

DRAFT Minutes
Chinatown Working Group Meeting
March 5, 6:30pm, 275 Cherry Street Community Room

Voting members present: 229 Henry Street Tenants Association (Wang Chunhuang); 318 Restaurant Workers Union (Nelson Mar); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (David Mulkins); Chinatown and Lower East Side Artists Against Displacement (Francisca Benitez); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Zishun Ning); Groundwork (Caitlin Kelmar); Lower East Side Organized Neighbors (Antonio QueyLin); Lower East Side Unified Neighbors Association (Richard Yuen); Mujeres y Hombres Luchadores (Yolanda Donato); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (Francisca Benitez, Joanna Estevez, Elvia Fernandez, Madeleine Jackson, Steph Kranes, Antonio QueyLin, Louise Velez, Briar Winters); Youth Against Displacement (Steph Kranes, Zishun Ning).

Also present: Shu Kui Chen (231 Henry Street); rob hollander (Lower East Side Residents for Responsible Development); Vaylateena Jones (LES Power Partnership); Charles Krezell (Loisaida United Neighborhood Gardens); Richard Moses (LES Preservation Initiative).

Meeting convened at 6:45pm, Briar Winters (NMASS) facilitating.

Agenda approval

Briar: The agenda includes a LESON update, Bowery update, outreach letter, updating the mission, looking into alternative meeting locations.

Fran Benitez (NMASS, CLAAD): Include an update on NYCHA proposals for La Guardia Houses.

Madeleine Jackson (NMASS): Also we should discuss other groups using the CWG Plan for their strategies. I proposed that they rename their plans to avoid confusion with the CWG strategy.

Briar: With those amendments to the agenda, seeing no further objections, the agenda is approved.

Approval of the February minutes

No objections, the February minutes approved.

LESON update

Antonio QueyLin (LESON): We are currently drafting a letter prior to the public hearing in April or May. We will distribute the letter when it's ready. We plan a press conference at the end of this month.

rob hollander (LESRRD): I can resend the legal letter.

Caitlin Kelmar (Groundwork): Who will sign the letter?

Antonio: Anyone who supports it. We'll distribute and ask for support.

83-85 Bowery update

Zishun Ning (CSWA, YAD): There is a petition on line. The hunger strike got the Mayor's attention. The landlord was compelled to negotiate. He is willing to accept rent stabilization for the apartments following the recommendation from the Supreme Court. If the tenants are not back in place by March 28, they will go back on hunger strike.

Outreach letter

Steph Kranes (NMASS): Please feel free to change the letter. I am not the gatekeeper of the letter.

Briar: If you want to personalize the letter for particular recipients, please do so. [Briar reads the letter out loud.]

Fran: Add "continue" to "...to thrive..." since Chinatown is thriving now.

Vaylateena Jones (LESPP): It would be difficult to rezone without the electeds. A rezoning is expensive. If you insult them, you will lose them.

Fran: Zoning of a neighborhood should not be in the hands of money.

rob: Zoning is a city process which requires money and time. But it is not solely in the hands of money. Protesting in the street does not take money or much time.

David Mulkins (BAN): Didn't the CWG already produce a zoning plan?

rob: An environmental impact statement must assess every lot individually. It takes about \$1 million and 6 months to a year.

Richard Moses (LESPI): City historic designation can help keep residents in place and encourage small businesses.

David: New developments can destabilize nearby buildings as well.

Richard: You might add in the letter that time is short.

Mission statement

[Fran reads the current mission statement.]

rob: I'd like to see "visitors," "revitalization," "impact," and "develop a plan" removed. The mission should concern those who live or work in the neighborhood. "Revitalization" is a code word for development. The mission should encompass the surrounding neighborhoods, not just the impact of Chinatown on surrounding neighborhoods. That should have been changed years ago. We already have developed a plan, so "develop" should be replaced with "implement."

Caitlin: People often ask what is the CWG doing now since it has already completed its plan. The mission should reflect what it is doing now.

Vay: Include the diversity and culture of the Lower East Side. And also include working with other organizations.

Briar: Who wants to volunteer to draft a revised mission statement following these suggestions, and post it as a google doc for us to edit or comment on?

[Caitlin and rob volunteer.]

Briar: We will need a translation for the draft.

La Guardia Houses

Briar: The infill RFP has been published.

Joanna Estevez (NMASS): They claim that the La Guardia tenants agreed to it.

Elvia Fernandez (NMASS): The tenants did not agree.

Vay: I heard they went door-to-door to persuade people individually.

Madeleine: That's improper. Audrey has been organizing against the infill. We should contact their group.

Briar: We will reach out to Felicia to see if we can be of assistance.

Vay: Also attend the Public Housing Committee, March 8 at Grand Street Guild, 131 Broome St. Their agenda includes NYCHA Next Gen and the NYCHA plan for La Guardia Houses and NYCHA parking policy and outsource management.

Use of the CWG Plan by groups outside the CWG strategy

Madeleine: Groups that use the CWG plan while promoting a strategy that is not the CWG strategy confuse residents. The CWG Plan should be used only in the context of promoting the entire plan, not be used by other groups for their own purposes.

Vay: I refer to parts of the plan.

Madeleine: You are using it in the context of research, not misappropriating the plan.

rob: The CWG strategy on the waterfront is not to negotiate for affordable housing but to prevent all the development. These other groups are using part of the CWG plan as a tool to negotiate with developers for affordable housing. So there's a conflict of strategic goals using the CWG Plan. They are working with elected officials, who have an interest in obtaining affordable housing because it makes them look good.

Briar: The rezoning they are proposing would nullify the LSRD. Under the LSRD, any development would have to undergo a comprehensive environmental review process. LESON asserts that Extell was built illegally. Once these groups' proposed spot rezonings are implemented, the LESON strategy can't be pursued.

Fran: Have we contacted these groups?

rob: They attended our meetings, asking for our support. They heard our objections, so they know exactly where we stand.

Richard Yuen (LESUNA): They say they believe in the full plan but they feel it can't be implemented now. Their strategy is in response to the imminent danger to the waterfront.

Madeleine: Why can't they use a different name for their plan? What they are doing makes organizing so difficult.

Briar: Why don't we reach out to Damares to clarify.

Fran: Ask her to attend.

rob: Add it to the agenda for next time as well.

Fran: Did you contact Eva?

rob: She didn't respond. I will contact her again.

Fran: On the website, the CWG plan should be more prominent than the LESON strategy.

Caitlin: I'll change that.

Alternative locations

David: The meeting place should be more central and the meeting time is too late.

Fran: I'm talking to the East Broadway Library for space.

Rob: We'll hold a poll on line.

Meeting adjourned, 8:15

Respectfully submitted,
rob hollander, CWG Sec'y