



TWIN TOWERS ALLIANCE

WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT — WHAT NEW YORK NEEDS — WHAT AMERICA DESERVES

July 31, 2007

By Fax and Mail

Senator Charles Schumer
New York Senior Senator
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Congressman Charles Rangel
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Gentlemen:

The Twin Towers Alliance was launched last year and represents thousands of individuals who refuse to believe that Americans are powerless and stuck with the unsightly and dispiriting plan for the World Trade Center. It is fundamentally insulting and wrong – and we are certain that an honest inquiry into the facts will bear that out.

If there is one good reason why the majority of Americans, who have always thought rebuilding the Towers was the most fitting course, should be overruled, then at least the courtesy of an explanation is in order. Plainly, it is not because the current plan is more popular, sends a stronger strategic message, is more economically feasible, a wise use of taxpayer money, or the preference of most 9/11 families – and construction is by no means so far advanced that a dramatic correction could not be made – so the public deserves to know why George Bush's pals, George Pataki and Roland Betts, were allowed to remake our World Trade Center in their image.

When people rushed to their newspapers in 2002 to see what the design competitions had produced, most were saddened and alienated by a collection of designs that were notable for only one reason – the design that was missing – the Twin Towers. Instead, the worst tragedy most of us had ever known became an architectural beauty pageant – in very poor taste since we all knew what the real World Trade Center looked like. It needed to be improved upon, not abandoned to its fate. In the years since, dogged and valiant efforts were made by individuals and grassroots organizations to call attention to the dishonest proceedings, but the fix was clearly in. Still, it's not too late to do the right thing.

To that end, we are challenging the legitimacy of the sweetheart deal made with the GSA that would use taxpayer funds to prop up a building that otherwise would not be viable. We are requesting that you put the General Accountability Office to work during your August recess on behalf of the taxpayers of this country to establish the merits of the agreement, beginning with the cost of shuffling offices and breaking of long-term leases, and to determine if the project would otherwise have a life of its own. A feasibility balance sheet is past due.

We are also requesting on behalf of the American people a clear rendering of how the \$20 billion dollars in taxpayer money was spent over the past six years. We deserve an accounting of exactly how much of it went into renewing Lower Manhattan, which is now booming, and then, just how much of the public's money was actually spent to frustrate the public's will.

We expect that most of those in Congress who voted for the expenditures thought that they were acting in concert with the wishes of the people and were helping to heal our nation. It is unlikely that many of them understood that rebuilding what had been demolished was never an option – or that people were tricked into wasting thousands of man-hours in a sham process for propaganda purposes that ignored the public's input, while serving very narrow interests and depriving us of our rightful part in the decision-making.



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Trying to please everyone is never a realistic goal, but a *much wider consensus* could have been reached if we, the citizens who finance the government, had been considered stakeholders. The spurious nature of the proceedings was displayed in the official endorsement of the effete claim that restoring the pre-WTC street grid was an “imperative.” The result was an environmentally retrograde and indefensible plan that condemned the most meaningful and *potentially the most valuable public land we possess* to more traffic, more pollution, and less public space.

It would be hard to show Bin Laden greater deference than to convert the glorious, sun-drenched lobbies of the Twin Towers into a “Freedom Tower” that has to be entombed in twenty stories of concrete just so Greenwich and Fulton Streets can transverse the site! In reality, the much-maligned “superblock” was both an oasis from the city streets and a moat around the Towers. What madness allowed the phony imperative to distort the rebuilding process – and why? The answer to that holds the key to the whole sorry process.

It’s not too late to ask these questions and with a little political courage we can get to the bottom of it – so that the true healing can occur. Treating Ground Zero as a blank slate was a nasty and opportunistic response to our collective calamity and if we can’t work this out, while there is still virtually nothing standing in the way, then it will be stark evidence that our government has deteriorated beyond the point where it can oversee anything truly worthy or act as an honest broker for the public good. But we have high hopes that there will be an eleventh hour reprieve – to worldwide relief and acclaim.

We are private citizens with no ax to grind and no burning desire to volunteer our time to a lost cause. But if we as a nation can’t get this right, then we are in very serious trouble *and the lost cause will be representative democracy*. If we are right about how improperly this has been handled, then our public servants owe us an thorough investigation. This is the last place we should be doing what we’re doing just because we’re doing it.

Clear-thinking can still save the WTC and while we have encountered much support in government for what we are trying to do, we have yet to find the one who will step out in front of the rest. One courageous politician is all it will take and we hope that those copied will also reflect on their obligation to the American people to rescue a badly botched plan. The question is: do you really respect the people who are footing the bills – or not?

Rather than allowing the issue to be framed by the minority that always disliked the Twin Towers, why not start listening to the majority that loved them? Ironically, a Harris Interactive poll commissioned by The Architects Institute of America to celebrate its 150th anniversary this year found that the Twin Towers placed in the Top 20 of “America’s Favorite Architecture” out of 150 structures – exposing the lie that they weren’t popular or important to us. Some people will never get it, but most of us get it all too well.

We would appreciate knowing before the week is out whether or not the requested inquiry will be ordered or if we need to look further for timely assistance.

Respectfully yours,

Margaret Donovan
for The Twin Towers Alliance

Copies to: Sen. Hillary Clinton | Sen. Joseph Lieberman | Sen. John McCain | Speaker Nancy Pelosi | Rep. Peter King | Rep. Jerrold Nadler | Rep. Gregory Meeks | Rep. Anthony Weiner | Gov. Eliot Spitzer | Mayor Michael Bloomberg | Atty. Gen. Andrew Cuomo | Majority Leader Joseph Bruno | Speaker Sheldon Silver | Assemblyman Richard Brodsky | Speaker Christine Quinn