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CONTACT:

Ethel Sheffer 212 799-3631

Michael Levine 212 228 7875

**THE NYMETRO CHAPTER OF
THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION
EXPRESSES CONCERNS ABOUT
THE PROPOSED MEMORIAL DESIGNS**

The Metro New York Chapter of the American Planning Association is concerned that the eight final designs for the Memorial Competition do not convey the required feeling of the singularity of the harrowing events of 9/11. They do not address either the unique effects of the event or the energy and vitality of New York, where human life was lost, the entire city wounded, and the world changed forever. We will leave comment on the details of the individual designs to others. We are concerned with larger issues integral to the Memorial Competition itself.

There is a remarkable sameness to these designs, in that none provide a well-designed urban public gathering space, none make use of the artifacts from the World Trade Center buildings, and none convey the urban and international texture of the place that made it a target for attack.

The memorial designs rightly concentrate on remembering the victims. But it is only part of the story. Because 9/11 affected so many, many stories need to be told to those who will visit the memorial in the next ten years, and the next hundred years. There appears to be nothing here for the survivors save to join in mourning the dead. There is nothing that evokes the experience of those further away watching the second plane hit and the towers coming down. There is nothing about those who labored in the pit, or those who ministered to the rescue workers. Most glaring, the designs as they stand do little to recall the actual horror of the destruction of the towers or the void left at Ground Zero. The footprints of the towers by themselves will mean nothing to future generations. Shards of the facade were supposed to be saved for later use as part of the memorial. A single piece would do more to make visceral what happened than all the trees and reflecting pools combined.

New York Metro Chapter
%o NPC, 232 East 11TH Street
New York, NY 10003
Phone: 212.228.7875
Fax: 212.471.9987
Email: office@nyplanning.org
Web: www.nyplanning.org



As planners, we question the idea of separating the memorial from the overall site planning. Seven of the memorial plans are designed around the footprints of a proposed cultural center. But both the unknown cultural center, and indeed, the office buildings and retail stores are not yet designed and continue to be the subject of discussion and conflict. The footprint, bulk, and shape of the cultural center--and even, perhaps, its chance of existence--remain uncertain. A memorial built to work with the cultural center as proposed may not work as well with what is eventually built. The site planning and the memorial should go hand in hand or the memorial, however well meaning, may be compromised in the future.

The selection process has proceeded without more than a nod to public input. While we do not believe the process should have been a matter for a referendum or beauty contest, we do believe that, however distinguished the jury, a sense of what the public needed from this memorial should have been solicited. The destruction of the World Trade Center was an event whose impact was shared by millions of people in New York and even more millions in the rest of the United States and the World. Consultation in this case was a necessity. A closed-door process where a group of experts by themselves determine what is important may be standard procedure in a competition for an office building or a new museum; it was not appropriate in this case.

Finally, the event is still too recent for its entire meaning to be understood. It is unclear if there will be room for further evolution as time passes. The needs of the near future must be considered as well. What will New Yorkers and visitors experience at the memorial in the next ten or fifteen years? What will the relation of the memorial be to the phasing of building construction? Are we likely to have only a partial memorial next to retail uses? Unfortunately, none of the eight proposed designs are successful in either emotional or practical terms.

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Web: www.nyplanning.org