Rebuild Chinatown Initiative:
The Community Speaks

One Year After September 11, 2001

Convened by
Asian Americans for Equality

Report Prepared by
Mourad, Warnke & Associates

November 2002
“Since last September, the community of Chinatown has become more patriotic. People have realized that Chinatown isn’t independent from neighboring communities, but rather is interlinked and interdependent with the rest of downtown New York City.”

- Chinese-American high school student

“The life we live in this country is basically defined by how mainstream perceives us and how we perceive ourselves.”

- Head of a Chinatown cultural institution

“Working 3 hours now, one does not even make as much as what one did in 1 hour in the past.”

- Former garment worker

“The most important thing for Chinatown, in my view, is to put inter-organizational and inter-personal politics aside, and ensure strong, effective and articulate leadership for the next few years.”

- Chinese-American college student
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FOREWORD

More than one year after the tragic events of September 11th, New York Chinatown---the largest Chinatown in the United States---is still struggling to recover from far-reaching economic and social impacts that threaten its existence as a 150-year-old residential neighborhood, regional commercial center, and international tourist destination.

Restricted access to the neighborhood in the aftermath of September 11th destabilized the local economy in fundamental ways: garment factories, restaurants, and small businesses that are the primary sources of employment for immigrants with limited language and job skills have gone out of business or suffered significant revenue losses. Unemployment remains high, residents face mounting threats of evictions, and street closures are dampening the efficient movement of people, goods, and services.

The widespread, ripple effects of Chinatown’s enclosure in the "frozen zone" illustrate that Chinatown is no longer an insular, self-sufficient enclave. Chinatown residents, workers and merchants are interwoven into the city’s neighborhoods, markets and culture by personal, economic and social relationships. Their contributions enhance the attractiveness and diversity that distinguish Lower Manhattan and the City as centers of finance and culture.

While public and private relief programs have provided the Chinatown community with temporary assistance, the long-term impacts on Chinatown necessitated a comprehensive and integrated community-based response.

The Rebuild Chinatown Initiative (RCI) is a community-based planning process to identify and articulate the current needs in Chinatown as a means for the community to plan for the future. In order to preserve and revitalize Chinatown as a part of the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan, community stakeholders have recognized the need to redefine Chinatown and help others recognize its multiple roles in the city and regional economy. As a result, they have begun to approach long-standing problems with creativity, form new partnerships, and set new goals.

Rebuild Chinatown Initiative: The Community Speaks One Year After September 11, 2001 represents more than 3,000 voices from a broad and diverse cross-section of the Chinatown community.
The depth and breadth of community participation is unprecedented. It is a powerful expression of the level of concern and enthusiasm from Chinatown stakeholders to participate in the public dialogue about the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan and the City. The report presents a broad consensus on an initial set of community needs and priorities that will guide the development of a comprehensive community plan of action.

While the tasks that lie ahead are enormous, a solid foundation of public-private partnership and community participation has been established to ensure that both short-term mitigations and long-term neighborhood improvements will be implemented. Rebuild Chinatown Initiative: The Community Speaks One Year After September 11, 2001 is the beginning of a rebuilding effort that will be sustained by community participation to maintain transparency, accountability and momentum for restoring the vibrancy and long-term prosperity of Chinatown, Lower Manhattan, the City and the Region.

Sincerely,

Dr. Betty Lee Sung
RCI National Advisory Board Member
Chair, Asian American/Asian Research Institute, CUNY
Professor Emerita, Asian Studies, City College, CUNY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND
The Rebuild Chinatown Initiative (RCI) is a community-based planning process to identify and articulate the current needs in Chinatown as a means for the community to plan for the future. During the initial phase of the planning process, from July through October 2002, members of the RCI staff were most engaged in collecting opinions and concerns of stakeholders in Chinatown—residents, workers, community leaders—to identify the development requirements of Chinatown as voiced by community members. The data collection was undertaken - both qualitatively and quantitatively - through three principal means 1) a household survey, 2) one-on-one interviews and 3) open community meetings.

SURVEY RESULTS
The survey was divided into three main sections: 1) demographics, 2) attitudes, concerns, and priorities for the community and 3) employment and income generation.

Key demographics, based on 1,797 responses:
• Survey respondents are overwhelmingly Chinese, accounting for 88% of the survey's population.
• 58% of the survey population identified Cantonese as their primary language, while 17% spoke English as a primary language. Mandarin accounted for 11% and Fujianese for 4%.
• The respondents are fairly well distributed according to age: 21% between the ages 20 to 34; 20% between the ages 35-44; 20% between the ages 45-54; 12% between the ages 55-64; and 19% over 65 years of age.
• Approximately half of the survey's population are Chinatown residents, with 27% stating that they live in Chinatown but work elsewhere, and 24% stating that they live and work in Chinatown.

Employment and Income Generation
The greatest proportion of respondents (39%) identified their employment situation as ‘Working for an employer’, and 19% were ‘Retired’. Despite these percentages, unemployment rate among the survey population was fairly high at 12%.

Skills and Capacities
The largest number of respondents indicated that their skills fall within the Professional category, such as teaching, accounting, computer work, clerical work, etc. Catering (preparing & serving food) services skills ranked second, and Manufacturing skills (which includes garment work) ranked third.

Likes and Dislikes
When surveys respondents were asked to indicate all the things they like best about Chinatown, they ranked ‘Access to shops’ as their primary ‘likes’ in Chinatown, followed by the convenience of
'Language', and 'Access to services'. Issues of 'Friends & family' and 'Sense of community' ranked 4th and 5th, while 'Access to cultural activities' ranked 6th, with 'Low crime rate' ranking last.

Conversely, when respondents were asked to indicate all the things they like least about Chinatown, 'Odor & Noise' was first in the 'dislikes' among survey respondents, while 'Lack of affordable housing' came 2nd. 'Parking' and 'Traffic' came 3rd and 4th respectively, and 'Lack of employment opportunities' ranked 5th on the list.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

The surveys, interviews and community meetings consistently identified three major community needs or issues in Chinatown: 1) sanitation; 2) affordable housing and; 3) employment and income generation. These issues were closely followed by parking and transportation.

For further analysis, community needs, as identified in the survey process, were cross-tabulated with key demographic factors of residency, age, and livelihood. In all instances, the top community needs as identified by the entire survey population remained constant when evaluated by each subgroup, thereby underscoring the urgency of these needs.

While the issues identified during the interview process were numerous, certain key concerns emerged, several of which supported those identified by the household survey and by community meetings participants.

- Improving the sanitary conditions of Chinatown (including issues of garbage collection, odor, and pollution)
- Addressing the affordable housing (and senior housing) demand of Chinatown residents, with respect to both development of new units and rehabilitation of the existing stock.
- Creating more employment and income generating opportunities for Chinatown's residents, particularly for those stakeholders engaged in the manufacturing sector.
- Alleviating the acute shortage of parking spaces in Chinatown.
- Reducing traffic congestion in the community.
THE WAY FORWARD: A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

In addressing the issues identified above, it is critical for RCI not to lose the momentum and enthusiasm generated among Chinatown's stakeholders through the household survey, community meetings, and intensive interviewing processes. Consequently, the program design phase of the Initiative should immediately and accomplish the following tasks.

1. Form a Community Advisory Board.
2. Recruit Board members and development specialists to 'Planning Taskforces'.

The taskforces should address the following tasks.
- Setting goals
- Illustrating alternatives/selection criteria
- Articulating the community plan's recommendations
- Designing an implementation program

The following techniques can increase the likelihood that the Chinatown revitalization plan gets implemented.
- Using precise language in the making of the recommendations.
- Including an order of priorities and a timeline in the planning document.
- Attaching cost estimates to each recommendation.
- Identifying potential public and private funding sources.

PROGRAMMATIC OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

MWA presents programmatic options to consider in addressing the top three issues that were identified during this process-sanitation, affordable housing, and employment and income generation.

Sanitation

Awareness-raising and behavioral change
- Develop awareness-raising campaigns run by local organizations. Existing Chinatown organizations with links to outreach or training programs would be best placed to take this forward.
- Increase awareness through existing and highly utilized services.
- Identify existing Chinatown sectors (i.e. merchants, caterers, street vendors) that could serve as catalysts in forming voluntary self-regulatory groups, to supervise and support compliance with sanitation regulations, and to strengthen bargaining-power with city authorities.

Compliance with the regulatory system and the need for external support
- Increase garbage pick-ups and/or larger garbage pails.
- Increase in sanitation inspection by City authorities to ensure compliance with sanitation regulations and the application of sanctions where necessary.
- Training on sanitation regulatory systems.
- Development of a capital pool to provide funds to restaurant and garment factory owners to upgrade their facilities for compliance with sanitation regulations.
• Identification of under-utilized public spaces which may be assigned for the creation of organized and contained market places for street vendors, including on-site cleaning stations.
• Create public/private partnerships such as a Business Improvement District as a means to raise funds.

**Affordable Housing Preservation**

• Strengthen existing tenant rights in order to deter illegal evictions and to reduce the harassment of renters, particularly elderly and immigrant individuals and families;
• Increase building inspections to ensure that buildings are code-compliant while also raising the penalties for code violations; and,
• Develop a capital pool to provide low cost rehabilitation financing to building owners to allow them to complete necessary repairs and upgrades.

**Affordable Housing Development**

*Short-term initiatives:*

• Create new funding pools to spur the acquisition of privately-owned development sites and the development of affordable and senior housing; and,
• Identify under-utilized publicly-owned buildings for acquisition for and/or redevelopment as affordable and senior housing.

*Medium-term efforts:*

• Create and maintain a database of buildings and building sites in Chinatown and the Lower East Side to help identify future development sites or preservation opportunities; and,
• Create a Lower Manhattan Affordable Housing Trust Fund with funding from a dedicated public revenue stream to support the development of affordable housing south of Houston Street.

**Employment and Income Generation**

• Creation of a Chinatown cultural district.
• Cultivation of the tourist trade.
• Increased protection for light manufacturing businesses, including garment factories, to preserve Chinatown’s viability as a mixed-use community.
• Development of strong English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for community residents and workers, including industry-specific classes, like “restaurant English”.
• Increased access to affordable loan and investment capital for small business owners, as well as training and technical assistance to facilitate the transition from traditional to modern business practices.
• Creation of strong training programs for garment factory owners and workers.
The Rebuild Chinatown Initiative (RCI) is a community-based planning process to identify and articulate the current needs in Chinatown as a means for the community to plan for the future. During the initial phase of the planning process, from July through October 2002, members of the RCI staff were most engaged in collecting opinions and concerns of stakeholders in Chinatown: residents, workers, community leaders—to identify the development requirements of Chinatown as voiced by community members. The data collection was undertaken—both qualitatively and quantitatively—through three principal means: 1) a household survey, 2) one-on-one interviews and 3) open community meetings. The Rebuild Chinatown Initiative was officially launched at a press conference on July 8th, 2002.

This phase of the planning process was coordinated by the firm of 'Mourad, Warnke & Associates' (MWA) and staffed by members of MWA and Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), the lead community partner. RCI also continues to draw upon the experience of an esteemed board of advisors comprised of local and national experts in areas such as community development, finance, and nonprofit organizations.

**Asset Mapping & Household Surveys**

The instrument for the household survey was developed by Moustafa Mourad, principal of MWA, in a collaborative process with a number of residents and community leaders. The survey, made available in both Chinese and English, was organized into three topic areas: 1) demographics, 2) attitudes, concerns, and priorities for the community and 3) employment and income generation. The final section was intended to map individual and household ‘assets’ in Chinatown, encouraging respondents to identify skills that can be translated into participation in the workforce.

Between August 1st and August 23rd, RCI staff members collected 1,797 usable surveys. RCI distributed the survey to over 50 organizations—including nonprofits, religious institutions, trade organizations, family associations, and health clinics—who in turn asked their members or clients to fill out the surveys. In addition, RCI staff and volunteers collected surveys through street outreach and at various community events such as the Asian Americans for Equality Summer Festival, the Clinton Street Summer Festival, the Chinatown Health Clinic Good Health Day, the SummerFest in Chinatown sponsored by the Office of the Manhattan Borough President and lastly, the second RCI community meeting.
Community Meetings
The Initiative held three community meetings that were open to the general public and facilitated by Moustafa Mourad. The first community meeting was held on July 16th at a local school, IS 131, and was attended by more than 300 people. In the course of the meeting, Mr. Mourad outlined the community planning process in general and provided an opportunity for all attendees to voice their concerns about Chinatown, as well as their ideas for improving the community. All of the comments were transcribed in Chinese and English.

The second community meeting was held on August 15th at a local school, PS 124, and was attended by more than 150 people. During this meeting, Mr. Mourad reported on the activities to date and provided another opportunity for attendees to voice their concerns. Again, all comments were transcribed in Chinese and English.

A third community meeting was held on October 24th at IS 131 to present the major findings from the survey results and solicit feedback from audience participants. Again, the surveys results were available in Chinese and English, and all comments were transcribed.

Interviews
Throughout the interview process, RCI staff and volunteers met with numerous residents, workers, and community leaders to give them an opportunity to discuss their perceptions of the community, and their vision of its future. Each interview focused on topics of importance to the interviewee, but generally interviewees were asked to discuss their history in and relationship to Chinatown, what they consider to be the main issues or problems in the community, and how they think those issues should be resolved.

From July through October 2002, RCI staff and volunteers interviewed more than 80 individuals reflecting a cross-section of the Chinatown community. Interviewees included high school students, long-time community activists, residents, employees, former garment factory workers, business owners, and heads of organizations. Interviewees also ranged from recent immigrants to residents whose families have been in Chinatown for many generations.

Each interview was transcribed and organized by theme. They are included as an Appendix to this report. Names have been omitted, along with affiliations and other distinguishing characteristics in order to maintain and respect the privacy of those who agreed to be interviewed.
**Chinatown Defined**

For the purpose of this planning process, Chinatown is defined through participants’ relationships to the community - as opposed to geographic boundaries. To be sure, a revitalization plan for Chinatown will necessarily presume a physical definition of the community, where resources should be directed. However, during the initial phase of the process — community data collection — anyone who had a relationship to Chinatown was considered an interested party and consequently, a community stakeholder.

As the surveys and interviews indicate, participants included individuals who live in Chinatown, work in Chinatown, shop in Chinatown, attend programs in Chinatown, and socialize in Chinatown, among others. Responses clearly indicated the dynamic nature of the Chinatown community whose sphere of influence extends well beyond its location in Lower Manhattan, beyond the five boroughs of New York City, and indeed to other parts of the United States.

**Other Planning Efforts**

We would like to acknowledge planning efforts and studies in this community that have preceded the Rebuild Chinatown Initiative. It is our hope that RCI complements and builds upon these efforts so that when seen in the collective, they present a comprehensive picture of the current needs in Chinatown and helps set priorities for the future of this community.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank everyone who generously gave us their time to participate in the initiative by completing the surveys, attending community meetings, and sharing their concerns and ideas for the preservation and revitalization of Chinatown.

RCI would like to thank the following organizations for distributing and collecting surveys from their staff members and clients:

**Surveys:**
The American Legion, Department of New York, Lt. B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291
Asian American Arts Centre
Asian American Business Network Corporation
Asian Americans for Equality
Chan Le American Association
Chatham Green Co-Op Board
Chinatown Daycare Center
Chinatown YMCA
Chinese Christian Herald Crusades
Chinese Evangelical Mission
Chung Pak Day Care
City Hall Senior Center
FuKien American Association
Garment Industry Development Corporation
Gouverneur Hospital
Greater Blouse, Skirt & Undergarment Association
LaGuardia Houses Tenant Association
Little Italy Restoration Association - Mott Street Senior Center
Moy Shee Family Association
Museum of Chinese in the Americas
Overseas Chinese Mission
Smith Houses Tenant Association
St. Vincent’s Hospital Chinatown Clinic
United Fujianese of American Association

We would like to thank JPMorgan Chase on Grand and Mott Streets for providing space to distribute and collect surveys in our street outreach.
RCI is also grateful for the invaluable insights, concerns and ideas shared by the following individuals:

**Interviews:**

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<td>Kuk-Lan Koo</td>
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<td>L. Kiu</td>
<td>Young professional</td>
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<td>Betty Lee Sung</td>
<td>Professor Emerita of Asian Studies, City College, CUNY</td>
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<td>32 Mott Street General Store</td>
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<td>Asian American Arts Centre</td>
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<td>Dorothy Scarimbolo</td>
<td>Henry Street Settlement</td>
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<td>Shao-Chee Sim</td>
<td>Asian American Federation of New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amy Tang</td>
<td>Former Chinatown resident</td>
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<td>Steven Tin</td>
<td>Chinatown Athletic Council</td>
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</table>
Tammy To  City Council District 1
Wei Hua Wang  United Fujianese of America
Joseph Wong  American Legion
Liza Wan  Chinatown resident, AAFE Computer Technology Center client
Aiping Wang  AAFE Computer Technology Center client
John Wang  Asian American Business Development Center
Mr. Wang  AAFE Computer Technology Center client
Susan Wilson  Garment Industry Development Corporation
Yuet Wong  former garment worker
Liping Xie  Chinatown resident
Yee Kam Yeung  United Fujianese of American Association
Billy Yip  Church of the Living Lord
Zi Nan Zhang  United Fujianese of American Association
Miss Zhao  AAFE Computer Technology Center client
Hui Dao Zhu  328 Cafe
Jeffrey  AAFE Computer Technology Center client
Kenneth  AAFE Computer Technology Center client
Li Wei  AAFE Computer Technology Center client
Mr. M.  AAFE Computer Technology Center client
May  AAFE Computer Technology Center client, Chinatown resident
William  AAFE Computer Technology Center client

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**Appointed and Elected Officials:**
Sayu Bhojwani  Commissioner, New York City Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs
Anthony Campagiorni  Director of Business Recovery, Empire State Development Corporation
Alan Gerson  New York City Councilman, District 1
Sheldon Silver  New York State Assembly Speaker
Martha Starck  Commissioner, New York City Department of Finance
Nydia Velazquez  United States Congresswoman, 12th District New York
Betty Wu  Commissioner, New York City Department of Employment

**Community Meetings and Events:**
Intermediate School 131 and Chinatown YMCA
Public School 124
Holiday Inn, Downtown/Soho

Rebuild Chinatown Initiative: **The Community Speaks**
November 2002
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Derrick D. Cephas Partner, Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft
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COMMUNITY & INDIVIDUAL ASSETS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ethnicity & Gender
Survey respondents are overwhelmingly Chinese, accounting for 88% of the survey's population. 4% identified themselves as White, and 3% were Hispanic, followed by 1% each for African American, Asian Pacific Islander, and Other, respectively. Women outnumbered men almost two to one, (61% vs. 34%), while 5% did not answer the question.

Primary Language
58% of the survey population identified Cantonese as their primary language, while 17% spoke English as a primary language. Mandarin accounted for 11% and Fujianese for 4%.
Age
The respondents are fairly well distributed according to age: 21% between the ages 20 to 34; 20% between the ages 35-44; 20% between the ages 45-54; 12% between the ages 55-64; and 19% over 65 years of age. The largest group, representing 41% of all respondents, are between the ages 20 to 44.

Household Description
Almost half (46%) of the households surveyed replied that they are 'A couple with children'. Single persons -the second largest category- accounted for 14%, followed by couples without children who comprised 12% of the survey's population. A significant 10% of the households were extended families, and another 9% were families sharing living quarters. Single parents were only 5% of the survey's population.
Residency
Approximately half of the survey's population are Chinatown residents, with 27% stating that they live in Chinatown but work elsewhere, and 24% stating that they live and work in Chinatown.

Respondents who both live and work elsewhere accounted for 27%. Respondents who work in Chinatown but live elsewhere represented the smallest group, with 19%.

Among Chinatown residents, the majority are long-term residents, with 34% stating that they have lived here for 11 to 20 years, and another 24% stating that they have lived here for 21 years or more. Only 5% of the residents stated that they have lived in Chinatown for less than 1 year, and 11% stated 1 to 5 years.

Education
The greatest proportion of survey participants, 23%, indicated elementary school as the highest level of educational attainment. 20% responded that they are high school graduates, with another 20% stating that they had received some high school education. Only 15% indicated that they are college or technical school graduates.

The level of educational attainment is inversely related to the respondents' age group. That is, as the age groups get older, the level of educational attainment decreases. For example, 37% of respondents between the ages of 20 to 34 indicated that they had graduated from college or technical school, compared to 6% of respondents aged 65 or above.
Income

Incomes were generally low among the survey population. Approximately a quarter had an annual income of $5,000 or less, and 17% were in the $5,000 to $9,999 category. Those whose income ranged from $10,000 to $14,999 per year accounted for only 13% of the respondents.
Livelihood

A quarter of the respondents did not answer this question; however, the largest proportion (18%) of those who did were garment workers, followed by workers in the food industry (7%), while those who worked in small businesses accounted for 5%. Business owners were only 4% of the survey's population.

Among those who indicated that they own a business, almost half—46%—are in 'Retail', and only 10% are in 'Wholesale' operations. In addition, the majority (53%) of the businesses identified employed 2 to 5 workers, and 15% had 5 to 10. Only 5% employed more than 20 workers.

The responses among those who indicated 'Other' as their livelihood were varied and represent the diversity of personal and professional service jobs in the Chinatown community.
HOUSING

Tenure and Expectations of Homeownership
A large majority (78%) of the survey population are renting their homes or apartments. Only 17% were homeowners. The largest proportion (41%) of respondents expected to buy a home, compared to 32% who did not. More than a quarter, however were not sure.

Where to buy?
While the largest proportion (33%) of respondents was not certain where to buy a home, Chinatown was the first choice (20%) of those who indicated a location. Brooklyn was the second choice (14%), followed by Queens (11%).

WHERE WOULD YOU BUY A HOUSE OR APARTMENT?
(among renters)

Why buy outside Chinatown?
High prices were the first deterrent (35%) for those respondents who indicated a preference for buying outside Chinatown. Traffic & parking ranked third (13%) among the reasons for buying outside the area, followed by health & safety concerns (12%).

WHY BUY OUTSIDE CHINATOWN?
(among renters)
EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME GENERATION

Employment Status
The greatest proportion of respondents (39%) identified their employment situation as 'Working for an employer', and 19% were ‘Retired’. Despite these percentages, the unemployment rate among the survey population was fairly high at 12%.

![Employment Status Bar Chart]

Length of Unemployment
The vast majority (77%) of respondents did not answer this question. However, the largest proportion (12%) of those who did were unemployed for less than one year, followed by 5% who were without a job for 2 years or more. The fact that the largest proportion of respondents has been unemployed for less than one year may reflect the overall economic decline in Chinatown since September 11th, 2001.

![Time Unemployed Pie Chart]
Looking for Work
Although the unemployment rate among the survey population was 12%, more than a third (34%) of the respondents indicated that they are looking for work. The fact that almost three times as many people are looking for work than are unemployed may suggest several things. For example, it may suggest that a significant number of respondents are underemployed, perhaps working part-time or in jobs for which they are overqualified. In such instances, respondents may be looking for a more permanent full-time job, or a job that more closely matches their skill levels.

Obstacles to Employment
Almost 1 in 3 respondents (29%) identified language as the primary obstacle to employment, followed closely by the general lack of employment opportunities (26%). Lack of skills accounted for 13% of the responses, ranking it third on the list of obstacles.
SKILLS AND CAPACITIES

Skills and capacities among all respondents

The largest number of respondents indicated that their skills fall within the Professional category, such as teaching, accounting, computer work, clerical work, etc. Catering (preparing & serving food) services skills ranked second, and Manufacturing skills (which includes garment work) ranked third.

It should be noted, however, that the Professional category may be overstated in that it included a broad range of skills, from teaching and counseling; to answering phones and clerical work; to accounting, banking and financial services. The Professional category may best be distinguished as skills for jobs in an office environment, as opposed to manual labor, for example.

Respondents were also asked to indicate if they had other skills that were not reflected in the survey. They indicated numerous additional skills, including child care and senior care, farming, jewelry finishing and repair, and volunteering at nonprofits.
SKILLS & CAPACITIES: PROFESSIONAL
(Among respondents with professional skills)

SKILLS & CAPACITIES: CATERING
(Among respondents with catering skills)
SKILLS & CAPACITIES: MANUFACTURING
(Among respondents with manufacturing skills)

SKILLS & CAPACITIES: CONSTRUCTION
(Among respondents with construction skills)
SKILLS & CAPACITIES: MAINTENANCE
(Among respondents with maintenance skills)

SKILLS AND CAPACITIES: MAINTENANCE
(among respondents with maintenance skills)

- General
- Moving furniture
- Small repair
- Window washing
- Carpet cleaning
- Small appliance repair
- Lawn service
- Floor stripping
- Routing drains
- Electrical repair
- Forklift
- Auto repair
- Other

SKILLS & CAPACITIES: RETAIL & SERVICES
(Among respondents with retail & services skills)

SKILLS AND CAPACITIES: RETAIL AND SERVICES
(among respondents with retail and services skills)

- Convenience store
- Other
- Other retail store
- Clothing store
- Hotel
**SKILLS & CAPACITIES: TRANSPORTATION**
(Among respondents with transportation skills)

![Bar chart showing transportation skills among respondents.]

**Unemployment**
In looking at skills according to employment status, the unemployment rate among those with manufacturing skills was particularly high, accounting for 21%, a rate that is almost double that of the overall survey population of 12%. By contrast, unemployment among respondents skilled in ‘Catering’ was 8%.

The high unemployment rate for respondents with manufacturing skills may reflect the general decline in Chinatown’s garment industry, particularly after the events of September 11, 2001.

**Additional Training**
Survey respondents were asked to identify areas of additional training that they may require. By far, the largest majority of respondents (over 200) replied that they needed English language training. Computer training, including basic skills, programming, graphics and web design was the second largest category with over 50 respondents. Other notable areas for additional training included: childcare; home attendant; business and finance; medical, including nursing and medical assistance; and hotel services, including administration, management and room maintenance. Several respondents also replied that they needed more education in general, such as earning a college or graduate degree.
SOCIAL FABRIC

Like and Dislikes

When surveys respondents were asked to indicate all the things they like best about Chinatown, they ranked 'Access to shops' as their primary 'likes' in Chinatown, followed by the convenience of 'Language', and 'Access to services'. Issues of 'Friends & family' and 'Sense of community' ranked 4th and 5th, while 'Access to cultural activities' ranked 6th, with 'Low crime rate' ranking last.

During the 1st community meeting on July 16th, we asked attendees to fill out a brief questionnaire that included, "What do you like best about Chinatown?" Approximately 100 attendees returned the forms and provided the following 'likes', which closely reflect the results from the survey. Convenience was cited by one-third of the attendees; sense of community by 30%; food by 30%; and shopping by 22%.

Conversely, when respondents were asked to indicate all the things they like least about Chinatown, 'Odor & Noise' was first in the 'dislikes' among survey respondents, while 'Lack of affordable housing' came 2nd. 'Parking' and 'Traffic' came 3rd and 4th respectively, and 'Lack of employment opportunities' ranked 5th on the list.
In general, the top three 'likes' and 'dislikes' remained consistent, regardless of factors such as residency, length of residency, livelihood, or income.

When survey respondents were asked to comment on whether Chinatown is a better, worse, or same place to live compared to 3 years ago, less than a quarter (21%) of the respondents felt that Chinatown is a better place to live today, while 32% thought it has gotten worse. The largest proportion (38%) thought the neighborhood was about the same.

The perception, however, changes depending on the length of residency. A majority of longtime residents of Chinatown (11 to 20 years and 21 years or more) identified the area as a worse place to live today.

In general, the top three 'likes' and 'dislikes' remained consistent, regardless of factors such as residency, length of residency, livelihood, or income.
COMMUNITY NEEDS

TOP THREE COMMUNITY NEEDS:
• Sanitation
• Affordable Housing
• Employment and Income Generation

The surveys, interviews and community meetings consistently identified three major community needs or issues in Chinatown: 1) sanitation; 2) affordable housing; and 3) employment and income generation. These issues were closely followed by parking and transportation.

Based on survey results, the overwhelming issue for all respondents was improving Chinatown's 'Sanitation', followed by the need for 'More affordable housing' and 'More employment opportunities'. Improved traffic conditions, and more parking spaces ranked 5th and 7th, respectively, in the order of priorities.

For further analysis, community needs were cross tabulated with key demographic factors of residency, age, and livelihood. In all instances, the top community needs as identified by the entire survey population remained constant when evaluated by each subgroup, thereby underscoring the urgency of these needs.
Community needs by residency

All four residency groups (with the respondents who ‘work in Chinatown but live elsewhere’ being slightly in the minority), identified sanitation as the top priority for Chinatown in almost equal proportions, illustrating a consensus on the issue’s importance.

SANITATION
(among all, by residency)

Almost a third (32%) of those respondents who identified affordable housing as a crucial need for Chinatown lived there but worked elsewhere, followed by those who both lived and worked in the community (26%). Interestingly, respondents who lived and worked outside Chinatown also accounted for 23% of those who identified affordable housing as an important need.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING
(among all, by residency)

There are at least two explanations for the fact that a significant proportion of those who live and work outside of Chinatown also identified affordable housing as a pressing community need. First, it suggests that there are people who would like to move to Chinatown were more housing options available.
Second, it also suggests that the perception of a housing shortage in Chinatown is one that is widespread and may in fact prevent others from moving to the community.

The need for more employment opportunities, like sanitation, was identified as a significant priority equally among all residency groups.

![MORE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES (among all, by residency)](chart)

Respondents who both lived and worked outside Chinatown constituted a majority (33%) among those who identified traffic as a concern. The same was true of ‘more parking spaces’ as a priority for Chinatown, where 33% were those who both lived and worked outside the neighborhood, and 22% were respondents who lived in Chinatown but worked elsewhere. Those who work but do not live in Chinatown also accounted for 22%, while those who both work and live in the area accounted for 21%.
Community needs by age group

For age groups up to 54 years old—namely ages 20-34, 35-44, and 45-54—the order of priorities remained fairly similar to the overall respondents. Sanitation, affordable housing, and employment opportunities remained the top three priorities, followed by improved traffic conditions and the need for more parking spaces.

While respondents who are 55 to 65+ years old also identified sanitation as the primary issue in Chinatown, they were clearly concerned about senior housing, ranking it third (for 55 to 64) and second (for 65+). Health insurance was also a priority for elderly respondents, ranking 4th among both age groups.
Community needs by professional group

The top three priorities were the same for business owners as for all survey respondents—Sanitation, Employment opportunities, and Affordable housing—although more employment opportunities ranked 2nd instead of 3rd. The other notable difference is that Loans to start or assist small businesses ranked 8th in the order of priorities, compared to 16th for all respondents.
The need for more employment opportunities also ranked as the second highest priority for garment workers, and affordable housing ranked 3rd. Access to health insurance was significantly more important-ranking 5th in the order of priorities, whereas it ranked 10th with business owners.
Sanitation remained the number one issue for workers in the food industry, while affordable housing was a more important issue for them than employment opportunities, in contrast to garment workers. Both groups however, shared concern about access to health insurance - ranking it 5th in the order of priorities.

**COMMUNITY NEEDS: FOOD INDUSTRY WORKERS**

- Sanitation
- Affordable housing
- Employment
- Senior housing
- Traffic
- Health insurance
- Parking spaces
- Community centers
- Employment training
- Reviving Chinese culture
- Adapting Chinese culture
- Recreational facilities
- Zoning
- Using culture as asset
- Loans for homes
- Transportation
- Loans for businesses
- Other
While the three top issues—Sanitation, Affordable Housing and Employment—remained the same, workers in small business were clearly concerned about traffic, ranking it 4th in the order of priorities. There were also more concerned about the need for more parking spaces, which ranked 6th on the list.
COMMUNITY MEETINGS

During the first two community meetings, participants were asked the same question as in the survey and interviews, “What is the issue you care most about in Chinatown?” Again, their responses remained fairly consistent with what was indicated in both the surveys and interviews, with many participants responding with multiple issues. The following is a breakdown of 100 responses from 300 attendees at the July 16th meeting.

- Affordable housing (68%), particularly affordable housing for seniors (28%)
- Sanitation (38%)
- Transportation (38%), especially increasing parking spaces (13%)
- General environment and public spaces (26%)
- Safety (14%)
- Employment (13%)
- Health care (8%)
- Youth educational and recreational services (6%)

It is important to note that variations in the order of priorities of community meetings attendees reflects a different demographics set. For example, a larger proportion of community meetings participants tended to be elderly residents of Chinatown, who placed concerns of safety, and general recreational spaces for their grandchildren higher on the priority list than those of employment. In addition, many of Chinatown workers, particularly those in the food industry, could not attend the 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm meetings.
INTERVIEWS: ISSUES & VISIONS
AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

Rebuild Chinatown Initiative: The Community Speaks
November 2002
INTERVIEWS: ISSUES & VISIONS
AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

While the issues identified during the interview process were numerous, certain key community needs emerged, several of which supported those identified by the household survey and by community meetings participants. The following sections provide a brief discussion of the top 5 community needs—sanitation, affordable housing, employment, parking and transportation—along with related issues and articulated visions for their alleviation, based on comments from the interviews.

SANITATION

Many community residents pointed to sanitation as the single most important problem that must be addressed, especially because it has an impact on both transportation and tourism. This opinion was held by a wide spectrum of interviewees—bankers, high school students, property owners and heads of organizations, among others.

A college student who grew up in Chinatown discussed the sanitation problem as the following: “I don’t know if this has become a major change but recently I’ve really been noticing the huge piles of garbage out in the streets late at night. It’s really unsightly and causes quite a stench. I know that there are many restaurants and garbage can’t be helped, but there’s gotta be a way to reduce the amount of garbage.”

Issue: Sanitation & Community Responsibility

Several people attributed the sanitation problem as an attitude problem and concluded that it is the responsibility of all Chinatown community to keep the neighborhood clean.

Community Vision

• Improving sanitation in Chinatown requires the active participation of all citizens. One high school student and Chinatown resident said, “People should be responsible for not throwing garbage on the street”. “The family should take the responsibility to educate their children about public responsibilities,” said another Chinatown resident.

One interviewee stated that for some problems, such as throwing garbage and spitting on the street, people should not ask government to address them. Instead, people should change their attitude and have a more vested interest in the community, so that they treat it as if it were their homes.

Another interviewee suggested a general awareness campaign to urge for a cleaner Chinatown; perhaps a campaign specifically aimed at children to promote picking up trash as a ‘fun’ activity.
• Community organizations could play an important role in educating people about keeping the neighborhood clean. Since many new immigrants go to community organizations for information, job training and other services, these organizations should also teach them about public responsibility, as well as how to obey the laws and regulations in Chinatown.

• Community enforcement is important. One local property owner noted that by allowing sanitation to decline, Chinatown has made itself an easy target for selective enforcement. “There’s no excuse not to take five minutes to clean a 12-foot store.” He added that it is important to get Chinatown merchants to work together and help each other advocate for the City to improve parking and sanitation services in the community.

• A community association member explained how his association has been sending people to speak with merchants and restaurant owners on some of the main thoroughfares about sanitation. This particular program is just beginning and in the future, they hope to work with government on this issue.

**Issue: Sanitation & the Regulatory System**
Other interviewees noted that sanitation is a regulatory issue and attributed it to the lack of support from City agencies.

**Community Vision**
• More frequent garbage pick-ups. One interviewee explained that there should be more shifts, in the afternoon, for example, perhaps even garbage pick-ups every hour. Yet another interviewee called for larger garbage pails.

• Sanitation officers should give out tickets or summons, when necessary. This interviewee also suggested establishing public toilets, since many places refuse access to non-customers.

• Banks should create a $50 million pool for restaurant and garment factory owners to upgrade their facilities to include grease traps and other regulatory measures.

**Issue: Sanitation & Street Vendors**
Several interviewees noted that street vendors, while an important aspect of the local economy, contribute to the garbage on the street and the traffic congestion. “You can’t get rid of them [street vendors] because they are making an honest living. But if you don’t get rid of them, the streets won’t get clean.”

**Community Vision**
• Street vendors should be more organized so they understand the requirements and avoid turf wars.

• Create an organized marketplace. One interviewee said that ‘hawker stalls’ in Malaysia offer an interesting alternative for street vendors, because they have cleaning stations with running water that
allow them to wash their produce and maintain sanitary facilities. Another interviewee pointed to the Essex Street Market on the Lower East Side as an example for maintaining street vendors as a part of the local economy while relieving problems of sanitation and road congestion.

**Other Visions on Improving Sanitation**

- A restaurant owner suggested that the beautification of Chatham Square would be a significant step towards improving public perception of Chinatown, because of its high visibility.

**Green Markets**

- A couple of interviewees suggested the establishment of a green market as a means to improve the organization and sanitation of street vending in Chinatown. One community leader suggested a vacant lot or a street that is not heavily utilized and away from residential buildings as a place for street vendors to sell their produce, while a member of an association suggested the area around Delancey Street as a potential site.

**Business Improvement District**

- Several people suggested the formation of a Business Improvement District (BID) as a means to raise more funds to help keep the neighborhood clean. One community leader said that now is the time to start a Chinatown BID. Another community leader noted that the benefits of a BID include improved green spaces and more effective business promotion.

>“Public-private partnership is really key. A BID would raise more money and provide for more flexibility and shifts to keep the community clean,” stated one interviewee. She noted, however, that it is difficult to achieve consensus from major community groups about the proper solutions for improving sanitation, especially with regards to who will bear the costs for these additional services.

Yet another person stated, “They need to bite the bullet and take an increase in taxes to improve the business environment in Chinatown.”
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Many interviewees perceived affordable housing as a pressing community need, with the head of one family association describing it as the single most important issue in the community. Some interviewees stated that there was added pressure for housing due to the increase in recent immigrants. Still other interviewees called for government to develop housing in other neighborhoods for the new immigrants.

In discussing housing, interviewees pointed to many different aspects of the issue, including the lack of affordable housing and poor living conditions. Still others connected the affordable housing issue with the fear that the community will undergo gentrification. “Chinatown should be for the Chinese community. We have to be united for what the community will be in the future. If we start heading down this road [of commercial gentrification], Chinatown will not be a living community, but an assortment of stores. It'll be like a Chinatown ghost-town, a Hollywood set.”

Issue: Lack of Affordable Housing

One interviewee explained, “Housing is critical for the community. Right now, there is no place for people to live, and there hasn't been any significant new housing built since Confucius Plaza.” Other respondents added that the lack of affordable housing forces many Chinese immigrants to move to the outer boroughs. In fact, one interviewee explained why he lives elsewhere, “All of Chinatown's housing is old. That's why I don't live here. The rents are high unless you live in subsidized housing.”

One resident discussed the difficulty of securing affordable housing in Chinatown. “Though government subsidized housing is good for poor people, it is not easy to get one because it is hard to find more housing like this in Chinatown. If someone wants to apply for an apartment in my building or somewhere in central Chinatown, they have to wait until I die. I'd say that I was very lucky.”

Another community resident noted that the housing shortage reduced landlords’ incentive to maintain apartments because many people on waiting lists were so eager to find apartments that they were undeterred by leaking sinks or broken facilities.

Issue: Poor Condition of Existing Stock

Many interviewees, including local residents pointed to poor living conditions as a major issue. One Community Board member pointed to the severe overcrowding of residents in Chinatown apartments, “These conditions don't even exist in the Third World, but they're here, in a community located next to the Financial District.” One organization head noted that the housing conditions are worsening and that Chinatown has not experienced the kind of revitalization that other communities have had with the arrival of new immigrants.
Community Vision

- Chinatown needs more affordable housing. The head of a nonprofit organization stated that the community needs to develop a more proactive policy for affordable housing, especially to house the influx of recent immigrants and provide the appropriate social services. “We need more public housing; otherwise, the Chinese community will be locked out.”

- One interviewee suggested planning residential units around transportation hubs, as in Asian cities. Another person suggested the development of more high-end housing to accommodate potential growth in the high-tech industry.

- There is division on possible zoning changes. One interviewee, for example, suggested that “we should get the City to help plan so that we can increase [the size of buildings], and add volume and design guidelines.” Another indicated that zoning regulations needed to ensure the preservation of the residential community in Chinatown, as well as its historical landmarks, “Chinatown should stay a living, breathing 24-hour community.”

EMPLOYMENT & INCOME GENERATION

Many interviewees expressed concern over the local economy and its impact on employment opportunities. Interviewees pointed to numerous factors that have contributed to the slow down, including the tragic events last September and its aftermath, the overall downturn in the national economy, high commercial rents, and insufficient financial assistance for small businesses following September 11th.

The street closures in Chinatown following September 11th had a particularly damaging effect on the local economy. The immediately surrounding areas were cordoned off to street traffic for several weeks. Furthermore, the community had limited non-residential pedestrian access, and bridge and street closures, many of which remain in effect. As the economic base in Chinatown is largely that of retail and service sector businesses, operations that rely heavily on traffic and tourism, these closures were particularly devastating, the effects of which are still felt today.

One community leader noted that most Chinatown businesses operate on thin profits, which increase the effect of short-term losses. Further compounding the problem is the fact that the majority of Chinatown workers have relatively low skills, limited education levels, and language barriers.

Several interviewees replied that the relief funds post September 11th required too much paperwork and many small business owners gave up on filling out the forms. Alternatively, many small business owners didn’t have sufficient documentation to be eligible for assistance.
The owner of a gift and souvenir store on Mott Street estimated that before last fall, approximately 10,000 of the 100,000 local residents would pass by his store every day; he doesn’t see this kind of foot traffic anymore. He added that there are fewer international tourists in Chinatown and estimated that business is down 30 to 50 percent compared to the period preceding September 11th. As one interviewee described, the economy is bad, tourism is falling, now that the novelty of visiting New York City since the World Trade Center tragedy has passed, and unemployment is high.

Another storeowner cited shop closures as a major problem. When the economy starts to slow down, some shops inevitably close, which can lead to a domino effect. When customers see that some shops in an area have closed, they will go elsewhere.

**Issue: More Employment Opportunities in New and Varied Sectors**

Many interviewees agree that Chinatown needs to create more employment opportunities for its residents. One young professional stated, “I have seen a noticeable change in Chinatown mostly in the past year - mostly in terms of the economy of the neighborhood. Many people of the older generation are left without work, especially those in the garment industry, unable to find other occupations due to language barriers and lack of skills.”

One community leader pointed to job loss and job growth as the biggest problems in Chinatown. While the job situation has rebounded to a certain extent, it is not at the levels prior to September 11th. Even if there were job training programs available, the question remains, “Where are the jobs?”

**Community Vision**

- More jobs that pay more than the minimum wage and offer health insurance.

- Encourage small businesses to hire employees and simultaneously provide an alternative for street vendors.

- Emphasize new industries, especially the construction industry for immigrants with limited English language skills.

- Bring in high-tech businesses with a focus on Asia, and/or links to Asia or Asian culture.

- Encourage women to participate in different sectors of the economy, such as construction, especially given the advances in technology.

- Promote the Chinatown jewelry industry. According to one community leader, the retail jewelry industry in Chinatown was thriving prior to September 11th and could have emerged as a signature industry that "represented" the community. He estimated that 85%-90% of storefronts on Canal Street between the Bowery and Broadway are jewelry stores. Furthermore, some of their products, like the
jade and gold charms, could be considered "cultural products". He added that the jewelry merchants are influential enough to start their own association in Chinatown. "If we united around the jewelry merchants, tried to do some marketing, we could promote a 'Chinatown Jewelry District,' a 'Second Jewelry District.'"

- Create a local trade center that would serve as a hub for import/export businesses.

- Promote the service industries. One community leader noted that hair salons and optometrists also serve people from the outer-boroughs. Wedding photo studios and other retail stores are part of the backbone of the Chinatown economy; and bakeries, pastry shops, and tailors also provide a cultural touch and serve as an attraction for tourists.

- Promote diversification of industries. One Chinatown resident said, "If everybody only knows running or working for family stores and/or restaurants, they will never have chance to become better off and make Chinatown more prosperous. They've got to do something new. That is the way of doing business."

- Emphasize Chinatown's financial assets. One community leader noted that the neighborhood is rich in financial savings and entrepreneurial spirit, as demonstrated by the $3 to $4 billion in deposits in local banks and the 4,000 to 5,000 businesses within a limited geographic area. Given these characteristics, it is important to provide financial literacy for both individuals and the small business community. In order to achieve this goal, the Chinatown needs more community development and financial institutions.

- Support the creation of an Empire Zone. A couple of interviewees noted that the incentives offered by the Empire Zone will help businesses, particularly those with low-profit margins.

- Maintain and develop the manufacturing industry. The head of a nonprofit organization suggested that Chinatown develop a more targeted manufacturing policy that will encourage employment, provide affordable manufacturing space, and attract and encourage stable businesses that can sign 5 to 10 year leases. For example, he envisioned an urban industrial park concept that would include a few industrial building scattered throughout the neighborhood.

- Change zoning regulations so that the community can develop taller buildings and make more efficient use of the properties.

- Improved physical and transportation infrastructure critical for economic growth. One community leader noted the importance of creating a "long-term beneficial infrastructure [that is] conducive to capital, pedestrians, shopkeepers and tourists." Making the neighborhood accessible for both tourists and everyday shoppers is critical, because this is the economic engine that will drive growth.
Issue: Employment Training

Community Vision

• Provide English language training. Several people stated that English language ability is critical in order to qualify for better-paying jobs, perhaps in other industries and in other parts of the city.

• Provide ‘restaurant English’ courses for restaurant workers.

• Provide job training skills for entry level clerical positions.

• Provide life training skills, especially for displaced garment workers.

• Schedule job training programs at a time when students, especially those currently working, can attend.

• Provide training in the following industries:
  • Banking
  • Architecture
  • Engineering
  • Planning
  • Job training/employment services
  • Construction
  • Social services/public policy

Issue: Chinatown Garment Industry in Decline

Many interviewees, including those who are involved directly with the garment industry and those who are not, agree that the garment industry has a significant impact on the economic recovery of Chinatown. Several people noted that the garment industry is one of the ‘pillars’ of the community and that ‘as goes the garment industry, so goes the rest of the community’. They also agree that the garment industry is experiencing a sharp decline, which was precipitated by September 11th and is affecting other parts of the economy, due to the interdependence among the garment, restaurant, and retail and service sectors.

A member of an association stated that many garment factories are leaving Chinatown and opening up factories in the outer boroughs that are non-union shops. One interviewee noted that there used to be up to 20,000 workers in the garment industry, but as of last year, there were only 7,000 to 8,000 workers. Of this total, 4,000 to 5,000 are non-union workers. He estimated that out of the 200 to 300 factories currently in Chinatown, only 50 will probably remain and the rest will move to other areas. He added that “the factories that would remain would most likely be the union shops and that with 50 factories in the neighborhood; it would only translate into 500 workers.”
Community Vision

- Take a long term view. The head of a local bank expressed the opinion that the garment industry takes a short-term view. He noted that banks could provide loans for cash flow and machine upgrades. The industry should approach government and demand more training for its employees. He echoed other interviewees concerns that the industry is losing business to foreign competitors.

- Make improvements within the industry. The head of a garment industry organization suggested that factories need to 1) upgrade their per worker performance, 2) increase production, 3) increase training for all levels of staff-labor force, supervisors, and owners.

- Standardize the industry. The same organization head also pointed to the need for the New York garment industry to standardize itself so that it is more compatible with garment industry communities around the world. Within the world of the garment factory industry, he said, “Chinatown New York is only on a grammar school level.”

- Conduct an honest assessment of the relationships between the unions, manufacturers and employees, especially in order to create and maintain a manufacturing base in the community.

- Promote Chinatown garment industry as sweatshop-free. One interviewee mentioned that a strong anti-sweatshop movement has developed across college campuses in the past several years. If Chinatown garment manufacturers were certified as sweatshop-free, they would be attractive candidates for schools clothing contracts. It was noted however, that in order for this to succeed, many of Chinatown’s firms will need to upgrade their working conditions to eliminate sweatshop conditions. If such a market linkage were to occur, it could provide needed work for Chinatown’s garment firms, eliminate sweatshop conditions, and serve as a way to keep the garment industry alive.

- Conduct seminars to instruct shop owners on how to bid for government contracts and participate in government programs, like the wage subsidy program. One interviewee who works for a garment organization noted that receiving government contracts or participating in government programs requires that shop owners maintain documents and records.

- Specialize in more upscale products such as evening wear or high-end finishing and embroidery.

Issue: Factory Conversions into Loft Space & Overall Neighborhood Gentrification

One person discussed the increasing number of conversations she’s heard from within the New York City arts community of Chinatown being the next frontier for the arts, much as Soho was years ago, when manufacturing lofts were converted into galleries and luxury homes.

Another interviewee noted that the decline in the garment industry has caused many factories to close, making more manufacturing space available for conversion into office space. However, he anticipates that there will be a surplus of office buildings, especially due to the dot-com bust, causing rents to decrease.
PARKING

Issue: Shortage of Parking Spaces

Community Vision
- Create a big parking structure
- Build underground parking garage below Columbus Park.

Issue: Parking Shortage Exacerbated by Proximity to Government Buildings
Because of Chinatown’s proximity to municipal and federal buildings, parking spaces in the community have increasingly been occupied by municipal and federal employees, especially after September 11th.

Community Vision
- City agencies could provide its employees with parking in a nearby parking garage, like the Metropolitan, which was temporarily converted into an emergency command center but now stands closed and empty. This would help to ease the parking problem, by making more parking spaces on neighborhood streets available to shoppers. This interviewee also mentioned federal funding that may be available as a result of allocations made by Congresswoman Nydia Velasquez towards parking and transportation.

  - Create a rotating parking plan in which the spaces could be occupied by government vehicles during business hours and community vehicles during the evenings and weekends.

  - City agencies could offer free community space or subsidize the creation of a community center in order to compensate for the negative impact of reduced public parking spaces in Chinatown. This way the city agencies could “...give something back to Chinatown after always taking and taking.”

Issue: Parking Shortage Impedes Business Recovery
One Community Board member noted that parking and traffic have become critical elements for the economic activities in Chinatown as the community has become more of a service center for people outside the metropolitan area. Several interviewees, especially small business owners, noted that the limited parking and inflexible parking regulations are hurting the overall economic recovery of Chinatown. They feel that people are less inclined to come to Chinatown and shop if they cannot find parking; these people may begin to frequent businesses in other Chinese neighborhoods instead, such as Flushing or Sunset Park.
Community Vision

- Consider the creation of a parking garage as an important issue for rebuilding Chinatown, in order to accommodate people from the suburbs and outer boroughs. The current situation does not make it cheap or convenient for them to come to shop.

- Create more short-term parking to accommodate shoppers.

- Allow tour buses to park on Park Row, which is currently closed to vehicular traffic and residential or commercial parking.

- Install parking meters along Walker Street, which currently prohibits parking in order to allow for trucks unloading, but there is no longer such a need, because the garment factories have closed.

- Install 2-hour parking meters, especially for those from the outer boroughs who come to do their shopping.
TRANSPORTATION

Issue: Chinatown is Too Congested

Community Vision
Several people expressed the opinion that transportation be the first thing that is improved in Chinatown. One community leader stated that the volume of big trucks that travel Canal Street poses a serious threat to the senior citizens in the neighborhood. Other suggestions are noted below:

• Synchronize the lights on Canal Street to control the flow of traffic; may even want to synchronize the lights starting in Brooklyn to control the flow of traffic getting on the two bridges.

• Improve public transportation in order to reduce the volume of cars and traffic in Chinatown.

Issue: Chinatown Needs to be More Accessible

Community Vision
• Create a shuttle bus service for frequent service within the neighborhood. “It is important to make a shuttle available that provides more frequent service in the local neighborhood from Grand Street to Canal Street, a shuttle that runs every 10 minutes.” A local initiative similar to the Downtown Alliance, for example, could establish a shuttle service for the east side of Chinatown. This is crucial for stimulating the economy; otherwise, it is difficult to attract people to the neighborhood. The Lower East Side and Chinatown can build consensus and resources to cooperate on improving transportation between local neighborhoods.

• Increase the frequency of subway service, such as on the M and J lines that currently are not running on weekends, is also necessary.

• Build walkways on Canal Street and East Broadway.

• Make repairs to East Broadway and Mulberry Street. The sidewalks on East Broadway are too narrow, forcing people to walk on the road. “An estimated 2 million people walk across East Broadway everyday.”

• Improve traffic enforcement as a way to improve small businesses in Chinatown. Improved traffic flows generate more sales revenue for businesses and more sales tax revenue for the government.

• Provide bilingual signs on the streets, including directional signs for major bridges and tunnels.
ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

In addition to the key community needs that were identified in both the surveys and community meetings, the interviewees articulated other important needs and oftentimes a vision for addressing these needs.

ACCESS TO MAINSTREAM

Issue: Chinatown Historically Separated from 'Mainstream' New York City
One interviewee noted that government officials and policy makers often don’t have the cultural access or the language capacity to reach into the community. At the same time, the community historically has not done a good job of reaching out for help. However, several people stated that it is important to educate the mainstream of the need that exists in Chinatown in order for this community to move towards rebuilding.

Several people pointed to lack of government support for Chinatown. “Crucial issues are not brought down to the community level, which is why community involvement is so low. It’s not because people don’t care or don’t want to get involved.” At the same time, other interviewees pointed to the importance of becoming involved in the political process.

One person noted that one of the challenges facing Chinatown is to address the issue of how best to get the community to leverage its resources and assets in order to get a better return in services through external investment. He added that the community is not getting the appropriate response from City and State investment, given the financial and social capital that it hold.

Community Vision
- English language ability is important for accessing the mainstream. One interviewee continued by stating that people should exercise their political rights, such as the right to vote so that they will have a representative in government to express their needs and protect their rights.

THE NEED FOR UNITY

Issue: Chinatown Lacks Unity
Many interviewees, from community residents to store owners, to organization and association leaders, and from across all age groups pointed to the lack of unity in Chinatown as a major issue. One Community Board member cited the lack of communication and understanding as the biggest problem. “What might be offensive to one community may not be offensive to another...Really it's a lack of understanding.”
A storeowner and head of a small business owner’s association noted that while there are many organizations in Chinatown, the problem is that people don’t like to come together and unify. One interviewee noted that the lack of unity is preventing Chinatown from changing and growing. “Everyone has their mountain”, quoted one interviewee.

The head of an organization, however, explained that the fact that there are so many associations and organizations does not suggest a lack of unity, but rather, reflects the many different constituencies and perspectives within the community. He continued in stating that it is important for the community as a whole to collectively change the paradigm of a monolithic Asian identity, especially because it currently provides an easy way out for political leaders to generalize the characteristics of a community.

**Community Vision**

- Important for the Chinatown community to unite and speak with one voice, particularly after September 11th and revitalize the community. One college student who considers Chinatown her home community said the following: “the most important thing for Chinatown, in my view, is to put inter organizational and interpersonal politics aside, and ensure strong, effective and articulate leadership for the next few years.”

- Time for new leadership. Several interviewees also pointed to the need for new leadership within Chinatown. They contend that the traditional leadership does not fully represent the changing demographics in the community. In addition, interviewees pointed to the need for more female leadership, as well as leadership from the younger generation.

- Incorporate people into the decision making process. A community board member stated that one of the best ways for people to understand each other better is to “…incorporate a group of people from different nationalities into the decision-making process.” He added that the racial and ethnic composition of Community Board 3, for example, is becoming more mixed. “[there is] still a lot of work to do, but there is some understanding.” Another interviewee echoed the need for all groups to work together in stating, “Chinatown cannot survive without the white community: we have to all get together…”

- More coordination, transparency and democratic process are necessary for revitalizing Chinatown. These actions will in turn lead to a deeper level of unity within the community.
**TOURISM**

**Issue: Bringing Tourists Back to Chinatown**

**Community Vision**

- Short term and long term plans. One interviewee discussed that in the long-term, government will have to conduct a lot of planning in order to rebuild lower Manhattan and to ensure that the proper infrastructure exists for attracting people to Chinatown. In the short-term, government could focus on fixing the streets and sidewalks, especially on East Broadway and Mulberry Street.

- Internal and external steps. One organization head pointed to both internal and external steps for facilitating the community’s overall growth and promoting it as a tourist destination. Internally, the idea of promoting Chinatown as a destination will need to include community outreach and education to determine what to highlight and how best to improve its assets. Externally, the public sector should invest appropriately by recognizing Chinatown as a growing part of the City and consider it as part of the equation for the overall plans for the future of New York.

He also suggested that NYC & Company work with small businesses and restaurants to promote Chinatown as a destination. To this end, the community could promote cultural attractions, create tour packages, and generally give people a reason to come to Chinatown.

- Increase accessibility. One community leader said that there is a need to make it easier for tourists to order food or buy products in Chinatown stores with descriptions in English. For example, dim sum could be described in a manner similar to the way sushi is described in Japanese restaurants so that tourists know what to order. In addition, there should be more cohesion with the signs and storefronts to minimize visual confusion for tourists. In order to address the tourists’ concerns regarding sanitary conditions in restaurants, she suggested a rating system as a form of self-policing to establish a high quality of goods and services.

One interviewee suggested that a re-packaging campaign is needed to make Chinatown more palatable and accessible. “Tourists are overwhelmed by so many things to do that they don’t do anything at all. Tourists want the experience to be easy.” She suggested creating a guided walking tour to enhance their experience of Chinatown and to make them feel “handled.”

- Conduct tourism study. One interviewee pointed to the need to conduct a tourism study in Chinatown in order to better define the kinds of tourists who visit the community and their interests. While far-flung tourists, for example, are more likely to be one-time visitors who are interested in shopping and razzle-dazzle, the local tourists can be relied upon as repeat visitors. With the local tourists, then,
there is a need to think about why they come back to Chinatown, especially when Chinese goods are more available in the suburbs of Brooklyn, Queens, Bergen County, New Jersey and even upstate, in Buffalo. “What are the unique things in Manhattan Chinatown that can’t be easily replicable and will keep them coming back?”

COMMUNITY CENTER

Issue: A Community Center That is Open to Everyone

Community Vision
• Create a space that is non-partisan and non-political. In envisioning such a community center, one interviewee said that those who use it should agree to a set of criteria defined by a board of directors. The center would be open to everyone in the community, including non-profits, and daycare centers, rather than on selective membership based on political agendas. The creation of a community center would serve as a way of forcing organizations to communicate with each other and work together as a community, in addition to providing more recreational and community meeting space in Chinatown.

MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

Issue: More Outlets for Young People

One person noted that the decline in gang violence has created misperception that there are no youth problems. One interviewee replied, “There aren’t enough outlets for them, except hanging out, going to bars, going to karaoke.”

Another interviewee pointed to two key problems with existing youth programs. First, the lack of leadership development, so that when the existing leadership leaves, the programs end. Second, programs that are part of a larger organization outside of the community limit community input in program design and accountability.

Community Vision
• Create more opportunities for youth, through educational programs or recreational facilities. One interviewee suggested creating a tutorial or mentoring program where young professionals would work with Chinatown youth for several hours per week, as a way for young professionals to give back and remain connected to the community. He mentioned that his organization is interested in establishing a college scholarship program that would be funded by young professionals, and would sponsor a young person committed to working in the social services for one year.

• Develop a network of professionals and people who care about youth to discuss issues specific to youth in Chinatown, such as teen sexuality.
• Create more parks and regular youth programs, especially because of the large youth population and the growing numbers of Fukinese youth.

• Create a cultural community center that would provide Asian American youth and young professionals the opportunities to contribute new ideas and marketing styles for Chinatown’s future growth. “Young people adapt more easily, have new ideas, and are more attuned to marketing and technology. Their input is invaluable.”

SOCIAL SERVICES

Issue: Lack of Adequate Social Services
A social service professional noted that even though the Chinatown community has grown, social services are still limited, especially when social service organizations try to take on too much and compromise the depth of service available. One organization head pointed out that while Asian Americans comprise 10% of the city’s overall population, they receive just 1% of the city’s social services.

Community Vision
• Educate immigrants on political rights in the United States and help them to participate in the political process, namely through learning English. One interviewee stated that it was his opinion that the family associations do not provide programs like these, because they want to make the decisions and maintain the status quo.

• Establish a community 'kiosk' that provides information on the various services provided by the many community-based organizations in Chinatown. A community kiosk could include bilingual websites that would include lists of senior centers, child day care centers, home care services, housing, clinics, hospitals, and churches. A section could be devoted to health care access, mental health services, health insurance plans, Medicaid, Medicare, social security, and disability.

Issue: Limited Awareness About Social Services and Needs

Community Vision
• Bilingual materials at police precincts. A community leader argued for bilingual materials at local police precincts to share with the public, especially information regarding local tourist destinations, schools, churches, hospitals and other health and human services in the community. The interviewee also suggested making available important numbers to contact for emergencies, and bilingual interpreters who are on call to assist in case of major emergencies.

• Educate local community boards regarding local health and human services concerns.
**Issue: Limited Public Access to Computer and Internet Technology**

- Computer access at public libraries. One interviewee suggested equipping public libraries with computers so that users can have access to the Internet. This service would be especially helpful for young people who may not have access to computers at home due to financial reasons.

**HEALTH INSURANCE/ACCESS TO PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**

An administrator at a local hospital pointed to two barriers for Chinese immigrants in obtaining health insurance coverage: (1) income and type of employment; and (2) residential status. Many employers in Chinatown are small businesses or run on low-profit margins; henceforth, they cannot afford health insurance for their employees. Employees, while earning low wages, earn too much to qualify for Medicaid. Family Health Plus fills some of the gap, but its requirement of strict documentation of residential status discourages many immigrants from applying.

**OPEN SPACE AND NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES**

**Issue: Inadequate Open Space**

**Community Vision**

- One interviewee stated the importance of building plazas, green belts and other “pockets of reprieve” in order to reduce noise and pollution. Canal Street could be kept as a strictly commercial thoroughfare, and the streets behind Canal could serve as residential areas, with pockets of green.

- Improvements to Columbus Park: Repair the pavilion and maintain the upkeep of the restrooms.

**CULTURE**

**Issue: Increase Importance of Culture as Part of Chinatown Community**

The head of a cultural arts organization noted that the ways in which Asian Americans are perceived by the mainstream, have the most effects on day to day life. “The life we live in this country is basically defined by how mainstream perceives us and how we perceive ourselves.”

**Community Vision**

Several community leaders, mostly those who are associated with cultural arts organizations, articulated a vision for creating a major cultural arts center in Chinatown. Their visions are highlighted below.

- One interviewee noted the significance of having three former city council candidates, as well as competing community organizations, agree to a proposal and work together to create a cultural...
center in Chinatown. “It’s unprecedented and getting community leaders to work together with a public official is significant.” The project also has the support of a mainstream entity, the American Institute of Architects, as well as the help of Cornell students, who created concept designs. The head of a prominent architectural firm has provided professional guidance and critique, as well.

- Create a world-class Chinese museum that would serve as a destination center for national and international visitors to Chinatown. One interviewee offered this vision and suggested that the museum would include different tie-ins with other local businesses and highlight the unique services they provide. Several arts organizations including MOCA, Asian American Arts Alliance and the New York Chinese Cultural Center are working together to create a permanent museum.

- Create a major cultural institution in Chinatown that could serve as an anchor and a shift in the direction of the local economy. This interviewee envisioned a contemporary arts center with art by Asian American artists. He stated that such an institution could attract enough attention to alter the economy and mindset in this community. He stated that it is important to recognize that Chinatown’s biggest asset is its culture and added, why couldn’t Chinatown have large exhibits of Chinese art like the Metropolitan Museum of Art?

- Create a visitor cultural-learning center for local residents, community members and tourists to provide a space for gathering and learning. This interviewee envisions holding regular activities, such as a performance of Peking Opera or Chinese drums every Sunday. The center and its programs would be advertised in all the city’s hotels to highlight it as a first-stop and introduction into Chinatown’s history and culture. The center would serve as a “cross-pollination between tourists and locals...I’m not interested in market segmentation but in interaction between markets.”

- Create a special facility to provide a physical presence, a home base and convening place for arts and cultural activities. A cultural center would serve as a mini-destination point that would “present the things we’re proud of, something that’s high quality.”

- Finally, interviewee suggested that a cultural center could also provide ESL classes and other educational classes for community residents, as well as space for community-based organizations and professional offices.

**Issue: Position Chinatown to Use its Cultural Assets for Economic Advantage**

**Community Vision**

- Construct a ‘Chinatown Welcome Gate’. Several people stated that Chinatown needs something distinctive, something that clearly informs people that they have entered Chinatown.
• Organize more festivals. Interviewees noted that business owners, among others, should organize more festivals, such as a Jade Festival, Moon Festival, or Children's Festival, to bring city residents to Chinatown and patronize local restaurants. Said one interviewee, “Chinatown needs more festivals and fairs, so that it is more lively and attracts more visitors. It could potentially be a 24-hour neighborhood.”

• Create more effective marketing. One person suggested that Chinatown could be advertised as a cultural place to visit and hang out, not just for eating and shopping. “The landmarks should be used to strengthen the economy.”

• One community leader pointed to the example of Chinatown's neighbor, the Lower East Side. LES has a brochure which points visitors to its amenities and attractions and the Tenement Museum serves an important role in the community.

• Emphasize Chinatown's history. One community leader stressed the importance of linking Chinatown's history to the history of New York City. She noted that there is no mention of Chinatown at Ellis Island, despite it being the first point of arrival for many Chinese immigrants in the U.S.

• Designate Chinatown as cultural district. Such a designation would provide incentives for retaining cultural facilities and nonprofit organizations in the community.

• Consider a hotel tax. One interviewee pointed to San Francisco’s hotel tax as an example of a model for linking development with re-investment in local infrastructure, such as cultural facilities.

• Create more cultural landmarks and activities. Providing a Chinese movie theater, or Chinese dance and language classes, for example, would bring families into Chinatown who would in turn also spend money on shopping or dining.

• A couple of interviewees, particularly those who are active in the cultural arts said that it was important to consider the types of souvenirs and representations of Chinatown that are marketed and sold to tourists.

CRIME

Issue: Crime Often Unreported Because of Language Barrier and/or Victims are Illegal Immigrants

The crimes that are committed are mostly robberies. The head of an association stated that most of the crimes in Chinatown are committed by Chinese immigrants. He added that if a crime is committed on the street, the perpetrator could be anyone, but when it happens in the homes or offices, the perpetrator is mostly likely another Chinese immigrant.
Community Vision
The same association head noted that his organization has been educating new immigrants about reporting crimes to the police, especially since some of the police officers are Chinese speakers. It is also in the process of working with the local police precincts to create an emergency response system. In the event of a robbery, the Association member could call a hotline number that will be staffed by someone who speaks English and Fukienese, who will then call the police.

PROSTITUTION
One head of an organization stated that in addition to issues related to infrastructure, Chinatown also has problems that pertain more to social fabric issues, such as prostitution, youth gangs, smoking, and gambling. He stated that the popularity of massage parlors seems to contradict Chinese culture. He added that historically, massage parlors catered to the large Chinatown bachelor society and was very organized. Today, most of the ads are placed by individuals; so-called ‘free agents’ who conduct their own business from a cell phone.

YOUTH GANGS
The same organization head pointed out that gangs still exist, but they no longer fight over physical turf; instead, boundaries are now delineated by spheres of influence.

SMOKING
He also stated that recent immigrants often bring cultural habits with them, especially smoking since it is so prevalent in China. China has been a particularly vulnerable target for the tobacco industry.

GAMBLING
Finally, the same organization head also noted that gambling is embedded in Chinese culture, but can lead to stress, which can in turn lead to domestic violence. An interviewee who works at a Chinatown youth center also noted the consequences of gambling on the local economy in terms of the money that is lost to the casinos.
ATTITUDES

One organization head stated that the combination of denial, information deficit, ignorance and saving face that is sometimes seen in Chinatown can lead to a dangerous situation. “Hit yourself in the face until your face gets swollen and looks so fat that everyone thinks you're doing well.”

One head of a family association pointed to the lack of a sense of community, family and ethnic pride as a general problem.

Some interviewees, particularly community residents, noted that some of the problems in Chinatown, such as sanitation, can be attributed to people’s attitudes. People should feel more invested in their communities and take responsibility for their actions. “The people here are so businesslike. They only care about their own business.”

INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT

One community pastor stated, “Not only is there a generation gap, but a cultural and language gap.” He noted that the conflicts arise from different sets of expectations. While parents demonstrate their love through protection and provision, their children want to be understood and emotionally nurtured. The consequences of this gap are that “kids don't feel the home as warm or attractive. Outside things, then, become more attractive: friends and hanging out. This creates more conflict, as kids become less studious and parents become more protective and demanding.”

One college student said, “Many Chinese parents work so hard that they spend little time with their children. So many young people go to the Chinatown Youth Center to bang out.”

LEADERSHIP FOR REBUILDING CHINATOWN

Issue: Who Should Take Leadership for Rebuilding Chinatown?
The question of who should address or resolve the problems in Chinatown—or essentially, who should take a leadership role in rebuilding Chinatown—was one in which almost everyone had an opinion. The answers varied from “government” to “the people” to “community leaders” to a combination of the above.

Community Vision

• Community residents: One high school student echoed others in stating that Chinatown residents should have a say in the way problems are addressed. Another interviewee, who is a young
professional, stated that while city officials should definitely play a role, residents should voice their opinions, provide input, and prioritize the issues that are most important to them.

He added, “To do this, we need to break the language barrier and promote confidence in people's minds that their opinions do matter and that the strength of a community is a force to be reckoned with. I don't know too much about politics and the dynamics of the political, social and community systems that should be put in place to deal with these concerns, but I hope that someone is looking out for Chinatown, especially in these troubling economic times.”

One college student agreed that community residents should also be involved in the plans to revitalize the neighborhood. He noted that residents should be informed about the various options. For example, information about budgets and budget items can be given to people to help them prioritize, choose, and have a say in programs and projects for the neighborhood; or better understand why certain programs and projects are chosen versus others. “It should be a mix, but the strongest voice has to be from the community.”

• **Government agencies:** Others replied that government agencies should take a lead in rebuilding the community. One community leader identified the key agencies for rebuilding Chinatown as the following:
  
  - Lower Manhattan Development Corporation
  - Department of City Planning,
  - Department of Cultural Affairs,
  - Department of Business Services, and
  - Citywide Administrative Services.

A student at the CPC job training program replied that government needs to address the problems facing Chinatown’s recovery, but said it is difficult to find someone who is not self-interested or greedy. On the other hand, a small business owner shared his opinion, “The government does not care that much, and I do not know any community organization that can help on these issues. They also need money to do these [things].” Another interviewee stated that while she wants government involvement in solving these problems, it must listen to those who have been affected, to help them determine how to spend money on programs and services. “It is not enough just to throw money at a problem.”

• **Community leadership:** Still others called for community leadership in addressing Chinatown’s pressing issues. One community leader stated that a local community group be formed—for profit or nonprofit—to take the lead in tackling these issues. He argued that a local community group would best understand the complexity of Chinatown.
One interviewee stated that everyone at the community level should be involved in the rebuilding process, including:

- Asian Americans for Equality,
- Chinese-American Planning Council,
- Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association,
- Chinatown Health Clinic,
- Chinatown Manpower Project,
- Chinatown YMCA,
- Hamilton Madison Houses, and
- Henry Street Settlement.

Yet another interviewee argued that because Chinese radio stations and newspapers have significant influence on funding and outsiders’ perceptions of Chinatown, a group like "Asian Media in Action" should be formed by Asian American journalists to focus on social issues affecting Asian American communities in the city. Finally, one interviewee identified three community groups to take a leadership role: 1) business leaders; 2) long-standing organizations that have helped to shape the community; and 3) younger, more rebellious voices to offer more creativity.

- **All interested parties:** Several interviewees felt that the current issues in Chinatown should be addressed by all interested parties—government, community leaders and organizations, and community residents.

  Said one interviewee, "I think that government needs to play a role in solving issues, but we as the Chinese community need to play a role too. For example, Chinatown is dirty, but we need to take responsibility for being cleaner. But for example parking, traffic is the domain of government."

One interviewee suggested that elected officials play a role, as well as organizations from different sectors of the Chinatown community, like cultural institutions, tenant associations, unions, restaurant and jewelry associations, the banking community, school principals, hospitals, mainstream media, and community-based organizations that provide services to new immigrants.

**STRATEGY FOR REBUILDING CHINATOWN**

**Issue: Best Strategies for Rebuilding Chinatown?**

Just as people had definitive opinions as to who should take a leadership role in rebuilding Chinatown, interviewees also had numerous strategies or suggestions as to how best to rebuild the community.
Community Vision

- **Incorporate a vision that is shared by all stakeholders in the community:** One interviewee stated that it is important to build consensus, to the extent that interested parties “agree to disagree”. Another called for more coordination and communication to clearly articulate what the rebuilding process is and what it seeks to accomplish. Furthermore, she cited the need for greater transparency and accountability to the community, as well as a need to pay attention to both the big and the smaller organizations for community input. One interviewee cautioned however, against duplicating efforts, “…don’t need to reinvent the wheel; it’s all there.”

- **Use the political climate to secure commitments from elected officials:** One interviewee felt that it is important for community groups to use the political climate to secure commitments from elected officials for improvements in Chinatown, such as the creation of the cultural center. After the governor’s election in November, elected officials will not be concerned with Chinatown anymore, and the focus will shift from the governor to LMDC. The next three months is the most critical period, he argued at the time of the interview.

- **Rival community groups should sit down and evaluate the objectives for rebuilding Chinatown:** “[W]hat do they want out of September 11th as a stepping stone? What are their competing interests, and how can they pitch a deal and go in together? Then, the city will not be able to come up with reasons to object.”

- **Establish a town hall or community council:** A couple of interviewees suggested establishing a town hall or community council entity that would allow all segments of the community to share information as well as solicit the participation and support from the community. In forming such a council, one interviewee agreed that it must be created through an open process with a rotating chairperson position. While he noted that organizations that do not get along could pose a challenge to this type of effort, he believes that this type of structure is necessary for building a broad-based coalition.

- **Choose one or two items to address first:** Several people noted that this strategy is important so that the community can throw all their weight behind these items and help build broader support for the revitalization of Chinatown. One interviewee noted that it is important to show that “we can do it; otherwise, our efforts will be dispersed. It could even be one issue that would serve as a beacon to attract all the other stuff; it has to be sexy, high-profile and successful. And we can’t let government officials feel that they’re done with helping Chinatown after it is accomplished. We have to keep up the pressure.”
THE WAY FORWARD: 
A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

The fundamental objective of the initial phase of the Rebuild Chinatown Initiative (RCI) was to focus the initiative's efforts on a set of development priorities that are most 'meaningful' to the largest cross section of stakeholders in the community. In that respect, this phase of RCI was particularly successful, as a significant proportion of Chinatown’s community identified their development priorities to be:

1. Improving the sanitary conditions of Chinatown (including issues of garbage collection, odor, and pollution)
2. Addressing the affordable housing (and senior housing) demand of Chinatown residents, with respect to both development of new units and rehabilitation of the exiting stock.
3. Creating more employment and income generating opportunities for Chinatown's residents, particularly for those stakeholders engaged in the manufacturing sector.
4. Alleviating the acute shortage of parking spaces in Chinatown.
5. Reducing traffic congestion in the community.

While a number of other development priorities were also identified, they had less of a consensus among the community's stakeholders. This, however, does not make them less meaningful. It simply places them somewhat later in the time table of RCI’s programmatic initiatives.

FRAMEWORK FOR ARTICULATING A COMMUNITY PLAN

In addressing the issues identified above, it is critical for RCI not to lose the momentum and enthusiasm generated among Chinatown's stakeholders through the household survey, community meetings, and intensive interviewing processes. Consequently, the program design phase of the Initiative should immediately follow.

1. **Form a ‘Community Advisory Board’**: Forming a ‘Community Advisory Board’ to act as an overall planning and implementation ‘body’ is an imperative first step in articulating a revitalization plan for Chinatown. A prerequisite for the Board’s effectiveness is that its membership should reflect the diverse nature of nonprofit organizations and family associations in the community, as well as those stakeholders whose agendas may not be focused primarily on the five priorities identified above.
2. **Recruit Board Members and Development Specialists to ‘Planning Taskforces’**: RCI should form a task force to address each of the identified priorities. The task forces should be made up of ‘Community Advisory Board’ members, Chinatown residents, representatives of existing nonprofit organizations with a track record of addressing a particular issue (housing, employment, etc.), and ideally should be staffed by appropriate city agencies. The taskforce work program should address the following tasks:

- **Setting Goals**: Goals should correspond to the issues identified, and be attached to a timetable.
- **Illustrating Alternatives/Selection Criteria**: Any given goal can usually be met in several different ways. The taskforces should generate various alternatives, then design criteria for choosing among them. A good starting point is to review the Chinatown stakeholders’ visions for addressing each of the identified development priorities.
- **Articulating the Community Plan’s Recommendations**: The recommendations should directly address the identified goals for each issue (sanitation, affordable housing, etc.) and outline strategies for their realization.
- **Designing an Implementation Program**: The planning taskforces should outline a clear implementation program addressing:
  - What action to take first?
  - What resources are necessary?
  - Where will these resources be found?
  - Who are the potential implementation partners?

**GEARING THE CHINATOWN PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Not all plans get implemented. The reasons are partially technical and partially political. Some simple techniques, however, can increase a Chinatown Revitalization plan’s likelihood to be implemented, such as:

- **Using precise language in the making of the recommendations**: Recommendations should state things succinctly, and specify who needs to do what. A recommendation that reads "increase open space in the Chinatown" is rather vague. A stronger recommendation would read "RCI will work with the Planning Department to allocate CDBG funds acquisition of residential properties by nonprofit origination to maintain affordable housing in the community”

- **Including an order of priorities and a timeline in the planning document**: This is especially important if the plan recommends a wide range of costly items, such as street repairs, building rehabilitation, or other capital improvements.
• **Attaching cost estimates to each recommendation:**
  When the implementation costs are identified in the document, the plan tends to be immediately perceived as "realistic". In addition, the community can then raise funds from public and private sources to implement discreet recommendations. Similar projects in other neighborhoods can be used as examples.

• **Identifying potential public and private funding sources:**
  RCI should be active in pursuing foundation grants, as well as federal, state and city assistance.

Finally, it is important to note that 'Rebuild Chinatown will work only if the "community" has a substantial and tangible responsibility in both implementing and monitoring the successes and shortcomings of the plan's recommendations. A certain way to doom a plan to failure is to draft all recommendations to be "someone else's" responsibility to implement, be that the City, local nonprofit, or banks.
PROGRAMMATIC OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

MWA presents the following programmatic options to consider in addressing the top three issues that were identified during this process-sanitation, affordable housing, and employment and income generation. These recommendations combine the suggestions of RCI participants, along with insights based on MWA’s experience in conducting community planning processes and the community development field in general.

SANITATION

Throughout the RCI survey, interviews and community meetings, and across demographic and residency groups, sanitation was singled out as one of the most important problems in Chinatown. It was highlighted as an issue pertinent to all Chinatown community members and industries, with particularly negative impacts on sectors such as tourism and transportation.

There is a strong recognition by RCI participants that sanitation must be addressed from within the community in order to sustain a long-term improvement in Chinatown. A sense of collective responsibility needs to be developed to ensure active participation by all citizens in the effort to keep Chinatown clean, while external support is required for compliance with the regulatory systems.

The RCI study and community participants point to two priority focus areas to address this primary community need:

1. Awareness-raising & behavioral change within Chinatown, through actions such as:
   - Develop awareness-raising campaigns run by local organizations, and targeted at the Chinatown community as well as specific target groups such as merchants, caterers, school children etc. Existing Chinatown organizations with links to outreach or training programs would be best placed to take this forward.
   - Increase awareness through existing and highly utilized services, such as job-training facilities, schools and health centers; providing information on public responsibility, sanitation laws and regulations and the links to a healthier living environment.
   - Identify existing Chinatown sectors (i.e. merchants, caterers, street vendors) that could be catalysts in forming voluntary self-regulatory groups, to supervise and support compliance with sanitation regulations, and to strengthen bargaining-power with city authorities.

2. Compliance with the regulatory system & the need for external support, such as:
   - Increase garbage pick-ups and/or larger garbage pails.
   - Increase in sanitation inspection by City authorities to ensure compliance with sanitation regulations and the application of sanctions where necessary.
• Training on sanitation regulatory systems.
• Development of a capital pool to provide funds to restaurant and garment factory owners to upgrade their facilities for compliance with sanitation regulations.
• Identification of under-utilized public spaces which may be assigned for the creation of organized and contained market places for street vendors, including on-site cleaning stations.
• Creating public/private partnerships such as a Business Improvement District as a means to raise funds.

AFFORDABLE AND SENIOR HOUSING

Community residents, workers and leaders identify the absence of affordable housing as one of three critical issues facing Chinatown. RCI survey results and interviews paint a portrait of a community in which many residents live in cramped, dilapidated apartments at rents that consume large percentages of their incomes; where overcrowding is rampant; and where gentrification pressures from adjacent neighborhoods compel many landlords to exert multiple means to displace immigrant households.

RCI participants point to several possible improvements, divided into three primary areas: zoning; tenant protections; and new development.
• Participants are mixed on possible zoning changes, with some favoring increased density and significant expansion of existing buildings and others concerned for the historical and architectural integrity of the community;
• Many participants raised the need to increase tenant protections to prevent evictions and to improve tenant housing conditions; and,
• Many participants pointed to the significant need for increased affordable housing production and rehabilitation and to the need for affordable senior housing.

These priorities suggest several areas of focus for RCI, both short- and medium- term, to encourage affordable housing preservation and stimulate affordable housing development:

1. Affordable Housing Preservation

In order to improve conditions for existing Chinatown residents, findings from the RCI study suggest three short-term responses:

• Strengthen existing tenant rights in order to deter illegal evictions and to reduce the harassment of renters, particularly elderly and immigrant individuals and families;
• Increase building inspections to ensure that buildings are code-compliant while also raising the penalties for code violations; and,
• Develop a capital pool to provide low cost rehabilitation financing to building owners to allow them to complete necessary repairs and upgrades.
2. Affordable Housing Development

In order to increase affordable housing opportunities in Chinatown and to create viable housing opportunities for senior citizens of the community, findings from the RCI study suggest both short- and medium-term responses:

**Short-term initiatives:**
- Create new funding pools to spur the acquisition of privately-owned development sites and the development of affordable and senior housing; and,
- Identify under-utilized publicly-owned buildings for acquisition for and/or redevelopment as affordable and senior housing.

**Medium-term efforts:**
- Create and maintain a database of buildings and building sites in Chinatown and the Lower East Side to help identify future development sites or preservation opportunities; and,
- Create a Lower Manhattan Affordable Housing Trust Fund with funding from a dedicated public revenue stream to support the development of affordable housing south of Houston Street.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME GENERATION

RCI surveys and interviews indicate that the lack of employment opportunities looms as one of the most worrisome issues confronting the Chinatown community. RCI participants point to the community’s insularity, an isolation compounded by significant language barriers, as a primary contributor to the dearth of viable job prospects. Chinese immigrants, with limited or no English-language skills, are at a severe disadvantage in the job market outside of Chinatown and New York City’s other Chinese immigrant communities. With the decline of the garment manufacturing industry, for decades one of the community’s primary employers, and the reduction in tourism, both domestic and international, Chinatown is no longer generating sufficient jobs to employ New York’s Chinese-immigrant population. RCI participants suggest several solutions to this problem.

1. **The creation of a Chinatown cultural district,** with a cultural center or museum and a performing arts facility. In addition to drawing increased tourism, a cultural district would also have distinct ancillary benefits, including increased business for retailers selling cultural items, like antiques and jade and gold jewelry, and for restaurants.

2. **Cultivation of the tourist trade,** including the creation of walking trails and maps, informational kiosks and guides to restaurants and stores. Chinatown does not actively welcome tourists at present, a situation which businesses could tolerate in flush times but which is no longer tenable.

3. **Increased protection for light manufacturing businesses,** including garment factories, to preserve Chinatown’s viability as a mixed-use community. Protections might include stronger enforcement of existing zoning regulations, the development of a rent subsidy program or the creation of a separate light manufacturing zone, an “urban industrial park”.

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4. Development of strong English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for community residents and workers, including industry-specific classes, like "restaurant English".

5. Increases access to affordable loan and investment capital for the small business owners who constitute the overwhelming majority of Chinatown employers, as well as training and technical assistance to facilitate the transition from traditional to modern business practices.

6. Expand training programs for garment factory owners and workers to enhance the competitiveness and strength of the garment manufacturing industry in Chinatown.
Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) data shows a steady decline of Chinese immigrants to the United States since 1996 (from 62,963 persons to 43,835). The trend is likely to continue in the future, particularly given stricter immigration regulations following the events of September 11th. Decline in the number of Chinese immigrants will undoubtedly have an impact on Chinatown in both social and economic terms. Businesses in Chinatown depend on immigrants both as labor force participants, as well as consumers of specialty goods. The trend may also indicate a need for the Rebuild Chinatown Initiative to consider strategies aimed at diversifying Chinese businesses products, and consequently their consumer base.