

THINK Team's Frederic Schwartz

THINK was the only one of the seven architectural teams to come up with more than one plan, but Frederic Schwartz said he and his partners in the THINK team realized soon after the Dec. 18 release date, that the World Cultural Center was their strongest idea and started making many of the adjustments before last week's announcement.

Schwartz told Downtown Express in December that he thought putting the cultural, educational, and museum facilities in two latticework structures in the shape of the Twin Towers was better than the other two ideas — a large elevated park over retail stores and a transit center or an enormous "Great Room" with community facilities.

"It is the one that answers all of the questions," Schwartz said over the weekend about the cultural center. "We were looking at different ideas. It helped us get to where we are."

He said after having conversations with L.M.D.C. officials and attending public hearings, it became clear early on that the culture scheme had to be refined. He said the team has already taken out the reflecting pools under the towers, which will open up more space for parks and pedestrian movement. "We had heard concerns about that," he said during an interview in Downtown Express' office Feb. 9. "We think they shouldn't be there. There should be more open space, more flexibility for the memorial competition."

The lattice structures would be built around the original footprints of the Twin Towers, but they would not touch the footprints, a concern of many of the victims' families.

He said his group has answered an L.M.D.C. suggestion by putting more of the retail space at street level, although he did not go into specifics. "These are things we were doing anyway that just make sense," Schwartz said.

The development corporation has also asked the team to improve the connections between the subway and commuter lines in the transit center and to look at making changes to the Battery Park City connections at West St. THINK has proposed pedestrian bridges over West St., but Schwartz did not say if the adjustment request means that officials are looking to build a short bypass tunnel near the site, which is one of the options being considered.

He said one of the advantages of the overall plan is that the towers would be built right away with the street grid, transit center, and memorial site. "It is the only project that in phase one realizes the skyline," he said, "that returns the skyline to our city and leaves open space and leaves the possibility of culture, and then has the city develop block by block as it always does."

Like Libeskind, THINK would extend Greenwich and Fulton Sts. through the site.

Schwartz said the 1,600-foot lattice towers answer Silverstein's concerns about tall buildings because they are "indestructible." Most of their interior would be open space so even if a plane crashed into them, he thinks they would remain standing because the fuel would have little material to burn.

He explained why he thought the buildings are safe: "This is not a target. You're not going to target creativity, art, music, theater and life — and also they're indestructible...They're engineered so they can't fail anywhere. If something hits, they have redundancy and reinforcement where it can't fall."

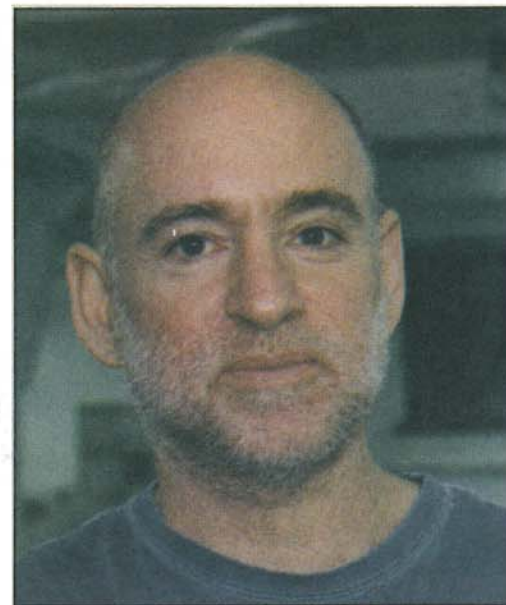
The cultural spaces could be built with the towers or afterwards and should be designed by other architects once the public decides what it wants, Schwartz said. Rebuilding the Whitehall Ferry Terminal in Lower Manhattan while it remains open — a project he has been working on for the last decade — is harder than building a performance space 1,000 feet in the air. "I don't think it's complicated at all," he said. "You know what's complicated? Building the ferry terminal while 70,000 people a day walk through it."

The latticework would allow for a re-creation of the "Tribute of Lights" memorial in the precise location where the original towers stood. The original tribute of twin beams of light in the sky was on display for a month after the six-month anniversary of the attacks, but they were to the west of the original towers' location.

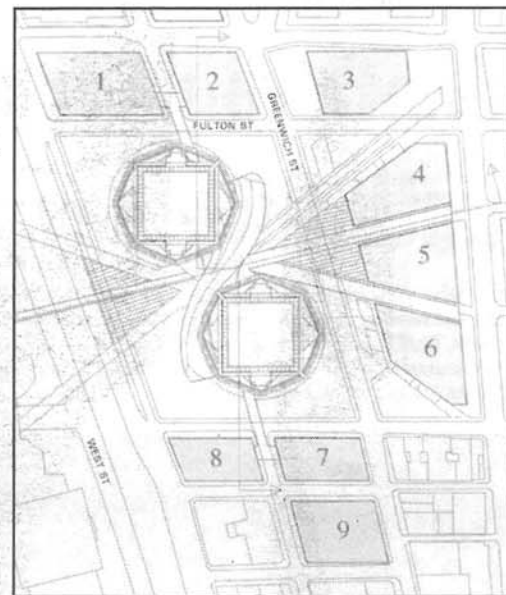
Schwartz says the lattice is reminiscent of the Twin Towers without being a replica, and serves to recapture the buildings' beauty. "I loved their sculptural quality," he said. "I looked at them from my window, I walked out of my front door, and they were there. From my office, they were there.... I loved the way the light would change."

"What I also loved, what I thought was really incredi-

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Downtown Express photo by Elisabeth Roberts



THINK team's original street plan. Frederic Schwartz, above says the plan has recently been modified to take out the circular reflecting pools. The numbers represent commercial buildings.

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