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# If the Mayor Wants to Help

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Mayor Michael Bloomberg has made it clear that he wants more say over what happens with the former World Trade Center site. Anybody who yearns for a speedy revival of Lower Manhattan should applaud the mayor's re-entry into this difficult arena. But we should also make certain New York's mayor stays involved in one of the most important and emotionally fraught urban renewal projects in the nation's history.

Four years after the attack at ground zero, the rebuilding is progressing in fits and starts. And Gov. George Pataki, who holds many of the levers of power, seems to be losing the political will needed to continue dealing fairly with all of the complicated interests involved. So we welcome Mayor Bloomberg to the fray and have some ideas about how he can help.

First, the mayor should breathe life into the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the quasi-private entity set up to run the planning and rebuilding of the site. Governor Pataki gave the corporation's hard-working and prestigious board a swift kick in the stomach last month when he caved in to a group of victims' relatives and squashed the long-planned International Freedom Center at the site. Already the governor's action has resulted in the resignation of Roland Betts, a key member of the corporation's board. But other board members are said to be angry and demoralized. Mr. Bloomberg, who gets to choose eight members of the board, has four vacancies to

fill. This would be an ideal time for the mayor to pick energetic and powerful new members, like the head of Goldman Sachs or the president of Pace University downtown.




Mr. Bloomberg has also let it be known that he would like for the city to buy out or find some other way to get free of Larry Silverstein, the developer who held the lease of the trade center when it was attacked on Sept. 11, 2001. While Mr. Silverstein might not be the ideal developer for this site, moving him at this stage might only further slow an already slow process of rebuilding.

Mr. Bloomberg's main complaint about Mr. Silverstein seems to be the push to restore the same square footage of commercial space that was once housed in the twin towers - about 10 million square feet. The mayor is pitching more apartments for the booming residential market downtown. As slowly as the rebuilding is going, Mr. Bloomberg should have enough time to argue for a readjustment of the square footage in future buildings to more residential than commercial space.

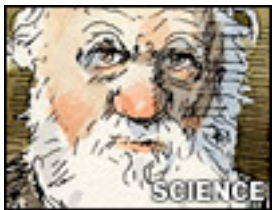
It would be easy to criticize the mayor for being tardy here, especially since he wasted so much energy promoting the stadium on Manhattan's West Side. But now he has turned to a problem in his city that not only deserves his attention, but also needs a strong and thoughtful leader to go forward.

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