



Business group forms to help Chinatown
by Aman Singh

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Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation selected ten new members for its board of directors and launched a search for a permanent executive director, the organization announced at a Feb. 7 meeting at Sweet-n-Tart Restaurant on Mott St.

Few were aware of the partnership because the Rebuild Chinatown Initiative took pains to keep the L.D.C. under wraps until a board was selected. Asian Americans for Equality, which started rebuild Chinatown, tapped community leaders from all fields to represent the L.D.C. and, at the meeting, formulated its policies and aims for the year ahead.

Founded last November, the L.D.C. operates out of various, collectively agreed-upon, meeting places. With an infusion of \$225,000 it received from the September 11 Fund for the development of Chinatown, the partnership will now begin a search for an executive director and permanent operating space.

The group is a community-based, economic development organization, that evolved from a three-year-long, community-wide planning and consensus-building process with a mission to improve the district commercially and culturally.

“This is the first ever initiative taken by a locality to address their issues by organizing themselves for the benefit of all,” said Robert Weber, director of policy for AAFE. “The L.D.C. will voice the concerns, form plans and introduce new initiatives to attract new businesses to Chinatown and increase investment.”

Forming new partnerships with the government and others to increase public and private investment in Chinatown is the partnership’s top priority, according to interim executive director Amy Chin. “Chinatown, with more than 80,000 residents, is in the midst of an important transformation,” she said. “Since September 11, Chinatown has been slowly working towards coming together and finding new ways to bridge our differences.”

David J. Louie, chairperson of the board, outlined several immediate plans of the LDC, including a Night Market — a popular concept in China and Singapore — that would benefit local merchants. He also suggested using banners to promote business districts, using kiosks, promotional materials, corporate sponsorships and the campaign’s Web site, www.explorechinatown.com.

Weber, in an interview with Downtown Express, suggested creating a heritage trail of must-see historic sites, installing signs and maps along key corridors to guide visitors, enhancing Chatham Square as the main public square in Chinatown by installing signs, public art and street furniture and developing a community-wide street cleaning project to clean the sidewalks and remove graffiti.

“The next few months will see the L.D.C. acquiring office space, establishing its credentials, strategizing plans and soon, with an executive director in place, the partnership can begin putting its plans into action,” he said.

The partnership hopes to have the Night Market up and running by April or May. They expect to begin work on the heritage trail and “Explore Chinatown” project around the same time.

The board is comprised of people in commerce, business, planning, human resources, the arts, advertising and finance. They were chosen by the AAFE following an application process and each had to prove his ability to raise \$10,000 annually for the L.D.C., said Weber.

Louie is a member of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of New York.

The other members include Deborah Chan, a lawyer in private practice; York K. Chan, president of Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association; Spencer Chan, president of the Sweet-n-Tart Restaurant Group; David S. Chen, executive director of the Chinese-American Planning Council; Peter Cheng, executive director of the Indochina Sino-American Community Center; Margaret Chin, deputy executive director of Asian Americans for Equality; **K.Y. Chow, president of GM Printing**; Kevin Chu, a business developer for the Garment Industry Development Corporation; Charlie Lai, acting executive director of the Museum of Chinese in the Americas; Bill Lam, owner of Longines Realty, Inc.; Charles Man, partner in Sino-American Tours; Sio W. Sang, president of the NYC Promotion and Tourism Association; Pin Tai, senior vice president and division manager of Cathay Bank; Bonnie Wong, founder and president of Asian Women in Business