



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

Forwarding: Mayor de Blasio Announces \$80 Million in Funding to Rebuild 70 Mulberry Street, Creation of Advisory Committee

BRIAN KAVANAGH July 2, 2020

| ISSUE: **70 MULBERRY STREET, CHINATOWN, ARTS AND CULTURE, HISTORIC PRESERVATION**



NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) Commissioner Lisette Camilo today announced \$80 million in funding to rebuild 70 Mulberry Street, the creation of an advisory committee to support community engagement, and a three-month visioning process to gather public input about the future of the site. The City will explore available options to preserve the existing structure and seek to build consensus about the rebuilding process. To date, the City has participated in extensive

conversations with the local community board, elected officials, building tenants, small business owners, and the public about the building and its future.

"In January, Chinatown lost the beating heart of its community: 70 Mulberry Street," said Mayor Bill de Blasio. "We're working hand-in-hand with the community to preserve this building's rich history and bring it back to life again."

"Working with the residents of Chinatown, we have secured the funding necessary to rebuild this treasured site at the heart of the community," said Lisette Camilo, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services. "This historic building is important to the entire neighborhood and we want local voices to help drive its redevelopment."

The City will prioritize options to preserve what is salvageable from the existing structure and a re-development that acknowledges the history and significance of the site. All building tenants who were displaced will be welcomed back when construction is completed. Since the January fire, the City successfully recovered the vast majority of tenant possessions that remained in the building, assisted with the relocation of tenants, and undertook work at the site to best ensure public safety.

Members of the advisory committee will include each of the building's tenants, as well as representatives appointed by 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. The committee will assist with the visioning process and engage community stakeholders.

The community visioning process is expected to begin this summer and stretch into the fall. Community visioning will gather public input about the future of the site and provide a forum to discuss all available options for its redevelopment.

The morning of the fire at 70 Mulberry Street, Mayor Bill de Blasio acknowledged the extensive damage to the building and expressed his commitment to either restore or replace the building for the benefit of the community and its cultural and non-profit tenants. Today's announcement builds upon this commitment and will further empower the community to shape redevelopment efforts.

"70 Mulberry is a local gem and community anchor," said Representative Nydia M. Velázquez. "It is vital that, as it is redeveloped, Chinatown residents shape its future. The funding being announced today will ensure that this site is built back responsibly and in a manner that meets the community's needs. I look forward to working with the Administration and the community as this process moves forward, seeing the building restored, tenants return and services brought back."

"I'm pleased that the Mayor has committed to rebuilding this important structure which means so much to the community," said Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer. "I'm looking forward to a robust community planning and engagement process to guide and shape the rebuilding of 70 Mulberry."

"I'm pleased that the City is following up on Mayor de Blasio's promise to bring 70 Mulberry Street back to life with significant capital funds, despite of the financial challenges of the COVID-19 crisis," said State Senator Brian Kavanagh. "I thank the Mayor and Councilmember Margaret Chin for securing these funds. I'm also glad that the City has committed to an inclusive approach to developing a plan for the site. I cannot stress enough the importance of having the members of this community actively involved in every step of the process. I will continue to work with my colleagues in government and with everyone who cares about this beloved building to ensure that the new engagement process is thorough, open to all voices, and equitable, and that we move without undue delay toward a plan that is reflective of the community's needs and desires."

“The City’s announcement of pausing the demolition process and hiring an outside consultant to facilitate community engagement is an important step following the devastating fire at 70 Mulberry,” said Assembly Member Yuh-Line Niou. “We are thankful for the City’s engagement with our community and community board, and we must remain committed to continuing a transparent process that focuses on bringing the community’s voice to the plans for 70 Mulberry. Additionally, we must be sure that the \$80 Million allocated to 70 Mulberry will adequately fund the process for an expedited return for the tenants. 70 Mulberry is a very historic and important building in our community and it is essential that our neighbors are properly informed on the entire process.”

“After the 70 Mulberry fire collapsed the building’s upper floors and displaced its 5 long-serving nonprofits, Chinatown immediately lost critical senior, cultural, career development, youth, and adult literacy services that immigrant families depended on for generations,” said Council Member Margaret Chin. “The fire, coupled with this public health crisis, opened the wounds and history of inequity faced by this resource-starved community: small businesses that closed their doors overnight couldn’t qualify for emergency grants, residents were on edge from xenophobic attacks, and isolated non-English speaking seniors struggled with rising food insecurity. COVID-19 stressed our shared urgency to bring this building back, restore the historical elements that the community has grown to cherish, and welcome these displaced nonprofits home as soon as possible. This is a good step to making that a reality, and I thank the Mayor for taking this action.”

“Community Board 3 welcomes Mayor De Blasio’s timely allocation of the capital funding needed for the redevelopment of 70 Mulberry Street,” said Alysha Lewis-Coleman, Board Chair of Manhattan Community Board 3. “70 Mulberry Street is one of the only spaces in Chinatown that supports and houses non-profits that provide cultural programming, education, and training to the community. In this challenging time due to COVID-19 and

budget shortfalls, it is particularly important to ensure these vital resources are returned to the Chinatown community as soon as possible. Community Board 3 is also pleased that the administration is committed to engage community stakeholders for visioning the future of this site. We want to thank the numerous community-based organizations, block association, cultural groups, small businesses, and residents who voiced their desires through the community board platform and we continue to urge the city to listen to them for conceiving a plan that represents the majority opinion.”

“Chen Dance Center is absolutely thrilled and deeply appreciative of Mayor Bill de Blasio and DCAS Commissioner Lisette Camilo’s solid commitment for the rebuilding of 70 Mulberry Street, and their thoughtful actions to meet the needs of the tenants and the community,” said H.T. Chen from Chen Dance Center. “We look forward to joining the tenant organizations, city and state advisory members, and community stakeholders for the envisioning of the restored building and services for the community.

“On behalf of the seniors served by the Chinatown Senior Center, CPC thanks Mayor de Blasio and DCAS Commissioner Camilo for their commitment to rebuilding 70 Mulberry Street,” said Wayne Ho, President and CEO of the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC). “We recognize that this is a difficult fiscal year, so we greatly appreciate the \$80 million allocation for the rebuilding effort. We look forward to working with elected officials, city agencies, and local leaders in the community engagement process to envision the future of this historic building, ensuring it can continue to serve the Chinatown community. The seniors of the CPC Chinatown Senior Center are eager to return home to 70 Mulberry Street, which for more than 40 years has provided a hot meal, human services, arts and cultural activities, ESOL classes, and more to over 300 seniors per day.”

“CMP is grateful for the Mayor and City Council's commitment of \$80 million toward rebuilding 70 Mulberry Street despite this challenging time,” said Hong Shing Lee, Chinese

Manpower Group. “It not only provides the tenant organizations a bright prospective for the immediate future, it also offers the community a positive and definitive reassurance that 70 Mulberry Street will continue to be a beacon of the community.”

“The Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) is emboldened and encouraged by the prioritization that Mayor Bill de Blasio and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) Commissioner Lisette Camilo have placed on rebuilding 70 Mulberry Street for the Chinatown community,” said Nancy Yao Maasbach, President of the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA). “They have listened deeply to the tenants and community in the tragic aftermath of the fire on January 23, 2020. DCAS’ commitment to preserving salvageable components of the existing structure and upgrading the building construction for broad community use reassures MOCA that the \$80 million funding investment in 70 Mulberry, its tenants, and the community will contribute to a stronger New York City overall and will provide dividends for generations.”

“This is truly wonderful news. United East Athletics Association is extremely grateful to Mayor de Blasio and DCAS Commissioner Lisette Camilo for recognizing the significance of this community anchor and for your unyielding commitment to return the five non-profit tenants to their home swiftly,” said Echo Wong, Treasurer & Board of Director, United East Athletics Association. “We are looking forward to working with members of the advisory to put together a comprehensive and inclusive plan for 70 Mulberry Street to benefit the community. We also want to thank Council Woman Margaret Chin, State Senator Brian Kavanaugh, State Assemblywoman Yuh-Line Niou, CB3 and last but not least our long-term non-profit neighbors, CPC, MoCA, HT Chen, and CMP for their support and assistance during this difficult time.”

Media Contact

pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov

(212) 788-2958

###