



DOWNTOWN DIALOGUE

A NEW YEAR'S TOAST FOR LOWER MANHATTAN

BY LIZ BERGER



Downtown Alliance staffers make daily life better 24/7

New Year's is a time to consider the past and make resolutions for the future, a time of reflection and dreaming, reckoning and optimism. I've resolved to finish the books on my nightstand, learn how to make pie crust, and work out (this has been at the top of my list for too many years but this time I'm serious).

I also spent time as the new year approached reflecting on the past, present and future of Lower Manhattan—and when the clock struck 12 on New Year's Eve, I raised a glass to all of us who live Downtown and made a simple toast: *We've arrived.*

When the Downtown Alliance opened its doors in 1995, commercial vacancy rates approached 20 percent, companies that had been downtown for 100 years were leaving, and the streets were getting dark, dirty and empty at night.

Today Lower Manhattan's 55,000 residents have joined the more than 300,000 people who work here every day and nearly six million annual visitors to create a new kind of central business district, a thriving, round-the-clock neighborhood with 1,050 restaurants and retailers, eight museums, and nine public schools—with one more on the way.

For 16 years, our job has been to advance Lower Manhattan—through programs, service, research and advocacy—as a global destination of choice for companies, workers, residents and visitors. Here is how we do it:

We make daily life better now. The Downtown Alliance provides Lower Manhattan with supplemental sanitation, public safety, transportation, and homeless outreach. We started a public art program that turns construction sites into canvases and launched a co-working facility that offers affordable workspace to freelancers, entrepreneurs and startup companies. Today the neighborhood is one of the city's cleanest and safest. Our

sanitation staffers bag trash at all hours in all kinds of weather. Our public safety officers are the district's eyes and ears, continually patrolling the streets, checking in with businesses, and providing friendly assistance.

We support Lower Manhattan's businesses, employees and residents. We brand, market and position Lower Manhattan to investors, commercial tenants, shoppers, visitors and people who live and work here. We promote local retailers and restaurants all year long in print and on the web, with special emphasis on holiday shopping and summer cultural activity. Our research department produces business reports, market research documents and special publications such as our 2010 Survey of Lower Manhattan Residents. In addition, every year, we produce and distribute two million tourist, WiFi, and Downtown Connection maps, shopping and dining guides, residential living and retail investor brochures, and other printed materials.

We think about the future of Lower Manhattan. A half-century ago, David Rockefeller and his contemporaries proposed the creation of Battery Park City, the World Trade Center, the South Street Seaport, and countless other public/private partnerships, as strategies to sustain Lower Manhattan as a globally competitive central business district by encouraging the growth of a vibrant, mixed-use community. His legacy of business activism through visionary planning has inspired our work to keep Lower Manhattan a destination of choice for many years to come.

Lower Manhattan has been an active, vital and innovative center of urban life for more than 400 years. Our resolution is to keep it that way for (at least) 400 more!

—Liz Berger is President of the Downtown Alliance