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**Title**

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**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9r52r5s6>

**Journal**

AAPI Nexus: Policy, Practice and Community, 10(2)

**ISSN**

1545-0317

**Author**

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**Publication Date**

2012

**DOI**

10.36650/nexus10.2\_37-54\_Sze

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Peer reviewed

Research Article

# This Is Part of Our History

## Preserving Garment Manufacturing and a Sense of Home in Manhattan's Chinatown

Lena Sze

### Abstract

This article explores attempts by labor and community advocates to retain a garment industry base in Manhattan's Chinatown after 9/11. Specifically tying the viability of such proposals to ongoing processes such as gentrification, transnational capital investment, local development, and broader anti-manufacturing urban policy, I argue that strategies for appropriate and sensitive community development that are rooted in sectoral preservation or development need to take into account the specificities of place, class, and ethnicity. In particular, the concept of a valued cultural or home space adds urgency to the advocacy of such proposals beyond the generic economic rationale of manufacturing retention.

My idea is to keep currently what we have. Time cannot go back. . . . Whatever we have left now, don't destroy that, don't kick them out. We have thirty garment shops in Chinatown—why don't we keep these thirty, let them survive? This is part of our history, part of our contribution of Chinese immigrants to this city.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Manhattan's Chinatown struggles to maintain its identity in the face of global and local pressures posed, on the one hand, by the effect of economic restructuring on geographies of production and, on the other, by intense upscale development. Resistance to these processes is often focused on defending or creating space for affordable housing. The activism and the scholarship around gentrification tend to underscore the residential dimension of change. However, recent proposals seeking to revitalize neighborhood character through industrial retention, I argue, are also one expression of this

struggle. The informant I cite at the start of this article speaks to this specific affiliation based on ethnicity and class to a home neighborhood, a sense of cultural affinity intimately tied to the historic experience of laboring in a place-based industry.

Advocacy attempts at industrial retention remind us of how sectoral shifts and changes in the employment base of a neighborhood are as integral to gentrification and preserving place character as the displacement of existing residents. Specifically, they are attempts to manage dramatic neighborhood and industry change by reviving a sector (garment production) long integral to the neighborhood's identity as being new immigrant, working class, and ethnically Chinese. Borrowing sociologist Jan Lin's concept of the low-wage or informal circuit of economic production in Chinatown whereby producers are primarily working within the enclave's economic and spatial structures (1998), a response to changes in the once-thriving local industry can be analyzed as anxiety about loss of valued cultural space and a sense of home for Chinese garment workers. Just as Susan Nakaoka elaborates about Los Angeles's Little Tokyo in this issue, the concept of a *cultural home space* is also an important motivating factor in community development efforts in Manhattan's Chinatown, although these latter attempts were not framed as explicitly with ethnic-preservation goals. Although marked by a different emphasis (whereas the main goal in Little Tokyo is to attract Japanese Americans back to the neighborhood, and the aspiration in Chinatown is to preserve a working-class, Chinese worker presence), the cultural home space concept is applicable in both neighborhoods because these areas remain central psychic and economic loci for the ethnic Chinese and Japanese communities of their respective regions.

In New York, as with other traditional manufacturing cities in the United States, moving away from manufacturing toward a service-sector economy was a long process beginning at the close of World War II (Sugrue, 2005; Waldinger, 1996). During this period, industrial retention was increasingly viewed by urban planners, policy makers, and city elites as a losing growth strategy compared to the finance, insurance, and real-estate industries (Fitch, 1996; Sassen, 2001). As early as the 1950s, economist John Griffin noted the exodus of industrial firms from New York City, the result of unfriendly business policies coupled with the devastating effect of urban renewal on industrial districts (1956). As historian

Joshua Schwartz explains, Griffin and a small cadre of economists and planners suggested a trajectory for postwar growth not just built on the construction of new housing and civic projects but also on retaining and safeguarding the manufacturing base (2000).

The industrial retention literature most pertinent to Chinatown focuses on the specific ways in which industrial retention and displacement are part of gentrification processes. In this view, manufacturing and industrial firms retained are not just serving important niche labor markets but also must negotiate the same pressures of displacement as working-class residents in speculative real-estate markets. Geographer Winifred Curran elaborates on this concept in her case study of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and the industrial displacement that resulted from real-estate pressure and a proposed rezoning during the late 1990s (2007). Rather than classic accounts of gentrification that take as their starting point that industrial activity has left the central city and then proceed to analyze the activism and culture that rise up in its place (Abu-Lughod, 1995; Lloyd, 2005; Mele, 2000), Curran draws on the seminal work of sociologist Sharon Zukin (1989) in linking city policy, the active displacement of industrial firms, and neighborhood change.

Informed by on-the-ground research by industrial retention organizations (New York Industrial Retention Network, 2004), scholars are beginning to question property-led development displacing light industry through conversions, rezoning, and other land-use mechanisms in diverse mixed-use communities. Laura Wolf-Powers, drawing on case studies in Brooklyn and Queens, New York, suggests that such measures do more economic and social harm than good given the history and vitality that manufacturing jobs offer local working-class and immigrant workers (2005). This strand of scholarship begins to probe the real-estate-driven logic that has reorganized the central city since World War II (“highest and best use”), instead turning its attention to the structuring effects of industrial displacement on historically low-income groups, and thus is particularly useful in analyzing garment industry retention in lower Manhattan after 2001. Recent industrial retention proposals in Chinatown additionally allow different actors participating in industry change to express different material and symbolic meanings that the neighborhood holds for them—as a cornerstone of cultural life, a place for investment and capital accumulation, or yet another downtown neighborhood.

From February 2010 through September 2011, I conducted approximately fifty interviews for a larger project about industrial retention politics and policy in lower Manhattan, a portion of which is reflected in this case study. Except for a few interviews conducted over the telephone, interviews were in person and audio-recorded, lasting from half an hour to 1.5 hours long. A small number of interviews are drawn from a gentrification oral history project sponsored by the Museum of Chinese in America in New York City between 2007 and 2008 for which, as a paid researcher working with another interviewer, I spoke with thirty individuals. The interview pool for individual fieldwork and the oral history project included policy makers and community members working on the policy proposals described; retention advocates, labor organizers, and urban planners working in New York City; and neighborhood residents and workers with intimate knowledge of the industries and areas in question. Additional research included analysis of records from the U.S. Census Bureau, the New York State Department of Labor, the Empire State Development Corporation, and property records obtained through the New York City Department of Finance.

### Historical Background

The neighborhood's historic formation and growth provides important context for its current location and structure. Reforms in American immigration policy during the 1960s fundamentally shaped historic Chinatown in Manhattan by welcoming an influx of immigrants that transformed the community's institutions, economy, and social life (Kwong, 1996; Lin, 1998). This view of post-1965 immigration's effect on the enclave is reaffirmed by interviews with longtime residents.<sup>2</sup> Chinatown came to be dominated by the presence of ethnic Chinese working in the low-wage service (restaurant) and industrial (garment manufacturing) sectors. For many, the decades immediately following 1965, when the community was remade by the influx of immigrants, remain an important touchstone. Manhattan's Chinatown, as an integral part of the Lower East Side, welcomed large pockets of low-income Chinese to the Latino, African American, and Chinese communities already in place, a population presently threatened by gentrification and wealthy white, Chinese, and other Asian residents moving in, particularly on the fringe pockets (Saito, 2006; Toy, 2006).

Chinatown during the 1970s and 1980s became the largest Chinese ethnic neighborhood in the nation, nearly 250,000 in the 1990 census, and the historical reference point for many policy makers.<sup>3</sup> The garment industry was emblematic of this period because the “growth in garment shops ha[d] been particularly dramatic” (Lin, 1998, 40). Estimates range from twenty to twenty-five thousand directly employed (Abeles et al., 1983, i; Lin, 1998, 40) to a figure approaching two hundred thousand throughout the course of the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> A 1983 industry study attributes this rapid growth to two major factors: the influx of post-1965 immigrants and the fact that local manufacturing space was affordable and available (Abeles et al., 1983, 49). The depressed land values of Chinatown at the time were symptomatic of this period when New York City lost population and industry, including corporate headquarters and manufacturing industries. Chinatown garment manufacturing was surrounded by neighboring communities, such as the Lower East Side, SoHo, and Tribeca, alternately neglected by the state or undergoing massive “renewal,” ushering in the presence of artists and the early stages of gentrification. Thus the Chinatown garment industry is an index of gentrification because, as several geographers have suggested about the process, patterns of devalorization and revalorization are necessary for the proper circulation and reinvestment of capital (Hackworth, 2006; Harvey, 2005; Smith, 1993).

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a major turnover of these manufacturing buildings in Chinatown from white- to Chinese immigrant-owned. Jews and Italians were leaving at the moment of the neighborhood’s transformation from the “Machinery District” into industrial Chinatown.<sup>5</sup> At this time, the Chinatown garment industry had secure tenure in the area because garment factories provided landlords an abundant supply of tenants and a consistent source of rents. By the early 1990s, however, the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the dip in downtown Manhattan real-estate markets due to the national recession of during 1990 and 1991, the growth of Brooklyn’s Chinatown and its mostly nonunionized manufacturing sector, and the increasing sophistication of particular Chinese property owners created the ideal set of conditions for the first flood of garment shop displacements in Chinatown. Domestic work orders were declining largely due to the ease with which manufacturers could operate overseas, making the consistency of local garment shop rents less stable.

Crucially in this period, the influx of ethnic Chinese property owners whose buildings were entirely occupied by garment factories began to warehouse and/or convert properties.<sup>6</sup> The action of individual property owners, some of whom participated in the Chinatown garment industry or whose wealth was directly derived from the industry, became speculative developers, owners, or property agents in Chinatown at a time when market conditions and trade policy discouraged the sustainability of manufacturing in the area.

My informants suggest that these property owners, managers, and developers who displaced garment shops through lease non-renewals, rising rents, and other means had an alternative engagement with the garment industry than the residents and advocates who lived and/or worked among the factories. Although residents saw an economic driver in the Chinatown garment industry; the source of working-class jobs; and the wellspring of ethnic, immigrant, and Asian American culture, Chinese property owners saw diminished potential rents and returns as well as an ethnic space to be entirely remade. The view requires a garment industry that is largely gone, a perspective dovetailing with broader anti-manufacturing planning and policy ideas.

Thus the Chinatown garment district experienced a coincidence of local and global factors intensifying residential gentrification and industrial displacement. This decade between NAFTA and 9/11 was the tipping point for the local garment industry. Not only did it have to contend with longtime regional and global pressures and plans to deindustrialize the center city but also other, more local factors aggregated at a rapid rate. As noted, the 1990s witnessed the spectacular growth of alternative Chinese communities across the city and region, such as Flushing, Queens, where transnational (Taiwanese and Hong Kong) development capital poured in, and Sunset Park, Brooklyn, where new immigrants settled. While these immigrants moved to these areas and other communities such as quieter, quasi-suburban Elmhurst, Queens and Bensonhurst, Brooklyn because of a more affordable cost of living, factories moved as well for cheaper labor and land costs. The manufacturing buildings around SoHo and Little Italy housing much of the garment industry began to attract more and new media, fashion, and design firms. Layered on top of these displacement pressures were the global policy regimes ushered in by NAFTA and other trade agreements, the rise in Chinese investment in lower Manhattan real estate, and

the boom in Chinese and Asian manufacturing at the expense of formerly industrial regions of the global north (Hu and Khan, 1997; Semple, 2011; Wilson, 2011).

### Industrial Retention in Chinatown

Despite the decline in domestic and local garment manufacturing through the 1990s, my informants assert the Chinatown garment industry was still a significant sector and subculture in the neighborhood.<sup>7</sup> The events of September 11, 2001, significantly damaged the local economy, however, and furthered the industry's decline (Asian American Federation, 2002a; Asian American Federation, 2002b; Liu, 2008). At that time, there was an estimated workforce of approximately fifteen thousand jobs in the garment and affiliated industries in Chinatown (Asian American Federation, 2002a, 1).<sup>8</sup> After 9/11 and the preceding decade's developments, advocates saw an opportunity in the disaster to bolster existing garment shops in the neighborhood through the creation of a nonprofit development corporation to acquire and subsidize manufacturing space.<sup>9</sup> This opportunity was made possible because, as one advocate explains, "Post 9/11, remember, the market just tanked, so the real estate pressure was off."<sup>10</sup> In his view, this opportunity was rare because "the city doesn't enforce [zoning restrictions in manufacturing areas] at all . . . [even though] zoning has the potential to be much more powerful and inclusive [than nonprofit ownership]."<sup>11</sup>

Table 1. Apparel Manufacturing Establishments in Manhattan's Chinatown

	Total Establishments	Number of Establishments by Employment-Size Class						
		1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 49	50 to 99	100 to 249	250 to 499
1998	538	155	76	102	151	49	4	1
2001	283	96	17	47	87	34	2	-
2005	137	37	15	20	52	12	1	-
2009	59	19	7	11	20	2	-	-

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1998, 2001, 2005, and 2009 Zip Code Census Business Patterns

Note: Figures are based on the North American Industry Classification System industry codes for women's, men's, and other apparel manufacturing covering Manhattan's Chinatown, inclusive of zip codes 10002, 10007, 10013, and 10038.



To stem the hemorrhage of garment industry jobs out of Chinatown and with an eye on converting real-estate uncertainty into garment industry stability, a coalition of groups came together to pitch a project called the New York Fashion Space (NYFS). From approximately 2002 to 2005, the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), the union representing most garment workers in Chinatown; New York Industrial Retention Network (NYIRN), the city's leading industrial retention advocacy organization; the Garment Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC), a consortium of labor, government, and garment trade groups; and community organization Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) proposed to create a nonprofit entity to fundraise in an effort to purchase and manage a "fashion" building or buildings in the Chinatown neighborhood. The goal was to "save 2,500 jobs and provide 312,000 square feet of affordable manufacturing space" in a vertical incubator model.<sup>12</sup>

Seeking to secure financing, in particular \$25 million from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC), the agency administering government monies pouring into Lower Manhattan after 9/11, NYFS did not advocate a future for Chinatown based on a static or nostalgic model of the garment industry. NYFS did not seek to recapture the vast employment numbers of the industry at its height, but rather to locate Chinatown in the new production model of New York City as a fashion or design capital. Thus it attempted to articulate the local garment industry not in terms of the sweatshop production of the past, but as a forward-thinking model of apparel design, production, and retail under one roof: "[NYFS was] not just about making crappy t-shirts, but really about harnessing the production capabilities."<sup>13</sup>

Despite intensive planning and research, numerous meetings, and several dozen support letters from elected officials, community organizations, social service agencies, garment industry-affiliated companies, and groups (some of which were also applying for LMDC funds), NYFS never materialized beyond the proposal. The discussions "petered out," and LMDC never formally rejected the proposal.<sup>14</sup> Advocates assert that industrial retention had not been a development and planning priority. One states, "I got the feeling that the city thought Manhattan should not be factories." Another comments, "They [LMDC] were not actually

sold on the proposal at any stage.” That feeling was a recurring thread in my interviews. Viewed from the longer historical lens of anti-manufacturing urban policy, LMDC’s lack of interest was to be expected, because it extended the aspirations of a downtown growth machine coalition operating since World War II.

NYFS, with its cluster of activities ranging up and down the production chain, attempted to revision the garment industry as a viable twenty-first century business, arguing that geographic centrality and economies of agglomeration made the proposal reasonable in Chinatown despite the high-value real estate of the global city.

However, LMDC appeared not to consider the proposal because it did not capitalize on preexisting priorities emphasized in the redevelopment of lower Manhattan, including high-value commercial and residential land markets and financial services industries, or the rebuilding of Chinatown, which included tourism and marketing campaigns, in which AAFE also played a central role. Informed by members and organizers of Chinatown Local 23-25 of UNITE, who suggested that the industry provided a whole social world based on strong ethnic and class ties and that this world underwrote neighborhood vitality, the NYFS proposal spoke implicitly to the desire for community preservation in terms of ethnicity and class, one that could not be translated to the policy makers at LMDC with their predisposed notions of appropriate downtown development.<sup>15</sup> Longtime activist May Chen describes a Chinatown whose very identity was shaped by the culture and economy of the garment shop, “the garment industry, lots of jobs in one place for immigrants, and a lot of housing. . . . Workers and affordable housing together. That created a vibrancy that was more than your typical tourist-oriented Chinatown.”<sup>16</sup>

NYFS, however, was not the only strategy garment industry advocates and allies pursued. During mid-2002, the New York City Department of Small Business Services sought industry support for the designation of Chinatown/Lower East Side as a New York State “Empire Zone” (EZ) a state-based program distinct from the federally financed Empowerment Zone. Originally intended to be a “small, targeted program to assist economically distressed areas,” such as large portions of Western New York state hit hard by the flight of industry during the 1980s, by the time the Chinatown/Lower East Side EZ was proposed, critics charged

that the program was a series of credits and exemptions for corporations (Citizens Budget Commission, 2008).<sup>17</sup> Due to concerns about transparency and effectiveness as well as the state's larger fiscal problems, the EZ program effectively ended in June 2010.<sup>18</sup>

As early as 2002, when city officials approached NYIRN and UNITE for political support for the designation, two questions emerged. First, why would Chinatown even qualify as an EZ? Second, why would the industry support a program that might assist in the further gentrification of the neighborhood at the expense of manufacturers? Certainly the economic challenges in the Chinatown and Lower East Side neighborhoods are serious and numerous, including poverty, unemployment, and high rents (Chinatown/Lower East Side Empire Zone Board, 2006, 1–2). However, economically distressed areas such as those in Western New York generally do not also have lucrative property markets, hypergentrification, and the development of luxury properties and services. Given the resources potentially available through the program, the city sought to politically position Chinatown as deserving of EZ status when the local economy was hit hard by post-9/11 industry dislocation and job loss.<sup>19</sup>

The announcement of the EZ and the submission of the development plan occurred in 2006. Presented as an opportunity for industry to anchor manufacturing in the neighborhood, there was also the possibility that it would intensify patterns of pressure displacing the local garment shops. An internal memorandum from NYIRN to UNITE and GIDC staff members dated July 18, 2002 perfectly captures the garment industry's dilemma:

The impact of such designation is somewhat unclear... Zones are typically used to encourage companies to locate into communities which are experiencing dis-investment. An issue confronting Chinatown is gentrification, not dis-investment, and a risk might be that the zone benefits would help companies move into Chinatown and displace apparel. (Friedman, 2002a)

Industry advocates sought city funding, representation on the EZ board, and a local organization to administer the program in exchange for their eventual support (Friedman, 2002b, 2). But this memo indicates their fears in a terrain impoverished by viable policy options for retention.

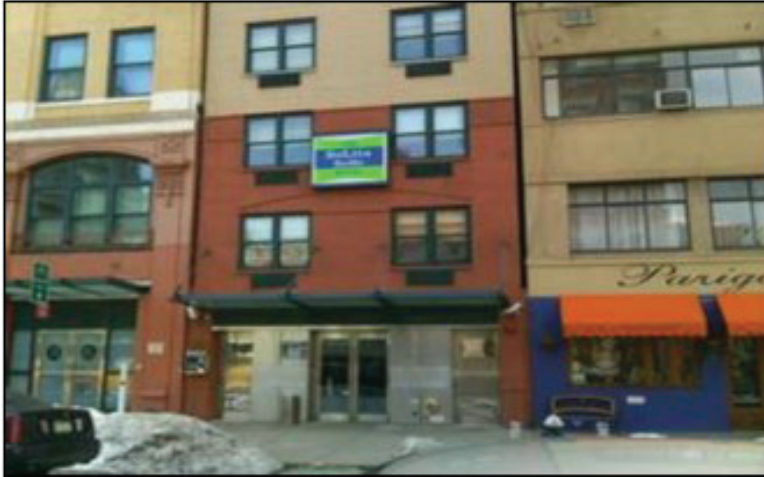
The brief shelf life of the EZ had demonstrably little effect in “revitalizing” Chinatown, and what little it did aligned closely to those 2002 fears of further gentrifying the neighborhood: city funding, even as matching funds, for industrial retention along the lines of the NYFS proposal never materialized; of the eight board members, only one was an industry representative even though advocates sought “a significant presence on the Empire Zone board” (Friedman, 2002b, 2); and AAFE and the Renaissance Economic Development Corporation were brought on board to administer.<sup>20</sup> As the sole industry representative on the board states: “I think [the Empire Zone program ha[s] done little or nothing to help Chinatown. Certainly for the garment industry, it hasn’t had much [effect].”<sup>21</sup>

Despite a conviction by advocates who helped secure the EZ designation that some element of the garment industry would be preserved, the EZ status held very different results. Of the twenty companies certified by the program as Chinatown EZ beneficiaries, only one is categorized by New York State as “manufacturing.”<sup>22</sup> Of the nineteen others, four are hotels, and an additional two others are real-estate-related firms, including a management company and a commercial development project.<sup>23</sup> So great was their hope in the maintenance of an ethnic Chinese presence of manufacturing workers and so limited the number of other development options to preserve that character that, in this case, community advocates were willing to risk supporting a proposal in which the forces spurring gentrification stood to gain.

## Conclusion

The retention efforts of garment industry advocates in Manhattan’s Chinatown demonstrate a local response to the intense development of lower Manhattan as well as the effects of recent economic restructuring and transnational capital investment from Asia. NYFS and the EZ plan largely acknowledge the historic importance of the garment industry, the employment capacities of a thriving manufacturing sector for immigrant workers, and the rising rents and displacement pressures of gentrification. However, they were unable to materialize retention goals because they did not express themselves as countering gentrification and maintaining a thriving, working-class ethnic neighborhood even though stabilizing neighborhood garment production sought those ends.

Figure 1: A portion of this single block demonstrates larger patterns in the changing Chinatown economy.



Note: A recently constructed hotel stands between a luxury condominium building (loft conversion) and a French bistro.  
Source: Photograph by Lena Sze, 2010

Rather than explicitly link to the bottom-up activism of local anti-gentrification groups, a move that would have generated more support and attention, these proposals instead sought to manage gentrification by using the constrained language of outside policy makers who, as my informants suggest, did not understand the importance of industry to the neighborhood and vice versa.<sup>24</sup>

Manhattan's Chinatown appears to be on the path toward luxury development and high-value uses reflective of gentrification. For Asian American communities with historically grounded fears of displacement, the issue of gentrification is charged with significant emotional and cultural meanings, as communities as different as Little Tokyo and Manhattan's Chinatown must learn how to manage and preserve the threatened cultural home space. Conventional development frameworks in ethnic enclaves tend to focus primarily on supporting real-estate development, tourism, and cultural economies.<sup>25</sup> Even subsidies for industrial businesses, if they do not connect to the community's historic sense of home or acknowledge fears of displacement, are not

enough.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless these post-9/11 industrial retention efforts to preserve a base of garment workers in Chinatown were a first policy step toward recognizing the urgency of a community under simultaneous threat from transnational and local pressures.<sup>27</sup> They remind us that Chinatown is a space where gentrification is an intensely contested economic, spatial, and social process. Responses to change in such a global-local neighborhood need, then, to acknowledge these multiple dimensions. Despite diverse class and social positions within the ethnic enclave (e.g., Chinatown property owner, garment worker, transnational Chinese investor, or city policy maker), these proposals sought, however briefly and modestly, to preserve a cultural space, a sense of home in the global city by maintaining a living and working Chinese ethnic presence in the neighborhood and keeping the neighborhood alive with working-class people and jobs.

### Acknowledgments

For their encouragement and intellectual support, I thank Susan Nakaoka and Tarry Hum. For their generosity and candor, I thank a host of community and industry advocates, especially May Chen and Lana Cheung.

### Notes

1. Cheung, Lana. 2010. Interview by Lena Sze. New York, May 25. There are currently 75 firms in the four zip codes (10002, 10007, 10013, and 10038) covering the garment manufacturing base of greater Chinatown, including manufacturers, contractors, and other firms registered as apparel related (New York State Department of Labor, Apparel Industry Task Force, accessed February 10, 2011). <http://www.labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/laborstandards/workprot/garment.asp>
2. Jan Lee, Margaret Chin, and Connie Ling. 2007–08. Museum of Chinese in America interviews conducted Sze. New York, New York, 18 June 2008.
3. Lin, Jan. 1998. *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 28.
4. Cheung. Interview by Sze. New York, New York, 28 February 2008.
5. Along two of the main streets running through the heart of industrial Chinatown, 21 out of 47 properties had changed hands from white (primarily Jewish) to Chinese from 1970 to 1989. *Source*: NYC Department of Finance, Automated City Register Information System.

6. These conversions usually took one of several forms: from manufacturing (renting at approximately \$8 to \$10 per square foot) to commercial office space (around \$25 per square foot), hotels, or luxury residential condominiums (reaching heights of up to \$1,000 or more per square foot).
7. The Garment Industry Development Corporation operated a Fashion Modernization Center, a 10,000-square-foot office providing programs, services, and training, in Chinatown from 1998 to 2003.
8. Chen, May. Interview by Lena Sze. New York, June 7, 2010
9. This models Brooklyn's Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center.
10. Adam Friedman of New York Industrial Retention Network (hereafter NYIRN). 2011. Telephone interview by Lena Sze. New York, January 14.
11. New York City effectively stopped enforcement of illegal conversion activity, even for the protected Garment Center, around 1993 (NYIRN, 2001, 22–6).
12. Thomas Yu, Director of Housing Development, Downtown Manhattan Community Development, Affiliate of Asian Americans for Equality. 2011. Personal correspondence, January 11.
13. Ibid.
14. Crean, Sarah. Interview by Lena Sze. New York, June 25, 2010.
15. Chen and Cheung. Museum of Chinese in America interviews. New York, New York, 9 November 2007 and 28 February 2008.
16. Chen. Interview by Sze. This statement echoes the analysis of Chinese Staff and Workers Association organizers according to Liu, 2008. New York, New York, 7 June 2010.
17. See also the New York State Department of Labor's "The Empire Zones Program" and "City, State Leaders Announce Empire Zone" (2006).
18. Elizabeth Mitchell, Downstate Director, Public Affairs, Empire State Development Corporation. 2011. Personal correspondence, January 18.
19. Internal NYIRN memoranda suggest the EZ designation would only succeed in the state legislature with the union's support. Adam Friedman. 2002a. "RE: Empire Zone for Chinatown." NYIRN unpublished memorandum, July 18; Friedman. 2002b. "RE: Empire Zone—Next Steps." NYIRN unpublished memorandum, July 28.
20. Chen. Interview by Sze. See also "Eight members are appointed to new Chinatown Empire Zone board." 2006. *Downtown Express*, December 22–28. Asian Americans for Equality is a controversial nonprofit organization in the neighborhood. Some see it as assisting in gentrification (Hevesi, 2003), while others, including former staff person and current City Council Member Margaret Chin, argue that

- it develops necessary affordable housing (Museum of Chinese in America interview). New York, New York, 9 November 2007.
21. The plan describes how retention of manufacturing is a priority and that the EZ administrator should monitor illegal conversions and variances (Chinatown/Lower East Side Empire Zone Board, 2006, 8, 4).
  22. Another is categorized as “Other” but is apparel related (a fashion label).
  23. According to one report, this kind of hotel development serves to further gentrify the neighborhood. See Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (hereafter CAAAV), 2008.
  24. Antigentrification groups currently operating in the broader Chinatown area include: CAAAV’s Chinatown Tenants Union, the Coalition to Protect Chinatown and the Lower East Side, Chinese Staff and Workers’ Association (CSWA) and National Mobilization against Sweatshops, and Good Old Lower East Side.
  25. These approaches are evident in NYFS, the EZ plan, and other economic development policies for the neighborhood. For more about post-9/11 investment in the area’s cultural resources, see Lin, 2006.
  26. About a similar incubator in Brooklyn, Tarry Hum concludes that such strategies are often inadequate because they “merely serve to hold on to the garment sector through subsidized rents” (2003, 296).
  27. See CAAAV, 2008.

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