

## Chinatown starts planning process to speed recovery

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Christopher Kui and Sheldon Silver

Chinatown leaders say that their community has been neglected in the rush to help struggling Downtown business.

In response to these complaints, a new planning process was announced Tuesday by the development group Asian Americans for Equality that aims to focus efforts on rebuilding the neighborhood's economy.

"The impact of the tragic events on Sept. 11 on Chinatown was profound and far reaching," said the group's executive director Christopher Kui in a statement. "Chinatown must be included in the overall redevelopment effort and rebuild its economic infrastructure if it's to survive as a viable community."

The area's economy suffered a blow after the World Trade Center attack when emergency efforts restricted access below Canal St. for weeks. A recent study by the Asian American Federation of New York found that in the first two weeks after 9/11, Chinatown garment, restaurant, retail and tourism industries saw revenues drop off from 60 to 100 percent of normal.

"All of Lower Manhattan was devastated by Sept. 11 and all communities must become full partners in the recovery process," said Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver in a statement. "A community-driven plan will ensure that a range of ideas will be heard and considered."

The planning process, organized by local politicians and community groups, will examine business and community needs and conditions in Chinatown. The initiative will use community-planning experts to identify immediate and long-term priorities for the neighborhood.

The planning process is expected to include:

- \* surveys of residents, business owners and stakes holders;
- \* an advisory group that would include academics, researchers and community leaders;
- \* focus groups with business owners, residents and workers to assess issues, solutions and priorities;
- \* proposed strategies for community revitalization.

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