

MEAGHER, TOM

From: BONDY, HALLEY
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its good i had some extra time, it's pretty involved. Im sure there are certain things you wont want in here.

New York City is depending on a small construction company in Orange to fortify one of the future World Trade Center towers, and despite hurdles in Ground Zero development, the company already has a 50-foot, bomb-proof façade sitting in its yard.

Last year, Metfab Metals, a metal manufacturing company boasting 18 employees in Orange, was contracted to construct the steel support system for the bottom seven floors of a forthcoming World Trade Center tower. By July, Metfab Metals and its Portland-based contractor, Benson Global, had created a life-size model of the lobby storefront, which, in its actual form, will house retail spaces overlooking the September 11 memorial.

"We were so excited when we were hired," said Metfab Metals owner Jim Murray. "To think how far away Benson is, all the way in Portland, and they chose us."

The model, called a "curtain wall mock-up," is a 50-foot tall, 20-foot wide shell of a storefront for Tower 4, one of five towers, including the central Freedom Tower, to be constructed on the site. The actual Tower 4, designed by Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki, will stand 975 feet above the ground.

The mock-up consists of 10-feet high windows—made by Benson Global—bordered by Metfab's solid steel.

The companies also helped construct the New York Times building in Manhattan and other New York buildings.

"New York is right in our backyard," Murray said. "We like to keep it a small business. We don't need a huge factory because proximity is more important to deliver on-demand."

It is uncertain when the mock-up will become a reality on Ground Zero, where only some underground infrastructure has been built, and the steel columns for the Freedom Tower have been raised. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the owners of the site, originally predicted that the Freedom Tower would be completed by 2011, then last year issued a report that the work could not conceivably be done until 2013.

On August 4, the New York Daily News released details of a confidential study issued by the Lower Manhattan Construction Command Center that the site will not be completed until 2018, 17 years after the towers were demolished.

Two weeks ago, Silverstein called the Port Authority to arbitration, saying in a statement that the Port Authority is behind schedule on constructing crucial pieces of the project, including the PATH hub that runs under the site.

"We are trying to get an expert panel to resolve what supports a real schedule," said Janno Lieber, the World Trade Center project director for Larry Silverstein, the site's developer. "We're at the point where it's possible that if we don't move forward, the building may be delayed for some time, which is not great for Metfab, and it's tragic for us because this project is going great."

A similar mock-up for Tower 4 was tested for explosives in California, but the security standards and

details of the test are confidential, said Janno Lieber, the World Trade Center project director for Larry Silverstein, the site's developer.

"These buildings are designed with all of the obvious risks in mind, and they should be built to withstand events of real magnitude," Lieber said. "All of our work is subjected to heavy-duty testing and the designs have not been exceeded by buildings in the United States."

The purpose of the mock-up in Orange is to see how a building so secure could also be aesthetically pleasing, said Lieber. The windows are large and transparent so visitors can see the memorial plaza, which is slated to be a tree grove surrounding two pools.

Murray said he was asked in his \$2 million contract to fabricate architecturally-exposed structural steel, which he said is "steel that doesn't look like steel."

Murray said that, when he finally gets construction approval on Ground Zero, he will hire locally.

"I hope to bring a lot of revenue here," Murray said. "Everyone, all my painters and subcontractors and suppliers, are from Essex County."