

**RCI "SWOT" WORKSHOP
Chinatown YMCA
February 27, 2003**

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED COMMENTS

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Expand study area to East River
- Emphasis on economic mobility
- Real estate pressures
- Conflicts between expanded boundaries and established/historic neighborhood identities

RCI SWOT

Strengths

- Tourism destination
- Center for alternative medicine/health
- Industrious/hard-working energy
- Social service capacity and variety (but sometimes not approachable)
- People live and work in Chinatown
- History
- Educational institutions with excellent reputations (but mega-district is a threat)
- New immigrants
- Sense of place: concentration of people and businesses
- Regional service center: daycare, Chinese schools, lots of services (but need to be more approachable)
- Super-regional retail marketplace
- Small cultural centers (but nothing large-scale)
- Highly skilled garment workers
- Mixed, economically diverse community
- "Primitive capitalism": cash economy, entrepreneurs
- Vibrant industries, service center
- Transit hub
 - subway, bus
 - links to East Coast Chinatowns
- Business suppliers
 - wholesale
 - restaurant supply
 - printing, signs
- Banks
- Multi-generational
- Cultural, family institutions → links across country and globe

Weaknesses

- Sanitation
- Housing
- Bathrooms

- “Model minority” — Chinatown seen as self-sufficient, not needing outside help
- Parking (a problem 7 days a week)
- Proximity to civic center — conflicts
- No translation for 911
- Broken sidewalks (East Broadway)
- Potholes
- Canal Street
- No curb cuts
- Petty crimes
 - Seniors
 - Robberies
- Lack of open space—parks, playgrounds, green space (passive)
- Language barriers (within Chinese population)
- Low-wage jobs
- No visitors center
 - Need tourist bureau office on Canal
- Lack of community space
- Lack of jobs for youth
- Lack of youth services
- Lack of indoor recreation
- Under-utilization of Roosevelt Park
- Need to preserve existing improvements
- Confucius Plaza vendors
- Fish smells everywhere
- Bathrooms

Opportunities/threats

- *Increasing land values*
- *Congestion*
- *Shifting immigration patterns*
- *Shrinking garment industry...*
- ...but increasing competitiveness and efficiency
- *Sign enforcement*
- Historic preservation (opportunity and threat)
- Satellite Chinatowns (opportunity and threat)
 - *competition*
 - *linkages*
- *Mega-districts will impact Chinatown schools*
- New cultural/anchor institutions
- Lower Manhattan rebuilding
- *Street closures—becoming more permanent*
- *Rising/high housing costs*
- Construction industry
- Policy to convert warehouses to manufacturing—zoning
- Ferries, waterfront parks
- *Expiration of subsidized housing programs*
- *Dilution of heritage*
- *Lack of space*

Ideas/Projects

- Nightlife - bars
- Move CUNY into the police headquarters
- Subway entrance at Hester and Chrystie
- Water mist to keep down odors
- Enforce sanitation regulations
- Triangle park
- Crosstown bus—Grand Street
- Compost for greening
- Public education for restaurants on sanitation
- Green roofs — hydroponic farming
- Space for gardens
- Reopen garages, generate revenues
- Signage — history, way-finding
- “Fish district” — contain the smells in one location
- Transit hub for buses
- Market (but avoid conflicts with homes)
 - clean, safe and accessible
 - night market
- Performance spaces, theaters (but no demand for movies)
- Museum — Chinese diaspora
- “Face lift”
- Taller buildings
- Authentic cultural/visual
- Keep it crazy-quilt, real, raw
- Bleach street weekly
- Renovate restaurant bathrooms
- Donate DOT building to Chinatown
- ESL funding
- Columbus Pavilion
- Volunteerism (2nd and 3rd generation)
- Involve leadership
- Seize opportunities (like Bowery Bank)
- Include real estate professionals/experts
- Civic leadership development center
- Rezoning — more density? — Canal as development focus
- Allen Street Mall
 - Greening
 - Vending
- Clean, safe, long-term leases for garment industry
- Indoor Pool
- Housing
 - Senior
 - Affordable
- Move Police Headquarters