FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 18, 2020

Press Conference:  
Preserving Historic Facade - the Quickest Path to  
Rebuilding a Bigger & Better 70 Mulberry (PS23) in Chinatown  

Recording of the conference, hosted by Think!Chinatown, will be available at:  
www.thinkchinatown.org/70-mulberry

Severely damaged in a 5-alarm fire at the start of 2020, the fate of this iconic schoolhouse and beloved Chinatown community center hangs in limbo. As the City is poised to release results of its first community engagement process, the public must understand the implications of different rebuilding scenarios that have been publicly proposed. Think!Chinatown (T!C), a neighborhood nonprofit focused on community engagement & the arts, invites experts in historic architecture, planning, and cultural nonprofit administration to illuminate these paths forward for rebuilding 70 Mulberry(PS23).

T!C has been filling in the gaps in the 70 Mulberry community engagement process by compiling relevant information and digging into research about architectural feasibility and zoning (which can be found here: www.thinkchinatown.org/70-mulberry)

Summary comparison of different building scenarios:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Building</th>
<th>9-Stories: built on restored historic building envelope</th>
<th>9-Stories: demolition &amp; all new construction</th>
<th>20 Stories: Built in phases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 5-Stories</td>
<td>• Build on top of existing base</td>
<td>•Foundations would need to be excavated</td>
<td>•Larger structure will result in more disruptive foundation, construction and in-street utility work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 42,000 SF</td>
<td>• 87,000 GSF total</td>
<td>• 87,000 GSF</td>
<td>• 230,000 GSF</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Not ADA accessible</td>
<td>• As-of-Right 3.5 years*</td>
<td>• As-of-Right</td>
<td>• Requires ULURP</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>• 4.0 years *</td>
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*Estimated time for design, approvals and construction completion

Nine stories built on the historic base will more than double the amount of pre-existing square footage for Chinatown non-profits to use. It is the fastest way for tenants of 70 Mulberry to return to their spaces. The shortest timeline and least disruptive construction process not only mitigates impact on neighboring properties and small businesses, it is also the most secure way
to push this rebuilding project forward without delay and the risk stalling out as a vacant lot. With plans for major building projects in two nearby sites (125 White Street Jail and 62 Mulberry), how 70 Mulberry is rebuilt is crucial to the survival of the heart of Chinatown in the next decade.

T!C Advocates For These Next Steps for Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS)

1. Immediately provide adequate space in Chinatown for tenants’ temporary use.
2. Expedite a preservation engineering assessment of the site
3. Establish a robust community task force that includes a broader segment of the Chinatown community to maintain communication between DCAS & the community. This should include community members who have professional experience in architecture/engineering/historic preservation/cultural programming/community engagement, business and property owners.
4. Map community assets of the neighborhood and analyze the gaps
5. Analyze construction impact of direct area of the site to include simultaneous construction work on 125 White Street and 62 Mulberry.
6. Prioritize optimal placement of scaffolding/construction hoardings to minimize impact on neighboring businesses, and traffic. Since construction will last for many years and span such a large area, consider using this space for community art or community bulletin especially for the tenants of 70 Mulberry.
7. Establish a listserv of contacts of concerned community members, all updates should be sent out to this list.

Please view the video of the press conference for 1) architect Erik Chu's presentation about the technical implications of proposed building scenarios, 2) architectural historian Kerri Culhane's talk about the history of not only 70 Mulberry the building but also the city planning of the surrounding area and 3) T!C President Amy Chin presentation of case studies highlighting Asian American cultural centers across the country as models. Other members from the community will be invited to give comments as well. The video of the press conference will be available at: www.thinkchinatown.org/70-mulberry

Quotes:

"As an alumnus of PS23 who attended there in the early 60's the building not only has sentimental but historical value to myself but also to all residents of Chinatown when the building was turned over to community use in 1975. The city's premature demolition of the building without an expert independent restoration opinion was reckless and the building must be rebuilt with the original stonework base ASAP."
- Karlin Chan, Community Advocate 陳家齡

"70 Mulberry Street, formerly P.S. 23, the heart of Chinatown, was foundational in the Chinese American diaspora from NYC to Hawaii. It provided so many immigrant families the opportunity to establish themselves and for their sons and daughters to become scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs and more. My father Charles Lee Dong Chin went from P. S. 23 to Stuyvesant High School, onto college in Indiana to become an aerospace engineer at age 16. Preservation of this historic place in our culture and the immigrant story is irreplaceable."
- Susan Chin, FAIA, Hon. ASLA Principal, DesignConnects (former Assistant Commissioner, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs)
“For decades, a cultural and community center has consistently ranked as a top neighborhood need in Manhattan’s Chinatown. Cobbled together by sheer will, 70 Mulberry was the closest thing to that vision of a community cultural center even though the adapted spaces were less than ideal. This is an opportunity to realize that long held dream by focusing on the cultural and community space as the key driver of the project --- not as an afterthought or merely an amenity in a building constructed for other purposes. Through the years, numerous vital community organizations have disappeared or have been displaced like the 5 tenants at 70 Mulberry are now. We must protect the homes of these organizations that serve our community.”
-Amy Chin, Community Advocate, President of Think!Chinatown

“Over the course of nearly a century and a half, the built environment has played a central role in Chinatown’s history; historic buildings not only contribute to its “sense of place,” but are the very places in which Chinatown’s rich culture was forged. The Chinatown Working Group recognized this when they designated the historic core of Chinatown as a “Preservation Area.” A modern and enlarged community cultural and social hub at the heart of Chinatown, within the walls of the historic P.S. 23, links Chinatown’s past to its present, and guarantees its future.”
-Kerri Culhane, Architectural Historian

“A 9-story structure built with the historic building envelope can provide plenty of space for a beautiful Chinatown cultural center at 70 Mulberry and can be built in a timely manner as-of-right.
- Erik Chu, Architect

About Think!Chinatown
Think!Chinatown is a nonprofit organization based in Manhattan’s Chinatown working at the intersection of storytelling, the arts, and neighborhood engagement. Learn more at www.thinkchinatown.org.

About Yin Kong
Yin Kong 邝海韻 is a community-based designer living and working in Manhattan’s Chinatown. Think!Chinatown is the culmination of her work in urban design, museum, culinary & cultural instruction, and community engagement. Previously an Urban Curator of the Dashilar Project, she consulted a municipal agency of Beijing on urban revitalization strategies in the city’s historic hutong core. Yin holds a Masters of Architecture, Urban Design, from the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London and a Bachelors of Arts, Urban Studies, from Columbia University.

About Amy Chin
Amy Chin 陳雪嫺 is a cultural leader who has advanced the role of arts and culture in communities large and small for over 30 years, through leadership and service in organizations like the Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation, the Cultural Arts Advisory Commission for the City of New York, the New York Chinese Cultural Center, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. She has been a consultant to private foundations and government agencies across the nation on arts funding and non-profit management and programming. Amy’s grandfather came to New York in 1903 and lived on Pell Street. After a childhood in her father’s Chinese laundry in the Bronx and Sundays in Chinatown, Amy earned a degree in East Asian studies from Barnard College and speaks Toisanese, Cantonese and Mandarin.
About Erik Chu
Erik Chu is an architect and urban designer of 25-years experience in NYC with a background in working with historic buildings. He has worked for Marvel Architects and for Beyer Blinder Belle Architects and Planners. Erik graduated Summa cum Laude from the University of California at Berkeley, and he has a Master of Architecture degree from Yale University. His design experience includes many residential and cultural projects. Cultural projects enable a community to reflect and to project alternate visions of itself which ultimately aspire toward a better, more kind, world. Erik's practice seeks to design projects that enable this vision of a better world to become reality. He aspires to a practice focused on community good. Erik sits on the AIANY Chapter Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

About Kerri Culhane
Kerri Culhane is an architectural historian with experience that spans twenty years of professional historic preservation and planning practice, ranging from single sites to landscape-scale planning and sustainable development projects. Over the past 15 years, Kerri's work has focused on the past, present, and future of the immigrant neighborhoods of New York City's Lower East Side, Chinatown, Little Italy, and the Bowery. In 2015, she curated the exhibition Chinese Style: Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee, 1900-1968 (Museum of Chinese in America, New York City), which examined the life and career of the first Chinese American professional architect to practice in New York's Chinatown. Her ongoing doctoral research at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, documents an architectural history of Chinatown since 1882.
A 9-story structure built with the historic building envelope can provide plenty of space for a beautiful Chinatown cultural center at 70 Mulberry and can be built in a timely manner as-of-right.

- Erik Chu, architect