

**Culture, Affordability, Preservation, Zoning Working Team  
Chinatown Working Group  
Tuesday, February 23, 2010**

**Meeting Minutes**

Location: 49 Chambers Street, Room 709

Time: 11:00am to 1pm

In Attendance: ABS Partners (Keith Lipstein), CB 1 (Michael Levine), CWG (Elisa Espiritu), LESRRD (Rob Hollander), Two Bridges (Wilson Soo, Victor Papa), CAAAV (Michael Limaco), Sing Tao Daily (Jackey Wong), Bond New York (Gerald Yu), Bob Schneck

---

Using the charrette group notes organized by Working Team theme, the CAPZ group discussed their corresponding list (of items suggested in the Town Hall by charrette group participants).

While discussing the list, the Working Team categorized and marked each suggested item with one of the following:

- Check Mark (✓) : indicates the Working Team's PAP already has the suggested item
- Cross Out (~~item~~) : indicates the Working Team has decided the suggested item is irrelevant and/or out of scope. It can also indicate an item which is repeated (i.e. suggested by another team earlier in the document)
- Circle / Highlight (item) : indicates the Working Team will work on implementing new language in their PAP to incorporate suggested item

For a summary of the comments, recommendations, and additions, please see text below.

---

**CAPZ: Affordability**

*Cantonese Group*

- ✓ The definition of "Low-Income Household" should have a Chinatown measurement and standard without being applied by the use of blanket/NYC citywide base.
- The incentives for Chinatown real estate development should be retained within the community.

*English Group 1*

- What would you improve in Chinatown's affordability picture?
  - Preservation of low income houses e.g. Al Smith Houses
  - ~~Restriction on high end residential development~~
  - Require mandatory affordable housing in all new buildings

**Comment [MSOffice1]:** Should go under Affordability. Double check with facilitators to better understand the group's request here (there were multiple interpretations). Ex. Transfer Air Rights within Chinatown? Also double check this item with the PAP after talking with facilitators to make sure it is captured in the PAP. If it is not, incorporate it.

**Comment [MSOffice2]:** Also include NYCHA, 421A, Rent Controlled, Rent Stabilized, SCRIE

**Comment [MSOffice3]:** Should go under Zoning, Special District. Questions concerning the use of the word "mandatory". Can we use it (legally) Please also see Immigrants PAP p. 16

- o ✓ Definition of affordability should be based on actual Chinatown Area average income data.
- o Protect affordable senior citizen housing
- o ✓ Protection of existing tenants
- o ✓ Preserve rent stabilization
- o Establish 30% minimum affordability for all new residential development

**Comment [MSOffice4]:** Please also see Immigrants PAP p.16

**Comment [MSOffice5]:** We may want to check other 197a plans to see if we can petition for a specific percentage in this manner.

*English Group 2*

- ~~Definition should incorporate neighborhoods~~
- ✓ Need local median area income figures utilized for new developments

*English / Spanish Group*

- ✓ Low income rent / senior citizen housing program
- ✓ More tenant protections
- ✓ ~~More programs like SCRIE for other low income tenants~~ (see above)
- ✓ Preserve rent regulation
- ✓ Maintain nice, decent affordable housing
- ✓ Don't demolish apartment buildings for new (high rise) buildings
- ✓ Redefine rent regulation – to suit Chinatown family demographics
- ✓ Do not lower standards for affordable housing
- IZ (Inclusionary Zoning) need to be strengthened.
- Affordable housing units on-site
- ~~More space for housing~~
- ~~Higher wages~~
- ✓ Need to define what is “affordability” within Chinatown – different degrees
- ✓ Need a LMI (local median income)
- ✓ Preserve rent regulated apartments
- ~~More organizations in Chinatown that help tenants organize and education~~
- ✓ Ensure greater safety and healthy housing
- ✓ (Immigrants PAP) Tenants do not necessarily know baseline rights
- ~~421B could be used more in/for Chinatown~~
- Affordability for both commercial (small biz) and residential
- ~~Feasibility of building projects—so that they can be affordable~~

**Comment [MSOffice6]:** Have language concerning IZ in Affordability section. Do we need to include it in Zoning?

**Comment [MSOffice7]:** Should be in Zoning, under Special District; not affordability.

**Comment [MSOffice8]:** Incentives to preserve (ex. Tax breaks). Also, research point: have there been zoning restrictions on commercial chains in NYC?  
**For Zoning** (two points):  
 1) Provide incentives for new small scale businesses.  
 2) Restrictions on certain new commercial uses to preserve existing commercial uses.  
**For Econ and Trans:** see p.4, Eng Group 2. Also see Econ and Trans PAP, p. 11

*Mandarin*

2/19/2010 / Facilitator's summary:

✓ The emphasis during the conversation was about housing so while people voted for affordability, it was in the context of being harassed from their homes, and not having enough places to live in Chinatown, and that leading to overcrowding. The focus was not necessarily on the cost of things.

The difficulties of living in Chinatown

- Difficult landlords
- Gentrification push Chinese out of the community
- Dirty Streets
- High rent

- Street food is not sanitized
- No space for youth activities
- Improvement of life quality
- It takes too long to apply for government subsidized housing
- Jammed apartments situation

Why do you want to live in Chinatown?

- Convenience for shopping and doctors
  - Feel more comfortable living among fellow Chinese to relieve homesickness
  - Language convenience
  - Similar in culture, life and ethnicity
- 

**Comment [MSOffice9]:**  
It was suggested by the group that we try to capture these sentiments in the 197a Introduction. In doing so, please cross reference draft Introduction submitted by Amy C. and Rob H. in Fall '09.

## CAPZ: Cultural and Historic Preservation

### English Group 1

(This section also included in Immigrants and Parks)

<i>What do you like about Chinatown's cultural, historic, immigrant or parks picture.</i>	<i>What would you improve in Chinatown's culture, preservation, immigrant and parks picture?</i>
Food	√ Provide better incentives for preservation of buildings
Low rise character of historic Chinatown (non grid)	√ Official designation of an Historic district
Marketable neighborhood	(√, Parks PAP) Enhance/give better care to Sara D Roosevelt Park and Columbus Park
Diversity and melding (blended diversity)	√ Preventions for creation of a "themed" destination - No Disneyland
Vibrancy and presence of 100 years of living culture	√ Preservation and maintain affordability
Al Smith Recreation Center	√ Cultural respect (traditions and practice)
	Financial/Operating Support for the Al Smith Rec Center
	√ Increase Space for expression of art (performance arts too)

Comment [MSOffice10]: Move to Parks WT for discussion

### English Group 2

- √ Stricter laws to safeguard
  - √ Encourage preservation of buildings / possible tax abatement
-

## CAPZ: Zoning

### Cantonese

- √ Zoning
- √ Protect landmark housing
- √ Retain middle to low income families
- Ethnic harmony
- Development plan with regarding diversity to include all ethnicity groups and all income level families
- √ A Chinatown based definition of low income family, not city wide
- √ Special incentives for Chinatown affordable housing development

**Comment [MSOffice11]:** It was suggested by the group that we try to capture these sentiments in the 197a Introduction. In doing so, please cross reference draft Introduction submitted by Amy C. and Rob H. in Fall '09.

### English Group 1

<i>What do you like about Chinatown's Zoning</i>	<i>What needs improving in Chinatown's Zoning</i>
Low-Rise character	√ Prevention of further high-rise development
The blended umbrella of zoning as it is now.	√ Not transfer air rights to other communities
	√ Consider South of Houston and East River to Center in the zoning plan
	√ Preserve current manufacturing and provide areas that continue to allow manufacturing uses. Limit luxury high rises
	√ Create a special zoning district similar to Little Italy Special District for Chinatown "core" (Worth to Canal, and Allen to Centre)
	Allow a dog run at Essex and Hester
	Come up with zoning plan that has a chance of approval

**Comment [MSOffice12]:** Move to Parks WT for discussion

### English Group 2

- √ Fair and across the board affordable housing as a result of zoning
- Safe guard small businesses and encourage growth
- √ Incorporate low-income housing in new developments
- (√, Econ and Trans PAP) Regulate rentals in favor of small businesses
- √ New development matches surroundings now
- Maintain hospitals and churches
- √ No new high rises, save low-income units
- √ Chinatown / LES one community
- √ Public amenities for community use

**Comment [MSOffice13]:** See p. 1 (Affordability section) of this document.

**Comment [MSOffice14]:** Zoning, Special District. New language for proposal: "Maintain existing community facilities (ex. hospitals, libraries, etc.)"

## CAPZ: Zoning (continued)

### *English / Spanish Group*

- √ Likes everyone working here together
- √ Too many big buildings
- √ Latino community feels excluded
- √ Like rules set in Spec. Little Italy district but concerned about abuses and effect on Chinatown population
- **Preserve manufacturing to co-exist with residential areas**
- √ Should include NYCHA housing in plan
- √ Create special zoning, subsidies to enable/incentives business
- √ Inclusionary zoning affordable housing
- √ Affordable housing --- need to ensure existence
- √ Securing anti-demolition provisions
- √ “New developments that get tax credits for low-income housing – 50% of the housing should be low-income”
- √ Area median income reflecting local demographic / neighborhood
- √ Incentives for swapping affordable housing for ht/density increases in buildings
- √ More opportunity for non-retail professional office spaces (not necessarily corporate buildings- small businesses)
- ~~Become the customer base for local shops~~
- ~~Increase zoning for height on buildings~~
- √ Limit commercial rent
- √ Encourage small biz providing services
- √ Don’t tear down old apartment buildings and replace them with unaffordable high rises
- √ Rethink tax incentive programs that may be lessening affordability

**Comment [MSOffice15]:** Zoning, Special District. Proposed new language for PAP: “Preserve manufacturing / business to co-exist with residential areas.” See also Econ and Trans PAP, p.12

### *Fujianese Group (Coalition Representatives)*

- For Rezoning
    - √ Include all the Chinatown and LES
    - √ Do not discriminate nor exclude (Latino, Low income workers, Fujianese)
    - √ A genuine community plan must benefit and be planned by reps of majority; not by the minority in the community!
-