



## FOCUS GROUP: CHINATOWN SMALL BUSINESSES

June 24, 2003

### TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED COMMENTS

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#### Attendees:

Mr. Louie	Has owned a grocery on Grand for one year
Mr. Shi Dao Wang	Graphic designer – on Broadway
Mr. Chi Lam	Educational Services – on Canal
Mr. Chiu	Diamond Line—on Canal
Ms. Winnie Mou	Manhattan Travel, Inc. – on Canal
Mr. Norman Chan	Voice of U.S. Fujianese – on Allen
Mr. Chung Fong Chu	Vegetarian Dim Sum – on Pell
Ms. Ching Nor Yee	Diamond City - on Elizabeth Street
Betty Lee Sung	Chatham Towers resident, RCI national advisory board member
Brandon Smith	LMDC
John Leo	LMDC
Laurie Tamis	Deputy Mayor Doctoroff's Office
Siu Kwan Chan	Renaissance
Ali	Renaissance
Kevin Kong	Renaissance
Jessie Lee	Renaissance
Mary Liu	Renaissance
Christopher Kui	AAFE
Margaret Chin	AAFE
Robert Weber	AAFE
Sylvia Syracuse	AAFE
Jennifer Sun	AAFE

#### Comments:

(Note: consultant comments are in parentheses.)

#### Parking and Traffic

- Parking is the most important thing
- How many spaces would diagonal parking create? (50-100 on Chrystie; another 100 on Allen)
- Chinatown traffic always a problem
- Agree that diagonal parking and other strategies (change parking regulations; combine bus stops with fire hydrants) to increase on-street parking will help everyone
- Need 2-hour limit for parking—one hour is not enough to visit, eat out, etc.
- People go to Flushing because of the huge garage—they would use a garage in Chinatown if there was one
- Want a 1,000-car garage on Delancey—at least 5 floors (this would require shuttles, which would be inefficient with existing traffic congestion; a cheaper alternative is remote parking under FDR)
- Can area under FDR be used for remote parking? (yes, owned by City and State)

### Pedestrian-friendly Streets

- Not a good idea to close streets—look at Little Italy—closures make traffic very heavy on Canal (Canal, Hester, Bayard and Baxter would remain open. Street closures can start as an experiment next summer to adjust for traffic impacts, deliveries, emergency vehicle access, etc.)
- Street closings—link to new parking elsewhere, provide handicapped parking (There is room on streets like Centre, Chrystie, and Allen for additional parking)

### Commerce, Retail and Vendors

- Big supermarket—agree that it is a good idea—will promote a cleaner Chinatown
- Most locations we identified for vendors already have vendors (yes, and the idea is to exert greater control over sanitation at these locations)
- Merchants currently being issued tickets for encroaching on sidewalk space (pedestrianized streets would provide more space for cafes and selling goods)
- Don't think the retailers are struggling—they are doing good business, paying high rents on Canal and E. Broadway---it's other businesses that are in decline. (context is important: next workshop will address housing, parks, social services, new economic sectors)
- Incentives for businesses to change their front facades and entries—do we want everything to look the same? (No, can be more tourist-y in the core, let the signage run riot everywhere else)
- Night market—hold on weekend evenings; must control the sanitation
- Q: On Canal Street, are most customers locals or out-of-towners? A: Many are people from the suburbs.
- Why protect the garment industry? It is natural for industries to fade or move away.

### Sanitation

- Q: How do attendees feel about the BID?
- Would require a lot of motivation and outreach—have to talk more about incentives and benefits than the cost
- Retailers don't care about additional assistance with marketing, because they're making enough money. A BID should be mandatory, not determined by a vote.
- Grand Street is already in Lower East Side BID—they clean the streets, clean the grates of graffiti—costs ~\$900/year
- How is BID paid for? Many people don't understand the whole mechanism, how the assessment is collected, etc. Community education is critical. (could demonstrate that BID fees may save merchants money from fewer sanitation fines.)

### General

- Study is still too confined to the existing Chinatown boundaries—need room to expand with new construction, down to the East River—Chinatown too congested. (other strategies will take into consideration the waterfront)
- Time line is important—need to decide when things will get done. (timeline is different for different strategies)
- All of these changes require a city permit—how will this be accomplished? (Community has more clout than it thinks it does)
- You say that we have clout, yet we haven't been able to change the status of Park Row, the Police won't even talk to the community. (Some issues are beyond even Chinatown's clout)