



No News Is Bad News

What we are witnessing at the World Trade Center is a massive failure of imagination. If not arrested, it will undermine the nation that so many have fought for and died to preserve.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg said last week: "It is in the interest of the city and this country to get development going at the World Trade Center site."

He went on to warn us: "There's no easy solution here. We'll try and come to an agreement."

The sad spectacle at Ground Zero is demoralizing our country. As it happens, there is indeed an easy solution for the World Trade Center and the majority of the people have always been in agreement on what that is -- rebuild the Twin Towers.

What we want is clearly irrelevant to officials who determine which "answers" will do. But America is only as strong as its social contract.

When officials fail to hold up their end of the bargain, our only hope is a faithful and resolute press.

America was founded on the belief that we, the people, know how to run our affairs. The only way our country will thrive is if those we elect to represent us actually do.

In the past year it has become apparent how completely the official plan for the Trade Center has failed. Unsound from the start, the credit crisis has exacerbated the distress of a project that has been on life-support all along.

At the same time, officials have known that there is a fully developed plan to build 21st-century Twin Towers. The plan would save billions of dollars, years of time, and honor the will of the people, but for some reason that doesn't matter.

The viability of "Twin Towers II" has been recognized as clearly superior by some of the most eminent skyscraper authorities in the world. But instead of analyzing its merits, officials put a bad plan on steroids, closed their eyes, and held their breath -- with predictable results.

Now the Port Authority wants to replace two of the four towers with retail "stumps," but instead of cancelling the windowless wonder that by any name is still an eyesore, they want to replace the only towers that have a little character.

The latest price tag for the WTC transit station -- inaccurately hailed as a "hub" -- is projected at between \$3 and \$5 billion dollars. For not much more we could build two spectacular mixed-used Twin Towers.

And the morbid 9/11 Memorial is again up over a billion dollars and will require another billion-dollar endowment to finance the annual \$50 million dollars-plus needed to run it.

It may be privately funded, but why should something that is detested by 9/11 family members, that manages to be extravagant and insipid at the same time, be treated as a sacred cow? Only because the facts are not widely known.

It is time to let the public become part of the solution. People can learn more about the "Twin Towers II" plan and leave their names and comments on the petition at www.twintowersalliance.com.

Between now and June 11th, intensive meetings will be held to examine the options for the site. Now that there is one final chance to get it right, we can't let officials decide our future behind closed doors, because they have a different set of priorities and the public is not high on their list.

Nothing good can come of allowing politicians to hide the details of their discussions from scrutiny. They are not authorized to use the public's money to sell our World Trade Center short, when a real solution has been provided that they won't consider. If they need imagination the people have plenty to spare.

The time has come for a free and probing press to stand up for the public's best interests by challenging the news blackout and by insisting on the people's behalf to know how officials are addressing the robust alternative plan that would powerfully resolve the breakdown.

If there is a good reason to deny the American people the incomparable delight of seeing those Twin Towers reclaim their place in the skyline, let's hear it. Because that's the kind of country this is. It was created of, by, and for the people.

It is the entire country's burden and the entire country's privilege to build a World Trade Center that we can all be proud of. It is illogical and improper that the future of this site should be limited to what the people of New York and New Jersey can afford in an economic slump.

The ideal solution would be for the Federal Government to buy the air rights to the site, form a public corporation, and, while it is being fully funded, to advance Mr. Silverstein the money needed to go full speed ahead with the project to restore the skyline by 9/11/2011.

The two states need the money and the American people need their towers back. Given the chance to fund new Twin Towers and profit from their investment, the people would eagerly rush to be a part of the win-win venture.

There is only one way to make sense of the past eight years. There is no need to justify honest mistakes with dishonest excuses. We have one last opportunity that we can't afford to squander.