

Statement on the World Trade Center Memorial

December 16, 2004

In January 2004, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation announced *Reflecting Absence* as the winner of the World Trade Center Memorial Competition. Now the design group has taken this memorial vision and advanced it forward into Schematic Design.

The design calls for three levels of memorial experience allowing for a ritual procession and offering access to the very foundations of the World Trade Center site.

Memorial Plaza Level

At the Memorial Plaza the visitor enters a unique space filled with a canopy composed of hundreds of oak trees. On the southwest corner, a clearing exists as a gathering place for events of remembrance. As a visitor moves forward, they become aware of one, and then another carved and recessed voids on the plaza surface. The two voids puncture the horizontal expanse of the Memorial Plaza, and make present the enormous absence felt by so many on September 11th. The size of the voids also physically conveys the magnitude of the twin towers that we lost. The voids possess waterfalls dropping nearly thirty feet into reflecting pools below. Visitors can either circle around a pool, taking its measure, or descend underground through an adjacent ramp.

Memorial Level

The descent underground further removes the visitor from the daily life of the city and into a contemplative and solemn place. At the bottom of their descent they arrive at the Memorial Galleries that ring each pool and delineate the footprints of the twin towers. Here, behind the curtain of water they first saw from above, they find the names of the victims inscribed around each pool.

The names of victims will be set on a low wall where a curtain of water falling from above will be the only element separating the visitors from the pool and the abyss at its center. Standing there, confronted by the names of those lost, and by the vastness of the space in front of them, visitors will be able to comprehend the scale of devastation that occurred.

In between the pools, visitors will find a hall that connects many of the other elements that are part of the site. The Memorial Hall, a vast open space will offer a place for visitors to rest and reflect. From this Memorial Hall, visitors will be able to travel even deeper underground to the very foundations of the site.

Bedrock Level

Each anniversary families have traveled down into the site to touch the bedrock. At the Bedrock Level of the memorial, visitors will again have access to the very foundations of the World Trade Center site, where the towers fell and heroes perished. The exposed box beam columns that supported the twin towers will be laid bare for all to see and touch--visible reminders of that terrible day. On the northwestern edge, visitors will see a vast 70-foot tall section of the exposed slurry wall that held back the Hudson River during the attacks.

It is at the lowest level of the site that visitors will also find a room set aside for contemplation, and at its center a mausoleum for the unidentified remains gathered at the site open to the sky above. This room is a space for family members to gather in the absence of a grave or tomb of their own. At times it will be open to the general public who will arrive here as part of their visit to the Memorial Center. Adjacent to the Contemplation Room will be a family room for victims' families to gather and share their collective memories.

The ascent back to the plaza and return to daily life completes the memorial experience and returns the visitor to the living Memorial Grove.

