



The Council of the City of New York
Committee on Lower Manhattan Redevelopment
Oversight Hearing on
The Status of the Performing Arts Center at the World Trade Center Site

Testimony by Catherine McVay Hughes, Vice Chairperson, Community Board One

October 21, 2009
10 a.m. in the Committee Room, City Hall, New York, NY

Good morning. I am Catherine McVay Hughes, the Vice Chairperson of Community Board One (CB1), and with me is Michael Connolly, the Co-Chair of the CB1 World Trade Center Redevelopment Committee. We appreciate the opportunity to testify today about the Performing Arts Center (PAC) at the World Trade Center (WTC) site, which is a key element of the Master Plan for redeveloping the WTC site. As the Community Board representing Lower Manhattan, including the WTC site, we are extremely discouraged that there has been so little progress in the development of the PAC at the WTC site since your last hearing two and a half years ago. In early September, we marked the eighth anniversary of September 11, 2001 but CB1 has still not been given a public presentation on this important project or any other hard information about when and how it will be moving forward. In less than two years, we will be honoring the tenth anniversary of September 11, 2001 yet there are still no public engineering or project design plans for the PAC.

Since the last hearing in April 2007, there have been further delays in design and construction of the PAC. The delays have included complications with the PATH station due to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) arbitration with Silverstein Properties (SPI). The demolition of 130 Liberty Street, which just yesterday received the approval of the NYC Department of Buildings, has also further delayed the PAC since the Vehicular Security Center itself has been delayed. We are concerned that the construction of the second entrance for the WTC parking garage could be yet another road block for turning over the PAC site. Moreover, CB1 continues to be extremely concerned that the PAC site will be used as a staging center for the construction of WTC Tower One or Tower Two, as a temporary entrance and exit for the

City of New York



Julie Menin CHAIRPERSON | **Noah Pfefferblit** DISTRICT MANAGER
49 Chambers Street, Suite 715, New York, NY 10007-1209
Tel 212 442 5050, Fax 212 442 5055, Email cb1@cb1.org, www.cb1.org

Calatrava-designed PATH station, or for other uses completely unrelated to the PAC. At this point, we do not even have an anticipated date for when construction on the PAC will begin or when it will be operational. For all these reasons, we urgently request that all involved public and private agencies act immediately to prevent use of the site of the PAC for unrelated purposes and ensure that construction will commence as soon as possible.

One thing we do know, however, based on information provided at the last meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) on October 6, 2009 is that, according to Deputy Mayor Robert C. Lieber, the PANYNJ will soon finalize the contracts for the footings and the foundation at the corner of the site where the PAC was originally slated to be built. This work is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2010, and in order to take advantage of the PATH work outages it is important to have an engineering plan for the PAC now.

Although there have been very preliminary talks about potentially moving the PAC location to 130 Liberty Street (a/k/a the former Deutsche Bank building, which is currently waiting demolition), we have not seen any engineering studies for this site either. We agree with Deputy Mayor Lieber that the viability of the original site for the PAC remains of vital concern and the construction cost estimate, planning, design and construction should move forward now. This is essential to prevent further time delays and escalation of costs. While we could potentially support a plan to move the site of the PAC to 130 Liberty Street if it meant that the design and construction of the PAC as a first-class architectural project could be completed without further delays, we are deeply concerned that without any firm plans for the 130 Liberty Street location or signed contract with the PANYNJ, this idea is yet another red herring and our community will be left with no PAC at all.

In April 2007, we stated here that we were concerned about developments regarding the PAC, which had lost the Signature Theater as a tenant, representing a significant reduction in the plans for activity at the site. We are still concerned. The Master Plan for the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan followed a lengthy public planning process that resulted in a clear consensus that the development of significant and varied cultural facilities is essential to the successful revitalization of the WTC site and Lower Manhattan.

The Frank Gehry-designed PAC, as the principal and now only remaining cultural facility planned for the WTC site, remains a key element of the Master Plan and its realization is absolutely essential to the revitalization of Lower Manhattan. It is particularly important since earlier plans for a cultural center housing The Drawing Center and The Freedom Museum were eliminated from the WTC site. We are concerned that the LMDC, City of New York, the PANYNJ, and all other public and private agencies involved in the reconstruction of the WTC site respect the very strong desire of the community to see that the promised PAC is built as it was intended in a timely manner.

Up to \$55 million of federal money was allocated to The City of New York to provide funding for the ongoing planning, design, development and construction of the PAC at LMDC's Board of Directors meeting on September 7, 2006. CB1 is very concerned that the Project design has apparently not commenced and no funds have been raised for the construction of the PAC, which was estimated to cost approximately \$200 million to complete. Almost eight years after September 11 there is still no lead agency or authority in charge of making the PAC or any other cultural enhancements for the WTC site a reality.

CB1 has been advised that Gehry Partners has a contract with LMDC for \$4.6 million for design and related work on the PAC and has so far been paid \$2.3 million under that contract. The Board of Directors of the LMDC authorized a sub-recipient agreement with the City of New York covering funds allocated to the PAC in 2007. Accordingly, the remaining \$2.3 million due under the Gehry Partners contract are to be disbursed by an appropriate agency of the City of New York in connection with the assumption of this contract from LMDC. We requested at your April 2006 hearing to see the latest plans that LMDC received for these large amounts of taxpayer's money. We are still waiting.

The PAC was conceived as a calming transition between the bustle of commerce and the reflection and remembrance that will be inspired by the Memorial and as the spark for the resurgence of arts in Lower Manhattan. CB1 strongly urges that the design phase for the PAC be completed as soon as possible and made available for public review. We further urge that the funding process for the PAC commence immediately so that there will be practical assurance that the PAC will be built.

CB1 again requests a time table and a plan of implementation for each of the remaining steps involved in the design and construction of the PAC, together with specific information on funding the project, as soon as possible. CB1 further requests that the process relating to the planning and development of the PAC and other cultural enhancements for the WTC site be open and transparent in the future and recommends the immediate formation of an advisory panel including representatives of CB1 to address issues relating to the PAC and other cultural enhancements for the WTC site.

CB1 believes that the PAC could be enhanced by the inclusion of a smaller second stage that could be used for productions by other theaters in the metropolitan area, perhaps on a rotating basis. Such a theater could give Downtown audiences a welcome opportunity to attend performances by prominent local theater companies such as the Manhattan Theater Club, Second Stage, and The Roundabout.

Moreover, CB1 encourages all concerned government agencies and private parties to consider other possible cultural facilities and programming for the WTC site in addition to the PAC including, for example, the development of additional gallery or

performance spaces in portions of the vast commercial developments already planned for the site along the model of Jazz at Lincoln Center in the Time Warner building.

Completion of the PAC, which is the only community enhancement planned for the WTC site, is essential to the success of the master plan and the revitalization of Lower Manhattan. One need only look at the ways in which significant cultural components have helped to revitalize other cities to see its importance.

In Los Angeles, the Walt Disney Concert Hall is not only the striking new home of the acclaimed Los Angeles Philharmonic, but has become a national cultural landmark, inspiring the commercial, retail, and cultural resurgence of the surrounding area.

In Miami Beach, a public commitment to the arts and the South Florida Arts Center sparked cultural revitalization. Later, a renovated Miami Beach Convention Center became the home of Art Basel, turning Miami and Miami Beach into an international cultural mecca.

In San Francisco, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and community leaders had the vision to create the cutting edge Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, which along with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and other museums in the area, have transformed and revitalized the formerly moribund Yerba Buena downtown area between the city's financial district and civic center neighborhoods. As Newsweek noted in 1995, Yerba Buena is now “the most concentrated arts district west of the Hudson River.”

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony today. CB1 strongly supports creation of the PAC and hopes that its implementation will move forward as expeditiously as possible. We also support the consideration of additional cultural facilities and programs to enhance the redevelopment of the WTC site. CB1 reiterates its support of the goal of redeveloping the WTC site in a vibrant manner that is compatible with the development of a livable and dynamic mixed-use community.