

Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) Full Group Meeting
5:30pm to 7:30pm, Monday, November 7, 2011
American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291

Voting members present: American Legion Post 1291 (Gabe Mui); Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (Bethany Li); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler, David Mulkins); Cherry Street Tenants Association (Ricky Leung); Chinatown Youth Initiative (Andy Woo); Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Wendy Cheung, Josephine Lee); Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (Jason Chan, Esther Wang, Billie Zhu); Community Board 1 (Paul Cantor, David Levine); Community Board 2 (Ed Ma, Antony Wong); Community Board 3 (Gigi Lee, John Leo); Create in Chinatown (Amy Chin); Hester Street Collaborative (Anne Frederick); Immigrant Social Services (Lillian Moy); Indochina Sino-American Community Center (Gin Lee); Lower East Side Business Improvement District (Tim Laughlin); M'Finda Kalunga Community Garden (Kathleen Webster); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (Sophie DeBenedetto, Michael Lalan, Santos Rivera); 197 Madison Street Tenants Association (Fu Ko Poon); 61 Delancey Street Tenants Association (Zhi Qin Zheng); Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (Victor Papa, Wilson Soo).

Elected official representatives: Councilmember Chin (Matt Viggiano); Manhattan Borough President Stringer (Lin Zeng).

Press: Sing Tao (Bonnie Li); World Journal (Yichen Tu).

Also present: Rob Hollander (Lower East Side Residents for Responsible Development).

Meeting called to order, 6pm, Mae Lee and Antony Wong facilitating, Jason Chan translating.

1. Agenda: Antony Wong proposes to hear CAPZ first. Tim Laughlin moves to approve the amended agenda, Esther Wang seconds, no objections.

>Agenda approved as amended

2. Minutes: Victor Papa moves to approve the October minutes, John Leo seconds. No objections.

>October minutes approved.

3. CAPZ agreements: Wilson Soo presents the CAPZ agreements (see addendum I)

-Rob Hollander corrects the wording on the floor area ratios (FAR) from "rezone the main Chinatown area from FAR 6.0 to FAR 3.0 and the area between Delancey Street and Houston Street to FAR 4.0 such that the zoning reflects the existing buildings." to "rezone the area between Delancey Street and Houston Street to FAR 4.0 such that the zoning reflects the existing buildings and rezone the main Chinatown area from FAR 6.0 to FAR 3.0."

-Mitchell Grubler: What are the **boundaries**?

-Victor Papa: The west boundary would be the east side of the Bowery, to include the East Bowery Plan.

-Ed Ma: This is a historic achievement, harmonizing all ethnicities in the area.

-Esther Wang: The boundaries need work.

- Josephine Lee: The northern boundary must extend through the upzoning areas of the recent EV/LES rezoning, in light of new data of displacement there.
- Gigi Li: Is this a guideline for a consultant?
- Michael Levine: Yes, so a consultant can propose a plan to CWG.
- Gigi Li: Concerned that **Community Board 3** won't accept it.
- Victor Papa: These agreements reflect the broad consensus of these diverse communities and as such it behooves the Community Board to respect it. It should, however, include an acknowledgement of the CB3 SPURA guidelines.
- Mae Lee: Shall we include that in the agreement?
- Josephine Lee: It is included in the latest version, the omission may be a mistake.
- Rob Hollander: Concurs.
- Josephine Lee: Thanks Michael Levine and Victor Papa for facilitating this long process of consensus. DCP has re-evaluated rezonings in light of impact data.
- Esther Wang: CAPZ took its task to be to consider the community's needs, rather than what the Community Board wants, and to leave the needs of the Community Board to a negotiation with the expressed needs of the community.
- Tim Laughlin: Concurs with Gigi Li. There are other stakeholders that have not been present in this process.
- John Leo: It is necessary to persuade the Community Board and get its commitment.
- Victor Papa: ...as long as the Community Board doesn't pre-empt CWG.
- Michael Levine: CB3 Land Use Committee meets December 5, the same day as the next CWG, so we won't be able to **vote until January on the RFP & agreements.**
- Rob Hollander: Postpone the December CWG until December 12 in order to vote then.
- Michael Levine: Will be out of town on the 12th.
- Rob Hollander: Withdrawn.

4. RFP for a consultant: Michael Levine presents the RFP (see addendum II)

- Michael Levine: The funds are still available for one more year.
- Matt Viggiano: Fund for the City of New York will take 9%, leaving about \$136,000.
- Michael Levine: RFP probably includes too much for that sum, but it's best to cast a wide net and whittle down later.
- The \$15,000 promised by Senator Squadron for Jim Solomon's out-of-pocket expenses have not turned up at LMDC. We will ask the Senator to help us track the funds.

5. Cultural and Historical Preservation: Amy Chin, Rob Hollander and Mitchell Grubler present the CHP package (see addendum III)

- Amy Chin: The team followed eight principles.
 1. to honor the immigrant culture of this neighborhood which has a long history of immigration.
 2. to encourage the creation of means and spaces for all the arts as well as other aspects of the daily life of the people of Chinatown, including congregating spaces, culturally specific stores (ducks in the windows)
 3. to keep arts groups in Chinatown so that we don't lose yet more arts groups to locations outside Chinatown
 4. to preserve the distinctive physical character of Chinatown, terra cotta façades, the character of the streets, just as New Orleans or Shanghai have a distinctive flavor
 5. recognize the importance of new design that is related to existing character, unlike cheap and ugly designs that detract from the beauty of Chinatown
 6. to work with other teams to preserve affordability, commercial viability and the needs of development

7. to support current institutions that protect Chinatown and its people
8. to avoid building tombstones to culture rather than living, breathing cultural environments-in-use, so that Chinatown does not have a mere appearance of Chinese cultural effects, as in D.C.'s Ann Taylor or Fuddruckers in Chinese.

1-7 express what we'd like to see in Chinatown; 8 expresses what we would want to avoid. The team proposed a cultural and historical district and a fund (see addendum III) as other communities have.

-Rob Hollander: reviews the distinguished history of the neighborhood, first African village (1643), oldest brick structure in Manhattan (Pell St.); the first apartment building (see addendum III), the development of tenement styles reflecting architectural fashions and the character of the immigrants living in the area. Describes the methodology of the architectural survey: the team recorded and described in detail, with estimated date of construction, every building in Chinatown defined as 90% Chinese storefronts (see addendum III).

Explains that landmarking

- preserves only the façade – the owner may change the interior freely
- does not require any restoration or any work on the part of the owner
- preserves the building as is (at the moment of landmarking), *not* as it *was* when it was built
- respects the character of the storefronts and signs, both the current storefronts as well as the historical storefronts
- requires permission for all expansions visible from the street, adding an additional cost of development
- requires permission for replacement features on the façade

The Landmarks Preservation Commission's replacement preferences may be more expensive than otherwise. This is the reason why landmarking leads to gentrification: when property owners invest in quality features, they attract wealthier clients. As replacements are upgraded, the neighborhood gentrifies and real estate values rise. From a property owner's perspective this is a long-term benefit, but from a renter's perspective, it may cause displacement pressures.

-Mitchell Grubler: When the East Village and Lower East Side were rezoned, the city excluded the Bowery. The west side of the Bowery is protected by the Special Little Italy District, the NoHo Historical District and the NoHo Historical District Extension, but the east side of the Bowery is unprotected. The Bowery Alliance of Neighbors, a group of local residents living on or near the Bowery, gathered to protect the east side of the Bowery from hotel and condo development that is destroying the fabric of this historic neighborhood. BAN brought in a distinguished zoning planner, Doris Diether, who proposed a plan, which brings the east side of the Bowery's zoning into conformity with the west side of the Bowery. The East Bowery plan requires a height limit of 85', or at most eight stories, and would preserve buildings of special significance. The plan requires no other changes in the zoning (see addendum III).

-Ed Ma: Can the city require esthetic conformity for new developments?

-Mitchell Grubler: There are no esthetic laws. However, the SLID does specify the quantity of masonry (as opposed to glass and metal) and the exact types of commercial uses.

-David Mulkins: The Two Bridges Neighborhood Council in conjunction with BAN succeeded in securing a New York State Registry of Historic Places for the Bowery, which will lead to a National Registration. The 85' height cap is significantly higher than the current context of the Bowery.

-Ed Ma: Chain stores are opening in Chinatown. Chinatown lacks an arch. Many other Chinatowns have one to give a distinctive character. Funds are available for it here, but there has been no consensus on a location.

-Kathleen Webster: Whatever large institutions that occupy Chinatown should not allow their logos and self-promotions to obscure traditional signage.

-Mae Lee: Does the Landmarks Preservation Commission consider languages of signs?

- Rob Hollander: No.
- Mae Lee: In the Immigrant/Social Services Action Plan there is no position on whether high-rise hotels should be built, but it does say that if a new business (such as a chain store or high-rise hotel) moves to the neighborhood, permanent as well as construction jobs should go to local residents.
- John Leo: CB3 has a local hiring network for new developments.
- Ed Ma: Is it law?
- John Leo: Not law but the CB encourages.
- Victor Papa: It can be made into law.
- Mae Lee: Asks about the details of the Chinatown Cultural Fund.
- Amy Chin: New developments would contribute 1% of their construction budget to traditional arts and culture. Also considering a heritage trail to connect this history with the histories surrounding it.
- Josephine Lee: CWG should have a position on luxury hotels and chain stores. These businesses have no commitment to the neighborhood and suck money out of it.
- Victor Papa: Why is Little Italy excluded from historical preservation?
- Rob Hollander: Because Little Italy is already protected by the SLID and CB2, which aggressively pursues historical districting of its land, would get more traction on preserving it than CWG.

6. Economic Team meeting: Antony Wong announces the Economic Development Working Team, Tuesday, November 22, 3:30pm-5:30pm, CB1, 49-51 Chambers Street, room 709.

7. Implementation team update: Anne Frederick, Kathleen Webster and Mae Lee report

- Anne Frederick: The team is meeting with elected officials between now and the 20th to consider next steps.
- Kathleen Webster: Concur.
- Mae Lee: Five meetings coming up – CB1, 2 and 3, Councilmember Chin this week and BP Stringer. Later Parks Dept. and Dept. of Education.

8. CAAAV data: Esther Wang presents preliminary results of a survey on development (see addendum IV)

9. Community announcements

- Esther Wang: A protest on Sunday on behalf of the more than 24 tenants who were evicted at 11 Allen Street. 11am.
- Kathleen Webster: E-mail her for a copy of a translation of the Occupy Wall Street website's Frequently Asked Questions.
- Jason Chan: Boycott Domino's Pizza, Wed. Nov. 16 in Brooklyn.