

**Culture, Affordability, Preservation, Zoning Working Team
Chinatown Working Group
Tuesday July 14, 2009**

Meeting Minutes

Location: 49 Chambers Street, Room 709

Time: 11:00am to 12:30pm

In Attendance: 3Square LLC (Douglas Woodward), AAAC (Robert Lee), AAFE (Richard Lee), AALDEF (Mabel Tso), ABS Partners on behalf of Canal/Lafayette (Keith Lipstein, Jay Caseley), Assemblyman Silver (Karen He, Joyce Lau), Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler), CB 1 (Michael Levine), CB 2 (Jim Solomon), CB 3 (John Leo), CREATE (Amy Chin), CWG (Alanna Martinez, Julian Fu), Edison Properties (Jerry Gottesacro?), First Pioneer Properties (Suraj Sani), LESRRD (Rob Hollander), TBNC (Wilson Soo)

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

1. Name of new WT decided: Culture, Affordability, Preservation, and Zoning (CAPZ)

Working Team chairs identified their respective Guiding Principles to maintain. Richard Lee (Affordability) discussed the importance of using a local Area Median Income when creating affordable housing. Amy Chin (Culture & Preservation) emphasized the need to better integrate Asian culture into the neighborhood. Michael Levine (Zoning) discussed Zoning Guiding Principles. Guiding Principles of three Working Teams to be consolidated and presented for voting in August meeting.

2. Review of Milestones

Michael presented Milestones again. Working Teams are currently in Stage Two, which emphasizes research by Working Teams.

3. Discussion of Use and Bulk of areas in Chinatown (Brainstorm Session)

Michael Levine presented two maps, created by Alanna Martinez (Zoning WT Intern), that show zoning districts by land use and by bulk. Michael led discussion of "Planning for Chinatown": 1) How are buildings used and how big are they, 2) What buildings does Chinatown want in terms of use and bulk, and 3) what buildings are of historical/architectural significance and how are they used? Discussion notes recorded by Alanna on easel pad.

Attached are the expanded notes from the meeting, which covered mostly the zoning issues.

4. Next meeting

The next meeting will be Tuesday, August 11 at 11:00 am at 49 Chambers Street, Room 709. To have ready for next meeting: Culture & Historical Preservation and Affordability sub-teams should have notes from their respective “brainstorming” sessions on current conditions and what is desired in the future.

Notes from CAPZ Brainstorming Session

1. A. What do we have now? How are the buildings used?

Residential

- poor housing conditions
 - some residents are living in old and crowded housing in need of repair
- seniors/newer immigrants/1st generation
 - a large section of the buildings are occupied by seniors, newer immigrants and 1st generation Chinese and their families
- over occupied families
 - large groups/families living in apartments that were made for smaller numbers
- renovated apts. w/ high rents
 - newly renovated apartments are being rented for too much
- outdated infrastructure
 - old, dilapidated buildings
- illegal partitioning (in core and beyond)
 - in order to accommodate large families sharing apartment space, temporary partitioning has been put up to separate the spaces
- Confucius Plaza (ML), Chatham Green (co-op), Chatham Towers (ground flr. Comm. Space)
 - three of the largest apartment buildings and complexes in Chinatown
- higher income/savings ? (low income/high savings?)...mid. Income
- families, professionals, seniors (Conf. plaza)
 - the population of Confucius Plaza
- lofts (conv. Living, sometimes legal, sometimes not, joint living/work quarters)
 - in the Chinatown area there are loft spaces that have been converted to joint living and working quarters for artists. Residents live there legally and sometimes illegally.

Commercial

- possible ground flr./comm.. basement...in most buildings
 - commercial businesses operate on the ground floor and in the basements of buildings in Chinatown.
- industrial (western portion Chinatown)
 - industrial and manufacturing spaces in Chinatown are mostly found in the western portion of Chinatown
- office buildings, spas
- Orchard st. mix of buildings

- mixed use buildings as well as a wide range of commercial, residential and some religious buildings
- manufacturing...building by building basis
 - the type of manufacturing changes building to building
- less garment factories
 - there are less garment factories in Chinatown then there once were
- wholesalers, building materials, shipping and distribution
 - Division Street, the Bowery and the area around the Manhattan Bridge, L.E.S.
- print shops
 - Eldridge and Allen st. glass, signage
- restaurant supplies and lighting
 - found along the Bowery
- restaurant, hair salon
- restaurants became souvenir shops
 - Former restaurant businesses have left or closed leaving their space to be occupied by souvenir shops
- trendy shops/boutiques
- funeral supplies
 - By Columbus Park there are several Funeral Homes as well as businesses that sell funeral supplies
- banks, jewelry, trinket shops
 - What businesses occupy the majority of Chinatown
- new hotels
 - Along Canal Street and the Bowery
- interstate buses
 - Market Street, Division Street, Canal Street at the Manhattan Bridge, Chatham Square

Cultural Character

- medical offices, cultural facilities
 - Exist in commercial spaces as well as on the ground floor of large high-rise apartment complexes i.e. Confucius Plaza, Chatham Green
- non-profits, immigration services
 - Services that exist in Chinatown that we do not want to see lost; important and vital to the community
- religious buildings, storefronts, video stores
- schools, Buddhist temples and Taoist temple
 - variety of schools (elementary, middle school, highschool, private and parochial) as well as range of religious buildings
- “hub to come back to”
 - Chinatown will always be a central place for families, individuals, tourists, immigrants, etc. to return to
- “ethnic islands”
 - it is one of the few ethnic neighborhoods left in New York
- tourism Mecca

- it is a center for tourism in New York
- “an island unto itself”
 - it functions as a self sufficient section of the city
- clinics (small and large scale linked to hospitals)
- health services from street stalls
 - street tables and vendors that offer health services as a way of reaching out to the community
- job placement
 - linked to non-profit
- association buildings
 - Organizations that have helped establish and continue to be part of the cultural fabric of the neighborhood

1. B. What do we have now? How big are the buildings?

Residential

- tenement buildings (5-6 stories, predominant)
 - majority of buildings in the neighborhood are tenement buildings that range from 5-6 stories high
- modern high-rise res.
 - Chinatown does have a few modern high-rise residential buildings

Commercial

- Market st. mid-rise free market (4-8 story mid-rise)
- Jewelry, banks, produce...medium sized buildings (core Chinatown)

2.A. What do we want to have? How should the buildings be used?

Commercial

- density bonuses for affordable housing
- mixed use of residential and commercial uses, as well as ownership and rental opportunities and affordability
- revitalization in certain commercial areas such as Canal st.
- diverse uses
 - economic revitalization which results in diversification of businesses

Cultural Character

- “a place (island) of beauty”
 - we think of Chinatown as a center of cultural beauty in New York
- stability
 - we are looking for overall cultural, economic, and residential stability in the neighborhood.
- “cultural anchor w/ architectural visibility”
 - we need a space, like a cultural arts center, that is functions as an “anchor” for the neighborhood and is an architectural highlight.

2.B. What do we want to have? How big should the buildings be?

Residential

- create more space through better use of higher buildings (mid-rise 10 flrs.)
 - we are willing to make concessions if it means more affordable housing will be available
- towers in non-res. Areas? ...wide streets, transportation
 - we will allow larger towers to built in the community as long as they are in commercial/manufacturing areas; possibly along Canal Street or the Bowery and near transportation.

Commercial

- Equalize FAR for commercial and residential buildings
 - Even preference given to commercial and residential; we specifically do not want to see preference given to commercial.

Miscellaneous

- building conditions, land use, housing conditions, demographic analysis
 - in order to continue our work we need to do proper research on the current building conditions, access land use maps, housing conditions, and do a demographics analysis.