

**Zoning Working Team
Chinatown Working Group
April 14, 2009**

Meeting Minutes

Location: 49 Chambers Street, Room 709

Time: 11:00am to 12:30pm

In Attendance: Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (Victor Papa), CB#1 (Kasey LaFlam), ABS Partners (Keith Lipstein, Jay Caseley), Asian Americans For Equality (Brian Cho, Richard Lee), LESRRD (Rob Hollander), AALDEF (Bethany Li), Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler), CB#3 (John Leo), CGMA (Sherman Eng)

Elected Officials/Representatives in Attendance: Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (Karen He), State Senator Daniel Squadron (Jasmin Sanchez), Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer (Jen Hong, Greg Kirschenbaum)

Media: Sing Tao Daily (Jacky Wong, Lotus Chan)

1. Working Team Milestones

Co-chair Victor Papa welcomed everyone to open the meeting. He suggested that since the first milestone was about establishing goals that it would be helpful to hear from the liaisons for the other working teams to better understand what other working teams are doing in relation to the goals of the zoning working team.

2. Reports from Working Team Liaisons

Affordability Team: (Rob Hollander, Brian Cho, and Jacky Wong)

There was a lively discussion about whether or not to fold the Affordability Working Team into other working teams, in particular zoning and immigration. Several ideas were considered:

- combine with zoning working team
- combine with immigration working team
- form an advocacy group that would address the issue of affordability

The last idea seemed too broad for most and a decision was not reached at the affordability meeting.

Jay Caseley asked what information was needed to best establish what affordability means and where it would be best suited in Chinatown. Richard Lee discussed the process that was used to advocate for affordable housing in Willets Point and how it could be applied to Chinatown.

Victor followed this up by adding that the different working teams need to come to a common understanding of what affordability means and suggested creating a task force that would examine this issue more closely and provide a definition for the larger CWG. The task force would be several members of the zoning committee and the affordability committee and would undertake the research needed to establish the level of measuring affordability.

Economic Development: (Rob Hollander, Jay Caseley)

Discussion focused on the need to bring more stakeholders to the table in order to create a more collaborative process. Also, some discussion about zoning, yet the committee focused mostly on how to maximize what currently exists in the community.

Historic & Cultural Preservation: (Mitchell Grubler, Rob Hollander, Jay Caseley)

Committee identified key areas that they will be focusing on, which include preservation of cultural character, current demographics, and building stock. Also discussed the need for cultivation of these things as well. Encourage new design that is harmonious with what exists and yet is also reflective modern aesthetics. Also, to ensure efforts of other teams are conscious of the Historic & Cultural Preservation committee's goals.

Victor asked if there were other comments to be added about the other committees or the proposed idea to establish an Affordability Task Force. Jacky Wong spoke about the importance to discuss ownership within the affordability group.

3. Stakeholders Not at Table

Victor Papa mentioned reaching out to the Settlement Houses and also to places of Worship. He volunteered himself and Co-chair Michael Levine to begin making those contacts.

John Leo discussed reaching out to those groups that are missing and asking why it is they are not participating. He asked the elected officials if they could provide assistance again with this process. Greg Kirschenbaum suggested that the CWG try to establish those contacts first, and then solicit the help of the electeds. He offered the services of Borough President Stringer's office if assistance was needed to perform outreach. John requested that this discussion be tabled and addressed during the next steering committee meeting.

4. Zoning and 197a Experts

Community Board #1 Urban Planning Fellow Kasey LaFlam provided the committee with a brief overview of the zoning that currently exists in the broader Chinatown community. This included information regarding uses allowed, FAR, and height restrictions.

Rob Hollander discussed the urgency for us to analyze the zoning needs in Chinatown since much of the building stock does not utilize maximum FAR potential, which leaves the community vulnerable to out-of-context and unwanted development in particular areas.

Victor Papa suggested that we ask NYC DCP to come to the next meeting in May to discuss more information about zoning and the 197a planning process.