CHINATOWN COMMUNITY INPUT FOR THE CREATE NYC CULTURAL PLAN

Workshop Summery
April 2, 2017

Yin Kong & Olympia Moy
btwn2bridges@gmail.com
WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE

WORKSHOP ORGANIZERS:
Olympia Moy
Yin Kong

IN ATTENDANCE:
30 total participants
Councilwoman Margaret Chin
Wellington Chen - Chinatown Partnership
Derek Weng - DCLA

MEDIA COVERAGE:
Sing Tao Daily
SinoVision
World Journal

LANGUAGES FACILITATED:
Mandarin
English
Cantonese
Fuzhou Dialect
OUTREACH:
• Worked with local Chinese newspaper reporter to get the word out about the CreateNYC plan and the Chinatown Input Workshop
• Created a flyer and met in person with community organizers, and city council member’s office to ask them to come
• E-mail blast/ Facebook Event

WORKSHOP MATERIALS:
• We created our own worksheets based off questions selected and adapted from the CreateNYC Workshop Toolkit. All materials were translated into traditional Chinese characters.
• Bi-lingual registration forms were distributed online and on paper to capture some key information about the organizations and individuals
• We complied a list of programs and policy suggestions which were compiled from previous group studies such as the Chinatown Working Group Plan.

LANGUAGE FACILITATION:
There were 4 breakout groups each lead by a facilitator Mandarin, Cantonese, Fuzhou Dialect, and English

WORKSHOP FORMAT:
• 3 topics - Equity & Access, Organization Challenges, Neighborhood Characteristics
• For each topic, each breakout group held a discussion based off of a set of questions on the worksheet
• Each topic had an activity with post-it’s to create a generative response to a “how can we” type question.
• Group reported to the room after each topic
• For the closing activity participants ranked the importance of program and policy suggestions by with 6 voting dot stickers

WORKSHOP MATERIALS & FORMAT
Chinese Poem Art Society - innovative new art being created, bridging Tang dynasty heritage and new accessibility to broader audiences.

FZ Association services the Fujianese immigrants in the community. Members are concerned about using space in the park where they gather to dance or play music.

Calligrapher who meets every Tuesday afternoon at the Florentine Music School with other fellow brushwork artists. He would like to see an archive created for calligraphy and other art created in Chinatown.

Four Seas Players is an established, all-volunteer theater with lighting and tech, but faces affordability issues for storage, rehearsal, and performance space. They would like to draw more American born Chinese and other audiences to their productions.

The Eastern American Fuzhou Association has been putting on productions of Fujian Opera for 10 years. All volunteer-run, amateur opera company, comprised of working people, including Chinese restaurant workers who work out-of-state and for whom this opera group is the only engagement/enjoyment in Chinese cultural performance. Each production costs about $30,000 for rehearsal space rentals and costumes. They perform in local high school auditoriums and parks 2-3 times a year. Previously has received small $800-$2000 grants on a per-production basis from LMCC. They have asked specifically for language and technical assistances with the grant cycles.

Chinese Street Musicians Association - The group leader raises ~$20,000 himself from busking to fund his Chinese music group. 80% of the organizational budget is contributed by him, and another 20% by volunteer donations. Despite the fact that the leader only speaks Chinese, he got help to incorporate as 501(c)3 and sustain it.
Many of the smaller organizations are self-funded.

Some of them have received small grants from LMCC in the past.

Some organizations have tried or would like to apply but missed deadlines, or were rejected because of technical issues.

Language barriers to information about grants.

Nervous that the redistribution of culture resources will skip over Manhattan’s Chinatown.

Folk/ “everyday culture” activities often times do not fit under most common arts grants structures.

Wei (4-lingual poet): San Francisco has Children’s Tang poem recitation contest for past 6 years, but NYC can’t organize due to lack of funding.
WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT CHALLENGES FOR ORGANIZATIONS

• Lack of marketing and publicity on a bi-lingual platform for cultural events were a main concern for performance troupes looking to expand their audience.

• Affordable rehearsal and performance spaces were often-mentioned concerns. Often times, the folk art groups take to practicing in the park, even in the winter time. Lack of suitable and affordable performance spaces limit the number of productions.

• Local groups struggle to connect and integrate with city-wide cultural support systems. They would like to reach mainstream media and audience members, but lack experience with English-language social media platforms.

Mr. Lv: Space and fundraising are main issues. We would love to have a permanent space but at the moment we dance outdoors. We also need English assistance to connect with city-wide resources.
Map and program under-utilized spaces in Chinatown... was deemed the most favored recommendation.

- Other favored programs are highlighted.

Participant:
There are actually fewer performance spaces / theaters, movie houses than there used to be. We’re actually moving backwards!

PRESERVING NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER: SUGGESTED PROGRAMS & POLICIES

- Map and program under-utilized spaces in Chinatown for rehearsals, performances, and storage space.

- Subsidize rental of performance / rehearsal space.

- Create transparent, local community scheduling process of parks & community spaces.

- Produce more festivals: for food, art, music, Flower Markets, Night Markets

Fund residency programs and fellowships to support Chinatown artists and cultural workers to produce new works made in Chinatown.

- Create a Heritage Trail / Historic walking tour path.

- Develop a cultural food education program.

Create a physical cultural center where visitors and community members have a center for gathering, learning, and sharing.

- Fund a user-friendly digital platform for Chinatown culture including a calendar & directory of programs.

- Fund a marketing/storytelling campaign that reframes the cultural narrative of Chinatown.

- Fund marketing and consulting for community arts and cultural groups to reach larger audiences / memberships.

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Protect the value of folk art and everyday cultural activities when discussing “arts & culture.” Create new grants specifically for folk/heritage activities or adjust existing grant application structures with folk/heritage activities in mind.

Most arts grants are not designed with folk arts and heritage activities in mind. This lack of support for folk art and heritage activities leads to a community-wide undervaluing of their own culture, lowering expectations of their own ability to organize to create their own cultural practices. The distinction between what is regarded as “high art” and what is regarded as “folk,” or “heritage” practices are sharply felt in immigrant working-class neighborhoods like Chinatown even while their daily lives are steeped in everyday culture. The different kinds of art require different forms of infrastructural support. Let’s support “culture-makers” and not just self-identified “artists.”

Create a platform to market cultural programs both inside and outside the neighborhood. This marketing plan must be multi-lingual.

The participants unanimously requested a centralized, inter-community cultural calendar and platform for information sharing. Ensuring this information is provided both in Chinese and English will help our performance groups draw larger audiences. Many organization leaders would like technical assistance to leverage media and social media.

Provide affordable spaces for culture groups: incentivize landlords to use their vacant spaces for cultural purposes, and create a transparent process for culture groups to apply for city-owned spaces.

Can we create a subsidy or tax-break for landlords in our neighborhood to allow cultural programs to use their under-used or vacant spaces? Culture organizations sometimes only need space seasonally or after-hours, or even use a small portion of the unit for storage, renting out an entire unit may not be necessary. Can we create programs to facilitate space sharing? Some city-owned spaces are occupied by a handful of long-time neighborhood organizations that may not fully utilize the spaces or embody a spirit of collaboration. Can such spaces be managed and operated in a different, more transparent manner? Can competitions similar to the LMCC Workspace program create a stable platform for running cultural incubation space, assuring space for new culture-makers?

Add infrastructure for public park spaces to be continuously used for cultural activities throughout the year. Have transparent and accessible scheduling protocols that balance sports vs. cultural practices as well as neighborhood use vs. city-wide leagues

Columbus Park and the southern end of Sara D. Roosevelt Park are used constantly by our groups or individuals for cultural activities. However, in the rain or on the coldest winter days, these community members are left without a space to practice. Can we collaborate with the Parks Department providing park furniture with cultural practices like martial arts, musical groups, sun/rain shelters, heat lamps for winter outdoor congregation?

Support local handicraft/artisan culture

Local handicraft culture which currently informally exists on the street is an essential element to our neighborhood’s character. Could we support these artisans by collaborating with city-wide programs such as the SBS Local campaign? Or can we support the artisans through residency or fellowship programs to create cultural products?

Empower local groups to cultivate the next generation of heritage culture through school and afterschool programs.

These programs do not just help to preserve neighborhood “authenticity” but also facilitates intergenerational exposure and education, creating the future audiences for ethnic knowledge, heritage.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS
您的機構名稱是？Organization's name？(9 responses)

- Btwn2bridges
- Four Seas Players
- New York Poem Arts Center Inc
- 纽约八和会馆
- Brooklyn Arts Council
- NY Wall Street Dragons
- Eastern America Fuzhou Association
- Chinese Mutual Groups
- NY Street Corner Musicians Group

機構有多少成員？How many members does your organization have？(10 responses)

機構成員/參與者的年齡段是？(您可以多項選擇) Age group of your members/participants？(You may select more than one group) (9 responses)

- 0 - 6 岁 yrs old: 0 (0%)
- 7 - 18 岁 yrs old: 2 (22.2%)
- 19 - 40 岁 yrs old: 4 (44.4%)
- 40 - 60 岁 yrs old: 4 (44.4%)
- 60 - 80 岁 yrs old: 7 (77.8%)
- 80 + yrs old: 1 (11.1%)

機構利用社交媒體嗎？Is your organization on social media？(8 responses)

- Facebook: 4 (50%)
- Instagram: 2 (25%)
- Twitter: 1 (12.5%)
- WeChat: 3 (37.5%)
- Other: 1 (12.5%)

你用哪種語言/方言與成員交流？Which languages/dialect do you use to communicate with your members？(10 responses)

- 普通話 Mandarin Chinese: 4 (40%)
- 廣東話 Cantonese: 3 (30%)
- 福州話 Fuzhou Accent: 3 (30%)
- English: 4 (40%)
- Other: 2 (20%)
Pre-Workshop Media Coverage:

Post-Workshop Media Coverage:
SinoVision: http://video.sinovision.net/?id=38067&sts=1491188073217

Video made for DCLA:
https://vimeo.com/212133812
password: chinatownculture
FOR US, THIS IS WHAT CHINATOWN CULTURE LOOKS LIKE
Thank you DCLA for including us in the CreateNYC Plan
Yin & Olympia: btwn2bridges@gmail.com