

Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG)
4pm to 6pm, Monday, December 1, 2008
Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association

Attendees (as per sign-in sheet):

ORGANIZATIONS (Representatives): ABS Partners Real Estate (Jay Caseley, Keith Lipstein); Asian American Arts Center (Robert Lee); Asian American/Asian Research Institute-CUNY (Betty Lee Sung); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Gruber); Chinatown Tenants Union (Bin Liang); CCBA (Justin Yu, Wee K. Wong); Chinatown Partnership (Wellington Chen, Michael Moi); Chinatown Manpower Project (Stephanie Lau); Chinese Chamber of Commerce (David Louie); Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee); CREATE in Chinatown (Amy Chin); Greater Chinatown Community Association (Kendra Lee); Columbia University Students (Shaohua Li, Gita Subramony, Andrew Watanabe); CUNY Graduate Center (Yi Chen); LES Residents for Responsible Development (Rob Hollander); Municipal Art Society (Sideya Sherman); Sanctuary for Families (Yi-Jen Chang); Sun Sun Group Inc. (Jason Situ); Two Bridges (Victor Papa); Margaret Chin; Lou Holtzman; Daniel Maio; Paul Newell

PUBLIC OFFICIALS: Councilmember Alan Gerson

PUBLIC OFFICIALS (Representatives): Mayor Bloomberg (Claudia Filomena); Assembly Speaker Silver (Michael Chan, Karen He); City Comptroller Thompson (Sandra Ung); MBP Stringer (Jen Hong, Greg Kirschenbaum); District Attorney Morgenthau (Linda Janneh); State Senator-Elect Squadron (John Raskin)

COMMUNITY BOARD (Representatives): CB#1 (Michael Levine, Kasey LaFlam); CB#2 (Zella Jones, Kimmy Lee, Edward Ma, James Solomon); CB#3 (John Leo, Susan Stetzer);

MEDIA (Representatives): *Downtown Express* (Julie Shapiro); *The Epoch Times* (Sally Sun); *Ming Pao Daily* (Rowais Wong); *Sing Tao Daily* (Lotus Chau); *World Journal* (Anne Huang); NTDTV (April Zhu)

1. Update on Recent Developments
a. Chair's Report

Chairperson James Solomon welcomed attendees. Attendees identified themselves and their affiliations. Bilingual Chinese/English agenda was distributed. Chairperson Solomon thanked the Chinese language papers 'World Journal' and 'Sing Tao' for posting the meeting notice and agenda. It was noted that the meeting notice and agenda were also emailed to the CWG email list.

On Monday, January 5th, CWG will start the process to formalize its structure and governance. Each organization attending CWG meetings will be asked to officially sign on as a member. This will allow the organization one vote on all issues that come before CWG for decision-making.

Prior to January 5th, it is imperative that CWG intensify efforts to reach out to other groups and organizations that should be a part of the planning effort, but have not fully participated before.

The Mission Statement drafted and commented on at the prior month's meeting has been revised. A second draft is ready further review. A motion to adopt the Mission Statement will be presented for a vote at the Jan 5th meeting (following formalization of CWG's governance structure).

Between now and Jan. 5th, Community Boards 1, 2, and 3 will hopefully have reviewed and voted on a resolution to support the formation of CWG and its stated purpose. At the same time, elected officials will supplement CWG outreach by directly contacting organizations and encouraging them to participate in the CWG.

The new time for CWG general meetings is now the first Monday of each month from 4pm-6pm. (NOTE: Since the Dec. 1 meeting, it has been determined that CWG general meetings will take place at the American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291, Auditorium, 2nd floor, which is located at 191-193 Canal Street, corner of Mott/Canal.) The next two general meetings will be Jan. 5th and Feb. 2nd. Note that the Feb 2nd meeting will be an important meeting encompassing, among other things, the election of CWG's first slate of officers.

b. Councilmember Gerson Reports on Agreement with City

Councilmember Gerson summarized the concerns he conveyed to the Deputy Mayor and Department of City Planning regarding the LES rezoning. Attached is a copy of the Deputy Mayor's response dated November 19, 2008 and addressed to Councilmembers Alan Gerson and Rosie Mendez. Councilmember Gerson emphasized that this letter importantly outlines the Administration's commitment to resolving many issues raised by communities within and surrounding the rezoned areas. Among them are creation and preservation of affordable housing including the continuation of tenement building preservation provisions and assistance for tenants' defense against landlord harassment. Another which directly pertains to CWG is support for an allocation of \$150,000 from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation to engage expert urban planners to work with the CWG task force. Councilman Gerson also voiced his support for the CWG planning boundaries to encompass any and all areas it deems suitable even including any areas already rezoned under the LES rezoning plan.

2. CWG Governance & Voting – Recommendations of Governance Sub-committee

The attached recommendations for governance (drafted by the CWG Outreach Sub-committee with assistance from Eve Baron of the Municipal Art Society) were distributed. The CWG Steering Committee recommends this governance structure as a first step to formalizing the organization. In its November meeting, the Committee considered the question of how to assure transparency and accountability and also implement a standard process for voting and decision-making. It was suggested that the larger working group votes on organization-wide issues while sub and steering committees work on finer details and day-to-day concerns. Sub-Committees will steer discussions and make recommendations to the full working group as needed. Sub-Committees do not vote on issues independent of the Working Group. Each member organization/group is allowed one vote regardless of how many people show up to a meeting representing that organization/group. No individual may officially represent more than one organization/group. Elected officials will be advisory and will observe and provide resources but will not be voting members. The three Community Boards would be allowed one vote each.

CWG will be governed by two Co-Chairs – one representing a Community Board and the other representing the community. Nominations for Chairs will be taken at the January 5th meeting. A formal election will be held at the Feb 2nd meeting.

Co-chairs will serve for one year. They may be re-elected at the end of their term. Primary duties of the Co-Chairs are to announce meetings, record attendance, and distribute minutes. Co-chairs have no greater power than to circulate information. Each Co-Chair has one vote.

ACTION: At the Jan. 5th meeting, CWG will call a vote on this Governance Structure.

For issues requiring a vote, it was generally agreed by all that a week to ten days would be sufficient time for prior review. Though, it was noted that Community Boards may require up to a month for their internal committee review.

Attendance and membership to the full Working Group, Steering Committee, and sub-Committees are open to all. However, in order to be a voting member, an individual must be affiliated with an organization/group (even if it is a group of one).

3. CWG Community Outreach – Recommendations from Outreach Working Session

Currently just over a dozen groups attend the CWG meetings on a regular basis. This is not a full representation of the community. The attached spreadsheet shows the attendance record of organizations/individuals who have been invited to be part of the CWG meetings. It was noted that trade associations are an important category of groups currently missing from the list.

ACTION: Members will review the list and email to Chairman Solomon the names and contact information for other organizations that should be included. Chairman Solomon will continue to update the spreadsheet and can provide to anyone who requests a copy.

ACTION: Representatives from the elected representatives offices offered agreed to directly reach out to organizations/individuals who have not attended meetings regularly.

The need for a regular meeting place was re-emphasized. Pauline Yu and Kendra Lee have volunteered to research possible locations. Any suggestions should be forwarded to Klee@GCCANYC.ORG. Ideally, the space should accommodate up to 50 people and be accessible.

ACTION: David Louie will inquire into the possibility of the American Legion Hall on Canal St.

CWG meeting notices and agendas need to be more widely disseminated. CB1 and CB2 have already begun posting these on their websites. CWG needs other Chinatown organizations to post these as well.

ACTION: Organizations able to post CWG notices on their websites should contact Chairman Solomon and he will forward information in both English and Chinese. Any media/news outlets can also email Chairman Solomon at cb2solomon@gmail.com.

CWG will endeavor to get future minutes translated into Chinese and establish a website for posting of all public information. CWG needs an English to Chinese translation volunteer. It is a time

consuming task, but maybe one that can be shared among several people. If a volunteer is not found, CWG may have to locate funding to provide for one.

ACTION: Zella Jones from CB2 volunteered to help set up website. Amy Chin and Paul Newell and John Leo volunteered to work with Zella on this initial website.

4. CWG Mission Statement

A revised 2nd draft of the CWG Mission Statement was distributed for group review. Comments/suggestions include:

- Meetings should be omitted as this is too specific and may change in the future
- An emphasis on ‘sustainability’ or ‘commercial stability’ should be included to counterbalance notions that ‘revitalization’ is a mask for outside development interests displacing small business/commercial enterprise in Chinatown.
- A reference to ‘re-investment’ or ‘job creation’ was suggested as a substitute for ‘sustainability’ which can be construed as simply maintaining the ‘status quo’
- A concern was voiced over the loss of small/light manufacturing space and that new light manufacturing enterprises be supported instead of allowing loft spaces to be converted into high-end residential condos.
- ‘CWG’s goal is to support residents and businesses of the community’
- It should be clearly stated that CWG engages in a ‘democratic process’ to build consensus among diversified groups.
- Language that addresses issues of ‘safety and social well-being’ should be added.

ACTION: Chairman Solomon will incorporate above suggestions to draft. Victor Papa will help on specific language for issues of ‘safety and social well-being’.

5. CWG "Study Area" – Jen Hong, MBPO, summarizes CWG submissions

Jen Hong/MBPO presented a composite map compiled from CWG members’ submissions outlining their definitions of a CWG study area. 6 maps were submitted from a total of 25 regular CWG attendees and about 160 other community members asked to submit maps.

By overlaying the maps, areas of consensus were determined. The darker shaded areas show greater consensus and conversely lighter shaded areas show less consensus. The hatchmarked area shows the area of greatest consensus. Even from the limited number of maps received, a strong consensus is demonstrated in the hatched area. For consideration, all ‘darker’ areas should also be examined for boundary adjustment.

As this is still a work-in-progress, the map should not be construed as the full determination of CWG’s study area.

ACTION: CWG members who have not submitted a map are urged to do so along with comments to cb2solomon@gmail.com

A wide-ranging discussion about boundaries revealed a depth of reasoning:

- The larger boundaries were submitted by members in order to cover areas they believed will experience relevant population growth/shift in the near future.
- Eastern areas adjacent to the East River are important for inclusion of low income families who may not have been thoroughly considered in the recent LES rezoning
- Areas beyond East Broadway (e.g. Henry St) are increasingly Chinese and should definitely be included.
- Defined area should not be restricted by current race/nationality of the residents, but rather viewed as a greater Chinatown/Lower East Side with a more encompassing vision of the neighborhood's future.
- Planning is different than re-zoning and CWG has not decided on the kind of planning it will conduct (e.g. transportation study, economic impact study, etc.). Boundaries could be different depending on the kind of planning that is conducted.
- It is important to consider the Empire Zone and Seward Park Urban Renewal Area.
- 1990/2000 census showed a dispersal of the Chinatown/LES population in a northerly direction.
- Chinese population has expanded in different directions. It would be useful take a look at census data and also examine shifts in the business centers.
- A core area and the expanded surrounding areas that support it are worth studying
- CWG may want to consider a wider geographic context including bordering neighborhoods such as Noho which is confronting similar issues of displaced manufacturing and artists and the need to stabilize economic and social pressures.
- CWG should not exclude the Latino community on the eastern edge of the neighborhood that had been excluded in the LES rezoning plan and could potentially be excluded from this planning process too.
- CWG should outreach to Councilman Gerson's 'Residents Committee'
- Study area should also consider the potential impact of Ground Zero and the development in lower Manhattan's Financial District.

ACTION: A subcommittee to examine the study area will convene. Volunteers include Rob Hollander, Jason Situ, Victor Papa, Kasey LaFlam, Wellington Chen, and possibly Helena Wong/CAAAY Chinatown Tenants Union.

6. Understanding Chinatown's Zoning – Kasey LaFlam, CB1 Urban Planning Fellow

TABLED TILL JANUARY 5TH MEETING

7. Community Announcements

An important public meeting on the Dept. of Transportation's redesign of Chatham Square will be held at PS124 at 6pm (sign-in begins 5:30pm) on Tuesday, December 2nd. Translators will be available as will a traffic expert hired by CB3. All are urged to attend and ask questions.

Asian American Arts Alliance is hosting a closing reception of its Metropoles exhibit in Chinatown at 5:30pm on Friday, December 5th at 26 Bowery.