

Labor Community Advocacy Network

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New Yorkers: "Listen, Gov. Pataki: Jobs, Affordable Housing and Environmental Justice."

A Giant papier-mâché ear and angry New Yorkers greeted thousands at the Civic Alliance's second "Listening to the City" event at the Jacob Javits Center on Saturday, July 20, 2002.

"We're demanding low-income housing, good jobs and environmental justice at Listening to the City II," explained Margaret Hughes, Co-Chair of the Labor Community Advocacy Network's organizing committee and Executive Director of Good Ole Lower East Side (GOLES). "We hope that the Lower Manhattan Development Corp. and the governor will really listen, hear the demands, and act on them--not just include them in a list and continue to use the money to provide corporate subsidies."

Workers who have lost their jobs due to the economic downturn since September 11th, concerned community members, and labor leaders joined the Labor Community Advocacy Network (LCAN) and New York Jobs with Justice to send the message that their participation, comments, and issues have not been heeded since the first "Listening to the City" event. While "Listening to the City II" was designed specifically to give a voice to citizens in the process of re-building, some groups have charged that it resembles a PR stunt more than a good faith effort to find out what New Yorkers need.

At a press conference prior to the "Listening to the City" event, LCAN and Jobs with Justice unveiled a scorecard that compared what people said at the February "Listening to the City" and what has been acted upon by public authorities since then. Among the demands that LCAN and NY Jobs with Justice put on the table are that

- ▶ the jobs created by the reconstruction be living wage jobs,
- ▶ \$1 billion go toward creating new public and private sector jobs, and
- ▶ the money from the Liberty Bonds, a substantial portion of which will go to residential development, be used to help create low- and middle- income housing.

"Immigrants and communities of color have been disproportionately affected by the economic devastation that resulted from the September 11th attacks," says Chung Wha Hong, Co-Chair of the LCAN organizing committee and Advocacy Director for the NY Immigration Coalition. "Fully 56% of those who lost their jobs were immigrants, and ten months after the attacks, tens of thousands of workers still cannot find jobs. Governor Pataki must listen and act now and allocate at least \$1 billion to create jobs for displaced workers."

Denise Poche-Jetter, moderator of the event, commented, "The LMDC and the Port Authority are putting forward these plans, but we know that Gov. Pataki is the ultimate decision maker. We're calling on him to listen actively this time, because we will be closely monitoring the process and educating and mobilizing thousands of New Yorkers."

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Reviews of Work Since Listening to the City I

Issues Expressed at Listening to the City I

- I1. Affordable housing is needed to avoid displacement of longtime residents.
- I2. Jobs are needed to replace those lost in the wake of the attack.
- I3. Downtown residents should see improvements in basic and essential services, including post offices, libraries, community centers and parking.
- I4. Downtown should become a vibrant, 24-hour mixed use community.
- I5. Government agencies should provide the public with more information about health issues resulting from the attacks and the clean up efforts.

Responses we've seen since Listening to the City I

- R1. The first use of government-subsidized Liberty Bonds to build residential units downtown designated only 5% of the units as "affordable" - and affordable was defined as \$1,700 per month for a studio and \$2,500 for a two-bedroom.
- R2. A study by the September 11th Fund estimates that 40% of those who lost their jobs due to the attack are still unemployed.
- R3. There has been virtually no subsequent public discussion of these amenities.
- R4. Preliminary indications of the 6 LMDC sponsored development scenarios include no housing at the 16-acre site.
- R5. After months of saying that indoor cleaning was landlords' and residents' responsibility, federal and local agencies reversed course in mid-May.
More than 400 laborers reported coughing and dizzy spells months after they stopped working at the WTC site.

- The process should be an open one where "the public is included in the decision making, and everyone's voice is heard and taken into account".
- 72% of participants in first LTC meeting were white; most were from Manhattan. Their average annual income exceeded \$100,000.
- Chinatown groups have been so consistently ignored by LMDC that they have hired a planner and launched their own rebuilding initiative.
- 46% of participants in the first Listening to the City had a low, somewhat low or very low level of confidence that the forum would make a difference.

Can we expect more from Listening to the City II?

Good Jobs?

Affordable Housing?

Environmental Justice?