

Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) Full Group Meeting
4pm-5:30pm, Monday, October 7, 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); Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Wendy Cheng); Committee Against Anti Asian Violence (Jason Chan, Anj Choudry, Billie Zhu); Community Board 2 (Ed Ma, Antony Wong); Community Board 3 (John Leo); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (David Tieu, Louise Velez); 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: Eva Hanhardt.

Also present: Jinn Fong (property owner); Rob Hollander (Lower East Side Residents for Responsible Development); Karen Hwang (formerly AAAC); Irving Lee (Property Tax Payers Association); Sam Stein (independent); Susan Yung (artist).

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

Meeting called to order at 4:15pm, Wilson Soo and Antony Wong presiding.

1. Agenda and Minutes: approved by all present
2. Introductions
3. Planning consultant status update, Eva Hanhardt of Pratt, presenting.

Eva Hanhardt: [See Planner Presentation on the CWG website:
http://www.chinatownworkinggroup.org/Pratt%20Presentation%20to%20CWG_2013-10-07.pdf
for the entire Powerpoint presentation.]

Our contract ends November 4th, when we will present our final recommendations. We would like to integrate the comments from the November 4 presentation into a final document, to be presented mid November. We would work on this integration after November 4 but at no cost to you. Do you have to vote on that?

Wilson Soo: We'll discuss it with University Settlement.

Mitchell Grubler: Did you consider a lighting cluster [along Bowery]?

Eva Hanhardt: Yes.

Jinn Fong: Is there a list of potential landmarks or buildings to be preserved?

Eva hanhardt: Yes, we will have a draft list of those buildings. We welcome additions. It's important that the owners understand what is involved, the benefits and downsides.

Sam Stein: Is the proposal to raise the density in the C area?

Eva Hanhardt: Yes, an FAR of 10 -- 210 feet height limit (21 stories).

Mitchell Grubler: How do you get affordable housing with maintaining manufacturing?

Eva Hanhardt: The current zoning prohibits conversion from manufacturing to residential. We want to make sure that there won't be any further conversion. Does anyone know who owns the Murray Bergtraum Park?

Victor Papa: It was given to Murray Bergtraum High School.

Eva Hanhardt: Is it then a long-term lease or private? It could be a development site. It has not been made available to other schools for use. By the way, these proposals are all drafts, not final.

Robert Lee: Regarding grandfathering more than 25 foot-frontage: bank walls are essentially blank. Couldn't they be asked for a more community-oriented use?

Eva Hanhardt: We cannot impose on something that is already in place through zoning, But we are recommending a conservancy which could curate exhibitions in the windows of storefronts. That will encourage public art and attract people into the community.

Irving Lee: These proposals had no input from the property owners. We have to get together since we are most impacted by these proposals. Will the presentation be on the website? Because it isn't there now.

Eva Hanhardt: Yes, it will be there tomorrow.

Wendy Cheng: How will the unresolved questions be addressed?

Eva Hanhardt: We will provide more than one option along with pros and cons of each.

Irving Lee: We expect the Property Taxpayers to be members of CWG soon.

Rob Hollander: Downzoning is a kind of taking from the property owners. But upzoning actually gives property owners money by fiat. Why not upzone the FAR while downzoning the allowable height, and require that the development rights be restricted to specific sites for affordable housing? Then everyone is a winner.

Eva Hanhardt: That is similar to what we are proposing. If you keep the density, you could transfer the rights. But to pick and choose property owners is tricky. It's not exactly what we are proposing, but it's very similar.

Rob Hollander: How do you close the loophole in the Inclusionary Bonus, where the height allows air rights to be transferred instead of affordable housing?

Eva Hanhardt: The transfer would be restricted to affordable housing.

Rob Hollander: That would be good.

Eva Hanhardt: The restrictions would be there not to deprive, but to discourage demolition.

Wilson Soo: We cannot continue. [We are already past our meeting time for discussion on this item. Any comments can be discussed directly with Eva.]

Mitchell Grubler: When will the presentation be on the website?

Antony Wong: Tomorrow.

5. Announcements

Mae: There is a Sandy long-term recovery group surveying the community. It will be out before the next meeting. Maybe we can look at it.

Robert Lee: The Asian American Arts Center is selling equipment and art on our sidewalk yard sale on Norfolk Street just north of Delancey Street.

Antony Wong: Meeting adjourned, 5:45pm

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Hollander, Sec'y