

Chapter Five: Recommendations

The September 11th tragedy gravely devastated the Chinatown economy. The unprecedented level of economic disruptions to families' lives and the community as a whole necessitates that priority attention be given to the rebuilding of Chinatown. As a cultural center and as a local economy with an aggregated bank deposit level exceeding \$5.4 billion, Chinatown is an integral part of Lower Manhattan and contributes significantly to the economic well-being of the city and metropolitan area. Therefore, efforts to rebuild Lower Manhattan would be incomplete without incorporating Chinatown into the overall development plan.

Based on the findings of this study, the Asian American Federation offers the following recommendations:

- **The Lower Manhattan Development Corporation should include Chinatown in its planning and development efforts.**

From both economic and urban planning perspectives, integrating Chinatown into the overall redevelopment efforts provides a broader vision, as well as social and economic value. This would enable a rational planning approach that addresses physical landscape and infrastructure concerns, requirements of the economic base, and the needs of residents, workers and businesses in the area.

- **The magnitude of economic disruptions in Chinatown requires immediate and targeted intervention with coherent policy and coordinated strategies to help businesses recover and unemployed workers obtain assistance.**

Almost one in four of those who worked in Chinatown lost their jobs during the first three months after September 11th. This statistic alone is an alarming call for immediate action. Support to businesses and workers must move from ad hoc and uncoordinated to sustained and integrative interventions that appropriately respond to the conditions in Chinatown.

- Chinatown, as an economically affected community, should be defined by geographic boundaries that are consistent with its residential and commercial patterns.
- State and city agencies should establish a targeted business assistance program that can respond effectively to the needs of the businesses in Chinatown. Such a program could be piloted in partnership with private funders and community organizations.
- Most dislocated workers are not English-proficient and lack skills suitable for employment opportunities outside of Chinatown. Resources are needed to increase the availability of English as a Second Language and job training programs targeting affected workers. Current performance-based job training contracts present serious barriers to non-profit agencies attempting to assist these hard-to-place workers. Short-term retraining of workers for employment opportunities related to Lower Manhattan redevelopment should be considered.

- The rebuilding of Lower Manhattan will generate significant jobs and business opportunities. There should be sufficient outreach and recruitment efforts to ensure equitable participation by workers and businesses in Chinatown.
- Chinatown has long been a prime tourist destination. Promoting Chinatown should be part of the tourism campaigns for New York City and the state of New York. There is a need for a comprehensive marketing campaign to stimulate tourism in Chinatown, featuring dining, shopping, and cultural attractions.
- **Long-term revival of Chinatown also requires comprehensive planning and investment for community economic and workforce development.**

Because of the importance of Chinatown in the larger city and regional economy, the recovery of Chinatown is vital to the economic development of Lower Manhattan and the city as a whole. The rebuilding efforts should involve an all-encompassing planning process to address systemic issues in order to foster business opportunities and the economic security of workers. Key issues to be examined include the strengths and growth potential as well as limitations of the industries in Chinatown; environmental concerns; and land-use, zoning and transportation factors that affect present and future economic development and the community's quality-of-life.

A special task force should be convened to investigate those long-term development matters, to identify both common ground among the various interests and possibly conflicting priorities, to cultivate community consensus on needs, to propose recommendations to the mayor and the governor, and to explore the feasibility of a public-private partnership to plan the creation of a special economic development zone for Chinatown.