The Plan for Chinatown & Surrounding Areas
Achieving Affordability, Preservation and Growth

Draft Final Recommendations & Implementation Strategies

Presentation to the Chinatown Working Group
November 4, 2013

Pratt Center for Community Development
The Collective for Community, Culture and the Environment
Introduction

• Living immigrant neighborhood

• Local assets: affordable housing, community, cultural identity, neighborhood jobs

• Citywide, regional value

• Major threats: encroaching development; gentrification; displacement
Integrated Recommendations & Implementation Strategies

Zoning

Affordable Housing

Culture & Historic Preservation

Economic Development
CWG Implementation Strategy

• The CWG should reconvene the Affordable Housing, Culture and Historic Preservation, Economic Development, and Zoning working teams as “Action Groups.” These groups should work with other CWG working groups, local and citywide organizations, elected officials and city agencies to promote specific actions and ensure implementation of zoning and other recommendations.

• Additional funding should be obtained for technical assistance that may be needed to shepherd the Special Zoning District/Sub-Districts through City Planning and the ULURP process and advance other recommendations.
Affordable Housing
Key Findings

• **Market rate rentals are not affordable to the existing population.**
  At a local AMI of $37,362 for a family of four, rent for a two-bedroom apartment would need to be $934 per month to be considered affordable. Market rate prices for one-bedroom apartments in the Context Area range from $1,200 to as high as $9,850.

• **Overcrowding is common.**
  More than a third of families in overcrowded conditions in certain census tracts in the core

• **Public housing provides a critical measure of affordability, but cannot meet all demand.**

• **The vast majority of people in the study area rent, and over half of all renters have a high rent burden.**

Severely Overcrowded Housing Units, 2007-2011
Affordable Housing
Key Findings

- **Affordable units in the study area and in larger context area are aging out of pricing control programs.**
  Loss of 9,000 regulated units between 2002 and 2008. Mitchell-Lama developments and projects built with LIHTC are now or will soon be going into decontrol.

- **Current zoning incentive programs have not produced many affordable units to date.**
  Despite the Inclusionary Housing Program overlay in the 2008 LES rezoning area there are only three projects in the context study area for a total of 59 units.

- **Increasing property taxes and maintenance costs in older tenement buildings, coupled with low income from rent regulated units create a burden for some property owners.**
Affordable Housing
Principles/Goals

• Preserve existing affordable housing.

• Develop affordable rental housing, based upon local area median income.

• Promote affordable homeownership development.

• Any new housing development on public land should be affordable to low-income residents.
PRESERVATION

1. **Apply anti-harassment and anti-demolition provisions throughout Chinatown and its surrounding areas**

   Incorporate anti-harassment and anti-demolition regulations in the Special Zoning District, as in the Clinton Special District and other NYC Special Districts. *(DCP)*

2. **Encourage use of SCRIE and DRIE in rent regulated, Mitchell Lama and other forms of housing.**

   Increased education and outreach by social service agencies and tenant organizations.

3. **Incentivize preservation of rent regulated units in new and old-law tenement buildings through property tax abatements tied to rental income.**

   Pursue tax abatement credits similar to SCRIE and DRIE to all rent regulated units in a building to reduce the tax burden on property owners in exchange for maintaining residential affordability. *(HPD, DOF, NYS)*
Affordable Housing
Recommendations & Implementation Strategies

DEVELOPMENT

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

Affordable housing, as defined in the Special Zoning District, should be limited to those bands of AMI that reflect average local incomes, or below 45 percent of the HUD-calculated citywide AMI of $85,900 for a family of four. *(DCP, HPD)*

6. Create more affordable rental housing units through existing subsidy and incentive programs (e.g. 421-a, LIHTC, and Inclusionary Zoning) using local median income to determine affordable rent levels.

Include guaranteed and bonused affordable housing development provisions in the Special Zoning District, with specific requirements such as percentage of affordable units, affordable rent levels and on-site and off-site development tailored to meet local needs. *(DCP, HPD)*

7. Establish a mutual housing association (MHA) for democratic control of all affordable units in inclusionary zoning projects within a special zoning district.

Include provision for establishment of a Mutual Housing Association held by a local organization with deep housing development and management experience to administer affordable units created through inclusionary zoning in the Special Zoning District. *(DCP, HPD)*
DEVELOPMENT (continued)

8. Pursue affordable homeownership development through FAR bonuses, tax incentives, Mutual Housing and other programs.

Include affordable homeownership provisions in the Special Zoning District, with specific requirements such as percentage of affordable units, permanence of affordability, and on-site and off-site development, tailored to meet local needs. *(DCP, HPD)*

9. Consider HPD’s micro-unit pilot program for potential development of affordable supportive housing for formerly homeless and low-income adults through new construction or rehabilitation.

Exploration by the CWG, community-based organizations and non-profit housing developers *(HPD).*
Affordable Housing
Recommendations & Implementation Strategies

Planned Community Preservation and Resilience District

10. Promote 100% affordability on NYCHA property and ensure that development meets the needs of local residents.

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

Designate a Planned Community Preservation and Resilience District for NYCHA developments on the lower East River waterfront. (DCP)
Economic Development
Key Findings

1. Diverse economy, comprised primarily of small businesses.

2. Residents tend to work in the neighborhood.

3. Need for job opportunities for local residents, many of whom have limited English skills.

4. Decline of Chinatown’s Garment Industry has had a significant impact on the local economy. The Healthcare and Food industries (including retail, wholesale trade and manufacturing) have absorbed some of the job loss and provide opportunities for residents with limited English skills. But industries such as manufacturing, that are particularly vulnerable to high real estate costs, will not be able to meet their growth potential in Chinatown without interventions.

5. In addition to rising commercial rents, many businesses suffer from a loss of customers and could benefit from marketing strategies as well as targeted business assistance to achieve greater operational efficiencies.

6. Chinatown has a strong local economic development infrastructure that can be built upon to further support the growth of its economy.
Economic Development Principles/Goals

• Promote economic development that benefits the residents and businesses of Chinatown and surrounding areas.

• Create well-paying job opportunities for the residents of Chinatown and surrounding areas.

• Build upon the existing base of businesses and commercial activity in Chinatown to continue to serve the local and regional Chinese population.

The CWG should invite all local groups with the capacity (or potential capacity) to implement one or more of the plan recommendations to form an Economic Development Action Group that will work with other CWG groups, local and citywide organizations, and government agencies to move the plan forward.
Economic Development
Recommendations & Implementation Strategies

2. **Foster the next generation of Chinatown’s economic development leaders.**

- Develop a “Young Entrepreneurs Boot Camp” series for local residents or sponsor participation in existing fellowship programs such as Coro’s Immigrant Civic Leadership Program or the BALLE Fellowship program.

- Promote the next round of NYCEDC’s THRIVE Competition, which offers prize money and promotion opportunities for business plans developed by NYC immigrant entrepreneurs.

*Coordinated efforts by CWG Economic Development Action Group members and other local community development organizations as well as youth and workforce development entities such as LAGCC and BMCC.*
3. Maintain affordable commercial space for local businesses to survive and thrive.

(a) Incorporate the following provisions in the Special Zoning District:

- Limit the size of certain commercial uses in some areas
- Require a Special Permit for certain uses, such as hotels, regardless of size
- Allow additional light manufacturing uses that are compatible with a mixed-use neighborhood in commercially zoned areas of the Special District
- Include a “G” zoning designation requiring a special permit to convert existing manufacturing space
- Prohibit certain uses, e.g. universities and very large entertainment or retail establishments that are incompatible with a local residential community

Application to DCP for the designation of a Special Chinatown and Lower East River District. Identify members of the CWG Economic Development Action to work with the Zoning Action Group and champion economic development related provisions in the special district proposal.

(b) The City should implement one or more of the following tax incentive and rental programs in Chinatown and its surrounding areas:

- Property tax abatement for landlords providing space to businesses defined as “community serving” with a five year lease or more.
- Property tax abatement for landlords committing to limit annual commercial rent increases to 3% per year.
- Commercial rent increase cap regulations similar to residential rent stabilization.

Advocacy by the CWG, local economic development corporations, Community Boards and elected officials. Consultation with DOF, SBS, and the NYS Legislature. Definition of “community serving” to be proposed by CWG member organizations.
4. Develop sector-based anchor projects that provide multi-use space connected with targeted workforce development programs.

(a) Develop an Asian Food Center in Chinatown, with a public food market featuring Asian-only cuisine on the ground level and additional space for Asian wholesale food distribution and food manufacturing on the ground and upper floors.

(b) Develop a Chinatown Jewelry Center, with ground floor retail space and space for a wholesale jewelry exchange and jewelry production on the upper floors.

(c) Explore additional sector-based workforce development programs, specifically in the healthcare industry in partnership with a major hospital network or clinic.

*Coordinated effort by CWG Economic Development Action Group members, in consultation with SBS (Neighborhood Development Division), EDC and institutions such as BMCC and LAGCC and Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center, a non-profit industrial developer in Brooklyn.*
5. Revive Chinatown’s customer base by leveraging Chinatown’s cultural and unique business assets.

(a) Develop a range of cultural programs, events, and performances. Market to the regional Chinese community and the national and international tourist industry.

(b) Create a coordinated marketing campaign for Chinatown’s businesses aimed at Chinese residents in the outer boroughs and in the region. Promote regional bus service to encourage shopping in Chinatown.

(c) Work with the local banking community to institute philanthropic sponsorships of local cultural initiatives, e.g. murals by local artists, use of bank windows for exhibitions of local art, and cultural events and performances.

Coordinated effort by CWG’s Economic Development Action Group, working with the Culture and Historic Preservation Action Group and in collaboration with the Chinatown Partnership/Chinatown BID, Chinese Chamber of Commerce of NY, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, SBS, Chinatown Create and others.
6. Enhance business services to support a vibrant business community

(a) Advise and assist business owners on business strategy, marketing, business practices, wages, compliance, etc.

(b) Advise and assist business owners on accessing financial incentives, grants and other government or non-profit sponsored programs.

(c) Educate businesses on the benefits of providing prevailing wages and creation of higher disposable incomes in the neighborhood.

(d) Provide ESL services to businesses and employees. Pursue partnerships with BMCC and LAGCC. Tailor classes for the restaurant, retail and healthcare industries.

(e) Form a Business Advisory Council, comprised of business owners that both rent and own their space, to work with the Chinatown BID.

(f) Provide business continuity and emergency preparedness workshops to help businesses prepare for and respond to business disruptions.

(g) Create a Business Emergency Grant Pool Program for local businesses in times of emergency.

(h) Encourage the Chinatown BID to apply for the next round of the “BID Challenge,” which rewards innovative ideas for job development and investment in BIDs.

Coordinated effort by the CWG Economic Development Action Group, working with the Chinatown Partnership, the Chinatown BID and local economic development groups, in consultation with SBS and in partnership with BMCC and LAGCC.
7. Improve transportation and parking options for Chinatown residents, workers and visitors.

(a) Reopen Park Row (if not completely, then at least partially for public or government parking).

(b) DOT should commission a study for regional bus parking locations, including Park Row, and the DEP parking lot under the Manhattan Bridge.

(c) Identify alternatives for government parking to reduce placard parking by government employees and preserve valuable on-street public parking spaces. Consider opening up a portion of Park Row for government parking and enabling greater government parking on the DEP parking lot under the Manhattan Bridge.

Efforts by CWG’s Economic Development Action Group, in collaboration with CWG’s Parking, Transportation, Circulation and Security Working Group and local community development organizations, and in consultation with NYCDOT and NYPD.
Chinatown and its surrounding areas form a vibrant canvas upon which centuries of immigration have left their mark. In order to build the future of these neighborhoods and communities we must recognize and preserve the significant elements of their past as well as their present.
Chinatown and surrounding areas comprise some of the oldest neighborhoods in New York City and include a range of historic buildings, streets and developments that provide an important window on different periods in the city’s history.

1. **Historic Tenements**
   - One of the largest remaining concentrations of new and old law tenement buildings in New York City lies within the historic Chinatown core, Lower East Side and Little Italy.
   - Decorative ironwork fire escapes. Chinese elements, e.g. lanterns, pagoda-like facades, and red awnings have been added more recently in some cases.

2. **Public Housing (NYCHA)**
   - “Tower in the Park” planned unit developments on the southern and eastern portions of the RFP Study Area, influenced by European architect, Le Corbusier. Distinctive for breaking the street grid, building heights, and iconic orange brick facades.

3. **Historic streets**
   - The Five Points area, bounded by Bayard, Worth, Bowery, and Baxter Streets has a unique street pattern and a significant place in New York City’s cultural history. Doyers Street, with its “bloody angle” is widely considered to be the defining street of historic and contemporary Chinatown.
Culture & Historic Preservation
Historic & Culturally Significant Resources

- **Local NYC Landmarks**
  Buildings or districts designated and regulated by the NYC LPC. Currently no local Historic Districts in the RFP Study Area, although some exist nearby.

- **National Register of Historic Places**
  The boundaries of four National Register Historic Districts intersect with the RFP Study Area: The Chinatown & Little Italy Historic District; The Bowery Historic District; The Two Bridges Historic District; The Lower East Side Historic District.

- **Place Matters Census of Places that Matter**
  Properties nominated by the public, that evoke associations with history, memory and tradition. Recognition only. No formal protections.

- **Special Zoning District**
  Special Little Italy District, just west of the Study Area, established in 1977 by CPC. Includes 18 buildings of special significance that may not be demolished or have external alterations without review and approval by the CPC.
Culture & Historic Preservation
Historic & Culturally Significant Resources

Source: NYC Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Copyrighted by NYC Department of City Planning, 2013; Placematters.net; NYC State Department of Parks and Historic Preservation; Chinatown Working Group
## Culture & Historic Preservation

### Pros and Cons of Local Landmarking

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros:</th>
<th>Cons:</th>
<th>Neither Pro nor Con</th>
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<td>• Is the highest level of protection available for a property. Even small changes may be regulated by the LPC.</td>
<td>• Materials required by LPC for use can be more costly, and the cost burden is on the property owner.</td>
<td>• Property owner consent is not required, but is important in LPC’s designation process.</td>
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<td>• Does not regulate changes to the interior of properties.</td>
<td>• LPC may require the property owner to remove/change culturally significant signage and other features not associated with the building/district’s designated “period of significance.”</td>
<td>• Research on preservation and gentrification has yielded varied results. On one hand, preservation can be a boon to tourism, which helps stimulate the local economy. On the other hand, preservation can limit new development opportunities, and it is not guaranteed that preserved housing and retail space will remain affordable (see the West Village).</td>
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<td>• Prevents “demolition by neglect”/requires property owners to keep their properties in a state of “good repair.”</td>
<td>• An historic district would limit possibilities for new development of affordable housing.</td>
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<td>• Within an historic district, provides the opportunity for public input on new development that may not otherwise exist if the development is as-of-right under the current zoning.</td>
<td>• Transfer of development rights can lead to further out-of-scale development outside the district or nearby individual landmarks.</td>
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<td>• Provides some grant opportunities for property owners and owners may sells air rights to both contiguous and adjacent properties.</td>
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Rich cultural history

- Formal and informal public gatherings
- Culturally-oriented businesses
- Cultural programming and events
- Family, civic and cultural institutions

Strong sense of place

- Brightly colored signage in Chinese characters on buildings and awnings. Add to the vibrancy of the street and let both outsiders and residents alike know that this is Chinatown.

- **Vibrant street life.** Characterized by street vendors and stores that spill out onto the sidewalk, density and diversity of pedestrians (residents, tourists, office workers), and limited sidewalk space.
• **Chinatown** has valuable creative and cultural resources that should be supported.
   Including local artists and performers, and people with unique skills and knowledge. Need to recognize and celebrate these cultural treasures and promote them locally and to a broader citywide and regional audience.

• **Need for affordable and adequate facilities** by non-profit arts and cultural organizations for both administrative and programming needs.

• **Need for a performing and visual arts center/campus/network in Chinatown**
   Substantial effort has already been made by CREATE in Chinatown toward developing a performing and visual arts center in the area. Needs ongoing support, organizational development and funding. Potential locations include the Loew’s Theater on Canal Street.

• **Need for more effective use of former Public School 23 at 70 Mulberry Street.**
Value of public open space, not only for active recreation but also for quiet contemplation, cultural expression, an opportunity to connect with others or merely observe.

Small parks

Sara D. Roosevelt Park, Columbus Park. Very well utilized by local residents of all ages.
  - Benches and tables (elderly)
  - Early morning Tai Chi, martial arts, or dance (elderly, middle-aged residents)
  - Ball courts (teens, youth)
  - Playgrounds (young children, parents, caretakers)

Public plazas

Chatham Square (local residents, tourists)
Confucius Plaza (local residents, workers)

Potential public open space at Confucius Plaza

East River Waterfront
Physically separated from the neighborhood by the FDR Drive overpass and South Street. Isolated from economic activity in the RFP Study Area. Some use, primarily by elderly residents for sitting, fishing, or strolling.
1. Preserve and enhance the cultural character of Chinatown that makes it a unique and diverse community.

2. Support cultural activities and preservation efforts that will attract and retain Chinatown residents, businesses, and visitors, while also addressing the quality and importance of family life.

3. Create a dedicated community arts center and other appropriate spaces for cultural use that are affordable to area artists, organizations and residents.

4. Recognize, protect and preserve Chinatown’s historic buildings/structures and districts of architectural and/or cultural significance, its distinctive streetscapes and other characteristic elements of the community.

5. Encourage imaginative new architecture and environmental design reflective of contemporary life and aesthetics, but also respectful of older architectural styles in the neighborhood.

6. Ensure that the efforts of other CWG working teams align with the community’s historic/cultural preservation, growth, and development goals.

7. Work with and support local cultural organizations that gather, safeguard and disseminate the shared histories and stories that collectively form the basic foundations of this neighborhood and are vitally relevant to its future.

8. Pursue policies and efforts aimed at long-term community preservation and development rather than the creation of a “Disneyland Chinatown.”
Culture & Historic Preservation
Goals

• Preserve sites of cultural significance to the contemporary community, as well as sites of historic significance.
• Preserve and build upon Chinatown’s cultural assets and promote opportunities for artistic and cultural expression.
1. Preserve and protect sites of cultural, historic or architectural significance in the study area.

A number of potential Sites of Significance have been identified in this study, building upon a list generated by CWG’s Culture & Historic Preservation Working Team.

The following three criteria - which expand upon the traditional criteria established for both local and national historic designation – have been/should be applied to sites of significance that warrant protection:

• Cultural significance to the current community
• Historic significance for the area and/or city as a whole
• Architectural significance

Incorporate Sites of Significance into the Draft Special District text as “Buildings of Special Significance,” following the Special Little Italy District model.

While Buildings of Special Significance would not be demolished without special permit approval by DCP as in Little Italy, both change in conforming use or façade alteration would merely require an authorization from DCP.

Close collaboration with property owners would be essential during this process.
Culture & Historic Preservation
Identified Potential Sites of Significance

Source: NYC Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO
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2. Some of the identified Sites of Significance that fall outside the Draft Special District will require different interventions, which should be determined on an individual basis.

- Sites within the Special Little Italy District could be added to Buildings of Special Significance in that district.
- Other sites may require non-zoning interventions, including landmarking or plaques noting the building’s historic and/or contemporary significance.

*CWG should partner with local preservation groups, such as the Bowery Alliance of Neighbors, Friends of the Lower East Side, and the Lower East Side Preservation Initiative, to discuss best interventions for these sites, and make recommendations to the appropriate community board and/or the LPC, accordingly.*
3. Pursue landmark designation for a Henry Street Historic District.

This area includes a number of intact tenement buildings, with standout terra cotta details. Coordination with LPC will be necessary to determine the exact boundaries.

4. Pursue a small historic district on the west side of Oliver Street between Madison Street and St. James Place/Kimlau Square.

New York State Governor Alfred E. Smith’s house at 25 Oliver Street is listed in the National Register. The block itself is an intact row of townhouses that could easily qualify as the Alfred E. Smith Historic District.
5. Pursue landmarking for the historic “Five Points” street plan.

The Five Points area, bounded by Bayard, Worth, Bowery, and Baxter, has a similar “….special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City…” as the Street Plan of New Amsterdam and Colonial New York, designated by the LPC in 1983.

6. Support Friends of the Lower East Side’s efforts toward an historic district on Orchard Street, as well as Two Bridges Neighborhood Council’s and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum’s local landmarking efforts.

Before landmarking is pursued for any sites, CWG’s Culture & Historic Preservation Action Group should conduct outreach to local property owners regarding what landmarking does and does not regulate, its pros and cons, and the landmarking process. CWG should also ensure that owners of property listed on the National Register of Historic Places are aware of and can access Historic Preservation Tax Credits for substantial rehabilitation of their property.
Culture & Historic Preservation
Recommendations: Arts and Culture

1. Pursue creation of a Chinatown Arts Center or Campus, building on the recommendation of CREATE in Chinatown.

2. Incentivize or mandate affordable arts and cultural uses within new construction.

3. Use Transfer of Development Rights from existing properties to new developments to support arts and cultural organizations.

4. Establish a cultural resources fund/conservancy.

5. Pursue recommendation by CREATE for a strategic plan for the establishment of a more efficient 70 Mulberry Street

6. Explore the use of tax incentives/tax credits to increase the likelihood of landlords renting affordable space to community organizations.

7. Celebrate and promote the wide range of unique craft / artisanal skills and services available in Chinatown. Advocate better promotion of Chinatown by the information kiosk on Canal and Baxter.

8. Provide for better access to and programming in public spaces.

9. Promote use of the Confucius plaza “amphitheater” site for public gathering
DRAFT SPECIAL CHINATOWN AND LOWER EAST RIVER DISTRICT

Zoning proposals/options with provisions and underlying zones
Why a Special District?

RFP Goal: Create a Special Chinatown District that addresses the issues in the entire RFP study area boundary – i.e. Chinatown and surrounding areas

A: Preservation Area
B: Planned Community Preservation and Resilience Area
C: Higher Density Mixed Use
D: Lower East River Waterfront
E1: Bowery-Grand to Bleecker
E2: Bowery-Bleecker to East 9th
F: Under Bridge General Services

Rec Area 1: Special Little Italy District
Rec Area 2: North of Grand
Rec Area 3: North of East Broadway
Zoning
Special District Findings

Although different parts of the RFP study area vary in many respects such as use, scale, community character, and context there are also a number of significant similarities that make the creation of a single Special District appropriate.

1. Unique history as NYC’s longest continuous home and cultural resource for past and current immigrants
2. Diverse mix of land uses that are not permitted to co-exist under current zoning
3. Unique signage and streetscape that is reflective of community culture
4. Concentration of tenements and large scale “tower in the park” planned developments built for working class residents
5. High percentage of low income residents unable to afford market rents and vulnerable to harassment and displacement pressures
6. High percentage of renters, rent regulated units and rent burdened and overcrowded households.
7. High percentage of residents who walk to work
8. Small businesses that provide culturally specialized goods and services for the local and regional community
9. Among the only areas in Lower Manhattan not currently covered by contextual or Special District zoning or NYC Historic District designation.
Zoning
Special District Findings

[Map showing zoning amendments and special districts, with labels for each area and special districts.]
San Francisco, Boston, Philadelphia, Seattle, Los Angeles, Vancouver, Toronto, Oakland, Honolulu.

1. Chinatowns in these Cities are either experiencing disinvestment and deterioration or are trying to protect themselves against gentrification pressures from encroaching market rate commercial, residential and institutional development.

2. All seek to preserve the unique history, culture, aesthetics and streetscape and to preserve and promote ethnic retail and other businesses in their Chinatowns.

3. Although many Cities are experiencing growth in Chinese and other Asian population, Historic Chinatowns are often less the destination for new immigrants than new satellite ethnic enclaves in other parts of the Cities.

4. Most of the Chinatown areas are mixed use with both residents and small culturally specialized businesses and services – often with residents living above commercial spaces.

5. Most Chinatown Districts are divided into Sub-Districts with somewhat different land use regulations.

6. Most, but not all, include height and use limitations to what they define as compatible with the existing context.

7. Most support the identification and protection (often landmarking) of historic buildings

8. Chinatown’s that have lost their ethnic resident community have not been able to preserve their historic, cultural and business identity or vitality. Yet, only a few Cities specifically focus on the issue of preserving existing and developing new affordable housing for residents.

9. Boston, San Francisco, Philadelphia and Honolulu have the strictest zoning regulations with Philadelphia’s Chinatown also served by the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation
10. Although not served by a specific development corporation, the planning departments in Honolulu and San Francisco, and the Redevelopment Authority in Boston, have regulations meant to preserve their Chinatowns and mitigate development impacts – including limiting or prohibiting formula retail and high-rise residential and commercial developments deemed inconsistent with the character of the built environment and needs of residents.

11. Seattle’s International Special Review District focuses on preserving and promoting the cultural, economic, historical, and otherwise beneficial qualities derived from its Asian heritage for both economic development and residential preservation.

12. Vancouver and Toronto emphasize promoting commercial revitalization and new economic and residential development. This focus has been criticized as furthering the disappearance of the unique character of the Chinatowns.

13. Cities with the greatest success in preserving and promoting their Chinatowns are those with active Community-based Development Corporations and Tenant Advocacy organizations whose multi-faceted work includes community organizing, planning, development as well as direct services. Their presence appears to be the crucial factor in the preservation of the existing residents, businesses and community character.

14. In summary, Cities whose governmental regulations and community organizations focus on preserving, promoting and protecting the vitality of the existing resident and business community continue to have the most vibrant and authentic Chinatowns, and ultimately benefiting the local community, regional visitors, and tourists.
Elements from the following New York City Special Districts were considered in framing the Proposed Special Chinatown and Lower East River District.

- **Clinton Special District:** Income mix, anti-harassment/anti-demolition certification.
- **Little Italy District:** Historic and cultural preservation, height limits, use modifications, Buildings of Significance.
- **125th Street Special District:** Cultural requirements, bonus space, Local Arts Advisory Council.
- **Lower Manhattan Special District:** Transfer of Development Rights, retail continuity.
- **Tribeca Mixed Use Special District:** Mixed use, ground floor size limits.
- **Special Hudson Square District:** Mixed use, industrial retention, use restrictions.
- **Special Midtown District:** Transfer of Development Rights, use restrictions
- **Special Garment Center District:** Industrial preservation, use controls.
- **Special Enhanced Commercial District:** Size and frontage limitations.
- **Bay Ridge Special District:** Community Facility height limits.
- **Planned Community Preservation Special District:** Special Permit requirement for development, demolition or enlargements in large scale planned community developments.
## Zoning
### Special District Options

### Option 1

Establish a **SINGLE** Special Chinatown and Lower East River District with several **Sub-districts** that represent the different characteristics of each sub-area.

**Pros:**
- Recognizes similar characteristics and goals shared by all parts of the RFP study area without creating multiple Special Districts that have many of the same provisions.
- Provides for both preservation and growth opportunities in the Special District.
- Transfer of Development Rights could be assigned to appropriate areas throughout the District.

**Cons:**
- A single District would be quite large.
- Unique elements in each Sub-district would require specific analysis for each.
- Potential delay in adoption of single Special District until all Sub-districts’ proposals were approved.

### Option 2

Establish each of the Sub-districts as either separate **Special Districts** or as discrete zoning actions.

**Pros:**
- Would allow each Sub-district to proceed at its own pace and prevent changes to an individual Sub-district from affecting others.
- Might make a focused Chinatown Special District more possible.

**Cons:**
- Certain synergies between the Sub-Districts would not be possible – e.g. TDR and balancing growth and preservation.
- Decision to include each of the identified common elements and provisions would have to be made one Sub-district at a time.
- Decision could be made to only proceed with implementing one or a few of the Sub-districts.
Zoning
Sub-Districts and Recommendation Areas

A: Preservation Area
B: Planned Community Preservation and Resilience Area
C: Higher Density Mixed Use
D: Lower East River Waterfront
E1: Bowery- Grand to Bleecker
E2: Bowery – Bleecker to East 9th
F: Under Bridge General Services

Rec Area 1: Special Little Italy District
Rec Area 2: North of Grand
Rec Area 3: North of East Broadway
The following would apply to all Sub-districts within a single Special District:

1. Zoning density (FAR) and height limits that reflect the existing scale of each District
2. Anti-harassment/anti-demolition certification
3. Buildings/Spaces of Significance and allows transfer of Development Rights to selected areas in the Special District
4. Use modifications, allowing greater diversity of uses than currently allowed in existing C zones, such as some light industrial uses
5. Special Permit for certain uses such as hotels
6. Guarantee/bonus of affordable housing (defined as up to 50% of AMI)
7. Guarantee or bonus for affordable housing within the Special District
Zoning
Examples of Use Modifications

Excluded Uses in Sub-District A and only by Special Permit in other Sub-Districts:

- Transient Hotels
- Universities and Dormitories
- Hospitals and Hospital Staff Dwellings
- Use group 10 - large retail such as Department Stores, - except Wholesale limited size
- Use group 12 – By Special Permit

Permitted Uses

- Most Use group 6 – Retail and Service establishments – but limited to 2,500 sq. ft. in Sub-District A
- Banks and Drugstores – but limited to 2,500 sq. ft. and 25 ft. street frontage in Sub-District A
- Food Stores without size limitation
- Restaurants without size limitation
- Use group 7- Home maintenance and repair except transient hotels
- Use group 8 – Amusements and repair shops
- Use group 9 - except Business schools by Special Permit
- Use group 10 B– only Wholesale businesses
- All Use group 11 – Custom manufacturing including Printing
- Banquet Halls
- Use group 16

Limited/Special Permit Uses in All Sub-Districts

- Clubs and Bars- By Special Permit only
- Skateboard parks (Use group 13)
- Docks ( Use group 14)– only in Sub-District D

Added Uses

- Use group 17 – light manufacturing such as:
  - Wholesale produce
  - Apparel/Textile products
  - Canvas Products
  - Ceramic Products
  - Electrical appliances assembly
  - Food Products
  - Jute, hemp products
  - Labs/research
  - Leather products
  - Luggage
  - Jewelry
Key Findings

- Includes historic core of the Chinatown community and adjoining blocks with similar lot size, built form, character and socio-economic conditions.

- Primary destination for immigrants from all over the world throughout NYC’s history. Continues to serve that purpose for many new immigrants today.

- Home to generations of Chinese (established community networks, access to cultural and ethnically specialized services and products, employment opportunities within easy walking distance).

- Relatively older, poorer population than NYC. Nearly all renters. Many live in overcrowded conditions paying over 50% of their income for rent.

- Streetscape characterized by unique and vibrant signage, open storefront displays and sidewalk vending.

- Many businesses provide culturally specialized goods and services.

- Most buildings are mixed use (stores, restaurants, and sometimes light manufacturing uses below; residential and also commercial uses above).

- Mostly 5-9 story buildings on long, narrow lots (20’-25’ by 75’-100’)

- One of NYC’s last remaining large concentrations of old and new law tenement buildings, many built with nearly full lot coverage and a higher FAR than 5-9 story height could accommodate today.

- Most of the area zoned C6-1 and C6-2 in 1961. New as-of-right development is out of scale and character with the existing neighborhood.

Current Zoning

C6-1, C6-1G
FAR: C6, R to 3.44, CF6.5
Height Factor Bldg.

C6-2, C6-2G
FAR: C6, R6.02, CF6.5
Height Factor Bldg.

R7-2 (C2 Overlay)
FAR: C2, R3.44, CF6.5
Height Factor Bldg.
**Sub-District A: Proposed Zoning**
Low-Medium Rise/Moderate Density/Mixed Use

**OPTION 1**

**Underlying:** C4-4A Modified
**FAR:** C4, R4.8, CF4
**Height limit:** 85 ft.

**Affordability Provisions**
1. Guarantee 20% Affordable housing (with 421a tax abatement)
2. Bonus to Residential FAR 6 for 20% (30% if not using 421a) additional affordable housing

**PRO:** Is more reflective of existing content

**OPTION 2**

**Underlying:** C6-2G Modified
**FAR:** C6, R6.02, CF6.5
**Height limit:** 85 ft.

**Affordability Provisions**
1. Guarantee 20% Affordable housing (with 421a tax abatement)
2. Guarantee 20% (30% if not using 421a) affordable housing for Residential upzoning in C6-1 and R7-2
3. Bonus to R6.5 for 20% affordable in existing C6-2

**PRO:** Reflects permitted FAR in existing zoning. Offers guaranteed affordable housing in upzoned areas.
**Sub-District A: Proposed Zoning**
*Low-Medium Rise/Moderate Density/Mixed Use*

**OTHER PROVISIONS**

- Require Anti-harassment/demolition certification.
- Include “G” protections for existing manufacturing.
- Add new permitted uses.
- Limit some commercial uses to 2,500sq. ft.
- Selected uses prohibited or requiring Special Permit.
- Legalizes existing signage except illuminated above first floor.
- Adds Buildings/Spaces of Significance.
- Allows Transfer of Development Rights to Sub-Districts C and D.

**Height and Bulk Examples**

**Option 1**
79 Eldridge: C4-4A with Bonus to total 6 FAR

**Option 2**
79 Eldridge: C6-2G
Key Findings

- **Large planned housing developments** constructed for low and moderate income New Yorkers along the lower East River in the 1930s, 40s and 50s.
- Have served **generations of New Yorkers** and become valuable communities. Although low and moderate income, population is quite diverse.
- Built in a “**tower in the park**” architectural style influenced by the ideas of the European architect Le Corbusier. Characterized by large-scale site plans with significant open space and internal pedestrian walkways.
- Several **middle income and market rate coops and rental buildings** in Sub-District B also developed with large-scale site plans and significant open space.
- Considerable **unused floor area** available under current R7-2 zoning. NYCHA proposes to use this FAR to build new market rate housing to support its operating costs.
- The entire Sub-District B is **vulnerable to the impacts of Climate Change**. Most developments lie within FEMA storm surge areas even in a Category 1 Hurricane. Nearly all of Sub-District B was severely impacted by Hurricane Sandy.

Current Zoning

**R7-2**
FAR: C 2, R 3.44 , CF 6.5
Height Factor Building
Sub-District B
PLANNED COMMUNITY PRESERVATION AND RESILIENCE AREA

Draft Study Area

Hurricane Storm Surge Zones
- Category 1
- Category 2
- Category 3
- Category 4

Note: Based on maps created for the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance’s Waterfront Justice Project.
Sub-District B: Proposed Zoning

**OPTION 1**

1. Map each large scale development as a **Special Planned Community Preservation District** overlay on Sub-District B of the Special Chinatown and Lower East River District. Changes require Special Permit with specific findings, that goes through ULURP.

2. Exact zoning designation and FAR to be determined through ULURP review process.

**Other Provisions**

1. Add Special Permit finding to existing PCPD language that new housing construction is in character with existing scale and at rents that will not substantially alter mixture of income groups presently living in the SPCPD.

2. Climate Change/Resilience built form, landscape and open space provisions.

3. Anti-harassment and anti-demolition certification.
**OPTION 2**

**Underlying:**  R7-2/C2 Modified  
**FAR:**  C 2  R 0.87-3.44*  CF 6.5*

* In each large-scale planned community - new development, demolition or enlargements would require a Special Permit in order to qualify for residential FAR of 3.44 or community facility FAR of 6.5, based on the following findings:

1. New housing construction or enlargement is at rents that will neither substantially alter the mix of income groups presently living in the specific development nor reduce the number of units.

2. New development or enlargements relate to the existing buildings or other structures in scale and design, and the development will not seriously alter the scenic amenity and the environmental quality of the community.

3. Development or enlargement maximizes Climate Change resilience and adaptation measures relating to built form and permeable surfaces and is sited so as to preserve the greatest amount of open space and landscaping that presently exists.

**Other Provisions**

1. Anti-harassment and anti-demolition certification

**PROS**

**Option 1:**

The Special Planned Community Preservation District zoning already exists and is mapped in other large scale developments in

**Option 2:**

This would involve fewer mapping actions while still incorporating many of the Special Planned Community Preservation District provisions.
Key Findings

- Mostly taller buildings, including commercial loft buildings, along the western boundary of the RFP study area (between White and Howard/Hester Streets, from Broadway to Baxter). Historically housed manufacturing uses, some of which still remain. Even though many loft buildings are only 8-10 stories, they are taller than buildings in Sub-District A (Preservation Area) because of manufacturers’ need for greater ceiling heights.
- Sections of both the SOHO and Tribeca Historic Districts extend into the western-most edge of the area.
- This part of Area C is zoned M1-5B (Artist Loft District) on the north side of Canal and M1-5 (medium density non-contextual manufacturing zone) on the south side of Canal to Walker Street, reflecting its manufacturing past.
- South of Walker is zoned C6-2A (medium rise, medium density contextual zone) west of Lafayette Street, and C6-4 (high rise, high density zone) to the south and east.
- The area to the south of the study area is zoned C6-4A (high density and high rise but with a height cap).
- There are a number of potential development sites with unused Floor Area, including parking lots and several 1 and 2 story buildings, located along Canal at the intersection with Lafayette.
- Built form and uses south of White are quite different, with primarily institutional/governmental facilities between Centre Street and Baxter and high rise residential cooperatives ranging in height from 10-30 stories on both sides of Park Row to the south east. The resident population in this area has higher incomes than those in the other Sub Areas.

Current Zoning

C6-4
FAR: C10, R10, CF10
Height Factor Building

C6-2A
FAR: C6, R 6.02, CF 6.5
Height Limit: 120 ft.

C6-1
FAR: C6, R3.44,CF6.5
Height Factor Building

R7-2
FAR: C2, R3.44, CF6.5
Height Factor Building

M1-5
FAR: C5, M5, CF 6.5
Height Factor Building
**OPTION 1**

(For areas currently zoned M1-5 and C6-2A. Retain existing zoning with additional provisions below for remainder of Sub District C)

**Underlying:** C6-2A Modified

**FAR:** C6, R6.02, CF6.5

**Height limit:** 120 ft.

**Affordability Provisions**

1. Guarantee 20% Affordable housing (with 421a tax abatement).
2. Bonus to 7.2 for 20% (30% if not using 421a) additional affordable housing (in existing C6-2A) and
3. Guaranteed 20% (30% if not using 421a) for upzoning of M1-5 of areas.
4. Additional 1 FAR bonus for Transfer of Development Rights from Area A and from Buildings of Significance.

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**OPTION 2**

**Underlying:** C6-4AG Modified

**FAR:** C10, R10, CF10

**Height limit:** 185/210 ft.

(Like area to the south and south east)

**Affordability Provisions**

1. Guarantee 20% Affordable Housing with 421a tax abatement.
2. Guarantee Additional 20% (30% if not using 421a) in existing FAR 10 or for upzoning in areas currently zoned C6-2A and M1-5.
3. Additional 1FAR bonus for Culture and
4. Additional 1FAR for Transfer of Development Rights from Area A and from Buildings of Significance.
OTHER PROVISIONS

1. Require Anti-harassment/anti-demolition certification.
2. Include “G” protections for existing manufacturing.
3. Use and size modifications (would allow as-of-right development).
4. Special Permit for certain sizes and/or uses.
5. Signage allowed except illuminated above first floor.
6. Add Buildings/Spaces of Significance.

PROS

Option 1: Offers more contextual development (lower height) in areas not currently zoned C6-4.

Option 2: Provides for more affordable housing and bonus for Cultural use. Reflects existing zoning in areas to the south and south east.

Height and Bulk Examples

Option 1
83 Walker: C6-2A without Bonus

Option 2
83 Walker: C6-4 without Bonus
Key Findings

- The Lower East River waterfront has changed dramatically from its historic port and maritime uses. Currently Piers 35, 36 and 42 house recreational uses such as Basketball City. A walkway is being constructed along the waterfront bulkhead, and there are plans for a major park development on the Piers. Currently little direct public access to the waterfront because of South Street and the elevated highway.

- Much as in Sub-District A the majority of the population is low income and older. High Rise affordable and senior housing has been built on the north side of South Street.

- There are several large potential development sites, including the recently closed Pathmark supermarket, proposed for high rise housing development, and the Edison mini-storage facility and parking. A large privately-owned sports field, used by Murry Bergtraum High School, is generally not accessible to the public. There are several municipal utility uses under the Manhattan Bridge overpass.

- Like Sub-District B, the entire Sub-District D is vulnerable to the impacts of Climate Change, with most developments in FEMA storm surge areas even in a Category 1 Hurricane. Nearly all of this area was severely impacted by flooding from Hurricane Sandy. Maximizing open space and permeable surfaces as well as incorporating resilient infrastructure and architecture are critical.

Current Zoning

**C6-4**
- FAR: C10 R10, CF10
- Height Factor Building

**M1-4**
- FAR: C2, M2, CF6.5
- Height Factor Building

**M1-6**
- FAR: C10, M10 CF10
- Height Factor Building
Sub-District D: Proposed Zoning
High Rise/High Density/Mixed Use

**Underlying:** C6-4 Modified
*(Bur pier area remains M1-4)*

**FAR:** C10, R10, CF10

**Height Factor Building**

**Affordability Provisions**
1. Guaranteed Affordable Housing (20%) with 421a tax abatement
2. Guaranteed 20% (30% if not using 421a) in existing R10 or for upzoning of M zones
3. Additional 1 FAR for Culture

**Other Provisions**
1. Add Waterfront Access and Climate Change Resilience provisions
2. Design for Maximum open Space and permeable surfaces
3. Require Anti-harassment and demolition certification.
4. Use and size modifications. Allow additional uses not currently allowed in C6-4

**Height and Bulk Example**
Pathmark Site: C6-4 without bonus

**PRO:** Offers guarantee of affordable housing and incorporates provisions for resilience.
Key Findings

- The Bowery is New York City’s oldest thoroughfare. At one time the center for theater and entertainment.

- Parts of the Bowery deteriorated during the mid-20th Century and were characterized by Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings.

- Significant new development in recent years, in particular hotels and high rise luxury housing.

- Current C6-1 zoning on the east side of the Bowery, in CD3, does not have a contextual height limit like that on the west side of the Bowery, which restricts building heights to 85 ft. as part of the Special Little Italy District, mapped entirely in CD2. Much of the new development on the east side of the Bowery is therefore out of context with the generally 5-9 story built form.

- Over 10 hotels concentrated along the Bowery significantly change the scale and character of the area. Also, construction of the New Museum has spurred the interest of arts related uses and market rate residential development along the Bowery and in adjoining areas.

- A number of older tenements and other residential buildings remain, housing generally low and moderate income individuals and families, often in rent regulated apartments.

- Concentration of restaurant supply, furniture and lighting businesses in the southern section of the Bowery.

Current Zoning

C6-1
FAR: C6, R 3.44, CF 6.5
Height Factor Building
OPTION 1

Underlying: C6-1G Modified  
FAR: C6, R.3.44, CF6.5  
Height limit: 85 ft.  

(Extend Area C of Little Italy Special District to East Side of Bowery)

Affordability Provisions
1. Guaranteed (20%) Affordable Housing with 421a tax abatement  
2. Bonus to Residential FAR 4.6 for 20% (30% if not using 421a) additional Affordable Housing (if accepted as amendment to Special Little Italy District Area C by CB 2 and CB 3)

PRO:  
Reflects the zoning on the other side of Bowery while adding bonus for additional affordable housing.

OPTION 2

Underlying: C6-1G Modified  
FAR: C6, R4.6, CF6  
Height limit: 85 ft.  

Affordability Provisions
1. Guarantee 20% Affordable housing with 421a tax abatement  
2. Guaranteed 20% (30% if not using 421a) Affordable Housing for upzoning Residential FAR from 3.44 to 4.6.

PRO:  
Offers contextual development and guarantees additional affordable housing.
Sub-District E1: Proposed Zoning
Low Rise/Medium Density/Mixed Use

Other Provisions

1. Add new “Buildings of Significance” to Little Italy Special District
2. Add anti-harassment and demolition certification.
3. Include “G” protections for existing manufacturing
4. Use and size modifications – add permitted uses to better reflect existing use diversity and mix
5. Prohibit or Special permit selected uses

Height and Bulk Examples

Option 1
139 Bowery: C6-1 without Bonus

Option 2
139 Bowery: C6-1G
Key Findings

- Important part of NYC history, like the Bowery to the south. Also experiencing significant new development.

- While the west side of the Bowery is in parts protected by NOHO, NOHO Extension and NOHO East NYC Historic District designations, the east side of the Bowery is left with only the non-contextual C6-1 zone.

- Hotels have been constructed in recent years. Universities such as Cooper Union have capitalized on their classification as “community facilities” and built out of scale and character academic and commercial facilities in the northern-most section of the area.

- Although far fewer than along the Bowery further south, there are still several buildings housing low and moderate income residents, including a Senior housing development.

Current Zoning

C6-1
FAR C6, R 3.44, CF 6.5
Height Factor Building
**Sub-District E2: Proposed Zoning**

**Medium rise/Medium density /Mixed Use**

**Underlying:** C6-2A  
**FAR:** C6, R6.02, CF6.5  
**Height limit:** 120 ft.  
(Same as the area north from 9th St. to 13th St. and Third Ave. to Broadway)

**Affordability Provisions**

1. Guarantee 20% Affordable housing (with 421a tax abatement)
2. Guarantee Additional 20% (30% if not using 421a) Affordable Housing for upzoning R from FAR 3.44 to FAR 6.02

**Other Provisions**

1. Add “Buildings of Significance”
2. Add anti-harassment and demolition certification.
3. Include “G” protections for existing manufacturing
4. Use and size modifications – add permitted uses to better reflect existing use diversity and mix
5. Prohibit or Special permit selected uses

**PRO:**  
Offers contextual development while guaranteeing affordable housing.
Key Findings

This area which is located under the Manhattan Bridge currently houses a skate park and the DEP Parking facility. It also has several utility facilities.

Current Zoning

C8-4

Zoning Proposal

Keep existing C8-4 Zoning
FAR: C 5, CF 6.5
Height Factor Building
Key Findings

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
Proposed Recommendations for Area 1
Amendments to Special Little Italy District

- Extend 85ft. height limit to the other half of Bowery.
- Guarantee 20% affordable housing with 421a tax abatement.
- Add bonus for additional affordable housing.
- Add anti-harassment/anti-demolition certification requirement.
- Include the “G” designation for entire length of Special Little Italy District.
- Add new buildings to the list of Buildings of Significance.
- Modify allowed and excluded uses.
- Modify signage regulations.

**PRO:**
Retains existing Little Italy Special District while adding selected provisions proposed for the Special Chinatown and Lower East River District.
Proposed Recommendations for Area 2
North of Preservation Sub-District A

Adopt selected provisions similar to Sub-District A

1. Add anti-harassment/anti-demolition certification requirement
2. Guarantee 20% affordable housing with 421a tax abatement
3. Add guarantee or bonus for additional affordable housing
4. Include the “G” designation to protect manufacturing
5. Add Buildings of Significance
6. Modify allowed and excluded uses
7. Modify signage regulation

**OPTION 1**
Add to the Special District as Sub-District A2: North of Grand Preservation Sub-District.

**PRO:** Special District designation makes adoption of provisions simpler.

**OPTION 2**
Adopt selected Provisions similar to Sub-District A but do not include in Special District.

**PRO:** Does not require extending the boundaries of the Special District.
Proposed Recommendations for Area 3
Seward Park north of East Broadway

Add anti-harassment / anti-demolition certification requirement

PRO: Allows for additional protection for any existing tenants.
Proposed Zoning

Provision 1: C4-4AG Modified
- FAR: R4, R4.02, CF4
- Ht. Limit: 85 Ft.
- Bonus 1 FAR for 20% Affordable Housing

Provision 2: C6-2G Modified
- FAR: R4, R4.02, CF6.5
- Ht. Limit: 85 Ft.
- Guaranteed 20% (30%) Aff. Housing for upzoning of R FAR from 3.44 to 4.6

Sub-District D: LOWER EAST RIVER WATERFRONT
Proposed Zoning:
- Underlying C6-4 Modified
- FAR: R10, CF10
- Height Factor Building
- Guarantee 20% (or 30%) for upzoning of M zones
- Additional 1 FAR TDR from Sub-District A

OTHER PROVISIONS
The CWG should undertake the following steps in advocating for and implementing the proposed 197-c Zoning Action:

- Finalize decisions on zoning options
- Establish a Zoning Action Group

Once established the Zoning Action Group should:

- Meet with Community Boards 1, 2 and 3.
- Decide who is going to formally submit the 197-c application to DCP. Note that 197-c Zoning Actions require Environmental Review, the cost of which is borne by the applicant and can be prohibitive.
- Initiate preliminary discussions with zoning staff at DCP’s Manhattan Office. Identify additional tasks that need to be done.
- Coordinate with other CWG groups.
- Work with DCP in finalizing the Special District text.
- Work with HPD, NYCHA and other city agencies on related affordability, public housing and other recommendations.