government to conserve land to improve the quality of life and to protect natural and historic resources for future generations.

- 2. Set aside ten percent of Downtown rebuilding monies as a real estate superfund for the Arts and Cultural Land Trust.**
- 3. Restore incubator spaces and create new ones** in both existing and projected buildings, to serve the visual and performing arts.

“The changing world for artists Downtown at times produces a despair that is hard to get around. There was a great sense of community at the beginning. Now the challenge is to support the arts organizations here, secure studios, and protect the Loft Law.”

— Al Loving, Painter

Incubator spaces provide the opportunity for developing studio work, and they can be used for preview audiences. Incubator spaces offer options to small arts groups to share office space economically in their early years. These kinds of spaces are a vital part of the arts ecology.

- 4. Construct affordable performance spaces of varying sizes** (99-300 seats for theater, and up to 800-900 seats for dance), and designate rehearsal and office spaces in all new buildings.

The City’s arts infrastructure is one of its great assets, and it need not be identified exclusively with large institutions and a few cultural centers.

- 5. Develop a media arts building** for the various media groups and media art centers that have emerged within the City over the past 25 years.

Many of these groups are now scattered throughout Lower Manhattan. Such a facility would provide screening rooms, an insert stage for shooting video, post-production facilities, recording studios, and technical support for filmmakers, as well as spaces for classes, lectures, and teleconferencing. Equipment such as high-definition cameras would be available for rent. For-profit customers would include the small and mid-sized businesses in the area that cannot afford to build their own production studios or buy equipment. Office spaces would also be rented to freelance producers and writers, at fees commensurate with income. As a nexus for nonprofit and for-profit media groups, the building could become a services exchange center.

“There are hidden victims of 9/11. One of the after-effects is that landlords are moving to kick people out. The Loft Law was seriously eroded before, but now it is being gutted.”

— Jerry Kearns, Painter

6. Issue “arts bonds” targeted for the capital needs of arts and cultural groups in Lower Manhattan.

The City’s capital budget is under enormous strain and will continue to be greatly reduced over the next few years. Arts and cultural groups will have to look for new solutions to their capital needs. State legislation created the Trust for Cultural Resources, which issues low interest rate 30-35 year bonds, but only for construction projects and capital purchases of \$20 million or more. The New York City Industrial Development Agency provides an option for nonprofits to use low-cost double or triple tax-exempt bonds to acquire land or building, construct or renovate buildings, and to purchase machinery or equipment. Bond purchasers want to see a source of revenue that is reliable so they can be assured that the interest will be paid. The nonprofit arts sector earns 40-53% of its income, which in some instances can be dedicated to repay bond holders. Carrying debt service for bonds would be a new challenge, but for some groups it is a viable alternative to delaying or continuing to do without essential capital.

7. Eliminate the sunset provisions of the current Loft Law.

Artists living in Downtown are increasingly under pressure to relocate. Over the past two decades many have done so. A significant reason for that relocation is the constant battle over retaining sufficient space in which to work, i.e., lofts. Property owners deserve adequate compensation for their property; the city needs its artists. A long-term, fair solution has to be found, and ending the fight every two to three years during the State’s

“The rebuilding of cultural institutions is important, but so is the rebuilding of the daily lives of artists. We need to give young artists a place to be in the City.”

— Elizabeth Murray, Painter

budget negotiations over the Loft Law is a start.

PROVIDE TAX INCENTIVES

What is the biggest difference between Williamsburg, Virginia, and Williamsburg, New York? Artists live here. To keep them here—and bring their energy and creativity back to Lower Manhattan—we need more affordable spaces for exhibition, performance, work, and living. The economic engine that the arts represent deserves the oil of tax breaks.

- 1. Provide tax incentives to Downtown landlords** who rent at below-market rates to nonprofit arts and cultural groups.
- 2. Offer tax incentives to Downtown developers** who construct and for extended periods set aside spaces for rehearsal, performance, exhibition, and work/living for artists, arts groups, and other cultural institutions.
- 3. Extend the current real-estate tax exemption to nonprofit arts and cultural groups** when they rent space in commercial buildings. Allow them to carry that tax exemption with them if they relocate.
- 4. Expand the current \$2,400 per-employee federal tax credits to nonprofit arts and cultural groups** and allow them to sell those tax credits to commercial businesses anywhere in the City.

These credits are now being provided for commercial businesses through 2003 in Lower Manhattan as part of the Liberty Zone

“We need more environments linked to pleasurable experiences.”

— Town Hall Meeting Participant

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federal relief program for the City. Nonprofits were not included in the legislation simply because they do not pay corporate taxes. A precedent for “selling” tax credits exists among manufacturers who are allowed to sell their excess tax credits to other manufacturers for decreasing pollution. Allowing nonprofits in Lower Manhattan to use tax credits in a similar manner would bring them income and would spread tax credits to other parts of the city that have been affected by September 11, but cannot directly benefit from the various programs for Lower Manhattan. A further benefit is that much of this kind of “trading” would probably be with small and mid-sized firms since these firms are often the vendors used by nonprofit groups.

DESIGNATE DOWNTOWN AS A CULTURE ZONE

Outdoor performances, new public art, and outdoor pavilions for exhibitions and events can renew Lower Manhattan’s cultural life, for residents, working people, and tourists alike. Even as we await the realization of long-term projects, one-time, special events and new green spaces can energize the area. The over one thousand visitors who come daily in sorrow or curiosity to the WTC site may leave with the needed message that the Big Apple has not lost its shine.

- 1. Enhance Lower Manhattan by supporting outdoor performances, festivals, and the establishment of “mini-greenplaces” combining the concepts of arts and parks.**

Some of these projects will be temporary, especially near the WTC site, as the rebuilding will take years. Additional art and green spaces can do much to alleviate the stress residents and

“Some of those here I’d call ‘living treasures.’ There should be some way to acknowledge the individuals who were pioneering spirits Downtown.”

— Michele Oka Doner, Sculptor

workers will experience throughout that time.

- 2. Commission new art for Lower Manhattan as part of a newly created “Arts Corridor”** specifically for public enjoyment throughout the area.

Include the many historical sites that are part of Lower Manhattan in the designation and promotion of this Arts Corridor. From Federal Hall, Fraunces Tavern, the Tweed Court House, and the African Burial Ground to the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Lower Manhattan is a remarkable blend of the old and new. These sites range in date from pre-Revolutionary days to the present. Weaving them together with new and changing art on a marked route will enrich visitors’ and residents’ experiences of Downtown.

- 3. Offer joint purchasing options for common products and services** to nonprofit arts groups, utilizing the existing purchasing processes of the City.
- 4. Extend lower-cost energy opportunities** to nonprofit arts groups through the New York Power Authority.

MARKET A RENEWED LOWER MANHATTAN

The cultural wealth that exists Downtown and the potential for creating more will lie fallow unless marketing efforts are enhanced. Few arts and cultural groups have sufficient resources for this effort. These marketing efforts must be directed at New Yorkers, in addition to tourists. Much of the improved attendance at our theatres and

“Culture builds community.”

— Town Hall Meeting Participant

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museums has come from those who live here. A City-led effort to call attention to all of the Downtown arts and cultural groups is needed.

- 1. Install easy-to-use kiosks throughout the area with current cultural information** about Downtown arts and cultural events.

These kiosks could provide corporations with exclusive “naming opportunities” or be an attractive spot to share advertising.

- 2. Place cultural maps about Lower Manhattan on all the City’s subways and buses.**

These maps would locate the public places operated in the area by cultural and arts groups, as well as historic landmarks and routes of suggested walking tours.

- 3. Create joint advertising campaigns** among Lower Manhattan cultural groups and between these groups and organizations elsewhere in the City.

For example, promote a one-day tour between Harlem and Lower Manhattan and tie-ins between the exciting cultural facilities in Flushing, Queens, and Lower Manhattan groups.

THE GROUND ZERO MEMORIAL

Precisely what will best honor those who died on September 11 is a subject for continued discussion, and we share the view that time must be allowed for this aspect of rebuilding and for the families of

“It’s a radical thought to designate Downtown for artists’ housing, but we did the groundwork. Now we have to move out. The only place left is the river.”

— Vincent Smith, Painter

those who died to become fully involved. We also agree with those who say the memorial is for those looking back a century from now—so they can understand and respect the lives lost.

A number of artists and cultural workers lost lives and property—in some case, a career’s work. Many continue to live and produce their art Downtown, and they will be directly affected by all rebuilding at Ground Zero. We hope that in time an appropriate way will be found to include the creativity of Downtown artists in defining the memorial.

Should rebuilding on the site include construction of a separate cultural facility? The arts community trusts that the discussion among all parties, in which it will share, will determine whether this is desirable and sustainable. Suitable new facilities could add much to the cultural infrastructure of Lower Manhattan, and we look forward to continued discussion and debate on this possibility.

The World Monuments Fund calls Lower Manhattan “arguably one of the most important cultural landscapes in the United States,” referring to its extraordinary blend of Colonial and 19th century historic landmarks and streetscapes and its contemporary history of vanguard artistic ferment.¹ However Downtown is developed in the next decade, arts and culture deserve to be participants in this integrated political and economic process. It is important to assure representation of arts groups and artists in all city-planning deliberations, from Lower Manhattan to the tri-state region. The arts community, as an economic engine and as a collective of creative skills, has earned a seat at this table.

¹ See the Fund's Website, <http://wmf.org/index.html>, "The 100 Most Endangered Sites."

APPENDIX I

PARTICIPANTS IN SPRING 2002 MEETINGS CONVENED BY LMCC, NYCAC, AND NYFA

Conversations at the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA)

February 21, 2002

Amy Chin, Chinese Folk Dance Company/New York Chinese Cultural Center
Kevin Cunningham, Three-Legged Dog
Jane Delgado, Abrons Art Center, Henry Street Settlement
Linda Herring, TriBeCa Performing Arts Center
Peter Neill, South Street Seaport Museum
Anne Pasternak, Creative Time

March 7, 2002

Theodore S. Berger, New York Foundation for the Arts
Holly Block, Art in General
Randall Bourscheidt, Alliance for the Arts
Woodie King Jr., New Federal Theater
Norma Munn, New York City Arts Coalition
Voza Rivers, Harlem Arts Alliance
Liz Thompson, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council
Laura Jean Watters, Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island

May 6, 2002

Benny Andrews
Michele Oka Doner
Ming Fay
Jerry Kearns
Robert Lee
Alvin Loving
Elizabeth Murray
Yvonne Rainer
Vincent Smith
Nitza Tufino

Conversation at the Howard Gilman Foundation

March 14, 2002

Rick Bell, AIA New York/New York New Visions

Lisa Frigand, Con Ed

Agnes Gund, Museum of Modern Art

Guillermo Linares, Deputy Public Advocate

Janet Rodriguez, JP Morgan Chase

Judith Rubin, Playwrights Horizons

Brendan Sexton, Durst Organization

Paul Wolf, Denham Wolf Realty

Town Hall Meeting at the Museum of the American Indian

April 2, 2002

Listening Panel:

Paul Elston, Chair, Civic Amenities Committee, Civic Alliance

John Haworth, Museum of the American Indian

Norma P. Munn, New York City Arts Coalition

Richard Schwartz, Chairman, New York State Council on the Arts

Liz Thompson, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council

Madelyn Wils, Chair, Community Board 1

APPENDIX II

AN ANNOTATED, SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York. *Recommendations for the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan*. Memorandum to Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, Subcommittee on Arts, Culture, Education and Tourism. March 11, 2002.

This memorandum is based on comments by a focus group of artistic, managing and development directors of theatres below 14th Street, convened by the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York (A.R.T./New York). It presents concrete recommendations regarding performance space, tax and financial incentives, and promotion and marketing. *Creative Downtown* endorses and incorporates its findings.

Civic Alliance. *Planning Framework: A Draft Report of the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York*. New York, 2002.

The report describes the activities and preliminary recommendations of the Civic Alliance, convened by the Regional Plan Association in partnership with New York University, New School University, and the Pratt Institute. It includes the results of a meeting of more than 600 citizens, civic leaders, and public officials convened at the South Street Seaport in February 2002.

Dutch, Suri, and Neil Kleiman. *Going on with the Show: Arts & Culture in New York City After Sept. 11*. New York: Center for an Urban Future, 2001.

This report delineates the impact of the events of September 11 on the cultural sector. It notes that, "Lost amidst predictions of mass joblessness, budget deficits and overall economic turmoil has been the plight of arts and culture organizations, which have seen their revenue sources shrivel." The authors analyze tourism and attendance data, cite the results of interviews with cultural leaders, chronicle initial efforts to address the crisis, and make recommendations for immediate action.

Heritage Preservation. *Cataclysm and Challenge: Impact of September 11, 2001, on Our Nation's Cultural Heritage*. Washington, D.C., 2002.

This report was prepared by the Heritage Emergency National Task Force to assess the impact of the events of September 11 on cultural and historic resources in Lower Manhattan and the Pentagon. It includes an overview of cultural property in and around the World Trade Center before the attacks, describes the resources destroyed or damaged, analyzes a survey of Lower Manhattan collecting institutions, and makes recommendations for addressing future emergencies.

New York Foundation for the Arts. *Culture Counts: Strategies for a More Vibrant Cultural Life for New York City*. New York, 2001.

This is a report of the New York Foundation for the Arts' special project, "A Cultural Blueprint for New York City," an independent, non-partisan, citywide initiative of cultural and civic leaders concerned with supporting and sustaining New York City's cultural life. The report is based on a year of research and includes the first-ever public survey of New Yorkers' participation in arts and culture and strategies for city leaders.

New York New Visions. *Principles for the Rebuilding of Lower Manhattan*. New York, 2002.

This document was prepared for the leaders charged with the task of rebuilding and the individuals and community groups who "share an intense interest in Lower Manhattan's future." New York New Visions is a pro-bono coalition of architecture, engineering, planning and design organizations.

Sorkin, Michael, and Sharon Zukin, eds. *After the World Trade Center: Rethinking New York City*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

The editors and contributors reflect on New York's preeminent role as a financial, architectural, and cultural capital, while also stressing the "fault lines" of its recent growth and calling for a New York "where voices from all the city's communities count."

The New York City Arts Coalition is a sixteen-year-old citywide membership network of arts professionals and arts supporters organized for education, advocacy and public policy development in the non-profit arts field that works to promote a broader awareness of the role of the arts in the life of the city.

New York City Arts Coalition Steering Committee

Andrew Ackerman, Children’s Museum of Manhattan

Ted Berger, New York Foundation for the Arts

Amy Schwartzman Brightbill, New York Arts Recovery Fund

Holly Block, ART in General

Lillian Cho, Asian American Arts Alliance

Jane Delgado, Abrons Art Center, Henry Street Settlement

Jenny Dixon, Bronx Museum of the Arts

Alan Friedman, New York Hall of Science

Kathy Giaimo, Thalia Spanish Theatre

Randy Hall, Arts Education Roundtable

Hoong Yee Lee Krakauer, Queens Council on the Arts

Donna Walker-Kuhne, The Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival

Susana Leval, El Museo del Barrio

Virginia Louloudes, Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York

Cynthia Mayeda, Brooklyn Museum of Art

Norma P. Munn, Artists Community Federal Credit Union

Anne Pasternak, Creative Time

Nanette Rainone, Consultant to Non-Profits

Bill Scribner, Bronx Arts Ensemble

Isaiah Sheffer, Symphony Space

Linda Shelton, The Joyce Theatre Foundation

Gary Steuer, Arts & Business Council

Ivan Sygoda, Pentacle

Steve Tennen, ArtsConnection

Laura Jean Watters, Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island

Robert Yesselman, Dance/NYC

Lynda Zimmerman, Creative Arts Team

The New York Arts Recovery Fund administered by The New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), is a collaborative, comprehensive effort of key New York service organizations to address immediate, short-term, and long-term challenges specifically facing New York's artists and arts organizations most affected by the September 11 tragedy. The partners and steering committee for the Fund include The New York Foundation for the Arts, the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York (ART/NY), New York City Arts Coalition, Nonprofit Finance Fund, Arts & Business Council, Asian American Arts Alliance, Association of Hispanic Arts, and Harlem Arts Alliance.

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