

Economic Development & Revitalization Team
Chinatown Working Group
February 17, 2009

Meeting Minutes

Location: Chinatown Partnership LDC, 60 St. James Place

Time: 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm

In Attendance: Wellington Chen, Michael Moi, Lamgen Leon, Taylor Zhou (Chinatown Partnership), Sheldon Chan (Red Brick), Jay Caseley (ABS Partner), Cao O (Asian American Federation of NY), C.K. Chung (NYC Business Solutions), Wee K. Wong (CCBA).

Elected Officials/Representatives in Attendance: Jasmin Sanchez (State Senator Daniel Squadron), Jen Hong, Greg Kirschenbaum (Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer)

Community Board: Edward Ma, Jim Solomon, Zella Jones (CB#2), Jerry Chan (CB#2 CERT), Casey Laflam (CB#1)

Media: Wing Yip (China Press), Lotus Chau, David Wan (Sing Tao Daily), Anne Huang (World Journal), Sally Sun (Epoch Times), Peter Hui (WZRC Radio), Zhen-Peng Dai (Sino Television), Xiaomi Li (Ming Pao Daily)

Jim Solomon encourages people to visit the Chinatown Working Group's website, www.ChinatownWorkingGroup.org, for updates on CWG working teams' progress, to submit community related ideas, concerns and suggestions, and each of the eight WT's Guiding Principles.

1. First Agenda Item – Everyone present agreed to meet at around the same time in the future.
2. Second Agenda Item – Mr. David Louie, the other Co-Chair of the Economic Development & Revitalization Team, resigned as Co-Chair to take care of his business, so Wellington Chen is recommending Mr. Cao O from the Asian American Federation of NY as his replacement.

Wellington recommended the WT read “Revitalizing Chinatown Businesses” study from the Asian American Federation as a possible model for our group's Guiding Principles The following is a summary from the report:

- ◇ Change business strategies in Chinatown to serve a diverse customer base better.
- ◇ Improve business practice to make Chinatown more appealing to prospective customers and benefit business in other ways.
- ◇ Provide targeted business assistance to help business enhance their strategies and practices.
- ◇ Sustain environmental and business improvement efforts to raise the community's image and stimulate business growth.
- ◇ Resolve parking and transportation issues to make it easier for customers to patronize Chinatown Businesses.
- ◇ Pursue transformational development projects that could strengthen Chinatown's cultural and economic assets, spur an economic resurgence, and receive broad community support.

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Topics discussed:

- Chinatown's infrastructure is unique as a closely tied live, work, commercial and even manufacturing environment. As Commercial rent rises it is difficult for small business to sustain its presence and also compete with satellite Chinatowns in Sunset Park and Flushing. There is also a need to evolve businesses, overall, from the discount model and to stimulate a uniqueness of quality, cultural offerings and art. Enterprise zones, mixed use buildings might be explored in planning in order to sustain Chinatown's historically integrated live/work environment.
- Neighborhood garment industries forced to other boroughs due to high real estate taxes. There is a need to fill former manufacturing zoned or use group spaces with new lessees – perhaps more art & culture institutions/museums; high tech business incubators.
- While there are pockets of new Professional services (med, acct, legal, et al) in Chinatown their clients tend to be nonresidents. This is also true with the increase in hotels, though, unlike professional service businesses, they do employ Chinatown residents and stimulate a tourism economy.
- Chinatown needs more government funded social services and educational institution presence.
- Much of Chinatown's regular business is sidewalk or street-side based. More street and sidewalk planning, including possible street closures (for instance Pell St as a pedestrian street) might be considered to enhance Chinatown's street culture. This could offer the public a friendlier, more open and safer space for commerce more attractive to tourists as well as residents in other parts of the City. However, the negative effects of frequent street festivals and sidewalk café density needs to be carefully planned to not conflict with business owners and the quality of life for residents. The concept of Sidewalk Improvement Districts (SID's) was introduced by Mr. Chen as an area to explore. This too should be explored in area planning.
- Casino industries draws people away from Chinatown to gamble and their industry is not investing anything in the community.
- Joining community planning groups is integral in alerting government agencies about our needs. For instance: On-location film productions cater their own food, don't patronize Chinatown's businesses and dump their garbage on our streets. We need to press the NYC Office of Film & Industry to hire and to patronize local establishments, pick up their litter and be respectful to residents despite language barriers.
- Revitalization efforts need to cast a wide net to local residents, local and non-local workers, and visitors. The language barrier may inhibit growth in city-wide appealing offerings from Chinatown.
- The Economic Development and Revitalization Working Team (EDRWT) needs to finalize and vote at the next meeting its goals and guiding principles. Sustainability was singles out as an important issue.
- EDRWT members should provide important community topics for discussion and participate actively.
- What are the opportunities for the federal stimulus package incentives and funds to help Chinatown?

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Co-Chair Wellington will email the minutes to the members to review, so they can email suggestions, feedback and ideas.

The next Economic Development & Revitalization team meeting will be held on **Tuesdays, March 17, 4PM – 5:30PM**. All future CWG Econ WT meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of every month at the same time, if this is amenable to everyone.

Meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm.