

CWG Meeting Notes 10.4.2021

Voting Member Groups Present: Art Against Displacement (Vanessa Thill), CSWA (Zishun Ning), Downtown Independent Democrats (Tom La Gatta), NMASS (Steph Kranes, Briar Winters), Youth Against Displacement (Zishun Ning) East River Park Action (Fannie Ip), citygroup (Michael Cohen)

Also Present: Rob Hollander (Secretary/LESRRD); Kaiyu Li (University of Chicago); Richard Moses (LESPI)

Minutes and agenda approved; meeting called to order 6:40pm. Meeting facilitated by Vanessa Thill.

Strategizing for plan implementation

Rob reiterates the importance of convincing our next mayor to want to pass the CWG. Different orgs should use whatever tactics work best for them, all to the same end. Some ideas came up around the citygroup show, including a symposium, a more focused social media strategy, a YouTube channel etc.

Fannie wonders about the merits of adding the Lower East Side to the name of the plan, since many people think it's only for Chinatown. Tom notes that residents organizing in Soho/Noho have named their plan The Community Alternative Plan for Soho/Noho, and recalls that we have previously spoken about working with them to expand the principles (height limits/mandates for affordable housing levels) behind CWG into that area.

Zishun notes that we've been building name recognition around the current plan for a long time, and that the content matters most. We need to continue to strengthen our in-depth outreach and really talk to people about what the plan means. He mentions that the petition outreach via the Coalition is going very well, people are more open than during our last petition drive, thanks to our work and to the news around the election this summer. Rob wonders if we might add a subtitle to help clarify. Vanessa notes that making a change now could confuse people, maybe we need to think more about the visuals we use to share about the plan, to make sure it's clear what areas we are talking about.

Reportback on plan updates

Steph, Tom and Anna have been meeting bimonthly to work on this. 75% of the info they need has been collected, 25% left to find, which should be done in the next few weeks. Steph notes that one thing we may want to examine further is the fact that many of the stats from the Pratt report are for the Chinatown Core only, we should pull numbers for Chinatown and LES together to avoid giving the city further excuse to continue dividing us.

Further strategy discussion

Rob suggests launching a social media committee to coordinate efforts. Zishun notes that many member groups have accounts that are very active, Vanessa suggests coordinating content drops via private thread on Twitter to boost engagement.

Also discussed, the importance of coordinating closely with Councilmember elect Marte. Fannie notes that a planner has been brought on staff in his office.

Relationship with MoCA

Steph explains MoCa's relationship to the city, given the money that changed hands around the jail, and notes that the community has lost faith in them, doesn't think they will be an ally in our fight. Richard notes that with real estate developers on the board, they have been unfriendly to preservation related outreach. They have not been active in CWG since before the leadership change in 2014/2015. Fannie wonders if there could be an opening for conversation. Zishun reminds us that they have taken a clear stance in favor of displacement in the current fight. Some further discussion about strategy.

Upcoming Art & Health Fair

Vanessa notes that the citygroup CWG exhibition is now up, encourages everyone to go view it. She also reminds us that today is the deadline for the open call for the art show. Michael mentions how great it has been to have the visuals together with the summary of the plan, had led to some good discussion. He wonders how we can further use the show to support our organizing, how can we bring more people to see it, host info sessions, etc.? citygroup is also considering putting together another site visit like they did for the Week of Action on Henry Street. The show is open by appointment currently, Michael is there pretty much every day. He also notes that there has been some interest from City College students, trying to figure out how to get them involved. The Coalition can send further info in an eblast to help bring in more visitors.

NYCHA Blueprint and beyond

Vanessa mentions that she has been trying to connect people with the various groups working on issues in NYCHA. Rob believes that CWG should be vocal about opposing Blueprint, especially with the new city admin. Michael reminds us that we previously had some discussion around this issue in our reading group, he wonders if CWG should be amended to say that NYCHA must remain public, instead of only setting affordability levels. Zishun notes that the goal of the CWG is to stop the profit motive, stop speculation and that the Coalition has always been clear about opposing the privatization of NYCHA. Important to see the bigger picture, that tenants in both public and private housing are under threat, and that the CWG is a unifying plan that can bring people in from across the community.

Richard wonders about small-scale retail in NYCHA that could be useful to the local residents, some discussion.

Vanessa notes that permits have been filed for one of the proposed megadevelopments on Cherry Street. Steph reminds us that the best tool we have now is passing the CWG and growing our organizing, and that with the petition, the Jing Fong organizing, as well as the battle against the jail, many new people are joining the fight. Zishun reminds us that we can only win against the towers if we continue to mobilize and expand our organizing. Tom reiterates the importance of the upcoming election, great opportunity to talk to voters about displacement and what we can do to stop it.

Meeting notes courtesy of Briar Winters