The Political Fabric of Design Competitions

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The Political Fabric of Design Competitions

Abstract
Design competitions are commissioned for many reasons, almost none of which have to do with design and all of which have to do with political motivations. A political agenda always presides over the important but ancillary search for new design possibilities, innovative solutions, or a compelling architectural or urban vision. Though political agendas vary quite a lot, they are lodged in the fundamental need to create or cultivate a strong constituency and garner the necessary resources to advance a desired project.

Comments
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The Politics of Design: Competitions for Public Projects

Policy Research Institute
For the Region

Anthony Shorris, Director
Edited by Catherine Mainberg

Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs
The Politics of Design: Competitions for Public Projects

Catherine Malmberg, Editor

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# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Competition in the Region's Past, the Region in the Competition's Future</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walle Lenseth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Political Fabric of Design Competitions</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ummel. Sajaly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Competitions: The Pitfalls and the Potential</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deyar Sudic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Transcripts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening Session: Robert Hammond</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic Forces: Commentary on Lipstadt and Sagalyn</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Modes: Commentary on Sudic</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Agendas</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Participant Biographies</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Political Fabric of Design Competitions

Lynne B. Sagalyn
University of Pennsylvania

Design competitions are commissioned for many reasons, almost none of which have to do with design and all of which have to do with political motivations. A political agenda always presides over the important but ancillary search for new design possibilities, innovative solutions, or a compelling architectural or urban vision. Though political agendas vary quite a lot, they are lodged in the fundamental need to create or cultivate a strong constituency and garner the necessary resources to advance a desired project. Because they follow a competitive format and employ professional advisors, design competitions are a practical tool for avoiding charges of favoritism in selecting designers. Sponsors have historically held traditional architectural competitions for other reasons as well: they did not want to be responsible for the design selection; they wanted the best architecture but didn’t know the best talents; or they needed cover for some degree of preselection. The extension of the competition to urban design and planning changes the game. The reasons for holding these competitions are different and always political. Urban design and planning competitions are about political issues as much as about new design possibilities, innovative solutions, or design visions.

Political considerations drive the motion to mount a competition, and though less transparent, shape the details of how a competition is structured and implemented.

Urban design competitions are different from architectural competitions in important ways. First, the resolution of an urban design problem requires different skills and knowledge drawn from multiple disciplines. Second, the content differs: urban design problems focus on the relationships among architectural and non-architectural elements, whereas building competitions focus most intensely on single-purpose architectural products (Wright and Farmer, 1992, as cited in Blanejewski and Soule’s vol. 149, 175). Third, the context differs: if the site is vacant, a blank slate, the competition problem is akin to a building competition, but when the site is within a neighborhood or a downtown district—within the fabric of a city—change represents an intervention (Barnett, 2005).

Fourth, the physical terrain of the competition is a complex combination of public and private interests and domains, often in conflict with each other. Resolving these types of problems often involves real or symbolic redistribution or regulation of territorial (power) control and the rights of different social groups. Not only are these conditions complex and typically...
controversial, they fall squarely in the realm of political decision making. When public officials use competitions to shift that decision making to designers, it heightens the stakes for both sponsors and competitors.

In this paper I discuss how political motivations revealed themselves in several urban design competitions in New York City in the past two decades. I have not attempted to be exhaustive. There have been dozens of such competitions over this period. Rather, I have focused on several high-profile recent competitions. I begin by identifying competitions in terms of their strategic political objectives. I argue that such strategic underpinnings of competitions have become more compelling during the last quarter of the 20th century as cities with large ambitions were forced to rely on their own resources as a consequence of the federal government’s withdrawal of support for cities in the 1980s. Uniting two case studies, I address several questions: What political circumstances prevailed at the time of the design competition, and how did this context influence the structure of the competition? To sponsor a competition, what constituencies did the sponsor seek to reach, influence, and galvanize into action? What unresolved conflicts lay hidden under the umbrella of the program brief and rules of the competition? How did the competition succeed or fail to meet the political objectives of its sponsors? How do the lessons of these competitions enhance our understanding of the political dynamics of urban development? I conclude with some comparative remarks on political dynamic development competitions.

POLITICAL PRECURSORS

A strong and identifiable constituency is a political imperative for any substantial city-building project, particularly one with a long implementation horizon. Sometimes a natural constituency exists in a broad-based special interest, for example, historic preservation, or an iconic city district such as Times Square. In other instances, the currency of an idea or issue exists but lacks a constituency, and sponsors must mount an open competition to create that constituency. Examples include the TKTS Booth (1998) and Pier 40 (1999) design competitions sponsored by the Van Allen Institute. Using an open ideas competition to create the type of broad-based grassroots support that draws the attention of elected officials, along with a commitment of resources, defines the constituency building competition. The political motivation works both ways: for projects they want to promote, politicians use open ideas competitions to, in the words of Josh Sirefman, executive vice president and chief
operating officer of NYC's Economic Development Corporation, 'strategically galvanize people' (Alschuler 2004).

Sometimes the constituency-building motivation is geo-political; as in the case of the Queen's West Olympic Village competition (2003). This competition was sponsored by NYC2012, the privately funded committee, which led New York's bid to become the host city of the 2012 Games. The purpose was to attract the support of countries needed to assure the selection of New York. This part of the agenda was never made explicit. A two-stage process allowed NYC2012 to choose five teams from a list of firms that responded to an international request for qualifications. The short-listed teams—from Denmark, Holland, Great Britain, and two from the U.S.—produced designs in a process that generated "major media buzz" along the way, creating the international platform. Daniel Doctoroff, founder of NYC2012, sought: "These spectacular designs put the athlete at the center of the New York Games while forming the model for future urban housing" (Alschuler 2004).

While the competition did produce compelling designs, the city did not win the brass ring.

Sometimes an ideas competition is used to advocate for the preservation of a symbolic icon, as when the Municipal Art Society (MAS), in cooperation with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), sponsored an open competition to address the fate of the Times Tower (1984) during the contentious early days of the redevelopment of Times Square. Strictly an ideas competition, it was part of a larger set of tactics designed to focus attention on "the future of this volatile project." It put a spotlight on the city's plan to demolish the beloved but much-beloved sign tower, an intention that symbolized its short-sighted disregard for the defining character of this world-premier entertainment district (Saglin 2001, 196–204): "it worked," said Kent Barwick, "because it was a powerful public relations device. It got people talking and asking questions" (Gilmartin 1995, 457).

In a similar vein, the political-challenge competition seeks to pressure politicians who resist making a funding commitment to a project for which they have expressed moral support. For example, not long after the West Side Task Force, a state panel chaired by Arthur Levitt Jr. and charged with finding a successor plan for the aborted Westway project, delivered its report to Governor Mario Cuomo and Mayor Edward Koch, both politicians stalled on taking steps that would further serious planning. The battle over Westway had defined the parameters of a new "environmental paradigm for government paralysis" (Pummill 1988); an intractable conflict between transportation interests, transit advocates, and environmentalists. A crucial element of the tension-packed compromise sketched out by Task Force was the creation of a broad waterfront esplanade that included a walkway, parks, and bicycle path—a sweetener for the new six-lane roadway. While the mayor endorsed the report and plan, the governor held back on any commitment to the esplanade, and without the esplanade the fragile consensus holding the compromise together threatened to unravel. Months passed with no action. To build public support and get the
necessary detailed planning, moving, the MAS mounted an international ideas competition for all or parts of the waterfront, a derelict and inhospitable environment made more so during the more than 15 years of controversy over Westway (Hock 2005). The MAS framed its announcement in design terms: "What the city most needs today is a sense of possibilities, an exercise in imaginative conceptual thinking" (Giovanini 1987). Six months later, the governor and mayor took the first significant step in a long process by signing a memorandum of understanding for moving the project forward.

Design competitions have been motivated by several other types of political agendas. Sometimes the scale and scope of a problem is so unprecedented that no obvious platform exists for figuring out how to approach the problem. The task of transforming the 3,000 acres of Fresh Kills landfill presented such a challenge, and the international call for ideas (2001) was a dealing with the unprecedented competition sponsored by the Department of City Planning, in an unusual joint alliance with the Department of Sanitation, Parks and Recreation, and Cultural Affairs, and the MAS with support from the National Endowment of the Arts. Political considerations also define enlarging the scope of possibilities competitions. In such cases, sponsors mount a design competition in response to political forces surrounding volatile citywide policy issues such as school construction (New Ideas for New York City Schools, 1998) or housing (Model Tenement, 1897; New Housing, New York Design Ideas Competition 2003). Public sponsors may use competitions for political cover, asking the jury not to pick a single winner but rather to pick the top three, sometimes ranked, sometimes not—a rule that provides "wiggle room" for the sponsor.

The competition format similarly lends itself to situations where a political deadlock exists, for example, when officials cannot resolve a programmatic conflict or are confused about the direction of the program, as was the case in the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation's master-plan competition for the World Trade Center (WTC) site (2002–09), discussed in the next section. In other instances, the sponsor seeks a wide impact beyond the explicit design agenda of the competition in order to mobilize the resources necessary to make implementation possible. The ideas competition sponsored by the Friends of the High Line for the 1.45 mile industrial-urban elevated structure (2002), also discussed in the next section, typifies the liberate-resources competition. In each of these scenarios, sponsors have used the competition as a public platform to further particular political strategic objectives.
Motivating Context

Design competitions were exceptional events in the United States until relatively recently. Whereas competitions for major buildings, both public and private, were frequent and numerous in New York in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and thereafter, not a single competition was held for an American public building for 50 years until the city of Boston announced a competition for a new city hall in 1960 (Campbell 2005). So, design competitions did not come back into fashion until the early 1990s (Witzling, Alexander, Capen 1985).

The story behind such a long historical hiatus remains a fertile issue for scholars, but changes in the altered state of political economy in the last quarter of the 20th century following the withdrawal of federal funding for cities and the ascendency of public-private partnerships as the policy of choice for complex development projects surely matter. In the absence of urban renewal and UDAG monies, cities with large development ambitions were hand-pressed to find alternative sources of funds at a time when elected officials were confronted by local fiscal pressures made more difficult by growing taxpayer revolts. New legislation establishing comprehensive environmental impact reviews and mandating freedom-of-information access to public documents furthered the ease with which opponents of any project might use litigation as an effective strategy to severely cripple, if not kill, a project. Meanwhile and the failed first efforts to redevelop West 42nd Street and the Coliseum at Columbus Circle head the list of such casualties.

To manage the new political calculus, mayors, civic organizations, and project advocates alike needed tools that could build diverse and sustainable political support. Mayors, in particular, could no longer depend on the conventional coalition of government bodies, and on the ability to push through competing projects; they had to find ways to accommodate newly organized (or newly organized) interests — preservationists, environmentalists, community groups, or any number of other highly localized special interests — any and all of whom might find standing through the new legislative mechanisms. The politics of financing city development changed as well. Without federal funds, cities and their pro-growth interests needed alternative sources of funds for redevelopment projects. Funds that might be raised from the project itself or through less transparent (and usually complex) off-budget mechanisms that would not jeopardize spending for police and fire protection, health services, and education. As has often been the case in New York, city agencies might find expedient cause to join forces with state public authorities that control greater powers or financial resources. In this radically political landscape, design became a handmaiden of broader political agendas, while the competition format provided a professional platform for debate. As cities increasingly chose to implement large-scale projects through public-private arrangements, some form of competitive selection became economically wise as well as politically essential (Sapsin 1993).

With the help of a powerful multimedia focus, competitions have transformed planning.
from boring to sexy in the public mind," wrote Karen Alchuler, an urban planner, in "The Competition Craze" (2004).

The jolt of intense, coordinated, creative thinking about challenging urban sites can stretch the concept of urban living in ways that public agencies may never achieve otherwise. Finally, a well-conceived competition can provide a valuable test run for a public-private partnership before everyone signs long-term agreements.

Self-described as someone with a previously "long-held prejudice against competitions, especially planning competitions, which after all, must deliver a robust contribution for long term implementation," Alchuler speaks from practical experience in arguing that the political elements of urban design and planning competitions can be positive by creating strong leadership for a project encouraging, strategizing about how to develop political support for a design or planning agenda, and bringing forth clear ideas on how to use a design competition for maximum return. Ideally, design competitions also can appeal to democratic sentiments (Banerjee and Loukadjou-Sder 1990, 116).

There is something very civic-minded, and public spirited about a design competition. It catches the fancy of city citizens, draws the attention of the news and engages the interests of potential donors and philanthropists, stimulates young designers to devote their creative talents to developing innovative ideas, and so on.

The strategic use of competitions as a public platform sets up its own political risks. Competitions are open and relatively transparent processes. They are news events designed to attract media attention. They can create big expectations among diverse constituencies, with the danger that the winning proposal might unrealistically raise public expectations about the outcome of the project. These risks are higher, in general, in planning and urban design implementation competitions than in architectural competitions. Previously, scholars argued convincingly that a sponsors' lack of experience increased the risk of mounting a complex competition. While the rise of professional advisors has mitigated somewhat the technical risks of a weakly structured competition, it cannot insulate sponsors from bureaucratic obstacles, politics within juries, litigation, and unreasonable resources. In short, the conventional challenges of implementing big plans (Sigalov 2001).

CASE STUDIES
BREAKING THE DEADLOCK:
WTC COMPETITIONS

Among the many goals for rebuilding the WTC site, there stood out as essential: deciding upon a memorial design, selecting a master plan for the site, and implementing the public pieces of the rebuilding agenda. Only the memorial process was spared political struggle through the chosen design was not greeted with universal acclaim. In contrast, the selection of Libeskind's Memory Foundation master plan and the cultural components of the plan engendered a giant battle over who would manage the process and caucic
debates over the final decisions. The politics surrounding these conflicts were exceptionally complex.

Three conditions confounded and frustrated the task: a lack of clarity and fairness on the part of public officials (despite public pronouncements otherwise) about where the priorities—rememberance or rebuilding—would be; institutional barriers to such clarity rooted in competing jurisdictions among the major public stakeholders—the State of New York, the City of New York, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (NJ); and the inability of any of the principal stakeholders to submerge their individual political interests to the greater good in the contentious arena, design competitions would come to play a strategic political role. More than once, political officials attempted to use the design process to resolve these conflicts, not surprisingly, to no avail.

When the public dramatically rejected a first set of plans issued by the UMDC and the Port Authority in July of 2002, UMDC officials initiated a second design process, the "Innovative Design Study," which ran from September 2002 through February 2003. It became the focal point of worldwide coverage, extensive debate from design professionals, and intense lobbying on all sides, thrusting design into an unprecedented level of popular attention.

Given the high stakes of what would become a competition, design teams engaged in high-visibility public relations to be selected, which were widely chronicled by the media. On the day he chose Libeskind's Studios "Memory Foundations" as the winning design, Governor Pataki became the author of a highly politicalized process. In contrast, selection of a memorial design took place on a completely separate and quite different track from master planning for the site, deliberately so. The independent jury's selection, however, challenged the overall master plan and, finally resolved (or at least how the tension between rememberance and commercial reconstruction would be managed on the site.

The WTC controversies have differed from previous development battles among business interests, unions, and civic and citizen groups over large scale development projects in New York. They have not been just about a symbolic memorial or the design of a particular building, or how best to rebuild the entire neighborhood, but all of them and more—a healing vision. The multi-faceted scope of this task fell outside established institutional arrangements. In the highly visible first phase of planning, neither the UMDC as lead agency, nor the Port Authority as landowner, nor even the major as democratically elected steward of the body politic could successfully claim legitimate authority over the dual objectives of rememberance and rebuilding. No established procedure existed for the unprecedented task and ad hoc arrangements struck among the contending principals failed as substitutes. Each public agent brought its own statutory authorities and administrative process to bear on parts of the process but none could achieve mastery over the process. The result was fragmentation and confusion. The authorities tried to fill this gap by charging designers with arriving at a master plan, but while this designers could articulate possible alternatives, they
too could not resolve competing claims on the contested site. In the end, only the governor could resolve these conflicts and make final decisions, but he would step in only when compelled by circumstances to do so. And even his power has not overcome the political struggles and market realities that continue to frustrate progress on rebuilding.

DEVELOPING A MASTER PLAN

No one expected the process of planning how to rebuild the WTC site to be anything less than complicated and contentious. Not only were the objectives of expunging an emotionally traumatized neighborhood, physically rebuilding a devastated site, and memorializing the loss experienced there likely to run counter to each other, but the figures involved in decision-making all had big ambitions, strong emotions, and conflicting goals. Three imperatives shaped the planning process: first, as hollowed ground it is integral with the superstructure claim that it memorialize the 2,746 persons who died in the attacks; second, the site represents a long-term public commitment to city building, and third, whatever is built on the site must recognize the ownership claims flowing from a business transaction completed only weeks before the disaster and sustain the payments to the Port Authority. How would public officials reconcile these competing claims?

The 16-acre site is large by New York standards, equal to all of Rockefeller Center or the entire Grand Central Station district. Still, it was not large enough to accommodate the planning ambitions for Ground Zero voiced by different interests. There would not be much reason to maneuver, nor to explore notions of city building that might not address the PA’s financial concerns. This created the constant refrain in public discourse that planners were ‘looting the site with densely packed commercial towers which threatened to crowd out a meaningful memorial space. In time, the principal decision makers came to realize that the only way out of this dilemma was to expand the site beyond Ground Zero.

The LMDC was ambiguous about how it would reconcile competing priorities. It would push simultaneously for the “preservation of the site as a place of remembrance and memorial” and new development that would “enhance and revitalize Lower Manhattan as a center of new financial, cultural, and community activity” (LMDC 2004a, 5-6, 5-7). These goals would also have to take a back seat to the PA’s nonnegotiable demand to replace the 10-million plus square feet of office space that generated $120 million annual ground-lease payments stemming from the 99-year lease encumbering the site to Larry Silverstein and his investor group (for two towers) and Westfield America (for the retail mall). Absent buying out those dues, Port Authority officials insisted to honor the lease, which gave Silverstein and Westfield the right as well as obligation to rebuild exactly what was in place prior to the attack.

The Port Authority’s legal and financial constraints posed an obvious potential problem for the LMDC. Like the city, the LMDC had no authority over the PA, a state of affairs that was bound to create tensions with the quasi-independent authority. Its 16-member
board had a strong mandate, at least on paper: total control over the WTC site. But given the Port Authority's ownership of the site,oland Beets, chair of the LMDC site planning committee, asked himself: ‘how the LMDC could actually exercise this control.

"It's the Port's site from an ownership standpoint and what's the point of developing a whole plan and getting into a bidding contest with the Port because they don't like it?" Beets said. Both he and [Alexander Garvin] started out believing that if the Port Authority held the right to determine the program for the site—what that is, what functions would occupy the land and how much space would be devoted to each—the LMDC would have the right to figure out what the whole thing would look like" (Goldberger, 2004b, 87).

The struggle over who would actually control six decisions came into public view in early April 2002, when the LMDC, on its own, put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for urban planning consulting services for the site and surrounding areas. The LMDC quickly pulled the RFP after angered Port Authority officials vehemently objected that they had not been asked for advice. Shortly afterwards they issued a nearly identical joint RFP but with the Port Authority's name listed as the lead agency on the cover page. The Port Authority and the LMDC announced at the same time that they had negotiated a memorandum of understanding spelling out their respective roles in the rebuilding process and a division of labor for the planning process. Five weeks later, the agencies jointly selected Roidt Blinder Bell, Architects & Planners (BBB), in association with Parsons Brinckerhoff, to provide consulting services to the agencies; the full team included 11 other specialty and engineering firms. Phase I, scheduled to be completed in July 2002, promised up to six concepts for land use on the site; phase II was "to further develop and define these options based on the public input received;" and phase III was to result in a "preferred land use and transportation plan." The work never got beyond phase I, after a highly publicized meeting of some 4,500 people in July 2002, unambiguously rejected all six plans presented, described in the press as "strikingly similar," "vapid," "disappointing," "unimaginable," "mediocre," "too small," "lacking vision," "not broad enough, bold enough, or big enough." The group gathered at "Listening to the City" made it clear that the plans were simply inadequate.

The press savaged the alternatives in ways no elected official could ignore. 'In 'The Downtown We Don't Want,' the Times editorial page called the plans "trite, labored proposals that fall far short of what New York City—and the world—expects to see rise at ground zero." The editorial put the ones squarely on the requirement that the site be paired with a full 11 million square feet of office space, 600,000 square feet of retail space and another 600,000 square feet for a hotel.' And the Times just officials on notice that they would be held accountable for something visionary. "What those proposals demonstrate most conclusively is that nothing memorable can be done in Lower Manhattan if the Port Authority insists on reclaiming every inch of commercial space that it controlled before Sept. 11" (New York Times 2002a). A couple of
days later, the Times made a more direct call to hold Governor George Pataki accountable in “Talk to the Man in Charge” (New York Times 2002c).

Editors at the Daily News penned a sharper critique of the Port Authority, which they said was “flawed by design.” The LMDC, though filled with talented people, had been handcuffed by its boss, the Port Authority. It had to follow orders... As the design process proved, the PA still places its own needs first... It is accountable to no one. And that’s the real problem.” Over the next 10 days, the Daily News followed up with two more editorials, upping its criticism of the Port Authority’s “we’re limitation on the land use” which made “a visionary plan impossible” (Daily News 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d). Newsday told its readers: “None of the WTC Proposals is Good Enough.” Its editors similarly laid the blame squarely on the broad shoulders of the Port Authority and the requirement for putting the leaseholders first. They argued several points: “forget about legislating;” “slow down;” “creativity is key;” and “hold Pataki responsible” (Newsday 2002a). Alone among the city’s dailies, only the Post seemed to like what had been produced, remarkably considering the near universal sentiment otherwise; its editors said: “So far, so good” (New York Post 2002).

After publicly bringing phase I, the LMDC obviously needed to get it right the second time? Betts believed that lack of specific enabling legislation made the LMDC’s ad hoc planning process susceptible to legal challenge, but he considered it critically important to move the process forward. To “organize” would have taken a year of precious time (Betts, 2004). To recover momentum, he decided to throw out the BBB plans and start over. The “mistake” in the first round, he said, was to present the plans as mystic models showing a layout without defining what the buildings themselves would look like. The public “thinks you’ve designed a building,” Betts felt that the BBB architects had not been invested in their plans; he now wanted to involve the world’s best architects in the process. He had strong support from his committee, which included architect Bill Ties, who led the sell off of action to the Port Authority and the city.

LMDC executive director Tom Tien, who had a good relationship with Seymou, would work the Port Authority while Betts, who had a long and close relationship with Doctnor, would work the city. They would mention the 50 million Web site hits on Design I, how the eyes of the world were watching what we are doing, how such a big project demanded world-class talent, and we must do it right. Before they could launch their campaign, however, someone leaked their plans to the Times, and Betts recalled the task became “very difficult.” (Betts 2004).

Alexander Garvin, LMDC vice president for planning, design, and development, understood as well the strategic value of playing “the architectural card” to make the LMDC, “at least fora few months at the end of 2002, into the most conspicuous architectural patron in the world,” as Paul Goldberger explained in his account of the inside maneuvering.
(Goldberger 2003). “It was a shrewd decision, because it moved the planning process to an area that the Port Authority had traditionally shown little interest in.” Within the month, the LMDC launched a worldwide “Innovative Design Study” (design 2) with a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to select as many as five architecture and planning firms to offer new ideas for the WTC site.11 The LMDC emphasized the word “innovative” to signal how different this process (and presumably the product) would be.

Design 2 implicitly challenged the designers to resolve competing claims—in effect, to accomplish the political task that port officials were reluctant to do. Despite what the RFQ stated—on its face: “This is NOT a design competition and will not result in the selection of a final plan”—the Innovative Design Study had morphed into a design competition among world-class architects that would produce one winner. Given the high-profile talent brought to bear on a task and the worldwide attention it could hardly have been different. The competition unveiled nine design schemes12 in December 2002, receiving praise for the LMDC (if not for the actual designs) for calling for a big vision and a standard of world-class design. Yet the bold ideas and visual charms of a new future for the WTC site could not paper over the continuing confusion among civic groups, design professionals, and the public concerning how these crucial decisions would be made. Nor did they mute the persistent call for less commercial space. They could not. The role for the winner of this competition was never clear because the LMDC did not have the power to implement the selected master plan. The Port Authority had never relinquished its power to control the site agenda,13 and was reportedly holding out the ability to combine several aspects of several designs (Wyatt 2003).

Port Authority officials appeared indecisive during the earliest stage of planning, but the public debate over the design and the LMDC’s architectural competition triggered the PA into an even more intense struggle for control over site decisions. It felt that determining the configuration of memorial, commercial space, and cultural facilities was equivalent to programming the financial equation. If the LMDC maintained the forum’s responsibility for planning the 16-acre site, the LMDC would be determining how much revenue the Port Authority would get. PA executives were telling absent, when the LMDC launched the Innovative Design Study. Within the month, last days before the LMDC was set to announce the seven new design teams, the PA hired Ennead, Ebdus & Kahn (EEK), to do in-house transportation planning and design coordination. This further confused observers about how key decisions would be made and who would really see the effort (Hether and Jason 2002).

The Port Authority initially focused on rebuilding the towers and associated infrastructure demands; its institutional authority over infrastructure was unchallenged. To the PAs way of thinking, the LMDC would supply the “vision” ting, which would be inserted into the site plan, like a LEGO toy. In other words, the LMDC’s role in the decision-making for the master plan would be limited to
"pretty building designs," as EER partner Stanton Eckstut reportedly said, adding that he alone was developing substantive plans for the Vel's streets, transportation facilities, and underground infrastructure (Neuman 2002b; Wyatt 2002b). This infuriated Garvin, who had broader ambitions in mind when the LMDC commissioned the seven high-profile design teams. According to Goldberger, Bettis and Garvin saw the design study as a way to get more inspired designs from architects more creative than SBA. They had long ago accepted the notion that a truly visionary plan for Ground Zero stood no chance of surviving the political process. They saw their role as trying to squeeze as much design quality as they could out of that process, not by bypassing it altogether" (Goldberger 2004b, 22).

Skeptics and veterans could not help wondering about whether the LMDC's innovative Design Study was really just a sideshow while the PA made the real decisions. "It's a beauty contest and a distraction," said Robert D. Yaro, leader of the Civic Alliance (Yaro 2002; Japi 2003; McGeehan 2003). "Fundamentally it's a sideshow because none of these things will ever be built," said one LMDC director about the December 2002 unveiling of the nine conceptual visions produced by the design 2 competition. "But they did show a variety of ways the site could have commercial development and a memorial without looking like a mess" (Bag 2002). Shortly after these visions were presented, the Daily News (2002e) let go with force: "What a healthy, open process. And what a monumental waste of time!" the editors complained. "One suspects the PA will dismiss the LMDC plans outright and selfishly plow ahead with what it wants. If that is not the intention, why does Feustel's work continue in secret?" the editors asked. "Both sides have promised to work together, but it's not easy to trust the PA promises."

The competition had become more politicized with each step forward. Press coverage during this period focused on the "superbowl of design," and how the dramatic architectural visions produced by the seven design teams were whittled down to the semifinalist runoff between Daniel Libeskind and Rafael Viñoly. Both semifinalists "grasped the political nature of the selection process from the start, playing straight to the public as if the cities of New York City were the clients for the job" (Lowe 2003). When the governor decided to award the master-plan prize to Libeskind's "Memory Foundations," against the recommendation of his LMDC site-planning committee, which had taken a consensus vote for Viñoly's THINK team and its latticework scheme "Towers of Culture," political intervention had come full circle.

The final selection of the Libeskind plan did not resolve the key master plan issues—whether there would be four or five office towers, how the cultural facilities would be integrated into the plan, how much of the historic street grid would be reinitiated, where to place underground security screening and bus parking facilities, and how deep to expose the slurry wall. To the contrary the two agencies and their respective teams of designers, planners, engineers, and associated professionals debated these issues for months on end.
SELECTING A MEMORIAL DESIGN

The memorial design process followed an entirely different pattern of political decision-making. It proceeded in a straightforward way because this task floated above the institutional turf lines and political gray areas, thus allowing the commercially sensitive debates over identity, land use, street patterns, pedestrian ways, and vehicular traffic. That is not to say it was not subject to delay or criticism. How LMDC structured this competition and protected it from political interference presents a sharp contrast to the intense politicization plaguing the site-plan selection.

LMDC officials did not structure the memorial design competition to be an “open, inclusive process” but rather a series of controlled public forums where members of the jury could hear the views of different constituent groups. Confidentiality governed the jury’s activities. Its 13 members all signed agreements barring them from speaking to the press about the membranes. selection process until the winner was announced. (The eight finalists, model makers, illustrators, and computer animators also signed confidentiality agreements.) To hear off the public-relations battles that had plagued the site-plan competition, these agreements also included a clause prohibiting negative comments about peer designs that extended through December 3, 2003.

The jury’s notebooks never left the office where they were reviewed. The 5,201 entries (mounted on 30-by-42-inch boards) popped up on easels in rooms protected by a double-key system. The eight finalists were selected anonymously.

The hard-earned lessons of the site-plan competition led LMDC officials to decide to keep politics at bay. They succeeded in part because Governor Pataki, Mayor Bloomberg, and former Mayor Giuliani (who was not far removed from commenting in public on NHL events) all agreed that the memorial decision should be the jury’s alone. That responsible element was too hot to touch. Governor Pataki’s voice was heard only at the press conference, not before. The Port Authority was nowhere in the conversation, yet alone in the deliberations, on the most sensitive element of the WTC site: it was not represented on the memorial jury. The political calculus of the model was likely to work for the governor, regardless of the outcome. Wilks was well, the governor could take credit for not being distanced from the result. “You can’t have a memorial designed by politicians,” Pataki remarked after the winning design had been unveiled (Collins and Dunlap 2001). Ironically, the LMDCs ability to shelter the memorial process from the Port Authority, or the City enabled it to negate important parts of the selected masterplan.

The rules set forth by the LMDC Memorial Competition Guidelines, which is to say no rules, gave the jurors complete flexibility to alter the parameters of the Libeskind plan. The “rules” specified that competitors could create a memorial “of any type, shape, height, or concept” as long as it included the specifically enumerated physical elements essential for a fitting WTC memorial. Design concepts required only to be “sensitive to the spirit and vision of Stadler Daniel Libeskind’s master plan for the entire site.” And the jury was not
restricted in reviewing design concepts that "exceed the illustrated memorial site boundaries." (LMDC 2003a:6) Rampe reiterated this point at the press conference launching the international design competition, saying "It may not be going outside those guidelines" for competitors to express their creativity. By professional inclination, the jurors were intent on considering all proposals. To attract high calibre jurors, LMDC officials undoubtedly assured them that they would be the sole authority in this matter. Repeatedly, well-known juror Maya Lin was mentioned as someone who "broke some of the rules" to produce a spectacularly successful Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. (Wyatt 2003; Graves and Newman 2003). In short, jury members could disregard Libeskind's site plan if it created problems in selecting what they considered to be the most creative proposal.

The unique surviving element of Libeskind's vision was the slurry wall of the bathtub, which he deliberately left exposed as an ever-present reminder that the foundations held even as the seemingly immobile buildings crumbled. Libeskind's site plan defined a memorial area of 17 acres depressed 20 feet below the level of the street—called "the pit," "commemorative pit," "sinken pit," or "depressed pit" by different news media. The site plan articulated place-holding museums and cultural buildings at the edges of the memorial area to shelter it from adjacent commercial activities. These contrigital elements created a specific physical template for the memorial, in effect, pre-designing aspects of the memorial.

The LMDC memorial program drafting committee did not want to restrict the memorial in isolation: "Designs should consider the neighborhood context, including the connectivity of the surrounding residential and business communities." (LMDC 2003a:10). Reaching between the lines, this could be understood as permitting applicants to update the approved master plan. The committee wanted "the memorial and site-planning processes to influence and be coordinated with one another for mutual benefit." The memorial program would be "used as one of the criteria for the site plan selection. Once the memorial designer is selected, both the memorial designer and the site planner will work together to integrate their efforts." The words sounded right, but the site plan had already been selected when the memorial competition was launched; the premise of the jury's actual charge negated permission to reject the LMDC's own approved master plan. "The jury was always thinking it is smarter than the others and removed some placeholder," one juror said at an academic meeting. "All memorials are negotiated. Nothing is set in stone."

The logic of the master plan was to define a blank space that the memorial design competition would fill in, but the competition rules unambiguously defined the memorial selection as the planning priority to which the site plan would have to respond. "It was the memorial site competition," one juror told the press (Collins and Dunlap 2004). The jury understood to the way that the master plan called for the memorial to be depressed 30 feet below street level when many jurors preferred a grade-level solution. (This feature also both-
ened downtown business interests and Battery Park City residents, who considered the plan an obstacle to passage through the WTC site. Regardless of the logic or merits of the Libeskind vision, jurors wanted the memorial design to knit the trade-center site back into the neighborhood. "We also had to face the stark reality of reintegrating into the urban fabric a site that had been violently torn from it," the jury emphasized in its statement on the winning design. And their recommendations were made contingent on achieving that end (UMDC 2004).

It seems obvious that the jury would not want to confer even small degrees of prerogatives over the selection. Yet the jury was resolving an ambiguity that had bedeviled the entire planning process—how to balance remembrance with rebuilding. It used the moral authority of the memorial mission and its prerogatives as an independent jury to assert remembrance as the centerpiece of the endeavor. And it chose to do so in a way that would reunify the WTC site with the urban fabric of Lower Manhattan, healing the planning wounds of the past.

At issue in the designs turned their backs on the idea that the entire memorial should be depressed below street level, and one three proposals all violated Libeskind’s master plan. The final choice also replaced the master plan in the latest and perhaps most serious of steps weakening its integrity. The executive editor of Metropolis remarked on the “intransigence” of Memory Foundation (Pedersen 2004). At the signature elements of the plan—the Wreath of Light, the Park of Heroes, the exposed slurry wall, and companion sunken memorial site—had been “altered, reduced or eliminated,” wrote Robin Pogrebin from the New York Cultural Desk (Pogrebin 2004).

The jury’s decision also put MDC’s Rampe in a bind. "Kevin Rampe couldn’t reverse the independent jury nor could he afford to alienate Libeskind, who ideas for Ground Zero had been enthusiastically endorsed by Pataki, Rampe’s boss," Golberger wrote in The New Yorker. "The solution to this dilemma was, like everything else at Ground Zero, a delicately stitched-together web of political policy, and disingenuous public statements" (Golberger 2004a). When viewed through the lens of interests competing for primacy on this contested turf, however, the memorial competition allowed the independent jury to make the first controlling claim on the remembrance versus rebuilding conflict separate from the factors that inevitably put MDC at a disadvantage to the Port Authority or the lease holders. Soon after the winning announcement, Rampe announced: "We said from the beginning—and I took the selection by the jury shows that we didn’t just say it, we meant it—that the memorial is the centerpiece" (Dinant 2004).

LIBERATING RESOURCES: THE HIGH LINE

On May 9, 2003, New York City Council Speaker Gifford Miller announced that the City would provide $45.75 million of the estimated $65 million cost of restoration of the abandoned High Line, which runs for 1.45 miles down Manhattan’s West Side. This was the first formal financial commitment for the
open-space project that had been described as quixotic at best and had just barely escaped near-death by bulldozer. He made the announcement at a benefit preview co-hosted by actor Edward Norton and author Robert Caro in Grand Central Terminal's Vanderbilt Hall where more than 100 of the 720 submissions from the "Designing the High Line" international ideas competition had been put on display for public viewing. "The new funds secured by the Speaker will have a multiplier effect. We can use the City's financial commitment to the project to attract major private investment.

"corporate, foundations, and federal funds," said Philip Aarons (FH II, 2003b), chairman of the board of directors of the Friends of the High Line (FH L), a nonprofit organization established in 1999 to preserve the structure as public space and sponsor of the competition, along with the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York City Council, and the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development. The commitment marked a stunning political turnaround, a "David versus Goliath" triumph for a grassroots effort dedicated to preserving the 22-block-long elevated rail structure as an "industrial icon" and turning it into a public greenway akin to the Promenade Plante in Paris.

The 2003 ideas design competition paved an impotent role in the FH L's strategy to build broad-based support from public quarters and private interests and prevent a tear-down, something seemingly more imminent following Mayor Giuliani approval of authorizing papers signed by the Economic Development Corporation at the end of his administration. An organized group of owners of property underneath the structure had been lobbying for demolition since the mid-1980s; one owner had already demolished the southernmost five blocks of the High Line, bringing its terminus to Gansevoort Street in 1991. Giuliani, who rarely engaged in any development project, saw no value in the antiquated structure. His City Planning Commissioner Joseph B. Torrere cited "significant financial maintenance, operation and liability issues, as well as with the structure's lightning effect on multiple properties," in concluding that the practical obstacles to achieving FH L's vision for reuse were "profound. He estimated it would not to expect government funds since the Hudson River Park was under-way nearby. "This is an area where the city and state are spending, hundreds of millions of dollars for parkland across the street," he said: "It is unrealistic to expect that the restoration of the High Line for a non-transit use is something that would be financed publicly." (Shallop 2000).

The High Line was developing a "good head of political steam," with endorsements from
federal state, and local elected officials. FHHL's co-founders, Robert Hammonds and Joshua Davik, found other key private-sector allies through "friends, friends of friends, friends' parents" (Dunlap 2000). The New Yorker's Adam Gopnik brought national attention to the six-decade-old High Line with a story featuring the elegiac landscape photographs of Joel Sternfeld, who later explained: "Concrete imagery can be absolutely essential to the process of landscape debate" (Dunlap 2000). Pro-preservation editorials appeared in the Daily News and the Village Voice—both attracting benefits were held. FHHL secured planning support from the Design Trust for Public Space and produced a comprehensive 90-page planning report. Reclaiming the High Line exhibited at the Municipal Art Society and published in a book sponsored by AOL Time Warner ArtSchool in the New York Times, the Daily News, the Village Voice, and several magazines brought the fight to save the High Line to citywide and national prominence.

In July 2001, in a vote of 38–0, the City Council passed a pro-preservation resolution urging the City and State to "take all necessary steps" to preserve, re-create, and reuse the High Line. The vote of confidence would have little effect; however, if CSX Transportation Inc., the intended owner of the High Line, could not be persuaded to follow an alternative course of action. CSX wanted an exit strategy that would eliminate liability claims and maintenance expenses, which reportedly were running $400,000 per year (in 2000); though the company did not appear to have an agenda. It was determined to follow to achieve those aims (Dunlap 2000). A preliminary financial plan for the reuse of the High Line, including full structural rehabilitation, the construction of five access points, and landscaping and paving costs, had been estimated at $40 million to $60 million (New York City Council 2001). "Money doesn't grow on trees," the commercial property owners said in one of its films. "And the last time we checked, it wasn't growing in the weeds of the High Line, either" (Dunlap 2000). The rhetoric underscored the fact that no money existed to create a public space, nor even a plan to follow—in short, that the initiative to reclaim the High Line faced complex political, legal, and financial hurdles.

Though it would not be announced until February 2003, by fall 2001 FHHL was in line applying for funds from NIA to support a design competition that would "generate creative schemes for reuse of the High Line." As an ideas competition, "Designing the High Line" sought:

To catalyze the development of truly original designs, but those designs did not necessarily
have to be realistic or practical. Rather, they were meant to provide public debate about what’s best for the High Line and to make the ultimate selection of a design team a more creative process (FHL, 2003a).

FHL’s constituent audience included CSX, the City and State’s U.S. Congressional representatives who could push for additional funds in transportation bills, the Bloomberg administration, and citizens at large. It had been moving on several fronts; the odds in its favor were slowly increasing. As the end of 2002, FHL and its advocates won a major legal victory when Justice Diane A. Lesseff of the New York State Supreme Court ruled that plans to demolish the High Line had been “undertaken in violation of lawful procedure” and (eventually) an “error of law” (FHL, 2003). Facing more legal hurdles before the rail structure could be converted to public use, FHL needed political and financial resources more than ever.

The international design competition liberated the resources. In 2004, following a second competition to select a master plan design team (Field Operations and Olin, Scoppettone & Parvis), Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg announced $43.25 million in capital funding for a public park (increasing the City’s earlier commitment by $7.5 million); the City also filed papers seeking permission to transform the High Line into a public space through the federal rail-banking program. And by August 2005, Senators Schumer and Clinton and Congressman Waxler had secured additional funding for the project, including $18 million in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill.

DEVELOPMENT COMPETITIONS ARE DIFFERENT

Competition to select development partners for publicly sponsored projects differ in substance and complexity from ideas competitions. Typically the development competition involves a public/private venture in which the public sector is searching for the right team to work with to meet specific public objectives. Such city-building objectives include the creation of a district (Battery Park City), transformation of a district (42nd Street Development Project), or redevelopment of a high-profile site (Collins at Columbus Circle). In response to an RFO or RFP, competitors must demonstrate proven capabilities in a wide range of disciplines—planning, design, engineering, marketing, finance, and development; they must offer a sophisticated financial package that meets the sponsor’s financial objectives as well as a design vision, and perhaps a detailed programmatic plan. Developers, architects, or planners, lead the competing teams. Sponsoring agencies are likely to ignore some of the traditional features of the competition format for example, replacing the independent jury of peers with a selection committee more closely calibrated to serve the sponsors interests. The economics of the development proposal are paramount in any selection, as in ability to execute on a proposal—especially over multiple phases if the competition involves a large-scale project. Selection is more likely to produce tangible results than an ideas competition.
Selecting a developer is a lot about dollars, but not exclusively so. It is also about assur-
ing delivery of the public benefits in the development equation—open space, public
amenities, sanitary improvements, or specific programmatic space such as a renovated
theater or jazz center (Saegmuller 1997). In the classic trade-off of a development compi-
nent the public sector offers favorable terms (financial incentives, help with land assem-
by, infrastructure, and eased bureaucratic procedures) to achieve specific programmatic
objectives from developers who can access deep pools of investment capital in exchange
for the desired package of public benefits. Success/7 competitors must be able to perform
on a complex set of deliverables. A development
proposals have to be "smart" with regard
to what a public-private partner is looking for,
both in terms of design and ease of working
relationships. For designers, this might mean being
more conservative than otherwise and packag-
ing the design in certain ways (Corner 2005).

Using competitions to make complex develop-
ment decisions is far more difficult than using
them as a strategic political platform under-
lying the political motivation mentioned in
the beginning of this paper. How much weight
do sponsors give to the role of design in these
competitions?

Design strength may be a necessary condition
for selection in development competitions but
it is not a sufficient one. In most instances, it
will not take precedence over economics; the
politics taken of a development competi-
tion—of winning to execute—are too high. On
the other hand, design can mediate the heavy
weight given to economic criteria and execu-
tion capability in development competitions,
but it operates within a limited range. The
reputation and capability of designers on the
development team, for example, help shield
the public entity against the potential that a
developer will make poor aesthetic choices,
though it cannot protect the public sponsor
from the political risk of a serious architectural
misjudgment, as was the case with the much-
derided and widely despised designs produced
by Philip Johnson and John Burgee for the two
office towers of the 42nd Street redevelopment
project. Selection on the basis of design
capability also cannot mitigate the political
risk of policy overreaching, as in the case of the
first competitions for redevelopment rights of
the Coliseum at Columbus Circle when the
City and MTA lost a critical lawsuit linked to
the project's unattractive and excessive density,
which the judge ruled constitutes "zoning for
sale." On the other hand, design excellence,
built into specific design guidelines or per-
formance requirements of the development
project can build credibility and public trust in
large-scale public developments as illustrated
in Battery Park City.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS
Competitions are here to stay. They are a
relatively inexpensive way to serve their spon-
sors' larger political objectives. It is, however,
the transfer of the cost to developers, who spend
many times the fees they are given. In the
WTC competitions, for example, designers
spent 10 to 20 times the amounts they were
given. This is a unique situation: no other
professionals are prepared to "give away" their
time. Designers have in mind immortality and, as often as not, the notion that their plans will be implemented as they draw them.

For young designers entering competitions is a way to achieve public notice, maybe the most effective form of self-promotion. Witness Michael Arad, who succeeded in the WTC memorial design competition. More experienced designers are much more selective in the competitions they enter. Some avoid them entirely. Others make calculated investments of time and resources. They understand that the competition is political in nature and go to great lengths to position their work so that it is attractive to the jury or politicians who will determine their fate. They customarily cultivate the press to be sympathetic to their cause and routinely hire public relations firms to propel their case.

The blend of politics and design forces designers to adjust their sights and working methods. They need to see themselves as actors in a political system, not floating above it, as artists or social professionals. Without political skills, they will find their efforts outflanked by those accustomed to acting in the political arena.

References


Newsday, 2002. “None of the VRTC Promises is Good Enough” (editorial) July 21.


Notes

1. See in particular the case study of the design competition for Phipps Square, a 6-acre park in downtown Los Angeles (Lousarous-Sikes and Barreneche 1987).
2. The most frequently cited competitions are those for Central Park (1938), Washington Square Arch (1899–92), and New York Public Library (1897). See Spreeing 1979.
3. Witzling, Alexander and Casper analyzed 51 urban design competitions held between 1978 and 1984. Half of those were initiated by public agencies; public sponsors were more likely, they reported, than private sponsors to hold what they called “implementation competitions” versus concept competitions) because “Public agencies may also be less able to finance projects for a generation of concepts alone without the expansion to implement the results becomes a political condition for funding” (14).
4. Political ambitions have long shaped elected officials’ motivations to run competitions, whether architect, art or planning or urban design. Public buildings’ projects offer opportunities for patronage, as an emblem of a great city (or state), a high-profile public project can be used as a platform for higher office; control over major public construction projects can also serve as a tool of bigger political party strategic ambitions. The design competition for New York’s Central Park in 1857, embedded all these themes in what was a political struggle between the state and city for control over the park. See Rosenblum and Blackburn 1995, 96–97.
5. Much of this case study has been drawn from a complete discussion of the first three years of
6. Rebuilding the site presented city planners with the opportunity to correct past mistakes and remedy the district’s decline. In the area’s quality of life, the surrounding part of the historic street grid emerged as a rare point of cohesiveness among errant planners, downtown business owners, and residents of Belltown and City Park City.

7. The memorandum provided that the LMDC would convey the memorial design process and repeatedly obtained permissions from the Port Authority before some law for a memorial and allowing cultural facilities as well as commercial buildings on the site, and considering repainting the street grid, all of which might reduce the land available for the original-program of 10 million square feet of office space.

8. The executive branch of office space was a conflict that New Yorkers are used to以来 be a dense cluster of office towers, however configured, seemed as inopportune setting for remembering those who tragically perished on September 11. Participants recommended making every effort be made to cancel the Silverstein lease so that the Port Authority’s commercial requirement would not prove planning disasters. “Listening to the City” attended for further rebuilding proposals that placed a suitable memorial as the centerpiece of rebuilding, restoring Lower Manhattan’s waterfront, eliminating Water Street as a barrier to the waterfront, removing the street grid, emphasizing streetscape, and reducing the amount of office space on the site, and providing memorable architecture (HCDA, November 2000).

9. Although the design of the LMDC had been called for in the plan for the entire site before designing the memorial, many others and professionals alike as proceeding in reverse order. Should not the memorial design come first and constrain the master plan? Starting with a master plan would decision-making on how much territory would be reserved for a memorial, whereas the critical planning question might logically have been how best integrate an appropriate memorial design into the redevelopment of the site and the fabric of Lower Manhattan? The decision to proceed first with a master plan put the LMDC on the defensive when it’s handpicked mem-

10. The site planning committee was “terrific but not very enthusiastic” about the Design 1 concept. Beka recalled that “Listening to the City” stuck to their vision that the historic street grid should be restored, a transit hub, a first-rate memorial but, West Street waterfront and landscaped, and the skyline of Lower Manhattan remain with an iconic tall tower.

11. The LMDC was not in a good position to manage this process. It had planning expertise but no design capability. To fill the gap, LMDC met regularly with New York New Vision members to provide a “ Zionist council of sorts” for Garvin who asked them for advice on how to run a competition, input on the criteria to invite in the innovative Design Study A-10 and a list of architec and planners to review the NYC response. Garvin immediately asked NY/NV to run the competition, but the group said no. Martin Kamen, an experienced planner who had worked in the Queens Borough President’s office and chaired the group’s executive committee, firmly believed that LMDC should run the process. She wasn’t sure why NY/NV was being asked to manage it. Like other “in-call advisors” she was concerned that LMDC might just want them to provide cover. The extent to which Garvin relied on the group was “flattering” but, all caused NY/NV committee members to ask, “What is our role?” (Kesner, 2002).

12. Six teams, not five were chosen by the LMDC site committee and Garvin added three house consultants, Peterson, and McQuiggan, to the list of competing architectural teams. The THRAI team led by Ralf Vondra, submitted three designs, making for a total of nine designs from the seven teams.

13. After negotiations with the N. New weeks after the seven teams chose designs, the LMDC
announced a revised the office space component from 10 to 6.5 million square feet of space. The Port
Authority, however, had not actually changed its position—you can't assume the Port Authority
is going to give up its real estate interests,” a PA source was quoted as saying—but rather suggested
some of the space would be accommodated on parcels outside the WTC site. Since the City and
the Port Authority were still at loggerheads about where this might occur, “it was left perfectly amorphous”
(Whitfield 2002a). The new revision also al-
lowed for as much as two million additional square feet each of hotel and retail space. These revisions
reflected the fluidity of the planning situation as
well as ongoing negotiations between the City and
the Port Authority over “a host of issues,” including
the airport/WTC and swap put on the table by
Doctoroff ten weeks earlier (Neuman 2002a).

14. Up to this point, the governor and mayor had
not been involved with the design process. In mid-
December, the governor had walked around the
Winter Garden with Betts, Charles Gargano (chair-
man of the Empire State Development Corpora-
tion, LEMDC’s parent organization), and LEMDC’s
Alex Gworsky for about an hour asking questions. He
wanted to see the WTC and rebuilding plans again.
Now, just before the decision day, Lou Tomson
told Betts the governor was okay with both plans.
Doctoroff told Betts the mayor was okay with both
plans, Betts did not foresee a problem with a
ter selection. The full site committee heard the
work through revisions to both master plans only
the day before the vote. The committee liked both
plans, said Betts, his job was to persuade them of
the Virden plan. He did not want the LEMDC
to dissent on the final vote, so if something went
away, it would support the Virden plan. The
site committee voted unanimously for the Virden
plan, though Tomson abstained. “This should have
told me something,” Betts later remarked, but “I
missed this because Tomson did not care about
the aesthetics of the decision,” just the power and
politics of the situation. At 5:30 a.m. the next day,
Doctoroff called Betts to tell him that the report
in the Wall Street Journal that they worried about
with horror and implae. Something else, however,
was brewing: the Times piece. The phones started
ringing incessantly, the governor’s press agent yel-
ling, who do you think you are? “This introduced a
new factor—pride and who calls the shots” (Betts
2004). The governor and mayor met in a tiny room
for a final review of the two plans. The architects
had not been scheduled to make presentations,
but they were called in early that morning by
several accounts. Unkrik was said to have done
a great job, not so Virden. The governor made a
series of emotional statements and, according to
one person attending speaking on the condition
of anonymity, said, “I hate these tower skeletons
of death. I will never build them.” The meeting fell
apart soon after the governor left.

15. The five physical elements were
recognition of each victim of the attacks; an area for
quiet contemplation, a separate area for
violation by the families of the victims, a 2,500 square foot area
for the unidentified human remains collected at
the trade center site, and a way to make visible the
footprints of the original twin towers.

16. Sometimes political considerations interact with
compulsory performance objectives when competition
sponsors make up teams by matching different re-
spondents to an RFP in development competitions.
Another way in which a competition can become a
political platform is when a competition ends with
a public presentation before final selection, and the
event is used for show biz and able and entertain-
ment.