

Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) Full Group Meeting
5:30pm-8:00pm, Monday, November 4, 2013
American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291

Voting members present: American Legion Post 1291 (Gabe Mui); Asian American Arts Centre (Robert Lee); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler, Gilda Pervin); Chinatown Business and Property Owners Group (Rebecca Paveluan, Douglas Woodward); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Wendy Cheng, Wah Lee); Committee Against Anti Asian Violence (Jason Chan, Anj Chaudhry, Helena Wong, Billie Zhu); Community Board 2 (Ed Ma, Antony Wong); Community Board 3 (Gigi Li, My Phuong Chung); Good Old Lower East Side (Ginger Lopez); M'Finda Kalunga Community Garden (Kathleen Webster); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (Maggie Martin, David Tieu, Louise Velez); Property Tax Payers Association (John Casalnuovo, Irving Lee, Jan Lee) Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (Wilson Soo, Victor Papa); 61 Delancey Street Tenants Association (Zhi Qin Zheng); 197 Madison Street Tenants Association (Fu Ko Poon).

Planning consultant: Eve Baron, Jocelyne Chait, Eva Hanhardt, Lacey Tauber.

Also present: Rob Hollander (Lower East Side Residents for Responsible Development); Zella Jones (NoHo-Bowery Stakeholders, Incorporated); D. Kung (B. Agent); Sam Stein (writer); Frank Yee (Yee Fong Toy Association); Susan Yung (artist).

Researchers: Julia Borredon (student, Hunter College); Anastassia Fisyak (student, Pratt Institute); Julia Foley (real estate research, MNS); Sandra Villanueva (researcher, Loyola-Marymount); Meng Xun (student, Columbia University);

Public Officials: Gale Brewer's Office (Lisa Kaplan).

Media: Sing Tao Daily News (Bonnie Li); World Journal (Yi Chen Tu).

Meeting called to order at 5:45pm by Secretary Hollander.

1. Introductions
2. Agenda, Wilson Soo, presiding.
3. Minutes approved without objection.
4. Consultant planning proposals, Jocelyne Chait and Eva Hanhardt presenting.
[See presentation, <http://is.gd/5rUIZC>]

Wendy Cheng: Is there any reason why there's no height cap for zone B?

Eva Hanhardt: The existing contexts there have distinct heights. The height of new development would be determined by the locality's context. That's the idea of a planned community. The other option includes "scale."

Wendy Cheng: Will new development alter the mix of income groups?

Eva Hanhardt: They would conform to NYCHA income levels.

Wendy Cheng: Would new development compromise the open spaces?

Eva Hanhardt: A special permit would be required for all new development, demolition or enlargement.

Wendy Cheng: Will you give us a more detailed map so we can see the mapping of each street?

Eva Hanhardt: Yes, we will. Because CB2 has not decided whether to be part of area C, the exact boundary is yet to be determined. Areas of Little Italy can be carved out of the subdistrict. The residential buildings on the western side of Baxter Street can be carved out of the district.

Wendy Cheng: Will development by the waterfront be out of scale? How will they affect the neighborhood and the Seaport City proposal?

Eva Hanhardt: It would be taller than the NYCHA buildings but not out of scale with other buildings around them. We thought it would be better to have them tall with permeable space leading to the waterfront rather than short and blocking the waterfront.

Wendy Cheung: Does it say 100% affordable housing on public land?

Eva Hanhardt: We state this for the NYCHA properties. But there is no current vacant public land except under the bridge which has obvious limitations. We will include a discussion of public land and strategies in the final document.

Zella Jones: How much of a tax abatement? How much in real dollars would a 6-10 story building's abatement provide for affordable housing? And add "permanently" affordable. What is your formula for all the affordable housing?

Eve Baron: We are consulting with the Independent Budget Office and the Furman Institute to look at tax abatements. We do not yet have a formula. The 421a standard abatement is not always permanent. Our proposal will ask for permanent affordability.

Zella Jones: That should be made clear and explicit so no one is deceived into false expectations.

Eva Hanhardt: The small properties already have current affordable housing. We're looking at some assessment or abatement that would recognize that there is a concentration of affordable housing and that

recognizes the needs of the small property owners. We'll get back to you from our discussions with Furman and the IBO.

Jan Lee: Abatements for renovation for current small property is the key, otherwise the small property owners will sell and leave. They are often assessed on distant buildings including luxury hotels, raising the real estate taxes on small tenements depending on low residential rents. The plan must ask for assessments of apples to apples, not apples to oranges comparing tenements with hotels. It is essential to preserve the small property owners. They are holding on by a thread, dealing with increases in water fees, sewage fees and since the hurricane, insurance. This is not their fault. Assessments doubled in one year in my case. Also, the list of buildings with special significance should be an option given to the property owners. Some may wish to get on the list to sell air rights off site. If that's the incentive, allow the property owners to choose to sign on the list or to be left off the list. I'd like that to be on record because that is the feedback I've gotten.

Lacey: There would certainly be a conversation with the property owners. We don't know what the procedure would be.

Eva Hanhardt: We could establish the procedure.

Jan Lee: We were assured years ago that the CWG would not designate buildings without our consent.

Gilda Pervin: Would you clarify the proposal to extend area C of the Special Little Italy District to the Bowery?

Eva Hanhardt: Every special district has subdistricts. The Bowery abuts subdistrict C of the SLID.

John Casalnuovo: Why build in a flood area? It makes no sense. Lift the restrictions where there is no flooding. and build there.

Eva Handhardt: Just about all of the study area are in a flood area.

Jocelyne Chait: We have to wrap up.

Wilson Soo: You can email the consultants with your questions during the next two weeks.

My Phuong Chung: The Planning Consultant will present at Community Board 3's Land Use Committee December 11 [200 Madison Street].

Wilson Soo: Pratt will come back to us December 2.

Meeting adjourned, 8:10pm

Minutes submitted respectfully,
Rob Hollander, Secretary