



Testimony before the Public Design Commission of the City of New York

April 11, 2022

My name is Yin Kong. I am the director of Think!Chinatown, a non-profit based in Manhattan's Chinatown, working at the intersection of storytelling, art & neighborhood engagement to support what we love about Chinatown. - www.thinkchinatown.org

The plan to remove public art and de-map White Street is alarming, especially when the White Street plaza was intended to be a community give back when the City built the existing jails in the 1980s. Correction Officers have since taken over the public space once promised to the community to become their own parking lot. Building over this plaza is another example of the City's disregard for our community. At Neighborhood Advisory Committee meetings led by various city departments and offices, the decommissioning of White Street has been presented with a problematic narrative: the new plan will "create a car free zone" (meaning the tunnel). In fact White Street between Centre and Baxter has already been designated as a car-free pedestrian zone as a community concession with the building of the current jail as part of the Percent For Art project. The scope of the art commission includes the paving depicting the Chinese characters for upright and righteousness, the mesh wire columns, and even tree designations by Chinese American artist Kit-Yin Snyder. By painting lines over the pavement to create parking lot spaces, DoC had defaced the artwork and dispossessed the community of this plaza. Architectural Historian Kerri Culhane looked into the history of the site and could not find any paperwork for land use change from pedestrian space to parking lot. It should be the responsibility of DoC to produce paperwork for land-use change before moving forward with the ULURP.

In summary, the narrative needs to be corrected: this segment of White Street was already designated to be car free. **DoC has been taking space from the community and defacing our public art for decades.** We have to remember that the City's plans are not to build over a DoC parking lot, rather the City plans to build over a pedestrian plaza meant for the community. I have attached here renderings and blueprint drawings of the original pedestrian plaza on White Street.

How did a community space meant as a give back become a DoC parking lot, and how does the City propose to prevent such an egregious repossession of community give-backs in the future? The plaza-turned-parking lot is symbolic of the DoC's treatment of Chinatown, and shows disrespect for the work of the artist, Kit-Yin Snyder; publicly-funded art and public space approved

by the PDC; and the residents of the surrounding neighborhood who were promised a public pedestrian plaza. The community deserves compensation for decades of lost public space access. This history of DoC as a bad neighbor needs to be addressed and trust must be built before any projects can move forward.

Yin Kong,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'HKong', written in a cursive style.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AmyChin', written in a cursive style and enclosed in a light gray rectangular box.

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