

11/26/03

To the Memorial Competition Jury

The Jury Statement of the World Trade Center Competition stated that “While the eight final designs we have chosen all address the guidelines of the memorial competition, we recognize that they are still in development, and that even the final version of the winning design will require additional refinements.”

We feel, however, that the eight designs taken as a whole represent only one narrow interpretation of the guidelines, and urge the Jury to review the designs that it has received and its analysis.

The overwhelming sense of the design community participating in the New York New Visions Memorial / Design Review Committee and its 11/24/03 open meeting is that the memorial plans presented to the public last week are lacking in emotion and variety. They are focused upon the tragic losses of the individuals but do not express the import of the loss of the World Trade Center to New Yorkers, Americans, and the world. None of the memorial designs have achieved the level of artistic significance expected, nor have they, as yet, successfully addressed the complex challenge of integrating with the Libeskind site plan or the surrounding neighborhood context. The scale of the enclosed and open spaces is large and undifferentiated and may prove to be impractical or unmanageable, as well as barren or lacking in security. The practical questions of pedestrian access are not adequately addressed. The horticultural aspects are frequently uninformed. We have serious concerns regarding the maintenance and long term viability of some of the technologies proposed.

It is clear that planning for the memorial cannot continue as a separate process from that of planning for the site. The two efforts – plus that of planning for a range of cultural uses – must proceed from this point forward as a dialogue. The importance of the site – its history and what it represents for the future – demands excellence. The eight memorial schemes that have been presented to the public suffer from sameness. They are all from one family of design approaches. The jury must either find designs that reflect other approaches to the stated program or work with Studio Libeskind to develop the best of the eight selected schemes.

We are enormously grateful to the jury for their hard work and we realize how difficult this task has been and continues to be. It would be very helpful to all of us to receive a report from the jury as to the particular choices made. In New York New Visions’ review of the eight memorial schemes, we have been guided by the following criteria. We urge the Memorial Competition Jury to include these and similar benchmarks.

- Memorial Quality
- Quality of open space
- Significance and symbolism
- Levels of experience
- Authenticity, artifact use and narrative
- Program
- Relation to museum and interpretive center
- Public gathering place of adequate size
- Individual and collective recollection
- Open-air vs. enclosed space
- Site
- Relation of proposals to Libeskind site plan
- Relation to slurry wall
- Access points, connectivity and sense of entry
- Relation to Liberty Street and West Street
- Operations
- Long term survival of memorial and maintenance
- Relation of memorial to phasing and interim uses
- Dependence on technology and issue of seasonal use
- Operational entity