

# Chinatown Will Emerge As Key Neighborhood In Post-9/11 Debate

*Velazquez, City Aides Press Initiative*

**CAMPAGIORNI: 'WE HEARD AN OUTCRY, WE MADE A CHANGE'**

By **ERROL LOUIS**  
Staff Reporter of the Sun

The next venue in the city's post-September 11 debate is going to be Chinatown, which until recently was ignored in most discussions of how to restore and rebuild Lower Manhattan. That, at least, is the view of Asian Americans for Equality, which yesterday launched its own initiative to develop a post-attack recovery plan for Chinatown.

"At first, government agencies did not recognize the need to extend assistance to Chinatown," said AAFE's executive director, Chris Kui, who is using a \$100,000 grant from Freddie Mac, the mortgage agency, to hire a professional planner, Moustafa Mourad, who formerly served as a senior planner for the cities of Boston and Cambridge. During the next 90 days, Mr. Mourad will conduct surveys and focus groups on Chinatown's needs and create an action plan that will be forwarded to public and private agencies.

"What we're looking at is an engagement and dialogue" with agencies such as the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, said Mr. Kui. The LMDC, which is run by a panel of officials appointed by Mayor Bloomberg and the governors of New York and New Jersey, has primary responsibility for coordinating relief and rebuilding efforts in Lower Manhattan. At a stormy public hearing on May 23, Chinatown leaders charged the agency with ignoring the needs of their neighborhood, located about one mile northeast of the World Trade Center.

By all indications, the complaints have made a difference. "LMDC has launched an ongoing dialogue with leaders in Chinatown regarding the needs of residents, workers and the greater Chinese community," Nancy Poderycki of the LMDC told The New York Sun. "We will continue to listen and address their concerns throughout the revitalization process."

That sentiment was echoed yesterday at a press conference. Mr. Kui was flanked by Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, City Council member Alan Gerson, and the Bloomberg administration's commissioners of Finance, Immigrant Affairs, and Employment. All expressed support for the AAFE planning process.

"Chinatown has been affected by the events of September 11 like no other community," said Ms. Velazquez. "Some companies are only now understanding the scope of their loss, and they need help."

According to a recent report by the Asian American Federation of New York, most of Chinatown's 250 restaurants lost 30% to 70% of their business in the three months following the terrorist attack. During that same period, more than 40 garment factories closed, in many cases because they were located in the frozen zone where traffic was restricted. Restaurants and retail stores suffered as well when 1,000 parking spaces were eliminated due to street closings and increased police checkpoints. An estimated 7,685 people — 23% of the working population of Chinatown — were laid off in the three months following the attack. Few have been re-hired full-time.

To make matters worse, many Chinatown entrepreneurs were unable to complete the paperwork necessary to receive disaster relief loans or grants, due to language barriers and an absence of detailed financial records among the neighborhood's small businesses and restaurants that deal in cash. A final barrier to local mom and pop businesses was a relief policy that confined direct financial assistance to companies with more than 10 employees.

Many of those barriers have been removed in recent weeks. "We heard an outcry, so we made a change," said the Empire State Development Corporation's World Trade Center business recovery director, Anthony Campagiorni. Chinatown businesses with fewer than 10 employees may now apply for more than \$200 million in recovery funds that are still available, he said. The program, which provides

*Please see CHINATOWN, page 4*

# The

## NEW YORK



# Sun

Tuesday, July 9 2002

## Chinatown's Next

*CHINATOWN continued from page 1*  
grants ranging from 4% to 8% of a business's pre-attack revenues, expires at the end of December.

Additional help for Chinatown will come from a three day Lower Manhattan sales tax holiday that starts today and ends Wednesday. During the holiday, most hotel, retail, and restaurant bills under \$500 will be exempt from the 8.25% city and state taxes that would normally be charged, said Finance Commissioner Martha Stark. The commissioner estimates that consumers will save \$1 million during the next three days.

Mr. Fourad, the planner, said he will send researchers into Chinatown to survey current conditions and interview residents and business owners about their needs before drafting a final report. "It's not rocket science, but it's very labor intensive," he said, noting that he expects to hold dozens of formal and informal meetings over the next 90 days. "I do my best work around people's kitchen tables," he said.

"This kind of any approach can be very important for all of New York," said Eva Handhardt of the Municipal Art Society. "The real recovery is going to happen when the communities that have been affected by September 11 put their visions out there."