

Time to get rid of the LMDC

by DAVID DYSSEGAARD KALLICK

Lou Tomson, who made his name as a top aide in Gov. Pataki's first term, is stepping down as president of the Lower Manhattan Development Corp. This only reinforces the notion that the LMDC's role has been mainly about politics, not rebuilding.

The time has come for the corporation to step aside and put the control where it belongs: with the elected government of New York City.

LMDC was conceived by Pataki and Mayor Rudy Giuliani after 9/11 as a game of keep away from Mark Green, the mayoral candidate then leading in the polls. Now that the political show is over, the right place for city planning to be is in city government.

Last month, Mayor Bloomberg offered his "Vision for Lower Manhattan" that laid out the first comprehensive look by an elected official at what the area has been, and could be, for the city.

The plan has great strengths. It begins to view lower Manhattan in relation to the needs of all New York communities. But it should be expanded to include a greater focus on jobs, especially for low- and moderate-income workers. There is still \$1.3 billion that was designated by Washington for economic development. With the unemployment rate at an alarming 8.4%, it should be put to use now generating jobs for out-of-work New Yorkers.

The mayor's vision also expands housing in lower Manhattan, but he needs to make a more explicit guarantee that the area not just be rebuilt for the rich. And the city needs to establish an overarching transportation plan, then get some projects in the pipeline that can improve the city and put people to work today.

The LMDC did take a helpful step by soliciting the nine architectural plans now on view at the Winter Garden. Particularly good for the city would be those that allow for gradual development of the World Trade Center site according to market demand and civic opportunities. But the LMDC doesn't have the authority or the resources to carry out these or any other plans.

The city should be the initiator of master plans for lower Manhattan. The development should adhere to city building codes and go through the normal city review process, with City Council oversight and input from the City Planning Commission and other relevant agencies.

Throughout the rebuilding process, there's been a lot of talk about transparency without a matching reality. The time has come for the city to negotiate directly with the Port Authority for ownership of the Trade Center site.

City government is accountable to the voters who will be most affected by the rebuilding of lower Manhattan. So put it in charge. What better way to reaffirm our commitment to democracy in the face of terrorism?

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