

CHINATOWN WORKING GROUP

Community Planning Its Future

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Chinatown Working Group (CWG)

Some Basic Facts

What is the Chinatown Working Group?

The CWG is a democratic and open community-based planning group initiative on the future of Chinatown in New York City. Our goal is to support the community's residents, workers, businesses and visitors.

What is “community-based planning”?

With support and resources for meaningful participation, the community actively plans its future.

Who is the Chinatown Working Group?

Chinatown's stakeholders—like you! The CWG is comprised of more than 40 voting members representing low and middle-income residents, small businesses, workers, social service institutions, arts organizations and advocacy groups, as well as Manhattan Community Boards 1, 2, and 3. (See below for a complete list of all current CWG voting members.)

Is it true the CWG is “just a bunch of real estate developers” as some have alleged?

No. Only 1 of 43 CWG Voting Members is a real estate developer. The CWG ranges from war veterans belonging to the American Legion Post 1291 to residents of Hamilton-Madison House to members of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, Two Bridges Neighborhood Council and Chinese Progressive Association to the principals of Chinatown's public schools.

What is the point of the Chinatown Working Group?

Like many of you, CWG members are deeply concerned about our community's future—gentrification, skyrocketing rents, businesses closing, jobs being lost, our culture disappearing, traffic congestion, too little parking, immigrant rights, tenant harassment, public safety, the lack of parks and open space, and the social and economic well-being of our families, seniors and youths. Rather than blaming others for what is wrong in our community, we are pro-actively working to find solutions to make things right.

What is the Chinatown Working Group's objective?

The CWG's objective is to articulate common goals for Chinatown's future with consideration for its impact on adjacent New York City communities, and to formulate and work with New York City agencies to implement a precise, comprehensive, meaningful, timely and broadly supported community-based plan.

How does the Chinatown Working Group work?

To make sure the CWG fairly reflects the many points of view in our community, the CWG operates on the basis of one vote per organization. All substantive decisions are voted on by the full CWG, in person, and are recorded and available for public review. The schedule and minutes of CWG meetings are available on our website: www.chinatownworkinggroup.org

Who funds the Chinatown Working Group?

Nobody. All participants in the Chinatown Working Group are volunteers. Since its inception in the Fall 2008, members of the CWG have donated hundreds of hours of their time for the future of our community. The CWG hopes to receive funding in the near future from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation to hire independent professional planning expertise.

Is the Chinatown Working Group part of the government?

No. The CWG is an independent organization not affiliated with any government agency. Elected officials participate in a non-voting capacity during the CWG's monthly sessions—designed for open, democratic, consensus-building planning.

What concrete results have the CWG achieved since it began meeting a year ago?

It is a valid question. First, it is important to remember the CWG is a planning group—not a government agency or even a community board. The CWG has no budget or staff to handle constituent requests. What it can—and has done—in the past year is to formulate a plan for Chinatown. This has required establishing a transparent process that the community can have faith in, organizing countless meetings including two town halls to ensure open and broad participation, bringing in experts to address areas of shared concern, and working with the relevant agencies to ensure our ultimate recommendations will be implemented. Granted, this may not seem as concrete as a filled in pothole. But as many of you know, a process in Chinatown that is open, democratic and civil is a tangible achievement in-and-of-itself.

Most significantly, in mid-2010 the CWG will be submitting a detailed community-based 197a Plan to the Department of City Planning. The plan will encompass recommendations on everything from Parks and Transportation to Education and Zoning helping to guide future planning in our community. So, while some may now think the CWG is not moving fast enough, others will claim the CWG is moving too fast.

How do I participate in the Chinatown Working Group?

Anyone can participate in the CWG. All meetings are open. Everyone is welcome.

How do I become a voting member of the Chinatown Working Group?

If your organization is active in our community you may be eligible to become a voting member.

How much does it cost to be a member of the Chinatown Working Group?

Nothing. Membership in the CWG is free. Attendance at all CWG meetings is free.

How does one learn more about the Chinatown Working Group?

For more info about the CWG please visit our website: www.chinatownworkinggroup.org