TIME OUT NEW YORK

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Lower Manhattan's redevelopment is just one of many ambitious undertakings that will significantly alter the look of our city. Time-traveling to the year 2020, TONY imagines how this new urban landscape will change the way we live, work and play. By Soren Larson

And then there were two. Last week, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, busy determining what will be built on Ground Zero, winnowed its list to proposals by Daniel Libeskind and the THINK consortium. Public participation in this process has been unprecedented; during the weeks when the World Financial Center exhibited the suggested designs, herds of notebook-bearing natives and camera-toting tourists pressed their noses against the glass cases—and then didn't hesitate to submit written critiques. In short, people are mighty interested in the future face of New York.

But those aren't the only blueprints in town. New York is constantly reinventing itself, shedding skins like a stylist chucking last season's wardrobe. And now that architecture and urban planning dominate the public dialogue, it's a perfect time to take stock of the panoply of other projects that are in progress—or will be in the coming years—around the city.

The New York of 2020 will be vastly different from what we see today. Pessimists envision a Manhattan Mall of Starbuck's and Banana Re.

publics, but less cynical types believe we're forging a better Gotham, with more greenery, better access to the waterfront, ample housing and artful skyscrapers. "The direction that's being taken downtown seems to indicate that the architectural stakes have been raised," says Terence Riley, chief curator of the Department of Architecture and Design at MoMA.

The following pages dig into endeavors that will affect the various aspects of our urban existence—from cultural life and how we get around, to the spaces we live in and the places where we seek refuge from stress. It is difficult to predict which projects will appear, but one fact is clear: Even as we continue to deal with the consequences of the greatest act of destruction in the city's history, New Yorkers will keep building.

FUTURAMA The NYC of tomorrow will likely feature one of two WTC-replacement designs, from THINK (top left) or Daniel Libeskind (top right); also on the drawing board are (clockwise from center right) the expansion of MoMA, a performing-arts complex on West 37th Street and the Olympic Village in Queens.
ew experiences are more unsavory than traversing the creepy transportation hubs of Penn Station and the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Add to that the agony of a rush-hour cab ride to JFK, and no one would deny that it just plain sucks trying to get in and out of the city. This problem has not escaped the notice of our civic leaders. No, their ideas don't revolve around jetpacks or Segways, those hyped-up, stand-up scooters. If current notions come to pass, we'll be taking the train to the plane, skipping over the waves in a full fleet of water taxis and stepping onto conductorless subway trains.

"Ten years from now, we're going to see tremendous connectivity," says Amanda Burden, director of the Department of City Planning and chair of the City Planning Commission. "This will involve new ferries, bikeways, greenways and more. It's really important to think of ourselves more as one city, because we have all these great assets that are too hard to get to. Imagine going from Greengate to Times Square: You would take the water taxi to the West Side, then get on the 7 train, and you're easily there."

Burden mentions the 7 because city officials are certain the line will be extended—plans call for work to be done by 2009—from Times Square to the Jacob Javits Convention Center. This will provide easy access to the new Penn Station, to be installed in the classical McKim, Mead & White–designed General Post Office on Eighth Avenue, likely by 2010. The new terminal, designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, stars a curving glass-and-metal roof that will soar over a new main entrance and expansive ticket hall. An eye-popping, 180-foot-tall multimedia wall will display schedules and other information. No more scurrying about like rats in a dank tunnel.

By 2020, East Siders should also be enjoying the fruits of another major underground labor: the Second Avenue subway line. According to Deputy Mayor Daniel Doctoroff, the project is in the midst of a $1 billion capital plan that ends in 2004. "It's a long-term project," he says. "Over time, it will get done." And when riders descend to ride the rails, they'll probably be doing so in a fully automated environment—no ticket booths, no train conductors. By 2007, electronic signs and voices in the station will alert you to trains' arrival times. Eventually, you won't see a head poking out a window before the doors close; computers will shepherd the commuters.

For years, city officials have promised to use New York's waterways to better advantage. To that end, you might see a slew of new, small water taxis, which will negotiate the rivers and harbor and link commuters to Westchester and Connecticut. Elsewhere, the Staten Island Ferry is getting a makeover in both directions. Frederic Schwartz designed the sleek new Manhattan terminal, currently under construction, while the station on Staten Island's St. George waterfront is undergoing a much-needed face-lift with a clean, airy design by the mammoth firm Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum. Both should be receiving riders in 2004.

But the most pressing concern among today's travelers is the creation of faster, easier access to the airports. Mayor Bloomberg made his position clear recently, decreeing that "to make lower Manhattan a global center, we must have direct, one-seat airport access. Imagine stepping onto an AirTrain or PATH car, and 30 minutes later walking to your gate at JFK or Newark." Within a decade, frequent fliers will likely be whisking along on the AirTrain system—which will be extended from Queens through a new tunnel to lower Manhattan—or jumping on the PATH train to Newark.

As for La Guardia, well, don't get your hopes up—after all, cabbies have to earn a buck somehow.