Chinatown Planning and Rezoning Study

Key Findings from Research on Existing Conditions & Preliminary Strategies

Presentation to Manhattan Community Board 3’s Land Use, Zoning, Public & Private Housing Committee

September 10, 2013

Pratt Center for Community Development and The Collective for Community, Culture and the Environment Consultants to the Chinatown Working Group
CWG Members

- 11 Allen Street Tenants Association
- 61 Delancey Street Tenants Association
- 197 Madison Street Tenants Association
- American Legion Post 1291
- Asian American Arts Centre
- Asian Americans for Equality
- Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund
- Bowery Alliance of Neighbors
- Cherry Street Tenant Association
- Chinatown Business & Property Owners Group
- Chinatown Partnership
- Chinatown Rotary Club
- Chinatown YMCA
- Chinatown Youth Initiatives
- Chinese American Planning Council
- Chinese American Medical Society
- Chinese Chamber of Commerce of NY
- Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association
- Chinese Progressive Association
- Chinese Staff & Workers' Association
- Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence
- Community Board #1 Manhattan
- Community Board #2 Manhattan
- Community Board #3 Manhattan
- Community Emergency Response Team, CB#2
- Confucius Plaza
- Continental Garment Manufacturers Association
- CREATE in Chinatown
- Educational Alliance
- Friends of Columbus Park
- Good Ole Lower East Side (GOLES)
- Greater Chinatown Community Association
- Hamilton-Madison House
- Hester Street Collaborative
- Hotel Chinese Association
- Immigrant Social Services
- Indochina Sino-American Community Center
- International Chinese Transportation Professionals Association
- Lin Sing Association
- Lin Ze Xu Foundation of USA
- Lower East Side Business Improvement District
- Lower Manhattan GOP
- Little Italy Merchants Association
- M'Finda Kalunga Community Garden
- Museum of Chinese in America
- National Mobilization Against Sweatshops
- New York Downtown Hospital
- PS 130M Parents' Association
- The Pistol Club of Greater Chinatown
- 318 Restaurant Workers Union
- Two Bridges Neighborhood Council
- United Fukinese American Association
Chinatown Planning & Rezoning Study

• Building on the work of the Culture, Affordability, Preservation and Zoning (CAPZ) and Economic Development Working Teams of the Chinatown Working Group.

• Developing recommendations and implementation strategies for Affordable Housing, Culture and Historic Preservation, Economic Development and Zoning.
Study Areas
Demographics
Chinese Population, 2010
Median Age, 2010

- 20 - 25
- 25.1 - 30
- 30.1 - 35
- 35.1 - 40
- 40.1 - 50
Median Household Income

Source: 2007-2011 ACS
Housing Affordability
High Rates of Renter-Occupied Housing

Source: NYC Department of City Planning, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010.
Loss of Affordable Rental Housing

• 30,351 rent regulated units in context area

• Median rent for rent-regulated units in Chinatown/LES was $1,205 while for market-rate units it was $2,680

• Between 2002 and 2008* Chinatown and LES lost 9,000 rent-regulated units

• Mitchell-Lama age-out and conversion to market rate

* Additional research being conducted for last 5 years
Rising Housing Costs

- Market-rate rental prices rising
- Rent-burdened households – those who pay more than 30% of their income on rent -- concentrated in Chinatown core
Housing Overcrowding

Source: 2007-2011 ACS
NYCHA’s Proposed Infill Plan

- Lease open land to private developers
- Housing would be 80% market-rate and 20% affordable
- Strong opposition
Preservation of existing affordable housing

• Incorporate anti-harassment and anti-demolition regulations in a Special District, as in the Clinton Special District and other NYC Special Districts, to prevent predatory evictions and intentional demolitions by landlords, and preserve the existing rent regulated stock in Chinatown and its surrounding areas.

• Increase awareness of, and encourage use of, the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program in rent-regulated, Mitchell-Lama, and other forms of housing, to maintain affordable housing for seniors with a combined household income of $29,000 or less per year. Also the Disability Rent Increase Exemption Program (DRIE).
Potential Strategies

Use of local area median income to determine affordability levels in publicly subsidized or incentivized residential development.

Affordable housing, as defined in a Special Zoning District, should be limited to the two lowest bands of the Area Median Income (AMI) – 30% and 50% - reflecting average local incomes.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Income Limits for a three-person household in NY Metropolitan Area, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Group</th>
<th>% of AMI</th>
<th>Maximum Annual Income</th>
<th>Max Monthly Affordable Rent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Low-income</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>$22,100</td>
<td>$553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Low-income</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>$36,850</td>
<td>$921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>$58,950</td>
<td>$1,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate-income</td>
<td>120%</td>
<td>$88,350</td>
<td>$2,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-income</td>
<td>150%</td>
<td>$110,450</td>
<td>$2,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200%</td>
<td>$147,250</td>
<td>$3,681</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UD HUD Income Limits, Furman Center
Potential Strategies

Affordable rental housing development

- Create more affordable rental housing units through existing subsidy and incentive programs such as the 421-a tax incentive program, the Low Income Housing Tax Credits incentive program, and mandatory Inclusionary Zoning, using local median income to determine affordable rents levels.

- Explore the creation of a low-rent version of NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development’s micro-unit pilot program, for potential development of affordable housing for low-income individuals through new construction or rehabilitation.

- All new housing development on public land should be affordable (as defined in a proposed Special District) to low-income residents. Promote 100% affordability on NYCHA property and ensure that development meets the needs of local residents.

Affordable homeownership development

- Pursue affordable homeownership development through bonuses, tax incentives, Mutual Housing and other programs. Ensure that these programs restrict immediate resale and recapture property value increases.
NYCHA Developments  
(Smith, Baruch, LaGuardia Houses)

- Require public review under ULURP of any proposal for development on NYCHA property.

- Explore designation of a Special Planned Community Preservation District for NYCHA developments on the lower East River waterfront

The Planned Community Preservation Special District would protect the unique character of the NYCHA public housing projects that were planned and developed as a unit. No demolition, new development, enlargement or alteration of landscaping or topography would be permitted in the Special District except by special permit. The special permit would require a ULURP.
Business & Employment
Commercial Corridors

Manufacturing Businesses

Wholesale Businesses

Personal Services Businesses

Food & Accommodations Businesses
### Key Industries in Draft Study Area by # of Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration</td>
<td>33,631</td>
<td>61,482</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>3,536</td>
<td>5,181</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>2,347</td>
<td>2,906</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>2,090</td>
<td>2,821</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>1,427</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services (excluding Public Administration)</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>1,107</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>1,405</td>
<td>1,071</td>
<td>-23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>3,314</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>-74.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; Support, Waste Management and Remediation</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>-3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>-20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>-68.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Services</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>129.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of Companies and Enterprises</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>109.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Mining and Utilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>52,780</strong></td>
<td><strong>81,651</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Residents who Walk to Work

The percentage is calculated by dividing employed people who walk to work by the total of employed.

Source: 2007-2011 ACS
Key Findings from Local Businesses

• Major Challenges:
  – Loss of customers
  – Limited parking
  – Increased rent

• Current businesses unaware of existing assistance programs

• Access to loans not a significant issue
Potential Strategies

Enhance business support services

• Promote fellowships sponsored by local non-profits to encourage next generation entrepreneurs and capacity building for local businesses and economic development projects.

• Support and develop assistance programs for small businesses that are representative of the unique character and assets of the area and provide culturally specialized goods and services for local and regional shoppers.

• Develop assistance programs for small business disaster preparedness and business continuity.

• Develop coordinated marketing campaign for Chinatown businesses and/or specific sectors.

• Tax incentives for landlords/developers maintaining affordable commercial space.

Preserve zoning that protects and promotes mixed uses, including commercial and manufacturing
Potential Strategies

Improve transportation options to facilitate customer access

- Identify alternatives for municipal parking that take valuable public parking spaces (e.g. prohibit government placards for street parking)
- Strengthen connections with regional bus lines to promote local shopping

Leverage Chinatown’s cultural assets for economic development and increased “foot traffic”

- Develop a night market featuring local artisans and other vendors; coordinate with local retailers to maximize foot traffic to existing stores during market hours
- Revive/develop cultural events such as the “Taste of Chinatown” or a Lunar New Year flower market
- Curate cultural performances featuring Asian performers marketed to the NYC’s regions Chinese community
- Identify and develop open spaces that provide venues for both formal and informal cultural expression and activities.
Potential Strategies

Develop sector-based anchor projects that provide retail, wholesale and production space connected with workforce development programs

**Food Cluster**
- Public food market featuring Asian-only cuisines on the ground level
- Additional space for wholesale trade and production
- Offer culinary and restaurant management training programs

**Jewelry Cluster**
- Ground floor retail with wholesale jewelry exchange on upper floor
- Small production spaces available
- Offer jewelry apprentice programs
Culture & Historic Preservation
Current Lack of City Landmarks & Historic Districts

• Much of Draft Study Area acknowledged as historic, as part of National Register Historic Districts, but it lacks “teeth”

• Only a few local landmarks and almost no local historic districts in the Draft Study Area, leaving the historic fabric vulnerable to out-of-context development.

• Preservation can happen through landmarking and/or through zoning
Strong Cultural History

- Rich and vibrant cultural history on display through:
  - Formal and informal public gatherings
  - Signage
  - Culturally-oriented businesses
  - Cultural programming and events
  - Family, civic and cultural institutions

- Cultural producers struggle with funding and affordable space

- One of NYC’s most unique cultural and historical resources
Potential Strategies

• Identify historic areas for protection within the zoning text

• Educate Property owners and business owners about the pros and cons of landmarking

• Begin push for landmarking with individual buildings

• To be determined: priority sub-districts/sites for protection
Potential Strategies

- Use Transfer of Development Rights from existing developments to support arts and cultural organizations

- Incentivize or mandate affordable arts and cultural uses within new construction

- Establish a cultural resources fund/Conservancy

- Provide for better access to and programming in public spaces
Zoning & Land Use
Zoning & Land Use Research Findings

- Zoning allows much denser and taller buildings than currently exist
- Little public open space and parkland (apart from East River Park)
- Mix of uses: commercial, residential, institutional, manufacturing and industrial
Land Use: Residential Only
Increased development pressures in Chinatown and surrounding areas --- not covered by either a Special District or contextual zoning
Zoning & Land Use Research Findings

- Recent out-of-scale development not required to go through review process

- Most Chinatowns in other cities have Special District designations to preserve their unique character and community – but many are not successful because they have lost much of their ethnic population
Zoning & Land Use Research Findings

- Higher FAR and lower heights indicative of old law tenement buildings throughout draft study area

- Significant amount of unused FAR in NYCHA properties that are zoned R7-2
Different parts of the draft study area are characterized by different zoning, building heights, architecture and urban design.

Historic core composed of buildings between 5 and 9 stories – many of them old and new law tenements.

NYCHA public housing, Confucius Plaza, Chatham Green and Chatham Towers, and Two Bridges range from 10 to 40 stories.

Many commercial buildings along western border also taller due to higher ceiling heights.
Zoning & Land Use Research Findings

- Unique and vibrant streetscapes and signage in much of the area
- Small businesses that provide culturally specialized goods and services for local and regional shoppers and visitors
- Cultural and community organizations serve the large immigrant population, local & regional residents, and visitors
- Unique site plans in historic large-scale development on East River waterfront
Zoning & Land Use Research Findings

- Thriving immigrant community
- Many residents work in the area
- Much of the area’s population is low income and older, with larger household sizes
- 85% of the residents are renters and many of them are rent-burdened
- Overcrowded housing
- Lack of affordability affects low income residents, small businesses, arts and cultural establishments -- resulting in potential harassment and displacement of existing tenants, and gentrification
As one of NYC’s most unique areas of historic and ongoing immigrant settlement, there are many historically and culturally significant buildings and places.

Many have been demolished due to lack of landmark or other protections.
Many areas subject to flooding and storm surge

Much of the area is in Evacuation Zone 1 -- home to significant vulnerable populations

Lack of permeable surfaces and green infrastructure, especially in inland areas
Potential Zoning Strategies
Establish a Chinatown and Surrounding Areas Special District (s) with Sub-districts

- Neither the current zoning nor existing contextual zones are appropriate to the unique cultural and architectural history and contemporary character and use diversity of the area.
- The Special District will identify certain provisions such as anti-harassment and anti-demolition regulations that should apply throughout the entire district.
- The Special District should be comprised of several sub-districts with specific provisions that reflect the contextual differences in character and built form and the challenges and opportunities in each.
- Recommendations will be made for areas outside of the RFP study area that have similar cultural, demographic and built form characteristics and challenges.
General Purposes of the Special District

• The Special District should incorporate applicable language from other NYC Special Districts but also establish general purposes unique to Chinatown and its surrounding areas.

• The Special District should include successful provisions from other cities’ Special Districts such as height, built form, use and streetscape provisions and the preservation of a unique culture and thriving resident population.

General Purposes should include:

1. Recognition and preservation of the area’s unique history and culture
2. Retaining the mixed-use character for residents and workers
3. Preserving the existing scale and built form
4. Preserving the area’s unique urban design and streetscape
5. Preserving and developing cultural and community facilities
6. Anti-harassment and anti-demolition provisions that protect the existing low income population from displacement
7. Encouraging the provision of new housing affordable to low income residents
8. Preserving the small-scale character and variety of stores and activities and prohibiting or limiting incompatible uses
Built Form and Open Space Strategies

- Scale of any new development should reflect existing heights and density, e.g. low rise in the Preservation Core.

- The Special District should be zoned to permit the existing characteristic mix of uses.

- The unique layout of streets, buildings and open spaces in all sub-districts should be preserved. Any changes should require special permit review.

- In areas subject to flooding and storm surge open space and permeable surfaces should be preserved and resiliency and green infrastructure developed.

- Development near the waterfront should be required to provide for maximum public access and community use.
Zoning Strategies Relating to Residential Affordability

• Anti-harassment and anti-demolition regulations such as those found in the Clinton and other NYC Special Districts

• Definition of “affordable housing” limited to those bands of the Area Mean Income that reflect average local incomes

• Inclusionary Zoning requirement that all new housing development should include affordable units (as defined in the Special District) or provide funds for the preservation, rehabilitation or new construction of fully affordable housing offsite but within the Special District.

• All new housing development on public land should be affordable (as defined in the Special District) to low-income residents. Promote 100% affordability on NYCHA property and ensure that development meets the needs of local residents.

• Consider transfer of development rights from properties in Preservation sub-areas to appropriate other properties in the Special District thus discouraging the demolition of existing affordable housing.
The Special District should identify, protect and promote specific commercial, manufacturing, cultural, and community facility uses that are representative of the character of the area and provide culturally specialized goods and services for local and regional shoppers and visitors, and should modify the zoning regulations to permit them even where the underlying zoning would not.

In sub-districts the Special District regulations could prohibit certain uses that would be inconsistent with the unique streetscape or character of the sub-district.

In appropriate sub-districts, the Special District should limit the square footage and street wall frontage of certain commercial uses and require special permit review for those exceeding the provisions.

The Special District should permit the elements that contribute to the unique and vibrant streetscapes and signage that are not allowed under the current zoning.
Zoning Strategies Relating to Culture and Historic Preservation

- The Special District should preserve the historical and cultural character of the area by identifying and limiting demolition and alteration of buildings of Special Significance.

- The Special District could consider permitting the transfer of development rights from historic and culturally significant buildings to appropriate areas in the Special District.

- In appropriate sub-districts consideration should be given to requiring or incentivizing cultural uses for new development.
Preliminary Zoning Approach

1) In the RFP Study Area:
   Chinatown and Lower East River Sub-Districts:
   A Chinatown Preservation
   B Planned Unit Community Preservation
   C Higher density mixed-use
   D Waterfront
   E Bowery

2) Recommendations for areas outside of the RFP study area with similar characteristics and challenges:

   * Little Italy Special District amendments
   ** Area north of Chinatown Preservation sub-district
Similar characteristics outside of RFP study area

- Land use (mixed-use character)
- Built form (height, FAR & building typology)
- Rent-occupied units
- Rent-stabilized units
- Income
- Rent burden
- Small businesses serving local & regional immigrant community
- Signage and streetscape
- Harassment
Small businesses and streetscapes

Orchard Street, north of Grand

Eldridge Street, north of Grand

Mott Street, north of Grand

Orchard Street, south of Grand

Eldridge Street, south of Grand

Mott Street, south of Grand
Potential Recommendations for Areas outside of RFP Study Area

- Anti-harassment and demolition – HPD certification requirement
- Affordable housing preservation and development
- Small business & industrial preservation
- Preservation of buildings with cultural and historical significance
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