

Presented at the Atlantic Builders Convention 4-18-08:

The World Trade Center towers became one of the great symbols of this great nation. The most recognized buildings in the world symbolized American ingenuity, grace, and power. All who had the privilege to experience this great complex, saw in it the bigness of this great idea, we call The United States of America. They anchored the greatest skyline in the world and the hopes and aspirations of those who marvelled at them each day.

That is why they were attacked. This was an attempt to break the spirit of America and change the way that we live forever. While this tragedy did break our hearts, it will never break the American spirit – a spirit that continues to be the light and the hope of the world.

The world responded to these attacks, with citizens of countries around the globe saying “Today, we are all Americans.” There was no doubt that America would rebuild this great symbol of who we are, better and stronger.

This project was created to heal the American spirit. The late Herbert Belton, an architect who worked on the plans of the original World Trade Center worked with me to create a plan that re-engineered the towers to capture what was grand about the originals, while redressing every flaw, and answering a myriad of issues resulting from this changed world. First and foremost was the issue of security.

We set the towers far back from the West Side Highway and surrounded them with structures that rendered it impossible to attack with a truck bomb. We redesigned their structure to make them more resistant to an attack using jetliners of today’s size and speed. We developed an escape system that would allow rapid exit from the buildings in the event of an emergency.

Next, we created a memorial with input from victims’ family members that would honor the memories of those they loved so deeply, and memorialize the events of that tragic day for all the world and future generations to never forget. Inside the memorial is a garden of inspiration where people can visit from around the world to reflect on the events of 9/11 and the possibility of healing and peace.

We have preserved the footprints recreating six stories of the original Yamasaki facade on the north tower memorial and showing the ruins of the south tower on its respective foot print. The names of those lost in each tower are engraved on granite lining the inside of the facades. A memorial for the heroes who gave their lives to rescue those in the buildings is placed in the garden of inspiration.

We created a pedestrian friendly neighborhood setting with the lower buildings surrounding the towers, providing at grade retail and rich landscaping for shade, comfort, and beauty.

The theme of this design is the Phoenix rising from the flames greater and more majestic than ever. The low buildings with their sinuous form represent the flames from which these magnificent structures rise once again. The flames have not made us weak, but stronger and better.

I believe this is how we heal from those events of that fateful day. I remember the sense of healing in 1993, when those dark silhouettes were lit for the first time following the bombing.

It was a reassurance that as these buildings anchor that great skyline so does America anchor the dreams of so many people around the world.

There is no doubt that the rebuilding of this great symbol will take great effort. But it can and must be done. In addition to the parameters we've discussed earlier, TwinTowers II was designed to address the issue of economics. At the end of the day it is still a real estate development. This new incarnation is designed as a mixed use facility, which is the best form and most successful model today for a large development.

It will also become one of the greatest tourist attractions in the world. In short it will be an economic powerhouse with 800 condominiums, 8,000,000 square feet of commercial office space and 2,000,000 square feet of commercial retail space, and one of the best hotels in the world.

I believe this project should be built by establishing a syndicate of developers and financial institutions to create the real funding and resources necessary for its success.

I believe firmly that this can and must be done. We have the greatest developers, suppliers and design professionals in the world. Our unions represent the best workers in the world. And America has the will.

There are those who say that there is nothing that any of us can do change the course of events concerning the rebuilding of Ground Zero, let alone, any of the issues that we face today in this swiftly changing world. I believe each of us can make a difference here. Robert Kennedy once said to the young people of South Africa in their day of Affirmation, that many of the world's great movements, of thought and action, have flowed from the work of a single man.

A young monk began the Protestant Reformation, a young general extended an empire from Macedonia to the borders of the earth, and a young woman reclaimed the territory of France. It was a young Italian explorer who discovered the New World, and a 32 year-old Thomas Jefferson who proclaimed that "all men are created equal." These men moved the world, and so can we all. Few will have the greatness to bend history, but each of us can work to change a small portion of the events, and then the total – all of these acts – will be written in the history of this generation.

We all can make a difference here. This project can stimulate the economy by providing thousands of jobs in this region for years to come at a time when it is so desperately needed. That's what healing looks like. It's up to all of us.

Finally, there are those who say that we must temper our dreams and aspirations because of the new dangers we've witnessed in this world. That the boldness we so recognized as the American Dream is no longer feasible or even safe.

But it is our obligation to change this world once again.

Tennyson writes in Ulysses:

“Come now my friends
‘Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
That which we are we are
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate
But strong at will
To strive
To seek
To find
But not to yield.”

Let us not yield to some sense of fear and uncertainty
And let us not yield to those who would have us not be
The great nation,
The great state,
The great city,
And the great people,
That we are.