

Panel, Not Public, Will Pick Final 9/11 Memorial Design

By EDWARD WYATT

Officials overseeing the competition to design a memorial to victims of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, said yesterday that the public would not be asked to comment on individual memorial designs, even after a handful of finalists are chosen.

The process, outlined yesterday by Kevin M. Rampe, the interim president of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, and Anita F. Contini, a vice president, contrasts with the method used by rebuilding officials to select a winning design for the World Trade Center site.

In that instance, the development corporation conducted more than a dozen public hearings and solicited comments on individual designs throughout two rounds of the selection process. Rebuilding officials made frequent references to the "open, inclusive process."

In the memorial competition, however, it is not yet clear whether the public will see any of the designs before a winner is selected.

The memorial process as described by officials yesterday will involve the public, though. The development corporation will hold "public forums" this summer where people can talk to members of the jury that will judge the competition about what elements they would like to see in the memorial.

But those forums are likely to be meetings of specific constituent groups rather than large public hearings, Mr. Rampe said. The jury will be appointed in the coming weeks.

Mr. Rampe and Ms. Contini would not comment on the potential members of the jury. But people close to the process said the jury members were likely to be drawn from the artistic and design professions and would probably include at least one relative of a person killed in the 9/11 attacks.

Mr. Rampe said the purpose of the public forums would be to "ensure that the jury has the benefit of knowing the public's aspirations when they review submissions and can consider those aspirations during the decision-making process," he said, speaking yesterday at a meeting sponsored by Wall Street Rising, a business improvement group.

"But I want to be very clear," he added. "Public comment will not be

solicited on individual designs. We will entrust the jury with the ultimate responsibility to select a design, and once entrusted we must respect the jury's role in making the selection."

Some people who have closely followed the rebuilding process questioned the need for such secrecy. Nikki Stern, a member of the development corporation's Families Advisory Council, said yesterday that she believed members of the public should be able to express their "emotional reactions and needs" to the decision makers.

But she agreed that the decision about a winning design "needs to be made by a small group of people."

A memorial mission statement and program released earlier as part of a preliminary outline to guide development were created by committees that included victims' family members, downtown residents, emergency workers, arts professionals and others.

Asked whether the mayor or the governor would influence the selection of a winning design, as they did with the selection of Daniel Libeskind's design for the trade center site, Mr. Rampe said the jury would make the final selection.

"The designs will be judged against how well they give effect to the mission statement and program as set forth in the competition guidelines," Mr. Rampe said.

Those guidelines will be released on April 28. It is expected that a winning design will be selected by the second anniversary of the attacks, Mr. Rampe said, but he added that the selection "will not be driven by dates; it will be driven by the best possible result."

The memorial competition will be open to "anyone, anywhere, without regard to nationality or professional accreditation," Mr. Rampe said, as long as entrants are 18 years or older. A required \$25 submission fee will go toward building the memorial, he said.

In the late summer or early fall the jury members will review the submissions without knowing the name or affiliation of the designer. The field will be narrowed to "approximately five" finalists, Mr. Rampe said. Finalists will be given a stipend by the development corporation to develop their concepts further before a winner is selected.