

REPORT

Shared vision for 70 Mulberry Street

Report for the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS)

Submitted by

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Abbreviations

5G	Fifth Generation Mobile Network
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
Advisory Committee	70 Mulberry Street Advisory Committee
C.B.J. Snyder	Charles B.J. Snyder
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CP	Chinese-American Planning Council
CMP	Chinatown Manpower Project
DCAS	New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services
DDC	Department of Design and Construction
DOB	New York City Department of Buildings
FAR	Floor Area Ratio
Gym	Gymnasium
JACCC	Japanese-American Cultural and Community Center
M	Million
MoCA	Museum of Chinese in America
NYC	New York City
OACC	Oakland Asian Cultural Center
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PS 23	Public School no. 23
QR	Quick Response
UEAA	United East Athletic Association
ULURP	Uniform Land Use Review Procedure

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01 Introduction

70 Mulberry Street is a historic landmark that holds memories of generations and a history that is deeply woven into the community it serves. Designed and operated as Public School (P.S.) 23 in the late 1800s, generations of community residents were taught at 70 Mulberry Street in its early days. In its more recent history, the five-story red brick building was home to non-profit community groups, and as such, served as an anchor to its community within and beyond Chinatown.

In January 2020, 70 Mulberry Street was severely damaged by a five-alarm fire that destroyed the top three floors and displaced its five tenants.¹ In July 2020, the City of New York announced \$80 million in funding to rebuild 70 Mulberry Street. As a part of its commitment, the City also launched a 90-day community visioning process to develop a shared vision for 70 Mulberry Street.²

A community anchor

70 Mulberry Street was designed by influential architect Charles B. J. (C.B.J.) Snyder to operate as a 31-classroom elementary school with capacity for nearly 1,700 students.³ Designated as Public School no. 23 (or PS 23), and later The Columbus School by the New York City Board of Education, the newly constructed school was meant to serve as a model for future public schools creating students with a safe and healthy learning environment. Snyder saw school buildings as “civic monuments for a better society,” and in his designs he was particularly focused considerations related to fire safety, ventilation, lighting, and classroom size.⁴ Among Snyder’s innovations in PS 23 was the basement auditorium, the provision of which marks a critical step in the movement to provide community centers and neighborhood meeting halls within New York City public school buildings.⁵

In the mid-1970s, PS 23 was decommissioned as a school and the building was subsequently converted to serve as a community center for Chinatown. In the more than 40 years since, 70 Mulberry Street has been the home to five community-based organizations (referred

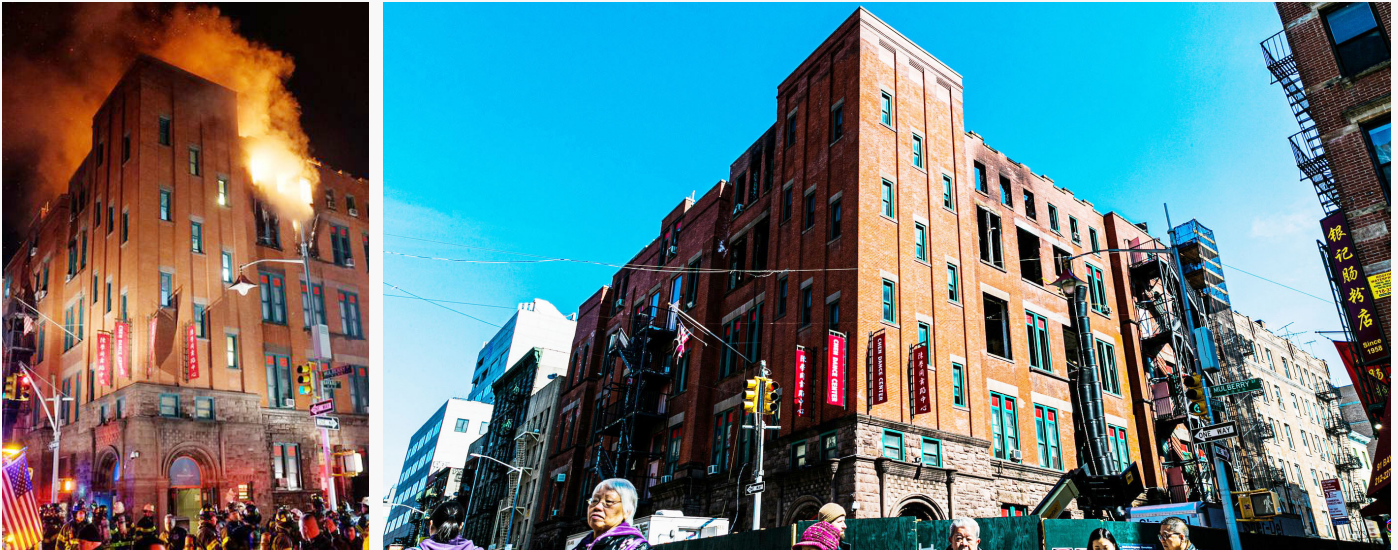
to hereafter as 70 Mulberry Street tenants) that, through their program and service offerings, have continued the building’s legacy as an anchor of activity and source of pride of the community.

Current 70 Mulberry Street tenants

- Chen Dance Center: “Established in 1979, Chen Dance Center has been dedicated to serving the Asian-American community and the New York City dance community. This commitment is demonstrated through arts education at the School, opportunities and production services at the Theater, and a modern dance Company known for moving presentations of Asian-American experiences. The Center is also dedicated to presenting a robust annual educational programming to schools in the metropolitan area.”⁶
- Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA): “Founded in 1980, the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) is dedicated to preserving and presenting the history, heritage, culture and diverse experiences of people of Chinese descent in the United States. The greatly expanded

70 Mulberry Street during and after the fire (from left to right)

Source: Gardiner Anderson, *New York Daily News*, and Jeenah Moon, *New York Times*



MOCA at 215 Centre Street is a national home for the precious narratives of diverse Chinese American communities, and strives to be a model among interactive museums.”⁷

- United East (UEAA): Established by a handful of sports enthusiasts in 1976, the United East Athletics Association’s “initial goal was to offer recent immigrant youths and youths from the Chinatown area constructive sports programs whereby they can develop physically and mentally as well as help them integrate into mainstream America. As the organization grew, UEAA was recognized as a solid component of the Chinese community in addressing the developmental needs of our young people. With the support of the community, UEAA expanded from offering strictly sports-oriented programs to include community services and activities, such as leadership development, summer youth recreational and educational programs, and host cultural events around the Chinese traditions and arts.”⁸
- Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC): Founded in 1965, the Chinese-American Planning Council,

originally the CPC was a grassroots community-based organization in response to the tremendous influx of Chinese immigrants after the change in immigration laws, and in the midst of the Great Society movement. With some 50+ programs, today CPC services over 8,000 people daily through the provision of social services reaching from child care services, youth services, community services, workforce development, and senior services.⁹

- Chinatown Manpower Project (CMP): Established in 1972, “Chinatown Manpower Project, Inc. (CMP) provides vocational training, employment services, educational programs and economic development opportunities to disadvantaged immigrants and refugees throughout New York City. With assistance from both private and public funding sources, CMP helps individuals take full advantage of all opportunities to succeed in their new environment.”¹⁰

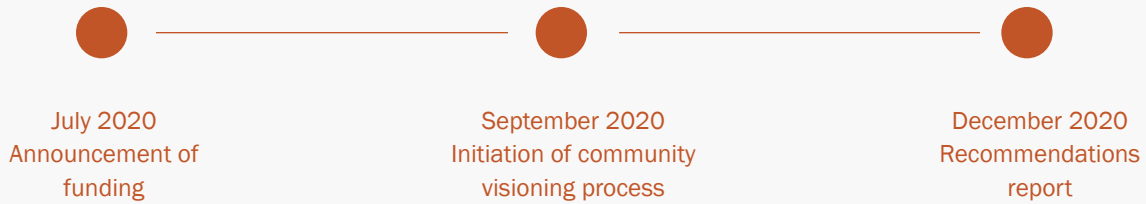
Collective cultural heritage

In 2010, Little Italy and Chinatown were listed in a single historic district on the

National Register of Historic Places “due to its national significance stemming from its association with immigration from 1800–1965.” It is located in a 38-block area of lower Manhattan roughly bounded by Baxter Street, Center Street, Cleveland Place, and Lafayette Street to the west, Jersey Street and East Hudson to the north; Elizabeth Street to the east and Worth Street to the south.¹¹

A majority of mid-nineteenth century buildings remain intact in the district, contributing to the neighborhood’s historic context, feeling, and readily identifiable sense of place. Particularly, “the range of vernacular and nationally-popular styles has produced a multi-textured and visually appealing streetscape composed of buildings that are typically brick, four bays wide and three to seven stories in height. There are no setbacks or front yards; therefore articulation in the streetscape comes from the variety of styles of buildings and often elaborate wrought or cast iron fire escapes mandated after 1867.”¹² As such, beyond the services and programs offered, the 70 Mulberry Street building holds architectural and cultural significance to the local Manhattan Chinatown community and New York City.

Figure 01: Project Timeline



Tragedy turned to opportunity

On January 23, 2020 a devastating fire significantly damaged 70 Mulberry Street, which led the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) “to issue a vacate order that required the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to demolish a portion of the building.”¹³ The five community-based tenant organizations have since relocated and begun to offer some of their services in a reduced capacity at interim locations. However, this disruption and alteration of services has potential impacts both on the recipients of services and on the organizations themselves, as nonprofit fundraising efforts often rely on consistent track records for service provision. On July 2, 2020 the City of New York announced a commitment of \$80 million in funding to redevelop 70 Mulberry Street with a goal of ensuring that it will continue to serve as a community resource for future generations, breaking with a narrative of historic disinvestment in the area.

The City’s commitment

As a part of its commitment, the City also assured the return of all five tenant organizations to the building upon completion of the rebuilding process. The City also committed to a three-month-long community visioning process to help ensure that public input about the future of the site would be gathered to inform the rebuilding process. To that end, DCAS formed an advisory committee consisting of building tenants and representatives appointed by elected and community officials including Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, State Senator Brian Kavanagh, State Assemblywoman Yuh-Line Niou, Councilmember Margaret Chin, and Manhattan Community Board 3. 3x3 was selected as an independent consultant to co-lead and facilitate the community visioning process with the intent of ensuring inclusion and transparency.

Project timeline

Following the July 2020 announcement of funding and process goals, the community visioning process was jointly initiated in September 2020. An initial phase of preliminary research and planning was followed by a series of community meetings and workshops, a survey, and an ongoing document review conducted over a period of 90 days. The drafting of this report marks the conclusion of the process, culminating in a set of findings and recommendations for the future of 70 Mulberry Street including its programming, design, and future role within the community.

02 Community Visioning Process Design

3x3 employed a mixed-methods approach to the community visioning process. The scope of the engagement initially focused on community meetings with different stakeholders including residents, small business owners, and property owners that live or work in the vicinity of 70 Mulberry Street, in addition to community and industry stakeholder groups and service recipients of the five non-profit tenants.

To triangulate and validate qualitative findings from the community meetings, the scope was adjusted to include a survey and a review of additional documents. One hundred thirty community members registered for the community listening meetings, 172 registered for the virtual town hall, 128 registered for the workshop, and 551 community members responded to the survey.

Objectives

In consultation with the Advisory Committee and DCAS, 3x3 established the following set of objectives for an inclusive community visioning process for 70 Mulberry Street:

- Identify and evaluate existing and future community needs and aspirations from the perspective of community members.
- Identify and assess existing concerns about the 70 Mulberry Street rebuilding process.
- Surface, consider, and evaluate the pros and cons of proposed strategies.
- Steward and foster trust and dialogue among diverse stakeholder groups.
- Combine different ideas into one feasible vision for the future of the site.
- Increase process transparency, and ensure efficiency adhering to the 90-day timeline.

Line of Inquiry

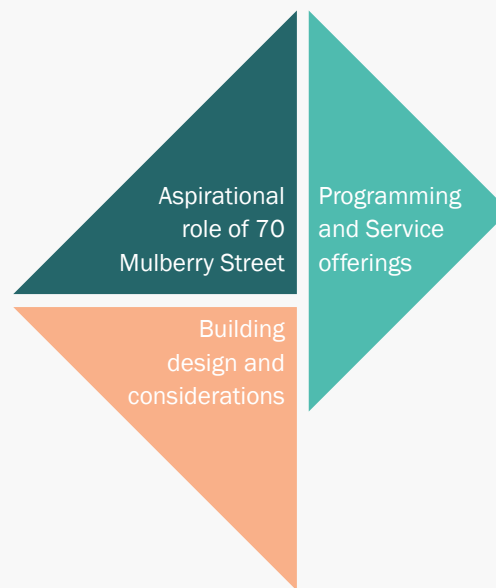
To achieve the established objectives, the community visioning process pursued

the following lines of inquiry through the methodology described below. Informed by a complementary document review, and further refined based on stakeholder feedback provided through the visioning process, the methodology and lines of inquiry guided the design of the community meetings and the analytical process.

Aspirational role of 70 Mulberry Street in its community

- Explore the roles that 70 Mulberry Street fulfilled in the past, learn about community visions and values, and identify where viewpoints are in opposition and where they align:
- What roles has 70 Mulberry Street fulfilled in the past from different stakeholder perspectives?
 - What values are surfacing through these roles?
 - What are stakeholder visions for the future of 70 Mulberry Street? What roles do community stakeholders see the building and its tenants playing in the future?
 - What community values are surfacing through desired, aspirational roles for the rebuilt 70 Mulberry Street?

Figure 02: Key thematic areas



- Where do community stakeholders hold opposing viewpoints, where do they align?

Building design and considerations

Explore the building design considerations for the rebuilding process, surface and understand concerns, desires and aspirations, opportunities, and potential trade-offs associated with different building scenarios:

- What building design aspects should be considered for the rebuilding process?
- What are community priorities in relation to different building design dimensions, namely:
 - preservation versus new development
 - adaptive reuse versus new space planning
 - retaining current building height and floor area versus expanding building height and floor area
 - retaining current programming versus expanding current programming
- What are notable opportunities for each of these dimensions/scenarios?
- What are stakeholder concerns about these dimensions/scenarios?

- What are the widely perceived trade-offs of each dimension/ scenario?
- What are the areas of alignment across stakeholder groups?
- What other concerns does the community hold about the design of the building?
- What other concerns does the community hold about the rebuilding process broadly?

Service offerings and programming

Identify the most pressing priorities related to community needs and desires and how they might be addressed through service offerings and programs at 70 Mulberry Street:

- What are the most pressing needs and desires across community stakeholders?
- How might these be addressed through service and programs offerings at 70 Mulberry Street?
- What are existing offerings within the community? How might these be harnessed in the context of the rebuilding process?
- How might any new service offerings and programs complement existing services and programs, including

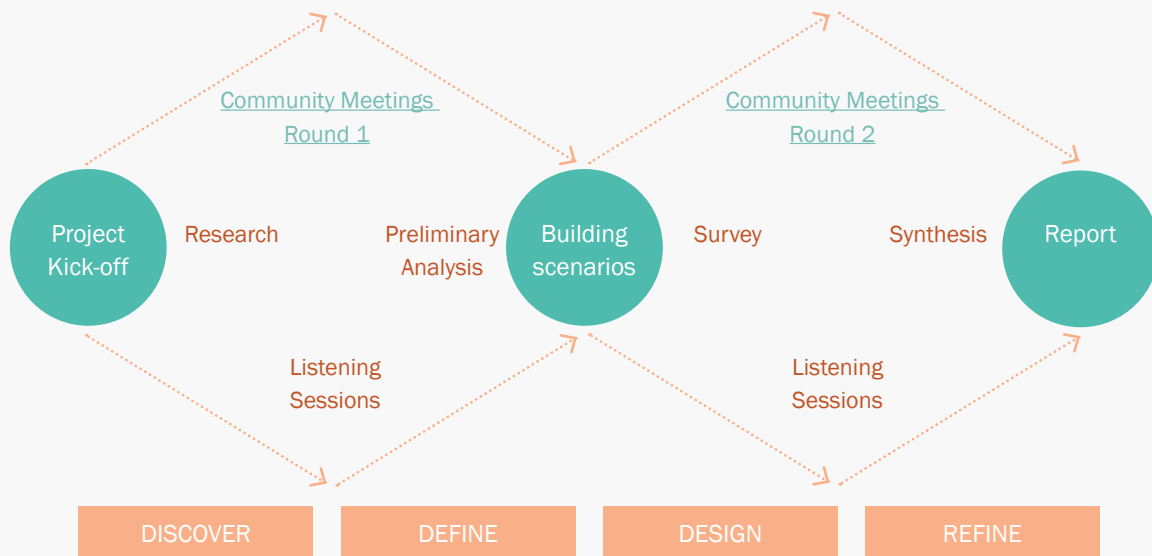
those offered by the tenants of 70 Mulberry Street?

Methods

Defining the methods—the approach and specific processes associated with data collection and analysis—might be one of the most defining tasks of a community visioning process. Detailed below is an overview of the methods employed for this visioning process, as well as constraints and limitations such as those introduced in response to COVID-19 health and safety considerations. The visioning process was conducted using a mixed-methods approach carried out via four phases over a three-month period between September and December, 2020.

Phase 1 focused on establishing the infrastructure of the process, including the formation of the working mode with the Advisory Committee, a review of existing documents and reports concerning the past, present, and future of 70 Mulberry Street to inform the objectives and strategies of the process, and format of the first round of community meetings.

Figure 03: Community Visioning Process Design



Phase 2 included the first round of community meetings, continued review of additional documents submitted by process participants including, among others, letters, reports, and proposals for the future of the site. A mid-term synthesis of the findings from the initial community meetings informed the development of a survey to complement the engagement process.

Phase 3 included dissemination of the survey and a second round of community meetings in addition to ongoing meetings with the Advisory Committee.

Phase 4 included a thematic analysis of findings from previous phases, including a quantitative analysis of survey results, synthesis conducted by the 3x3 project team, and a synthesis session with the Advisory Committee and DCAS to review findings.

Methodology and sampling

3x3 applied a set of design-led methods and digital convening formats to probe the lines of inquiry, elicit explicit as well as tacit knowledge, challenge assumptions, deepen understanding, and

foster discussion across stakeholders. There were a total of 430 participant registrations for the community meetings (130 for the listening sessions, 172 for the town hall, and 128 for the workshop, respectively). The registrations do not include Advisory Committee members and other people who might have received the meeting information through participants who registered. A sampling overview of each meeting is provided below.

Listening sessions

3x3 conducted five virtual listening sessions with one to four breakout rooms per session for different stakeholder groups from October 13 through 16, 2020 using Zoom, a digital video conferencing platform. 3x3 facilitators used Zoom breakout rooms to facilitate small working groups through a set of visual, prioritization, and discussion prompts focused on three themes: the role of 70 Mulberry Street, design considerations, and needs.

A total of 130 people registered for the listening sessions and more than 150 people participated in the session including the Advisory Committee. Of

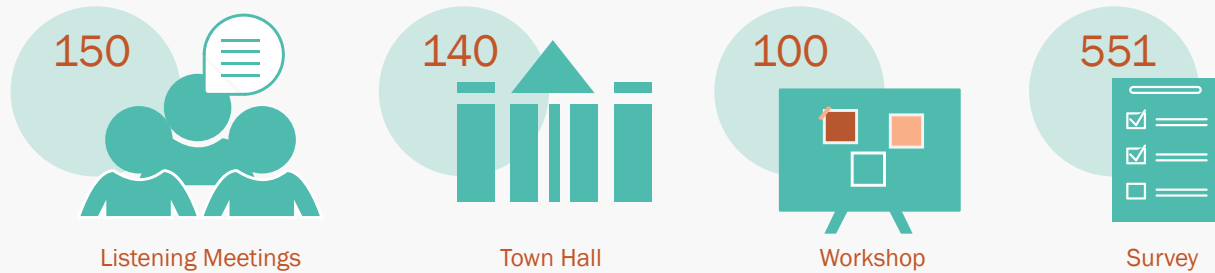
the 130 people who registered for the listening sessions, 48.5% belonged to the community and industry stakeholder group, 27% belonged to the resident and service recipients stakeholder group, 12% belonged to the small business owner group, and 12% belonged to the property owner group. Twenty-five people requested Cantonese facilitation.

Town hall

3x3 conducted a virtual town hall with no break out room for all stakeholders on November 9, 2020. The session was facilitated on Zoom using a slide deck and with a real-time virtual whiteboard space (via the platform, Mural) to support a free flow open mic forum and enable all stakeholders to express, listen, and discuss their concerns and needs.

One hundred seventy-two people registered and approximately 140 participated in the town hall, although a precise number of participants cannot be captured due to the nature of registration on the Zoom platform. Of the total registrants, 51.2% belonged to the community and industry stakeholder group, 10.5% belonged to the resident stakeholder group, 15.7% belonged to

Figure 04: Number of community participants



service recipients stakeholder group, 3.5% belonged to the small business owner group, 4.7% belonged to the property owner group, and the remaining belonged to the participants who did not register and representatives of Advisory Committee. Twelve people requested Cantonese facilitation and six requested Mandarin facilitation.

Workshop

3x3 conducted a virtual interactive workshop with five breakout rooms for all stakeholders on November 10, 2020. The session was facilitated on Zoom using a slide deck. 3x3 facilitators used Zoom breakout rooms to facilitate small working groups through a set of prioritization, visuals, and discussion prompts.

One hundred twenty-eight people registered and approximately 100 people participated in the workshop. Among those who registered, 53.7% belonged to the community and industry stakeholder group, 7.4% belonged to the resident stakeholder group, 13.9% belonged to service recipients stakeholder group, 3.7% belonged to the small business owner group, 3.7% belonged to the property owner group, and the remaining

belonged to the participants who did not register and representatives of Advisory Committee. Twelve people requested Cantonese facilitation and five requested Mandarin facilitation.

Document review

The chosen formats of the community meetings and synthesis were informed by the history of 70 Mulberry Street, current data and trends, community needs and concerns, and aspirations for the future of the site. To do so, 3x3 conducted an ongoing review of documents including letters, proposals, and reports regarding the history and future of the site submitted by different stakeholders through email and survey. The facilitation team added the option to upload documents through survey to expand outreach by opening up an additional channel for members of the community to provide context to the process and express their needs, concerns, and ideas.

A total of 21 documents were submitted by different stakeholders, among which seven were letters, five were proposals, and the remaining were research documents and book chapters that spoke to the history and needs of Chinatown.

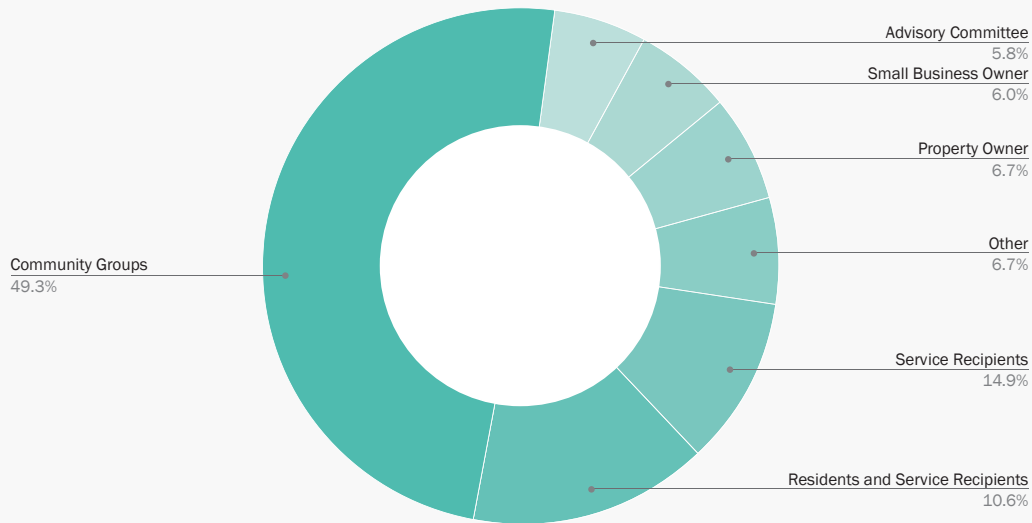
Survey

3x3 administered a digital and paper-based survey from October 23 through November 15, 2020. The main purpose of the survey was to triangulate and cross-validate qualitative findings from the community meetings and assess priorities and concerns about the future of 70 Mulberry Street. Survey questions were informed by a document review (see below) and findings drawn from the first round of community meetings.

3x3 administered and monitored the multilingual survey rollout in English, Simplified Chinese, and Traditional Chinese through SurveyMonkey, an online survey platform. 3x3, DCAS, and the Advisory Committee promoted the digital survey link and Quick Response (QR) code on their social media channels. The Advisory Committee, which included tenants and elected officials, disseminated the survey through existing connections into the community to increase access and expand outreach. DCAS collected the completed paper surveys via a physical dropbox installed at 70 Mulberry Street.

Of the 551 people who responded to the

Figure 05: Community meetings participants, by stakeholder group



survey, 27.7% belonged to the community and industry stakeholder group, 35.6% belonged to service recipients stakeholder group, 13.7% belonged to the resident stakeholder group, 10.1% belonged to the small business owner group, 3.4% belonged to the property owner group, and 0.4% belonged to the Advisory Committee. Nine percent of respondents did not identify their stakeholder group.

With the exception of individuals under 19 or over 80 years of age, there was a relatively even distribution amongst respondents. The majority of the survey respondents had at least some college education, with 64.9% of the 532 survey participants who responded to the education question indicating they had some college education or a higher level of educational attainment.

The majority of the survey respondents identified as Asian non-Hispanic. Of the 519 participants who responded to the question about racial and ethnic identity, 83.2% identified as Asian non-Hispanic. More than half of the Asian non-Hispanic respondents reported their ethnicity as Chinese, followed by Chinese American, Asian American,

Cantonese Chinese, and Japanese.

With regard to household income, 42.1% of the respondents reported their annual household income as under \$50,000, which is less than the median household income in New York City \$60,372 (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). Thirty-one percent of participants reported income between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and 19.4% of participants reported income between \$100,000 and \$200,000.

The majority of the respondents reported engaging regularly with the services offered at 70 Mulberry Street prior to the fire in January. Of the 533 people who responded to a question regarding their previous level of engagement, 36.2% reported visiting the building or engaging with services at least once per week, 18.6% reported two to three times per month, 9% reported one time per month, 18.8% reported every few months, and only 17.4% reported rarely or never visiting the building or engaging with the services and programs offered at 70 Mulberry Street.

Data Analysis Methods

A number of methods were used to synthesize and structure findings associated with the previously defined data sources:

Tagging

Key phrases from qualitative research were tagged, or coded, to identify broad themes and patterns across the different modes and audiences. Attention was paid to context, consistency, contradiction of views, frequency, intensity, degree of specificity across groups.

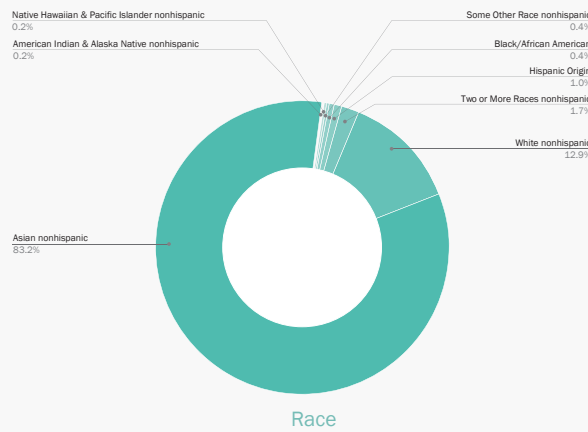
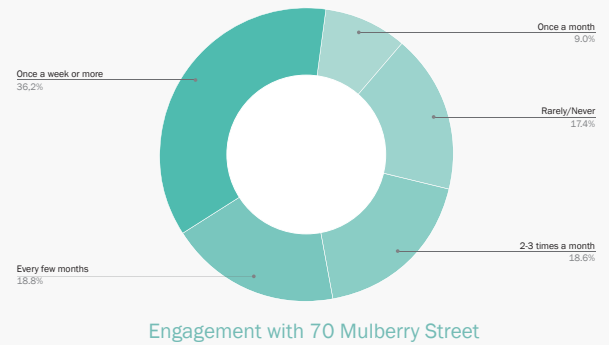
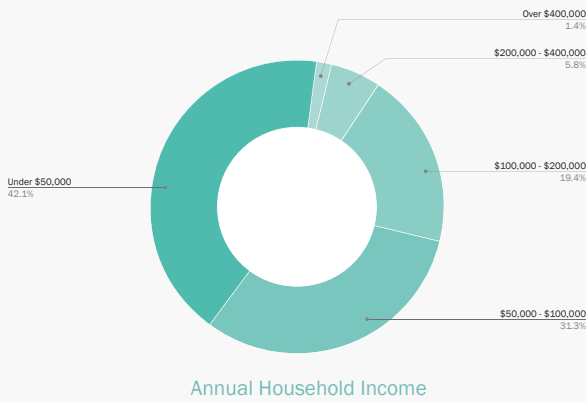
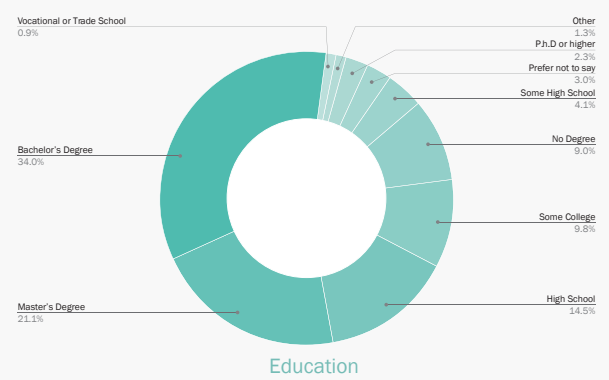
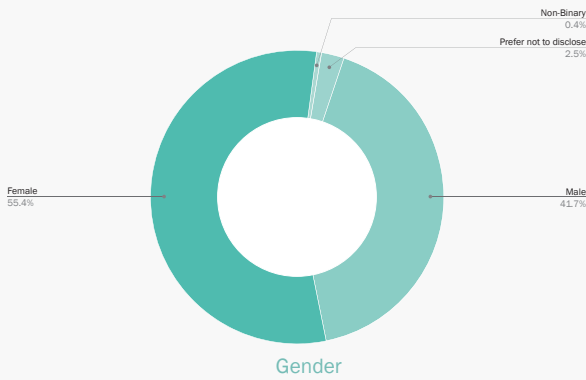
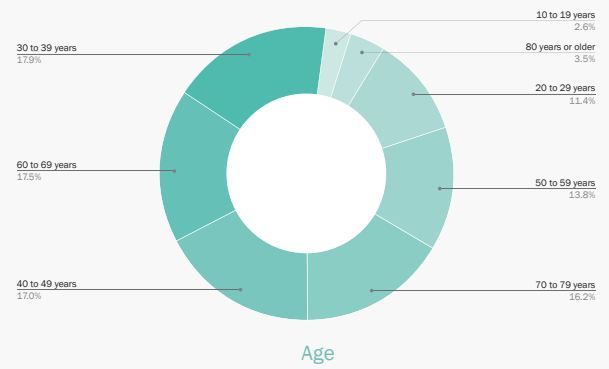
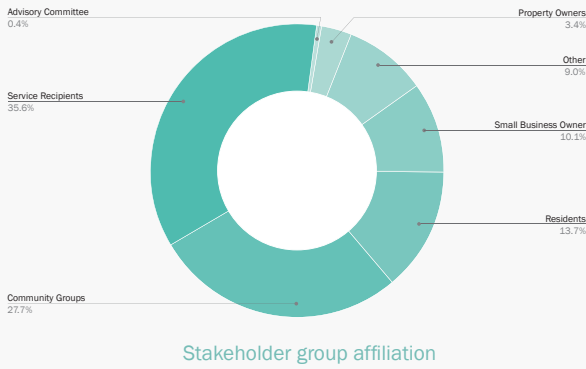
Statistical Analysis

The survey questionnaire was structured to collect quantitative data related to community preferences. The quantitative data were analyzed to interrogate the validity of previously collected qualitative data. This effort was undertaken via descriptive statistics such as percentage scores and weighted averages.

Triangulation

Data from all available sources were triangulated to validate findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Preliminary findings were validated and

Figure 06: Survey participants, by demographics



confirmed with the Advisory Committee through an online presentation and discussion at the end of each community meeting round to synthesize and determine recommendations.

Limitations

This visioning process encountered constraints and challenges that impacted process design, methodology, delivery, and overall project outcomes, which required 3x3 to plan and adjust project management strategies accordingly and on an ongoing basis. These, among others, included:

Project timeline

With a set project duration of 90 days for completion from launch to the report delivery, the project schedule was predetermined, necessitating an expedited outreach, engagement, and analysis process. A time period of at least 10 days was allowed for outreach to ensure the fast execution would not limit outreach activities.

Data collection challenges

Conducted between September and December 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection methods were required that minimized physical interaction in the interest of public health and safety. Community outreach was limited to majority digital methods. For example, under circumstances that would have allowed for meetings to be conducted in-person, the community engagement process might have been approached through a hybrid online/in-person approach rather than being solely conducted via Zoom. Conducting all community outreach meetings online limited participant access to a certain degree, particularly for those with lower levels of digital literacy or access. To address this issue, 3x3 added a paper-based survey to be disseminated throughout Chinatown, with the intent of reaching those with limited or no access to digital technologies.

Project scope

The original project design included in the request for proposals and allocated resources limited the scope to a series of community meetings. 3x3 added a survey and a pathway for the community to upload documents to provide additional data points to validate and triangulate findings from the community meetings. The scope did not include a needs assessment of the neighborhood.

Digital and language barriers

Set in the community of Chinatown, this project faced challenges concerning language and digital access. While facilitation was offered in multiple languages, and efforts were made to reach those with no or limited access to the internet, these factors should still be considered reviewing the outcomes of the process.

Outreach barriers

In the context of the pandemic, community outreach methods were limited to flyering, digital communications methods, and virtually facilitated community meetings. Additionally, a paper-based survey was disseminated with the intent to reach those with no or limited digital access.

To support outreach in the community, the 70 Mulberry Advisory Panel was established as part of this visioning process. Members of the Advisory Panel played a key role in the outreach and dissemination of process-related materials raising potential concerns that the process risks biasing panel members and affiliated groups' needs over broader community needs. Several strategies aimed to address this risk through, such as. publicly available press statements, open access meeting formats, and expansion of outreach through organizations beyond the Advisory Panel.

Limited group of stakeholders

This process was designed to prioritize the input from community members regarding the rebuilding process and emphasized their inputs rather than convening an extended group of

stakeholders, including, among others, developers, construction managers, and others otherwise relevant to a rebuilding process.

3A Findings: General

This section introduces findings derived from the community visioning process. It comprises a range of concerns and sentiments shared across different stakeholder groups concerning the rebuilding process of 70 Mulberry Street. Furthermore, it speaks to underlying expectations and hopes regarding process' governance moving forward that were expressed at the different community meetings, and further evaluated and validated through the survey.

Essence of time

Opportunities are time-sensitive. Across stakeholder groups and meetings, participants expressed a desire to move forward quickly with the process, and had strong concerns about possible risks associated with losing momentum with the project, including a potential (a) extended duration of the rebuilding process (coupled with an inability to address pressing community needs via vital services while the building is out of commission), (b) loss of the associated funds via reappropriation and changing political priorities and administrative change, (c) cancellation of the rebuilding process altogether, and (d) loss of economic and other opportunities while the process is ongoing. Forty-two percent of survey respondents indicated that a lengthy rebuilding process was their top concern, indicating that reducing rebuilding time was a top priority for many. Among the five nonprofit organizations and their service recipients, there was an urgency to return to the building as quickly as possible to restore the services at 70 Mulberry Street in order to serve community needs as soon as possible.

Multifaceted opportunity for the future of Chinatown

The uniqueness of this opportunity raises expectations about an exceptional outcome resulting in a newly built facility that can serve and inspire many future generations. The notion of the rebuilding process being a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity also manifested the expressed hope to take advantage of it and rebuild 70 Mulberry Street as a building with the ability to adapt and serve the needs of future generations of Chinatown. As such, the rebuilding process of 70 Mulberry Street is perceived as a multi-faceted opportunity that:

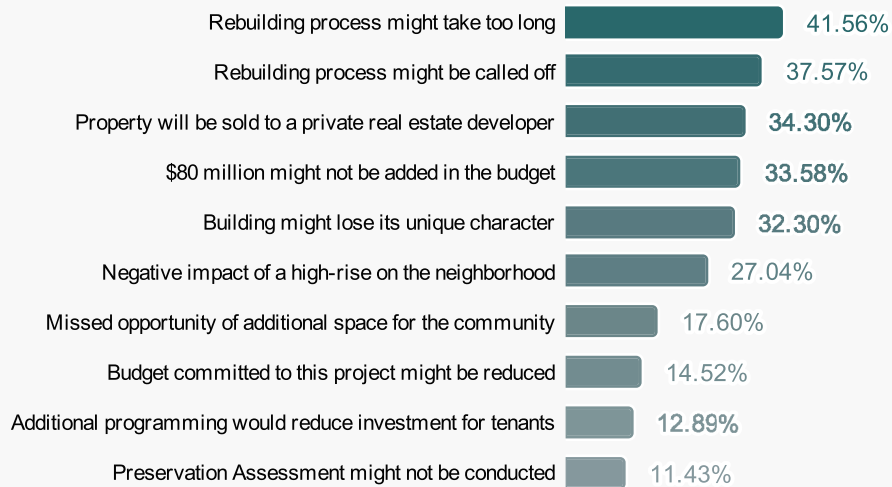
- (a) recognizes and honors Chinatown's heritage,
- (b) acknowledges and manifests its community's contributions to Asian American identity,
- (c) ignites a reconciliation and healing process, and
- (d) spurs local economic activity.

Potential transfer of ownership

Participants across stakeholder groups shared an interest for the building to remain publicly owned and accessible.

Figure 07: Rebuilding concerns

What are your biggest concerns about the rebuilding process of 70 Mulberry Street? Choose up to 3. (N = 551) Source: 70 Mulberry Street Community Visioning Survey



Many community members expressed concerns that privatization of building ownership would be coupled with a loss of community services and a misalignment between public interests and private management entities. Thirty-four percent of survey respondents selected ‘the building might be sold to a private developer’ as one of their top three concerns.

“The building should be maintained as a community building—the only nonprofit building serving the community.”

“The site should go back to being a community center and provide arts and community programs, not turn into a massive building with homes, nor turn into a private real estate development.”

Possibility of reduced budget allocation

Thirty-four percent of survey respondents selected \$80 million might not be added in the next budget, confirming the presence of a sense of skepticism and mistrust in the City’s commitment to the project, which may stem from a long-perceived lack of investment in, and public support of, the Chinatown

community. The inability to see proof of the budget allocation fueled community fears about whether the City will uphold the previously established budget in the context of the pandemic crisis and administrative change following the 2021 election.

“Whatever you are going to build it’s not going to work; another construction in my neighborhood has been going on for three years...”

“Is \$80 million guaranteed? Where can we see it?”

While the City provided evidence for the budget allocation over the course of the community visioning process, which partially addressed the concern, skepticism remained high, particularly in relation to a perceived lack of information concerning trade-offs related to different building scenarios as well as whether results of this visioning process would ultimately be upheld or incorporated into the City’s decisions about the future of the site.¹⁴ The skepticism highlights the importance of continued engagement and information transparency, as well as an avenue for community members to follow the rebuilding process. Participants

frequently requested information and voiced concerns about future building management, which is perceived as a determining factor in the nature and quality of future services of the building. “There is lack of information on issues raised prior, we are feared that this will continue...”

“...The City’s unwillingness to allow access and evaluations by qualified outside experts on the building deprives the community of the right to make informed choices on the future of this important site.”

“Even if the money is in as a line item, we are in a pandemic...”

“We do not know where that number [\$80 million] is coming from.”

Loss of unique character

Another frequent concern among participants relates to the degree to which the rebuilding process could be responsible for stripping 70 Mulberry Street of its unique character and symbolism within the community. This finding emerged in the first round of community meetings and was further confirmed when 32.3% of survey respondents expressed concern that 70

“A 20 story building will be an absolutely insensitive use of this cultural heart of chinatown. Tenants need to re-establish their homes at 70 Mulberry as quickly as possible. However, with that said, there does not need to be a choice between expediency of rebuilding and preservation of our community’s history. Both can happen with a sensitive architectural design of this space. This needs to be addressed and not pushed to the side.”

Mulberry Street was at risk of losing its unique character. The community saw the building’s uniqueness and pivotal role in the community as a function of many factors including the programs and services associated with the nonprofit tenants, historical architecture, and storied historical connection to the neighborhood.

“A place for immigrants coming to the community and a place where they can build friendship, sense of community, interest and appreciation for arts and culture.”

“70 Mulberry Street is very important to the heart of culture in Chinatown. It was devastating when it burned. Please keep the spirit of that building alive and make it stronger.”

Negative impact of a high-rise on the neighborhood

More than just hoping the outcome of the rebuilding process would be compatible with the neighborhood, participants expressed hopes that the rebuilt 70 Mulberry Street will fit the character of the neighborhood, and simultaneously represent a connection to the past as

well as reflect its distinctive and evolving narrative. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of survey respondents expressed concerns about the potential negative impacts of a 20-story building on the neighborhood.

“Maintain the skyline. For the light onto the street, if you are building any higher that would impact the sunlight of others.”

“Please do not make a 20-Story building! That would hurt the heart of Chinatown, my hometown.”.

“Build up the max height as soon as possible.”

“A 20 story building will be an absolutely insensitive use of this cultural heart of chinatown. Tenants need to re-establish their homes at 70 Mulberry as quickly as possible. However, with that said, there does not need to be a choice between expediency of rebuilding and preservation of our community’s history. Both can happen with a sensitive architectural design of this space. This needs to be addressed and not pushed to the side.”

3C Findings: The Role of 70 Mulberry Street

This section focuses on perspectives related to the historical connection between 70 Mulberry Street and the communities it has served. With this foundation, this section explores community visions for the future through identification of sometimes conflicting and aligned values and associated viewpoints.

Community Anchor

Many participants shared a historical and cultural narrative that defines 70 Mulberry Street as a multifaceted site of gathering and connection, whether for learning or to find a community and sense of belonging. It was also seen as a space to learn about Asian American heritage and culture, and there was a strong expressed desire for the building to continue playing this role.

A majority of participants agreed with the sentiment that 70 Mulberry Street should function as a community anchor, with 71.7% selecting community as the top value associated with the building. Many perceived the building as playing an important role for community members across different age groups, new immigrants, and multi-generation Asian Americans. Respondents **desired the space to serve the dual functions of providing a space for social interaction across ethnicities and serving as a site of resource aggregation for the broader Asian American community.**

Many service recipients and alumni of the former school expressed experiencing immersion in Asian American history and culture and a sense of belonging

to a community that supports them through their connection to the building. Consequently, participants expressed the importance of the need to regain that community in the wake of the loss spurred by the fire. Several themes related to this shared longing for community emerged:

- **New building, old spirit:** Participants expressed that the new building will have to balance the past and the future, and that doing so will require memorializing yet continuing the spirit of the old public school and service center while expanding to reach new community members and meet new needs. For example, one of the participants said, “as you enter the building, you kind of know what the building is and what it symbolizes.” Another said, “we need a place to celebrate our cultural heritage, therefore build a cultural center for all Chinese citizens and all are welcome.”
- **Unite the old and the young:** Participants also saw the building as space where young people can learn about Asian American culture and unite with the older population groups to heal trauma caused by xenophobia and racism.

One participant expressed hope that 70 Mulberry Street could be rebuilt as a “place to provide various services for our next generation’s and community’s development,” while another said, “Chinatown as a community has quite a wide age spectrum. I think it’s important that if the space is used as a community gathering place, it’s used to unite the elderly in the area with young folks and be inclusive to both.”

- Learn and support: Community members saw bringing people together to make new connections and support and learn from each other as a critical part of the 70 Mulberry Street community. One participant referred to the building as “a space where generations meet and interact with each other,” and another participant stated that rebuilding 70 Mulberry is “an opportunity to serve more people more appropriately,” referring to the large number of groups that have expressed interest in sharing the space at 70 Mulberry Street.

“[My mother] is a member of the Chinatown Senior Center, which has been there for about 40 years and used to take up the entire ground floor. She wants to remind everybody that it was a very important gathering place for about 300 seniors. Each and every day, five days a week, it was a gathering place for lunch. On top of that, the other uses were musical performances. There were dance classes, Tai Chi classes, drawing classes, computer classes and English classes. So there were a lot of uses in there that we would like to see restored.”

Cultural heritage and identity

Heritage was selected by 39.6% of survey respondents, ranking second amongst values associated with 70 Mulberry Street. The community widely understands the building as central to Chinatown and New York City’s Asian

culture and heritage, providing a place to express Asian American identities and serving as a home for arts and cultural programming. Many see the rebuilding of 70 Mulberry Street as an opportunity to reflect upon, express, and contribute to an emergent Asian American consciousness through a range of programming and connection of artists at different scales, from local to global. With many participants advocating for the preservation of 70 Mulberry’s cultural heritage as represented in a diverse range of identities—including, among others, Chinese American, Asian American, Immigrant, and New Yorker—an opportunity emerges for the building to play a role in bridging across cultures within the larger Asian American community and serving as a center of cultural education for young people.

“I think it is vital that the arts, particularly the performing arts, [the organizations could] still have a home at 70 Mulberry. Organizations like Chen Dance Center provide dance training and performance opportunities to thousands of Chinatown residents and NYC public school students and draw in people not just from the Chinatown community but all over NYC.”

“Keeping traditional Chinese traditions alive, engaging Chinese Americans of all ages to participate in festivities.”

Chinese and Asian American identity: Many participants expressed sentiments of the building as a shared resource—a cultural common—that holds significance to Chinatown’s Chinese and Asian American community including alumni of PS 23, service recipients of the nonprofit tenants, and residents and cultural organizations of Chinatown. Alumni of PS 23 who participated in the meetings discussed their deep cultural and emotional attachment to the building, some still walking by the building almost every day.

“It’s important that there is a space in Chinatown that welcomes all generations, and allows the community to express pride in its Asian American identity and humanity.”

“Keeping traditional Chinese traditions alive ... engaging Chinese Americans of all ages to participate in festivities”
 “My grandfather arrived in Chinatown in 1903. And for nearly 120 years since then, my family and I have been a part of this community. Throughout all this time, 70 Mulberry Street has been a cornerstone in the neighborhood, whether as a beloved public school, or community cultural hub, or an entry point for generations of immigrants and I, myself, have worked in Chinatown for over 40 years and participated in numerous programs there. We are the current guardians of a neighborhood legacy.”

Immigrant neighborhood: For many, 70 Mulberry Street is strongly related to the immigrant experience in New York City. Built in 1971, multiple generations of immigrants in Chinatown have gathered at the site to receive education, seek a sense of belonging, or participate in community activities. Former PS 23’s rich immigrant history was made famous by an article in the New-York Tribune in 1905 that noted the building as the “school of 29 nationalities.” PS 23 had an extremely diverse student body, including students with ethnic and cultural identities from modern-day Italy, Germany, Poland, Ireland, Russia, Turkey, England, Scotland, Greece, Syria, Austria, Egypt, Switzerland, and Lithuania, among others.¹⁵ Participants noted its rich immigrant history:

“It remains as a physical reminder of the collective history and generations of residents who attended that school, and have fond memories of that school and received an education that impacted the rest of their lives.”
 “Now we are at the point where we more or less the Asians are Chinese

Figure 08: Values

What are your biggest concerns about the rebuilding process of 70 Mulberry St.? Choose up to 3.(N = 551) Source: 70 Mulberry Street Community Visioning Survey

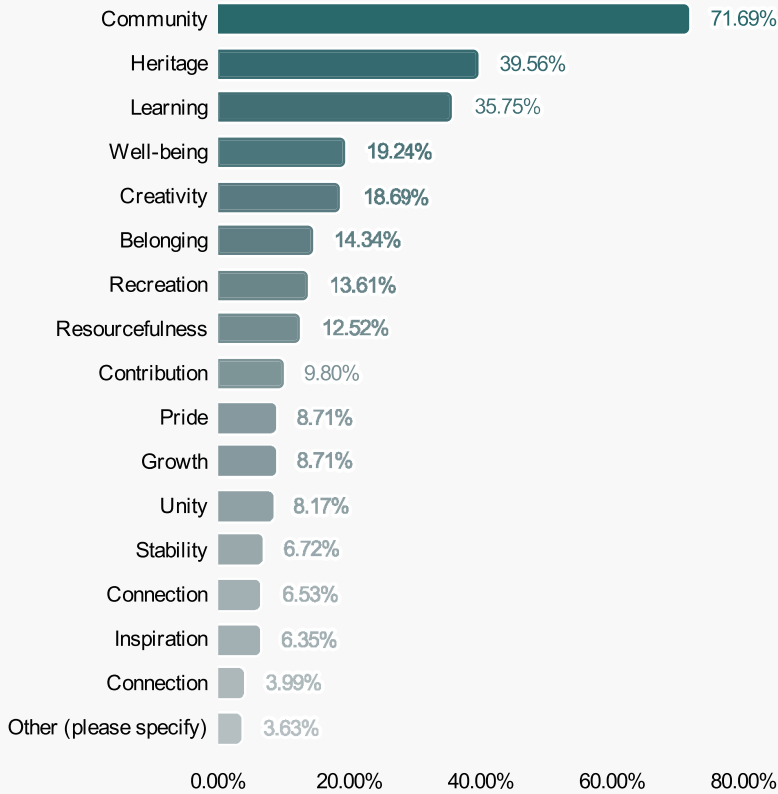


Figure 09: Cultural identity

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, on a scale of strongly disagree = -2 to strongly agree = 2. Source: 70 Mulberry Street Community Visioning Survey

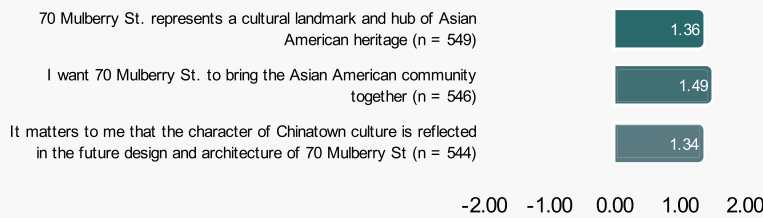
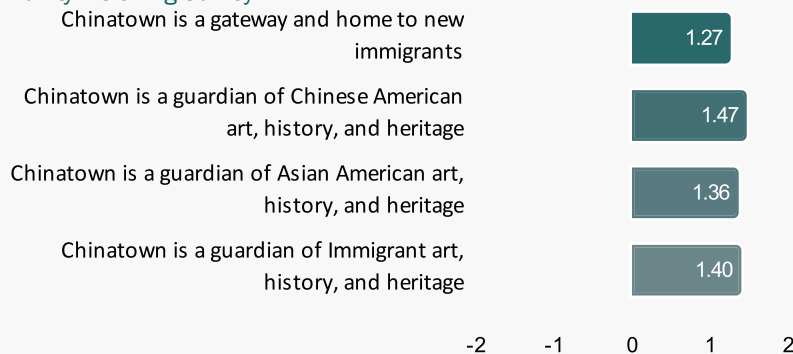


Figure 10: Cultural identity and Chinatown

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, on a scale of strongly disagree = -2 to strongly agree = 2. Source: 70 Mulberry Street Community Visioning Survey



“When my family escaped the violence out west in the nineteenth century, they found refuge in New York’s Chinatown. And the first generation of Americans and my family were educated at 70 Mulberry. These were my grandparents, my parents, my aunts, my uncles. They learned English; they learned American values; they learned civic engagement and the importance of voting. This building is historic, and it means a lot to my family. But it’s also part of the cultural fabric of Chinatown. And I would hate to see it become torn down like the old Penn Station.”

and pretty much dominate Chinatown, but let’s not forget about those people who came before because 70 Mulberry also means something to them as well. So it’s not just the Chinese, but as for our neighbors.”

“When my family escaped the violence out west in the nineteenth century, they found refuge in New York’s Chinatown. And the first generation of Americans and my family were educated at 70 Mulberry. These were my grandparents, my parents, my aunts, my uncles. They learned English; they learned American values; they learned civic engagement and the importance of voting. This building is historic, and it means a lot to my family. But it’s also part of the cultural fabric of Chinatown. And I would hate to see it become torn down like the old Penn Station.”

participants spoke about the deep impact of the learning experience associated with the building had on their lives. Suggestions from participants ranged from opening a learning center to a center for vocational training and cultural archives.

“It is a place for immigrants coming to the community and a place where they can build friendship, sense of community, interest and appreciation for arts and culture.”

“I highly support vocational training for this new building. Especially with the impacts of COVID, Chinatown and the Chinese community continues to suffer economically...”

Learning

Thirty-six percent selected Learning as a value associated with 70 Mulberry Street underpinning the hope expressed by many during the community meetings that the educational legacy of the building will be continued once the rebuilding process has been completed. Many

3C Findings: Building Design and Considerations

This section describes aspects of the building design under review during the visioning process, the community preferences for each of those dimensions, including notable opportunities, concerns, perceived trade-offs, areas of alignment, and other concerns that the community holds about the design of the building and rebuilding process.

Overall, participants prioritized preserving the building legacy and heritage and desired an expedited Preservation Assessment to determine which building elements to restore. A majority of the participants wanted to speed up rebuilding time and were concerned about the potential negative impacts of a 20-story building on the neighborhood. There was a firm agreement on the need for modern interiors while restoring the building's shell, specifically the stone facade and some architectural elements such as the stairwell. Some participants urged the design process to inbuild adaptation and flexibility for future technologies.

I. Architectural legacy and design dimensions

As mentioned in the introduction, 70 Mulberry Street, former Public School 23, was designed and constructed by the architect Charles B. J. Snyder in 1891. Snyder was Superintendent of School Buildings for the New York City Board of Education between 1891 and 1923. PS 23 was Snyder's first school building design among many other eclectic school buildings that are designated as New York City landmarks such as the Erasmus Hall High School and Morris High School. The last class of PS 23 graduated in 1976, after which the building was converted into a community center. 70 Mulberry Street, though not classified as a New York City landmark, is currently one of Chinatown's notable historical buildings and is listed as a contributing building to the Chinatown National Register Historic District. [The building owes its historical and architectural significance to multiple factors, including its¹⁶:](#)

- prominent location in the historic core of Chinatown;
- important history as renowned school architect Charles B. J. Snyder's first public school design;
- unique fortress-like Romanesque

and Renaissance Revival brick walls, corner tower design, and ornamented and rusticated brownstone ashlar base; and,

- long-standing cultural and emotional connection with the community not just because of the services provided by the nonprofit tenants but also because it had served the community for decades as a public school.

In January 2020, a five-alarm fire destroyed most of the brick walls and corner tower, but the community expressed a desire to explore preservation options for the remaining structure. Given the desire of the community to continue the legacy and heritage of 70 Mulberry Street, [the following building design dimensions were listed for consideration](#) under the community visioning process:

- preservation versus demolition of the remaining building structure and architectural elements;
- adaptive reuse versus new interior space planning of the building;
- retaining current building height and floor area versus extending building height and floor area; and,
- retaining current programming versus extending current

PS 23 building and classroom

Source: NYC Department of Records and Information Services



programming.

II. Preservation versus full demolition

After the fire destroyed the top three floors of the five-story building in January 2020, the City cleared the roof and flooring sections deemed unsafe and in danger of collapsing. Tenants were allowed access to artifacts and personal belongings.¹⁷ As the City weighed next steps, some community advocates pressed for a preservation assessment for the building, while other groups in Chinatown advocated for full demolition and construction of a taller building. As a result, the City facilitated the creation of an advisory committee of community leaders to undertake a community visioning process.

Aspirations and Priorities

During the community meetings and town hall, polarities continued to surface on the topic of preservation—between preserving part of the building, including its foundation and brownstone ashlar base, and full demolition. Several practical, tangible, and intangible benefits of preserving the building elements of 70 Mulberry Street were mentioned during the meetings spanning from

the building's rich immigrant history, long-standing historical connection, and architectural legacy and difficult to replicate details.

Architectural legacy: Charles B. J. Snyder introduced an innovative aspect in the design of PS 23 through the inclusion of an auditorium that established the school's capacity for hosting community events and public lectures. This community-oriented feature became a hallmark of Snyder's school designs. Another feat was the remarkable fusion of Norman Romanesque Revival with the Renaissance Revival architectural styles that is reflected in the brownstone base paired with arched doorways and carved medieval motifs, the corner tower, and the brick façade.¹⁸

Many participants remarked on the unique architectural features of the building, including the stairwell, columns, and door knobs. Others noted the complex nature of the building rooted in Italian design heritage but experienced by Chinese American students in its later years. Those with expertise in preservation and architecture remarked at the difficulty and expense of replicating the building's masonry work and architectural details

in Renaissance Revival style. 65.8% of the survey respondents agreed for 70 Mulberry Street building elements to be preserved to a great extent, most importantly the structural safe parts of the building that might be identified through a preservation assessment (derived from figure 11).

"If it is a hot summer day, you come into the stair, and it is kind of a cool stone. The building produces an experience that you connect to going there. And you go up through the stairs, and then you see different people who are coming and going from different programs that you may or may not be kind of associated or familiar with."

"It is the physical aspect of the building, the beautiful brownstone, arches to the entrance, the pattern of the windows, the beautiful color of the brick corner tower that towers over Columbus Park and was this community's version of a new Italian Campanella. It is the quality of the masonry. It is the physical presence in the heart of Chinatown. It is the long connection to the community, and is the crucial services provided by the tenants in that building for tenants who deserve to be back

in that building, with a better, more purpose built facility than they have ever had before.”

Iconic potential for the future of

Chinatown: At the same time, a contingency of participants pointed out that rebuilding a building with more floor area could be an opportunity to develop an iconic and modern cultural center that can put 70 Mulberry Street on the international stage. Twenty-six percent (26%) of the survey respondents were either neutral or agreed to being open to rezoning and the ULURP Process to build a taller building even if it adds additional time to the rebuilding process (derived from Figure 13).

“I would like to turn this unfortunate incident into an opportunity for us to increase the capacity of services in the community, both in terms of culture and also surfaces, and as well as housing residential, for senior citizens.”
 “I think that we should acknowledge the international presence of Chinese in the world. And we should recognize the growth of Chinese cities around the world and try to have this structure reflect some of that modernity. We are talking about 2030, we are talking about 2040, 2050, we cannot be locked into a building that is going to only reflect the past, we still have to be architecturally interesting. And in context with the rest of the world as well, where Chinese people exist.

“[My mother] is a member of the Chinatown Senior Center, which has been there for about 40 years and used to take up the entire ground floor. She wants to remind everybody that it was a very important gathering place for about 300 seniors. Each and every day, five days a week, it was a gathering place for lunch. On top of that, the other uses were musical performances. There were dance classes, Tai Chi classes, drawing classes, computer classes and English classes. So there were a lot of uses in there that we would like to see restored.”

Concerns and perceived trade-offs

Perceived trade-offs associated with preserving the architectural details of the building included a missed opportunity to maximize space and meet affordability needs within Chinatown, as well as the overall timeline of the rebuilding process. Time was identified as a major factor that should determine to what extent the remaining structure should be preserved or demolished, in favor of an expedient return of tenants to resume operations. Similar concerns were expressed regarding new development, namely if full demolition to expand FAR would necessitate a ULURP process. Participants were also concerned that a glass and steel tower would feel out of context in the neighborhood and would seem inaccessible and unwelcoming to visitors and passersby.

“If we drag our feet and talk about preservation but that takes three more years to understand what is involved in that, we do not have that time...My fear is that it is a blighted site that will be dragged into an eternity similar to Freedom Tower that took years and years to design because people never got to the design phase. And in that lost opportunity was money, jobs, growth, and a lot of the downtown economy suffered because of that.”

“I think the timeframe is really the the deciding factor for me, because I know that the urgency of having that space for community groups is, for me, personally more important than preserving the outside, because Chinatown is not going to be the community that it is without the people and without the services and the organizations.”

“We do not want a generic looking building like we see in Midtown, where you can, where if there were no street signs, you had no idea where you were standing. We do not want something that is totally out of context.”

Ultimately many participants were

challenged to weigh the tradeoffs related to preservation versus full demolition due to a lack of technical information. Participants voiced a need for technical decisions to be rooted in assessments conducted by experts and to be the basis for decision-making around preservation. Participants noted a need for the preservation assessment to determine what details can be preserved and whether the foundation could carry the weight of additional floors.

“We need more information on the speed and the possible height of the building.”

“How many floors can we add without ULURP?”

“It would be great if the decision is to preserve. It would be also great to understand if window openings and some of the other details can be preserved. That is why preservation assessment is critical. What of the original building remains?”

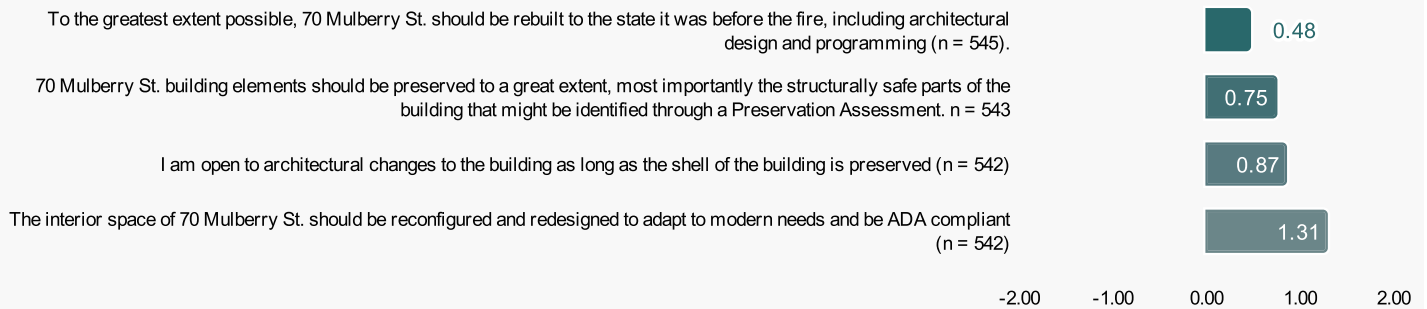
Areas of Alignment

Many participants opposed full demolition and preferred restoring the stone base and some of the architectural elements inside the building. The survey results indicated a similar result with a majority of the survey participants agreeing to the idea of ‘preserving the building elements to a great extent as might be identified through a preservation assessment (see figure 11). Participants widely expressed an **urgent need for an expedited preservation assessment to determine what can be restored along with associated expected costs.** Advocates for preservation desired the evaluation to be shared with the public in a meeting and used to inform the engagement process and recommendations report.

However, there was an overarching desire for 70 Mulberry Street to be rebuilt as soon as possible and to maximize and modernize available space with the possibility to expand in the future and contribute to economic growth.

Figure 11: Architectural perspectives

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, on a scale of strongly disagree = -2 to strongly agree = 2. Source: 70 Mulberry Street Community Visioning Survey



The need for speedy reconstruction as an overwhelming priority [opens up common ground for discussion on what should be prioritized once the results of the preservation assessment are available](#). Eighty percent (80%) of survey participants agreed that ‘more than anything’ it mattered to them that the rebuilding process is accomplished as quickly as possible (derived from figure 13). Despite many participants desiring preservation of the stone base, they did not want the preservation assessment recommendations to result in a lengthy drawn out process and would not prioritize salvaging architectural elements such as columns and door knobs at the cost of a longer construction time and less built area.

There was also alignment on the need to [memorialize the legacy of the community center and PS 23 by honoring the stories and memories of the alumni and service recipients](#). Participants also found common ground in their concerns and hopes for the new 70 Mulberry Street to fit the character of the neighborhood, welcome old and new community members, and manifest its distinctive and evolving narrative.

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the survey participants reported that it mattered to them that the character of Chinatown culture is reflected in the future design and architecture of 70 Mulberry Street (derived from figure 9).

III. Adaptive reuse versus new space planning

When the last class of PS 23 graduated in 1976, the building space was repurposed as an all-age community center. The building was then occupied by community activists tied to the emergence of the cultural heritage movement in Chinatown. Chinatown stakeholders were able to secure public support to house a range of cultural and social service organizations offering services for community use in the building eventually leading to 70 Mulberry’s current tenants.¹⁹ The tenants over the years made use of the space that was originally designed for a school.

Aspirations and priorities

The community meetings revealed that participants saw the rebuilding process as a chance to reconfigure and modernize the interiors and ensure greater accessibility (see Figure 11).

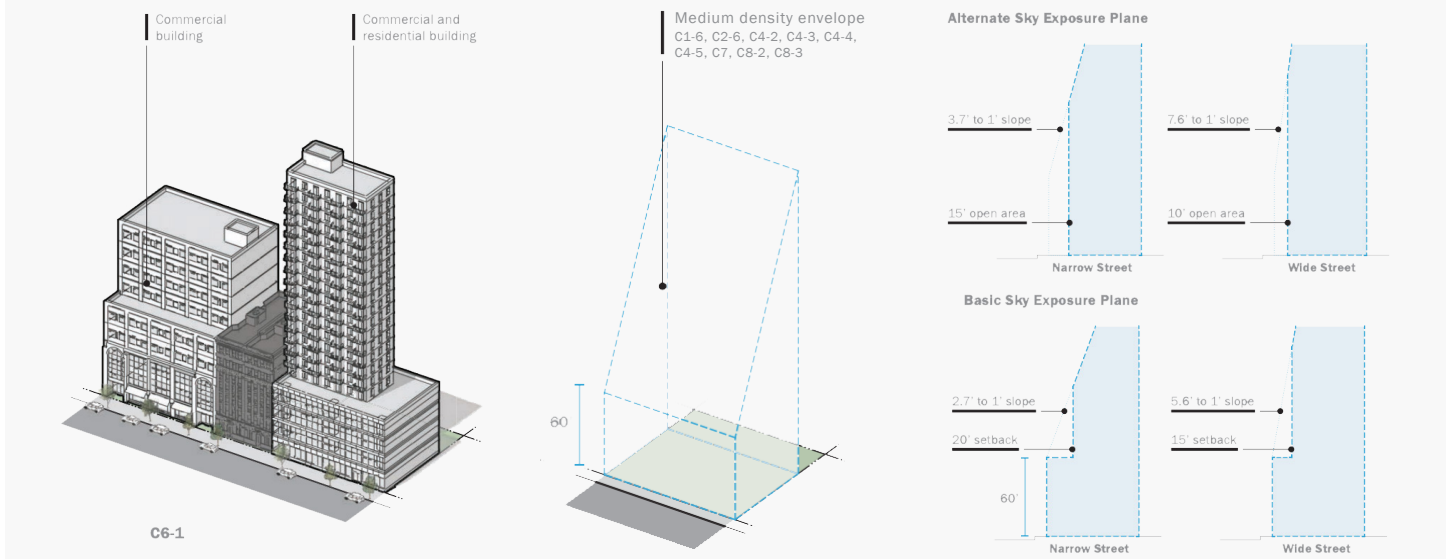
The participants noted the lack of sound proofing and odd locations of the bathrooms in the old building. Many expressed a desire to have an atrium and well-lit roof space in the rebuilt building. Some participants urged the design process to prioritize novel ideas and design for flexibility, particularly as it relates to how flexible, multipurpose, and shared space can help meet the constraints of a limited floor area between tenants. Others were interested in ensuring the space can adapt for future technologies.

“The building should have “built-in 5G and advanced media technologies”, use “green and energy-efficient building designs”, and provide “ease and mobility solutions to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).”

“I am just thinking about improvements from the old space like one with soundproofing. I know how Chen Dance Company was always complaining because our lion dancing was so loud, and we would have conflicts with that. ”

“I think it makes sense to have an atrium and, and a very well lit, roofed

Figure 12: Commercial district envelopes
Source: NYC Planning, Zoning Handbook



space, whether or not the roof is enclosed. Chinatown and particularly residents really do not have places, like SoHo and FiDi, where you can go to beautifully lit spaces.”

There was also a desire, particularly amongst certain groups, to keep the ceiling height of each floor at 15 feet with many participants noting the functional and aesthetic use of the extra height on each floor.

“A nice feature about the building was the fact that the ceilings were 15 feet high instead of the standard eight, or 10. It is a substantial asset for the organizations that used to be in that building ... UEAA or Chen dancers hung decorations from the ceiling for their performances, or just MOCA being able to display scrolls and artistic pieces, I think that it was an excellent asset that should be preserved for the new building.”

“Because of the nature of activities that the United East conducts, we need to maintain those high ceilings.”

Concerns, and perceived trade-offs

Relatively few trade-offs were mentioned

in relation to modernizing the space that are unrelated to the larger question of preservation versus new construction. Beyond timeline and space maximization considerations detailed in section 3C.II, building security was raised as a concern. Participants pointed out that the building has been trespassed on several occasions and it would be safer for the rebuilt building to have a controlled security system. For example, one of the participant said,

“It has a history of people unauthorized being in it. There are a lot of people who knew that they could take advantage of the building during off hours, different floors that were unoccupied or sometimes occupied by vagrants. So I understand how hard security can be to start, but I think it is very valid. I think that it should be addressed. Because the building did have a history of trespass.”

Areas of alignment

The majority of the participants strongly agreed on the need to create modern interiors while restoring the building’s shell, specifically the stone facade. The survey results also indicated a

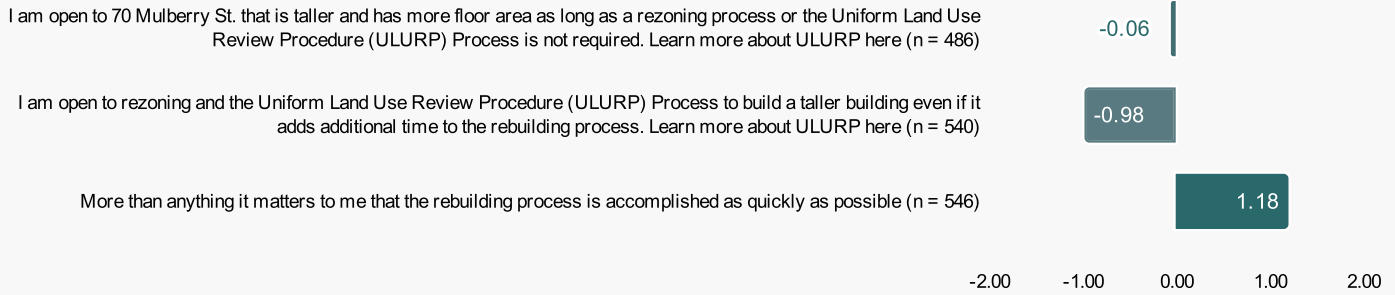
similar result. The majority of the survey participants strongly agreed to the space being reconfigured to adapt to modern needs and be ADA compliant (see figure 11). The common definition of a modern space that emerged from the discussion included a more accessible yet secured flexible space that can adapt to multiple needs of the cultural groups in Chinatown. There was strong support for the tenants to be able to secure better and possibly bigger space.

IV. Building height and floor area

According to the information on New York City Planning ZoLa tool, 70 Mulberry Street (Block 200, Lot 1) is zoned C6-1 which permits a wide range of commercial uses that require a central location.²⁰ Typically mapped in areas outside central business cores, C6-1 districts have a commercial floor area ratio (FAR) of 6.0 for a commercial building. C6-1 zoning allows the floor area to be increased by a bonus for a public plaza and or inclusionary housing.²¹ The building’s lot area is 12,512 square feet, with a frontage of 124.42 feet and a depth of 100.42 feet. The building covered a gross area of 41,358

Figure 13: Building height and ULURP

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, on a scale of strongly disagree = -2 to strongly agree = 2. Source: 70 Mulberry Street Community Visioning Survey



square feet on five and a half floors with a total of seven units. The building classification is public facilities and institutions and building class is a place of public assembly (indoors) and cultural miscellaneous (P9).²²

The height and setback regulations in the C6-1 zone are governed by sky exposure planes. According to Chapter 4 of the New York City Planning Zoning Handbook (2014), the envelope is distinguished by the height permitted close to the street and the steepness of the plane, which also varies based on the adjoining street width. An alternate steeper version is available for sites where an open area is provided along the street line. Figure 12 shows the difference between the basic and alternate sky exposure plane for a medium density envelope. C6-1 is a medium density envelope that allowed 70 Mulberry Street to cover the full lot until the height of 60 feet in the past. The basic sky exposure plane would have required a 20-foot setback on a narrow street and 15-foot setback on a wide street if the building height had surpassed 60 feet. C6 Districts have no parking requirements.²³

Aspirations and priorities

The rebuilding process of 70 Mulberry Street presents an opportunity to reconsider the size and shape of the building envelope. Notably, creating additional floor area at 70 Mulberry Street, via selection of any one of a number of rebuilding scenarios, could reduce historical pressures on space availability in the building and potentially allow for additional uses and tenants in the decades to come. The need for additional space emerged frequently in the visioning process, which helped to establish common ground for discussion between participants regarding competing ideas about the degree to which the rebuilding should focus on preservation as opposed to new directions.

“Building a new purpose built building of maybe six stories, at most eight stories, that would satisfy the needs of all the tenants that were displaced from the building.”

Concerns and perceived tradeoffs

Three general perspectives emerged from participants regarding how to approach the 70 Mulberry Street building

envelope: (a) retaining the five-and-a-half-floor approach with some additional community space on the sixth floor; (b) maximizing floor area with construction of several additional floors without triggering a zoning review process; and, (c) increasing building height considerably, which would require a ULURP process.

Retaining the five-and-a-half-floor approach yet adding some floor area on the sixth floor for community use would help compensate for the area existing nonprofit tenants may lose in the new building as a result of necessary changes to comply with contemporary building codes. In contrast, maximizing floor area while staying within the limits of current zoning would increase usable space at the site to a greater degree while avoiding a potentially lengthy ULURP review process. For example, one participant said, “if we could stay within the zoning and build up a couple of more floors to stay within the zoning so that more space in the interior can be utilized for the different organizations that would use the space.” The third approach, constructing a much taller building, would represent a significant departure in the building shape and require more

extensive reviews, but would result in accommodation of multiple additional uses or tenants.

“I would actually go to the maximum allowable, even up to 20 stories as long as there are some setback designs. So that they are not too offensive. But if we could accommodate, you know, multiple needs, put some housing.”

“I would think that keeping it as close to the current height as possible is a good idea for two reasons. One is that that would allow for the completion of the construction sooner rather than later. To really allow the building to function again as our local cultural space and the community really needs it and Chen dance and other organizations that really make something more very, very critical space for this community. I think six floors is a good idea that would really allow time to work in the interest of the community, having a higher chance of getting back into the space.”

Areas of alignment

Regardless of priorities related to building height, a virtually unanimous perspective among participants was that 70 Mulberry Street is more than just a building, and that design strategies should incorporate broader contextual factors to ensure the building fits within the neighborhood and reflects the heritage of Chinatown. Another area of alignment related to a perspective that technical and preservation decisions should be informed by assessments conducted by experts. For example, the preservation assessment process should be used to determine whether the foundation can support the weight of additional floors, as well establish an estimate of cost and construction time for each of the different building scenarios.

Most community members also wanted to speed up rebuilding time and wished to avoid a ULURP process that would make the process lengthy. While there was some concern expressed about potential

negative impacts on the neighborhood associated with a taller building, most community members were neutral about additional floors in a context where ULURP is not required. However, most participants were concerned that a 20-story building would have a negative impact on the surrounding area and felt more comfortable with 8–10 stories, with the additional stories set back and within as of right per current zoning. Survey results supported findings related to the ULURP process. The majority of the respondents disagreed with being open to the rezoning process to build a taller building, and strongly agreed with the need for a speedy reconstruction (see Figure 13).

“[A] ULURP process will delay the return of the people.”

IV. Current versus extended programming

Aspirations and priorities

As previously described, existing tenants at 70 Mulberry Street provide a range of programming including workforce development, arts and culture programs, senior services, and the historical archives. The City has promised to bring the original tenants back to the future 70 Mulberry Street so they can once again offer their original programs and services. As such, the City sought to rebuild 70 Mulberry Street according to its previous design and subsequently move tenants back in as soon as possible. However, this moment of reenvisioning, particularly given the potential for increased floor space at the site, has prompted stakeholders to advocate for consideration of extended programming, with potential new uses including affordable housing, a performance art center, and a library, among others.

Concerns and perceived tradeoffs

Some participants advocated to keep the future programming limited to the services offered by existing tenants, but the majority of the participants expressed diverse needs driven largely by the high cost of rent in Chinatown. Many

participants in the community meetings represented several small and local cultural and arts organizations, and they expressed a need for affordable space for small groups that do not have budgets to rent performing venues in downtown for meetings, rehearsals, production, and performances. Service recipients that were involved in the sports-related programming at 70 Mulberry Street expressed similar needs. Under current conditions, they are required to travel to different boroughs to access appropriate facilities for practice and other uses, a condition which could be addressed with the provision of multipurpose space at 70 Mulberry Street. Additional suggested programming ideas raised in the process included a library and a learning and resource center.

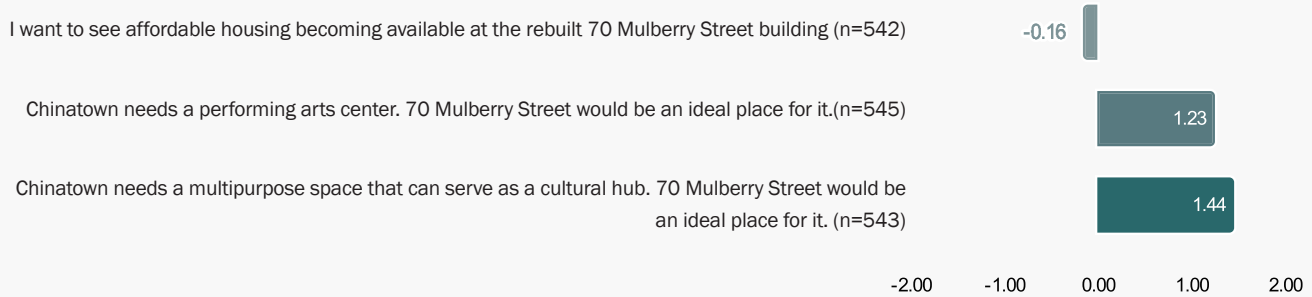
In contrast, challenges associated with high real estate values are also related to affordable housing particularly among older neighborhood residents. As in the case of the rest of Manhattan, Chinatown has witnessed a remarkable increase in land values and associated rent. With the median income low, the percentage of rent-burdened households has been high leading to displacement and an overall loss in Chinese population in the last decade. One way to help address this issue could be through the provision of affordable housing at the site, particularly if the rebuilding process selected involves considerable expansion in the number of floors.

“We have nowhere to go for a meeting or exhibition. That is the Culture Center we can use for exhibition, and building production pieces. It would be convenient if we can use it in many different ways to have the small pieces and also the tiniest cultural association and we can link up together, that takes patience and we have this, this can be so important.”

“Thinking about the way that libraries bring people together, and offer resources in terms of information. So I think about the Flushing library, as an example, where they have a theater for simultaneous

Figure 14: Programming perspectives

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, on a scale of strongly disagree = -2 to strongly agree = 2. Source: 70 Mulberry Street Community Visioning Survey



translation, they have computers where new immigrants and people from the community can come and learn how to use various technologies.”

“And let us not leave out that affordable housing thing. We do need affordable housing in the neighborhood.”

Areas of alignment

Above all other uses, the majority of the participants desired a multipurpose community space at 70 Mulberry Street, followed closely by a performing arts center. The building area, within as of right, was also not considered suitable for a 299 seat performance space that could be used for Cantonese Opera, but rather a performance space that could be more flexible and accessible to a wider range of groups than those who might utilize a more formal performance space. Survey responses also aligned with the findings from the community meetings.

While affordable housing was raised occasionally, most participants disagreed with the idea of affordable housing as a priority for this site, and strongly agreed with the need for a performing arts center and multipurpose community space (see

Figure 14). As one participant stated,

“There is a driving element in the community so there may seem to be a benefit to putting some affordable housing on the site but there is never a guarantee that affordable housing will be actually a significant percentage of the apartments.”

“Affordable housing is a need but I am not sure if 70 Mulberry Street is an ideal location for it.”

Additional Community Concerns

Some other concerns listed by the participants included:

Protection from harsh weather conditions

There were concerns among community members about the damage that the building might have incurred because of the missing roof due to the fire. One of the participants stated, “the building is open to all the elements and well we have had a dash of downfalls last month. The water can cause damage to the stonework that we are actually fighting to preserve. The water could have softened up the stonework, it is porous stone.”

On-the-ground expertise

There was a desire for the local community organizations to remain involved in the rebuilding process and support the process with their prior knowledge of the community and its needs.

Local contractor and architect

Community members desired, if possible, a local contractor and an Asian American architect to be hired for the rebuilding process. They perceived an Asian American architect would be more likely positioned to understand cultural nuances and better carry forward the building’s cultural and historical legacy.

Desire for more technical information

More technical information, such as that resulting from a preservation assessment, was requested throughout the process to help determine the existing conditions as well as clarify and assess a range of future possibilities.

Construction management

There is a desire for the process to have the least possible negative impacts on local businesses. There are concerns about the impact of construction activities on businesses due to traffic closures.

3D Findings: Service Offerings and Programming

This section describes the most pressing needs and wants across the community, and the service offerings and programming needs that emerged during the visioning process. Overall, the community wanted to continue the community and cultural services offered by 70 Mulberry Street nonprofit tenants while providing new affordable space for additional local cultural and arts groups. Participants expressed a desire to avoid duplicating services that already exist in the neighborhood and prioritize facilities that would maximize benefit for the community. There was a desire for the additional space to be multi-purpose and managed by a collaborative rather than a single entity.

Community needs

The most frequently expressed community needs related to support of a cultural hub (64.8%) and multi-purpose space (62.4%) to provide community services. Pressing needs related to cultural and arts programs centered around a performance center (30.5%), an opera theater (19.1%), and artist support through exhibition space (12.3%). The community service needs included a language training center (20.2%), a human services center (18.7%), and an independent library (10.2%).

Existing cultural and multi-purpose spaces

As mentioned before under the Building Design and Considerations, local community, arts, and cultural groups face significant obstacles to finding adequate space for practice, production, performance, presentation, exhibition, and administrative activities due to the high cost of rent in Chinatown. 70 Mulberry Street has served as a small performance venue in the past. For large events, the CCBA auditorium had served as the principal venue. There are four exhibition spaces in Chinatown,

including the Asian American Arts Center, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), and two private galleries. In addition to the performance and exhibition spaces in Chinatown, there are several facilities in Lower Manhattan.²⁴ However, the majority of these facilities have limited availability for small nonprofit groups. Some of the small nonprofit groups that expressed a need for access to space included the Asian American Arts Alliance, Asian American Arts center, Chinese American Arts Council, New York Chinese Cultural Center, New York Cantonese Opera, NY Fu Kai Cantonese Opera Training Center, Wu Mei Kung Fu, among others.

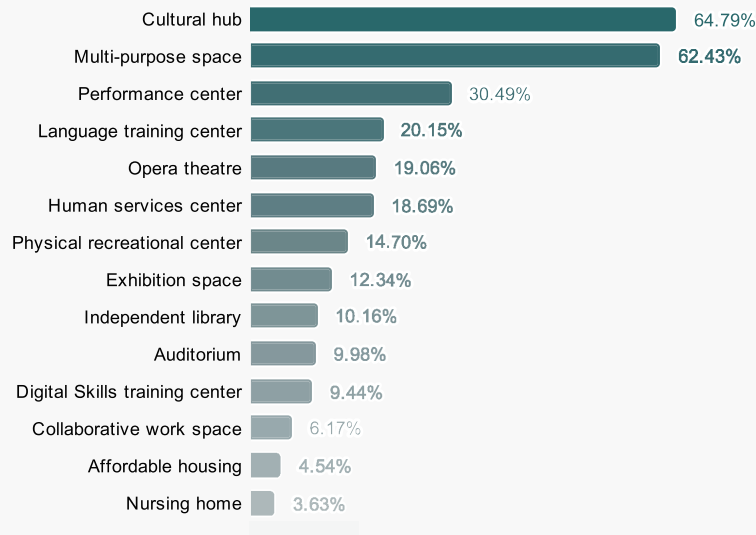
Many of these small groups stated that they have to travel to the Bronx or Queens to access affordable spaces. While diverse in their service offerings, with some offering athletics programs and others performing arts programs, the groups were connected in their need for a multipurpose space, and the demand for affordable spaces surpasses the current inventory of facilities.

Need to avoid duplication

During the community meetings, there

Figure 15: Community needs

Which of the following needs do you consider to be most pressing within the stakeholder community of 70 Mulberry Street? Choose up to 3. (N = 551) Source: 70 Mulberry Street Community Visioning Survey



were multiple instances in which participants expressed needs for services that already exist, pointing to the gap in awareness of the community. For example, a need was expressed for English as a second language class that is offered for free by Chinatown Manpower Project, one of the nonprofit tenants of 70 Mulberry Street. Another participant expressed the need for a center that offers resources to small businesses and help them modernize their business models. Small business support services are offered by Asian Americans for Equality, a nonprofit that provides low interest small business loans and training to small business owners.

Similarly, another participant expressed an interest in the provision of a youth-oriented mental health clinic geared toward educating parents and grandparents, especially immigrants from Hong Kong and China. The impetus of the program was to address generational trauma and introduce mental health programs to older generations who may be impacted by the stigma that surrounds mental health programs in Asia. One of the participants noted that the Hamilton Madison House, a nonprofit settlement

house that fosters wellbeing within vulnerable populations, was a more apt location for the health clinic.

Some participants urged the City to not duplicate the services that are already offered in the neighborhood. One participant said, “I think we are looking at the need to prioritize what kind of services can we pack into this 70 Mulberry location where we do not duplicate other services that are already available within the community.”

New programs and offerings

Participants expressed enthusiasm for a range of programs and services during the community meetings. Among these, cultural and arts programs (77.1%) and community services (69.7%) emerged as the top two preferences.

The community meetings revealed that several arts and cultural organizations had previously come together to study the feasibility of a cultural center that can provide cultural and arts programs in Chinatown. The analysis of one such feasibility study revealed the need for a detailed study of the technical

requirements of different performing arts to determine the suitability of a building as a venue site or design a performance arts venue. For example, a meeting participant who was the member of one such group stated,

“We were looking around for a building and were interested in creating a facility that would have a performance venue with space enough for a larger audience. And we know that there were art and cultural groups that wanted more than 500 seats and the architectural consultants that we had there, at that point in time, were saying that, I don’t think we could try to run the building economically, we could not afford to have more than I think 100 or so seats.”

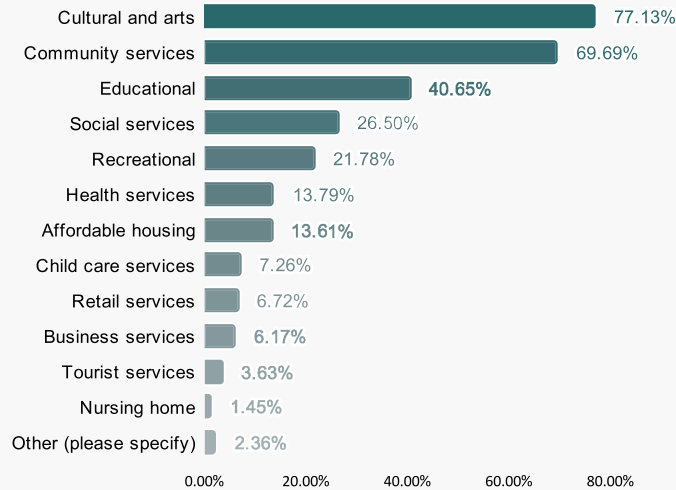
Some participants pointed out the importance of a cultural hub and community space in the wake of gentrification in Chinatown leading to displacement of many Chinese residents. It is critical for different ethnic groups to find a space to gather and celebrate their heritage. For example, one of the participants stated,

Services offered by current tenants, from top left Chen Dance Center, CPC Senior Center, United East Athletics Association, Chen Dance Center, Museum of Chinese in America, Chinatown Manpower project. Source: Advisory Committee.



Figure 16: Programming requests

Besides the services and programs offered by the five nonprofits that occupied the building before the fire, which of the following programming would you consider a best fit for additional space that might be available in 70 Mulberry Street after the rebuilding process is over? Choose up to 3. (N = 551) Source: 70 Mulberry Street Community Visioning Survey



“As gentrification and displacement of so many Chinese residents and new immigrants who would have settled in Chinatown are priced out of Manhattan’s Chinatown, these meeting points, and places to congregate and build community become increasingly important as people can no longer live in the hub of Chinese and Asian communities. So I really think the value of what is provided in this building and these organizations cannot be overstated.”

Considerations for multi-purpose space:

- Community members raised multiple considerations in relation to the multi-purpose space, with the ultimate goal of creating capacity for bringing the community together and providing a nurturing environment. Accordingly, participants indicated that the multi-purpose space should:
- Support digital technologies: Include an electrical and technology plan that allows the space to support modern technologies with capacity for adaptive responses to emergent and future technologies.
 - Adapt to different programming: Implement an innovative design that

- Operate by community-led management: Follow a governance structure that allows the shared community space to be managed with a community-centric approach. The organization leasing the space should understand the role the building plays as a significant community asset. The governance structure should allow representation from diverse organizations and individuals and play a central role in planning community and civic events. The management structure should not have a conflict of interest in relation to key stakeholders such as non-profit tenants or users.

Considerations for cultural and recreational facilities:

Cultural and recreational facilities that were repeatedly mentioned included a performance center, an independent library, and a gymnasium. While a rigorous needs assessment of existing facilities in Chinatown would be needed to determine appropriate specifications of each

proposed facility, these responses speak to challenges and priorities among participants.

- A performance center, specifically for Cantonese Opera, that could be accessible to local artists and yet meet standards so as to be appropriate for global artists.
- An independent library that records and makes accessible rare artifacts and books that are not included in public library collections.
- An indoor gymnasium that supports programming offered by the current tenants

04 Recommendations

Building upon the findings outlined above, the following section summarizes conclusions from this process and presents preferred options by the community concerning the rebuilding process of 70 Mulberry Street. The following section begins with a set of principles 3x3 is recommending to guide the rebuilding process moving forward, followed by recommendations for programming and services offerings, as well as the future building design.

4.1 Guiding Principles

In light of its history, laid out in the background portion of this report, and attested countless times by participants throughout this process, it is clear that 70 Mulberry Street is far more than a building, but rather an integral part of the Chinatown community. 70 Mulberry Street is the accumulation of its design and architecture, its tenants and service recipients, the services and programs offered, as well as its longstanding cultural and historical heritage vivid in the memories of many community members. Its diverse constituents—spanning from current and potential tenants and service recipients, local residents, local businesses, and community-based organizations—play a significant role in contributing to Chinatown’s social, economic, and cultural development, while fostering a resilient, culturally rich, and cohesive community.

70 Mulberry’s past role and legacy illuminates a set of overarching, guiding principles 3x3 is recommending to define the City’s approach to the implementation of the rebuilding process of 70 Mulberry Street. Overall, the rebuilding process

should be recognized as a multi-faceted opportunity that (a) honors Chinatown’s heritage, (b) acknowledges and manifests its community’s contributions to Asian American identity, (c) ignites a reconciliation and healing process, and (d) spurs local economic activity:

Time-sensitivity of reconstruction

The City should prioritize speedy reconstruction and expediency of return of the tenants so they can resume programming for the service recipients. Local elected officials should continue to advocate for the continued appropriation of funds and ensure 70 Mulberry remains a priority into the next administration.

Community-centered role

70 Mulberry Street’s community of tenants, service recipients, program users, residents, and adjacent businesses, and community organizations—as well as the surrounding Chinatown-area’s diverse population—is the most vital asset to its future, and its protection should be paramount. Interests of these groups should be taken into close consideration, and remain integral to any future schematics or decisions related to the rebuilding efforts including

its ownership, architecture, construction, interior design, management, programming, or service delivery.

- **Community preferences:** Ensure the integration of the community preferences resulting from this process as outlined in this report.
- **Maximize space and access:** Maximize the use and value of the space to all 70 Mulberry stakeholders, including existing tenants, local residents, service recipients of all age groups and other local community and cultural groups.
- **Continuity of community role:** Ensure continuity of its legacy and role as a cultural and community anchor for the post-COVID-19 revitalization of Chinatown.
- **Balance past and future:** Place emphasis on memorialization of key elements to commemorate its history as a learning and service center while expanding to reach new community members and meeting new needs.
- **Ownership and collaborative management:** Ensure that 70 Mulberry Street remains public owned and accessible, and that services are aligned with the interest of the community in public ownership. Develop a management system that fosters collaboration provides guidelines for use and maintenance of the shared community space. A governance structure should be developed to ensure the overall facility is properly managed.

Protection of cultural commons and heritage

The rebuilding process of 70 Mulberry Street presents a unique opportunity to offer the physical space to house, develop, pass on, and protect Chinatown's cultural commons and heritage, and ensure its longevity for future generations.

- **Asian American consciousness:** Provide a space to reflect upon, express, and contribute to, an emergent Asian American

consciousness through a range of programming and connection of artists at different scales, from local to global.

- **Space Programming:** Provide additional cultural and arts space to accommodate for expansion of the tenants' programmatic and service offerings as the main priority for the building's programming. Provision of cultural and arts space should guide the use of any potential additional space gained through the rebuilding process (see recommendation section 4.2 on program and service offerings).
- **Access:** Define access priorities to ensure availability to diverse user groups. The management responsible for the operations should lay out guidelines for using the shared space between different community and cultural groups.

Cultivate a learning and supportive environment

70 Mulberry Street should provide a learning environment where individuals can meet new people and support and learn from each other. In continuation of the educational legacy of the building, 70 Mulberry Street should address the needs of the immigrant community and offer programming that supports the development of language, digital, and workforce development skills.

4.2 Program and Service Offerings

Culture and the arts (77.1%), as well as community services (69.7%) clearly emerged as the most demanded services and programs by the participating community. 3x3 recommends that the rebuilding process of 70 Mulberry Street seizes upon the opportunity to improve conditions for existing tenants and to explore the feasibility of, and build the foundation for, an expansion of services and programs in the cultural, artistic, and community realms.

While DCAS would need to conduct

an internal assessment to determine appropriate specification of each proposed facility, these responses speak to challenges and priorities among participants.

Welcome Center

An accessible and well-lit entrance and lobby that draws visitors and integrates a series of spaces designed to provide an informative and immersive experience for both planned and spontaneous visits.

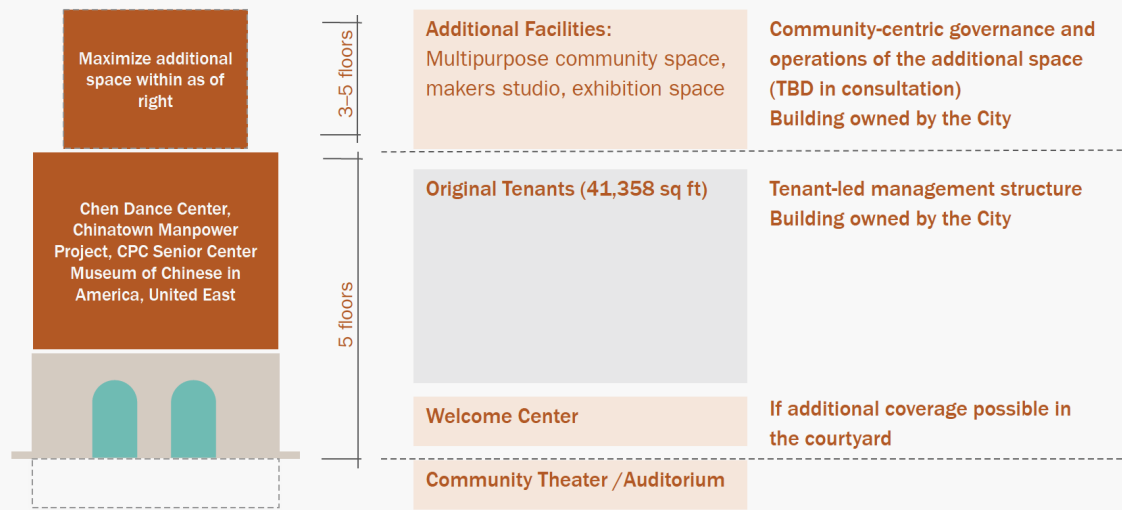
- **Visitor information center:** Provide information and tickets for events, screen the visitors for safety, and support the new and current members navigate different programs and service offerings at 70 Mulberry Street. The information center could extend into the gallery and exhibition space with small retail and cafe to encourage visitors to linger and engage with the art installations.
- **Resource aggregator:** A community resource finder can be installed at the welcome center to provide easy access to resources, community programs, and services offered at 70 Mulberry Street and other facilities in Chinatown.
- **Independent library:** If feasible, 70 Mulberry Street could be an appropriate site to host an independent library that focuses on accessible rare artifacts and books that are not included in public library collections. The library should offer resources and information on the educational programs available in the building that can improve the skills of the newly arrived immigrants and people of the community.

Multi-purpose and adaptable space

An adaptation of the interiors to state-of-the-art standards will also allow existing and new tenants to adapt their offerings to needs surfaced through this visioning process including, among others, the need for a cultural hub, (64.8%) and a multi-purpose space (62.4%). The creation of a common community space, in particular, should be

Figure 17: Building Scenario

Feasibility to be determined by technical experts post preservation assessment



taken into consideration given its demand across the community.

- **Flexible and adaptable space:** Concepts that maximize space flexibility to expand space use to the greatest extent possible should be prioritized. Implement an innovative design that provides a column-free space that can accommodate a diverse range of programs and spatial configurations.
- **Affordable and extended opening hours:** Programming and operations that allow the community space to be comfortable, affordable, and open at evenings and weekends.
- **Foster healing through multigenerational programming:** The programming should have a range of activities that encourage community participation as well as stimulate increased activity and interest in Chinatown, and bring young people and seniors together in one space. Young people should be able to learn about Asian American culture and unite with older population groups to heal trauma caused by xenophobia and racism.
- **Support digital technologies:** Include an electrical and technology plan that allows the space to support

modern technologies with capacity for adaptive responses to emergent and future technologies.

Community arts and culture space

Provided the buildings more recent legacy as a local cultural hub, participants expressed desire to expand on its existing assets (its tenants) to provide a home for other forms of community cultural production. While the participants did not see 70 Mulberry Street as the ideal venue for a larger performance center, many saw it as an appropriate context for a black box, small venue, or rehearsal theatre with a supporting maker space for production, and dedicated space for storage, dressing rooms, and back stage circulation. In addition, some floors could include dedicated space for rotating public-facing exhibitions and larger public events. These programmatic opportunities also provide a possible revenue stream for space rentals and box-office sales, to be potentially managed by a larger non-profit. .

- **Access to diverse cultural groups:** A mechanism for the local arts and cultural groups to rent the shared community space for rehearsals, productions, and performance.
- **Theater:** A stage, especially for

Cantonese Opera, accessible to both local artists and yet meet the standards so as to be appropriate for visiting, global acts. If feasible, the theater should be adequately designed to allow for AV projection. The theater could operate as a black box, a simple performance center that allows the local arts and cultural groups to create a flexible stage and audience interaction. The space should be easy to maintain and be easily adaptable to a large theater or multiple small rooms, as per the needs of the different groups. Adequate support spaces such as dressing rooms and storage spaces should be provided.

- **Exhibition and event space:** A space to accommodate rotating exhibitions as well as large events, for community gatherings or bookings. The space should have uninterrupted wall surfaces for display.
- **An indoor gymnasium** that supports programming offered by the Eastern Athletic Association (Currently, service recipients have to travel to different boroughs to access courts
- **Makers / Collaboration space:** The rebuilding provides an opportunity for a makerspace, a series of studios and

labs for productions such as sound recording and stage set productions, etc. that supports the community theater and community space.

4.3 Building Design and Considerations

The most substantial alignment across stakeholder groups concerning the future design of 70 Mulberry Street relates to preserving the building to an extent that allows it to retain its characteristic appearance as a cultural landmark while maximizing, and possibly expanding, available building space within as of right, in accordance with the overarching call for additional space throughout this process.

Prioritize preservation while maximizing available space and flexibility

Existing structures should be preserved, and previous yet demolished spaces should be rebuilt and taken to a state-of-the-art level with an emphasis on tenant needs and flexibility. As much space as can be gained under as of right should be made available as a multi-purpose, flexible space to Chinatown's community as whole to connect, learn, perform, and celebrate its rich culture, traditions, and art.

- **Memorialization:** The future management of the building should identify opportunities to memorialize the rich immigrant history and legacy of PS 23. Some of the strategies indicated by the participants include an exhibit in the reception area that builds upon the collection that MOCA has on PS 23 and the community center, an art installation in the lobby that symbolizes the legacy of the building, a placard in the building that explains the preserved details and relates to the memories of people in different spaces such as a the staircase, and activities that educate young people about the legacy of the building. The stories and experience of the people could also become a system of wayfinding, becoming a bridge between the old and the new while reminding young people about the history and legacy

of 70 Mulberry Street.

Conduct a preservation assessment

The most critical area of tension between stakeholder groups relates to the extent to which the building should be preserved. A comprehensive preservation assessment that takes into account the history and function of 70 Mulberry Street is deemed as necessary to identify and assess the building's preservation needs and provide frequently demanded technical information required to assess building options and scenarios. Among others, considerations of the assessment should include:

- **Foundation:** The preservation assessment should determine whether the foundation can be restored and support the weight of the reconstruction and additional floors.
- **Facade:** The preservation assessment should determine how much of the stone facade can be salvaged and the associated cost. There is a strong desire in the community to retain a sense of connection with the old building through the continuity of the stone facade.
- **Historical architectural components:** The preservation assessment should also determine what can be restored while laying out recommendations for appropriate handling and disposition of historical architectural elements that cannot be restored.
- **Neighborhood Contextualization:** Build within the current zoning and utilize the setbacks to humanize the scale and set the building in context, up to eight (8) to twelve (12) floors, as feasible per determination by preservation assessment. Avoid going through a ULURP process as this would slow the overall development timeline.
- **Improved space management:** Reconfigure the interior space to maximize its use by tenants and other cultural and non-profit groups in the area. To the extent possible, the floors should have a column-less space with movable walls that can render the space flexible and

adaptable to meet the needs of multiple cultural and community groups, as well as unforeseen future needs. A reassessment of the space needs of the tenants should be conducted to reimagined space and layout to better fit their needs.

- **Maintain High Ceiling Heights:** Retain the high ceiling height from the previous building design to accommodate the needs of the tenants and other cultural groups that utilize the additional height for displays and installations.
- **Welcoming entrance:** Design a well-lit, highly visible and accessible entrance lobby that welcomes visitors and to the space. If possible, provide an atrium that can light all floors with more natural light. Signage and wayfinding should inform the users and visitors of the space about the activities that are taking place within the building.
- **Advanced technology:** Design the space with consideration for soundproofing and advanced communication as well as media technologies given the cultural use of the building. Consideration should be given to ease and mobility solutions that go beyond standard ADA requirements, as well as security systems to increase safety and prevent trespassing. The mobility and access solutions should allow seniors and physically handicap people to stay independent. The building should be accessible to individuals of various abilities and multiple languages, with multilingual signage and staff.
- **Construction management:** Rebuilding process should aim to minimize traffic disruption to mitigate any negative impact on businesses that are in the vicinity of 70 Mulberry Street.

4.4 Community Space Management

A need emerged for a shared space management model that provides guidelines for the community space usage and maintenance, and ensures

equitable access. Options to implement such a management model will require further assessment by DCAS to find a structure that is in alignment with its current policies.

Conclusion

The legacy of 70 Mulberry Street' lies in its role as a repository of collective memory and its ability to function as a transformational space for individuals seeking to forge and maintain a sense of community identity and belonging. Affordability and public ownership of the building made it possible for non-profit tenants to bring its legacy to the present day and sustain services that support individual growth and engagement with Asian American heritage.

This process has demonstrated the vital role the return of 70 Mulberry Street could play in reviving the growth of Chinatown. But more specifically, the most valuable asset of 70 Mulberry Street may be the role it serves as a resource for individuals and groups whose needs cannot be met by the vast number of iconic but costly and selective community and cultural facilities elsewhere in the city.

As such, this moment represents a crossroads for 70 Mulberry Street and the communities it serves. If rebuilt with a commitment to community accessibility and heritage at its core, 70 Mulberry Street is positioned to continue to host a diverse and changing range of valuable cultural and social services, and in doing so embark on a new chapter that will sustain its position as a focal point in the community, nurturing social agency and supporting meaningful connections across generations as it has done for nearly 130 years.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER 3D

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