

# Planned Performing Arts Centre at World Trade Center site Gets Money for Staff, Building Plans

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A performing arts centre planned for the World Trade Center site got a financial boost Thursday that improves the chances of the languishing project to begin construction in four years.

The Lower Manhattan Development Corp. approved \$1 million to hire staff or consultants research that will determine the cost of a building, said Maggie Boepple, director of the centre. The approval means that construction of the centre could begin in 2017, with a projected opening in 2019, she said.

"This is a push-off for the project," Boepple said.

The LMDC had withheld the money in September, citing concerns over the project's cost and fundraising ability.

Boepple and a board of directors named last year have raised \$25 million for the project.

The LMDC, a city-state corporation created to co-ordinate long-term plans for the trade centre site, has appropriated another \$99 million for the construction and design below grade. The above-ground construction will be funded with private money through fundraising, she said.

The board has addressed the concern over cost by scaling back the square footage of the project, Boepple said.

"We've taken out things our theatre consultants told us were not essential, like lots of offices," she said. "It's easier and cheaper to rent offices in the surrounding area. We also took out a floor that would have been a rental floor for parties."

She said the adjustments "bring the cost down to something that is realistic."

"I don't know what the final number will be but it will be money that we believe we can raise," said Boepple, adding that it will be below the initial estimate of \$400 million to \$500 million.

Architect Frank Gehry was retained in 2006 to develop a world-class facility that could host and produce a range of performing arts.

It will present theatre, dance and music from around the globe and produce work from young artists, composers, choreographers and playwrights," Boepple said.

The Joyce Theater has been chosen to produce and import dance and other productions.

Gehry's preliminary design calls for a 1,000-seat theatre, a secondary 200-seat theatre, rehearsal spaces and cafe, among other features.

One of the obstacles to construction has been the temporary Port Authority Trans Hudson train station entrance that occupies the space of the future centre.

The entrance was created to provide access to the transit centre that was badly damaged and flooded during the terrorist attacks.

The above-ground construction will start as soon as the temporary entrance to the PATH train station at the site is relocated, Boepple said.