

**Zoning Working Team
Chinatown Working Group
February 10, 2009**

Meeting Minutes

Location: 49 Chambers Street, Room 709

Time: 1:00pm to 3:00pm

In Attendance: Victor Papa (Two Bridges Neighborhood Council), Michael Levine, Kasey LaFlam (CB#1), Jim Solomon, Edward Ma (CB#2), Keith Lipstein (ABS Partners), Lora Tenenbaum (resident), Thomas Yu, Brian Cho (Asian Americans For Equality), Damaris Reyes (GOLES), Rob Hollander (LESRRD), Bethany Li (AALDEF), Mitchell Grubler (Bowery Alliance of Neighbors)

Elected Officials/Representatives in Attendance: Jen Hong (Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer), Jasmin Sanchez (State Senator Daniel Squadron)

Media: Jacky Wong, Lotus Chan (Sing Tao Daily), Anne Huang (World Journal)

1. First Agenda Item – Acting Chairs Victor Papa and Thomas Yu opened discussion regarding general principles for the Zoning Working Team to adopt. Five general principles were highlighted (listed below), but the working team agreed by mutual consensus not to vote on final principles at this meeting. Attendees felt additional deliberation and discussion was needed before making final recommendations to the wider Chinatown Working Group.

Five General Principles regarding the Zoning Working Team discussed thus far:

1. To promote commercial stability and preservation; to encourage balanced economic growth appropriate to the neighborhood, in particular to small businesses; and to counter involuntary displacement of existing small businesses
2. To preserve the historical and cultural character of the neighborhood
3. To provide opportunity for new housing as well as preservation of existing housing, both rental and homeownership, affordable to current residents in the neighborhood, while recognizing a variety of income levels; to counter displacement of existing residents
4. To base Zoning Working Team recommendations on existing and new detailed research, in-depth fact finding, and community plans

5. To acknowledge that zoning alone will not guarantee the preservation of neighborhood character; that the Zoning Team will work closely with all other working teams of different issues, to coordinate and incorporate their input into future recommendations

Discussion regarding Five General Principles:

- Attendees briefly discussed the question of “What is Chinatown” and “What are the boundaries.” It was agreed that the answer would not be achieved in the first meeting alone, and that it will be revisited.
- Questions were also raised as to how the group will define “affordable,” and “to whom is housing affordable.”
- Affordability suggestions included using the a) HUD guidelines, b) using Chinatown specific census tract data as opposed to metropolitan area median income, or c) pegging affordability to what current residents make in 2007. No consensus was reached at this time and issue will be further revisited.
- Attendees also discussed how to protect existing low income tenants, while providing opportunities for working middle-class descendants (2nd generation residents who do not qualify for low-income housing but cannot afford luxury housing) to remain in the neighborhood with their families, such as limited equity co-ops
- Economic preservation and growth was discussed, and attendees raised various concerns as to how to use zoning to protect small businesses and prevent their dislocation; and how to attract new businesses, create jobs for local residents.
- Question as to the future of manufacturing in Chinatown was raised: What is the current state of the local industries in manufacturing zones? Can manufacturing be preserved and new jobs brought in? Attendees agreed more in-depth research was needed on those areas, and that resources should be devoted to careful fact-finding before any decisions were made.
- Issue of preserving or creating public open space was brought up. Members pointed out this should be raised in the Parks and Open Space Working Team, and that Zoning will request their input on the matter.

Discussion ended with agreement to revisit and refine general guiding principles in the next monthly meeting.

2. Second Agenda Item: Selection of Co-Chairs

Thomas Yu (AAFE) nominates Victor Papa (TBNC) and Michael Levine (CB#1) as co-chairs of the Zoning Working Team. Jim Solomon (CB#2) seconds, and elections of chairs were called to a vote by the voting members. Victor Papa and Michael Levine were unanimously voted in as co-chairs by the voting members effective immediately.

VOTE: To elect Victor Papa and Michael Levine as Co-Chairs of the Zoning Working Team

In Favor: 5

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Voting member organizations (each with one vote) included: Asian Americans For Equality, Bowery Alliance of Neighbors, Two Bridges Neighborhood Council, CB#1, CB#2

3. Third Agenda Item: Selection of Future Meeting Date, Time, and Location

The next Zoning Working Team meeting will be held on March 10th, 2009, 11am-12:30pm at 49 Chambers Street, NY NY 10007. Co-Chairs Victor Papa and Michael Levine will send out to members and other interested parties unable to make the first meeting, and receive feedback on meeting times.

Meeting adjourned at 3pm.