September 15, 2021

Mr. Winston Fisher, Co-Chair
Mr. Félix V. Matos- Co-Chair
New York City Regional Economic Development Council
633 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Re: Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative Application

Dear Co-Chairs Fisher and Matos,

We, the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown and Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, hereby transmit our application for the 2021 New York State Downtown Revitalization Initiative.

Manhattan’s Chinatown has long been a cornerstone of New York City’s downtown life and the cultural home of millions of Asian American Pacific Islanders in the Northeast. Yet, the neighborhood has suffered blow after blow, from the offshoring of garment manufacturing to the lingering effects of the 9/11 attacks, to, most recently, a surge in anti-Asian violence and COVID-19 lockdowns, which have closed more than 75% of storefronts and businesses. Being awarded the Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant will enable the development of cultural anchors that will ensure that Chinatown remains a driver of our city’s tourism economy and will maintain this cultural home for the region’s future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gale A. Brewer

Gale A. Brewer, Borough President
Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Application to the 2021 New York State Downtown Revitalization Initiative

PRESENTED BY THE

Manhattan Borough President
Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown
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<td>• American Legion Lt. B. R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291 • Asian American Federation (AAF) • Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) • BetaNYC • Chinatown Business Improvement District (Chinatown BID) • Chinatown Manpower Project (CMP) • Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) • Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) • Chung Pak Local Development Corporation (Chung Pak LDC) • New York City Council Member Margaret Chin • Think!Chinatown (TIC)</td>
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VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

Provide a brief statement of the municipality’s vision for downtown revitalization.

CULTURE: THE DRIVER OF CHINATOWN’S ECONOMIC PAST AND FUTURE

The Office of the Manhattan Borough President and the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown – a collective of local nonprofit organizations and civic leaders – propose the Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative (CT-DRI) to revitalize Chinatown and ensure it will remain a driver of our city’s tourism economy and a cultural home to the New York metropolitan area’s 1.2 million Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPIs). With its rich access to transit and geographic proximity to Downtown Manhattan, which itself is so critical to our city’s economy, Chinatown has the potential to further develop as a driver of economic growth – for neighborhood businesses, Asian families across the City, and the region at large.

Culture is the key. CT-DRI represents a set of deliberate strategies grounded in Chinatown’s authentic history as a cultural destination. The neighborhood’s events and active street life have drawn crowds of New Yorkers and tourists for generations, who in turn bring vibrancy to its festivals, restaurants, and
shops. We must now make bold new investments in Chinatown’s inherent strength as a cultural destination so that new generations – Asian and non-Asian, New Yorkers and tourists alike – not only come back to Chinatown but perceive it as a necessary New York City stop – and an additional reason to return to Downtown Manhattan, the theater district, and beyond.

The time is ripe for investments in Chinatown. While Chinatown remains an important neighborhood in the City’s economic life, recent years have seen material damage to the health of its businesses. The offshoring of garment manufacturing precipitated a period of economic decline in the neighborhood that was further exacerbated by the effects of the 9/11 attacks and, more recently, COVID-19 lockdowns and anti-Asian violence. The recent lockdowns closed more than 75% of storefronts and businesses, too many of them permanently. The fundamentals necessary for a neighborhood rebound are very much in place, but the need for swift action is acute.

The vision of the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown is to:

★ build a new economic engine driven by arts and culture,
★ solidify Chinatown as a cultural home to the 1.2 million AAPIs in the NY metro area to maintain their presence as an economic base,
★ attract tourists and regional visitors to rebuild Chinatown’s historic economic base, and
★ improve the quality of life in Chinatown so that its residents and visitors can enjoy a revitalized and renewed downtown area.

Inherent to this vision is investment in an ingredient that Chinatown’s cultural institutions have always lacked: space. With its characteristically tight streets and low-rise building stock, along with the incursion of essential City infrastructure like the Manhattan Bridge on public plazas, there is very little significant, dedicated space in the neighborhood for performances and art installations.

The Manhattan Borough President and the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown propose a comprehensive, community-wide participatory local planning process to revitalize Chinatown, centered on three new cultural anchors:

★ East Broadway Mall, an existing building that would be redeveloped as a new arts and culture community anchor with a business incubator and preservation of retail spaces
★ Forsyth Plaza/East Broadway Triangle, an arts and culture open space adjacent to East Broadway Mall that would combine the East Broadway Triangle, the newly renovated Forsyth Plaza, and the produce market that connects them
Kimlau Square, a portal into Chinatown often used as a meeting point that would be expanded and renovated to become the “Columbus Circle of Lower Manhattan”

The juxtaposition of these indoor and outdoor anchors will facilitate synergistic, interactive arts programming that direct participants to flow through the connected spaces. A new marketing strategy – stay, eat, play – will invite new visitors and bring back past ones to rediscover Chinatown after the sun sets. These efforts will be complemented by planning for a network of public spaces radiating outward and across the neighborhood.

JUSTIFICATION

Provide an overview of the downtown area nominated for the DRI program, highlighting the area’s defining characteristics and the reasons for its selection. Explain why the downtown is ready for Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) investment, and how that investment would serve as a catalyst to bring about revitalization.

Neighborhood Background:
With approximately 80,000 residents, this Lower Manhattan downtown area is one of nine Chinatowns in the City and one of 12 in the NY metro area. Together, they are home to 1.2 million AAPIs and the largest ethnic Chinese population outside Asia.

Historically, Manhattan’s Chinatown has been the first home for Chinese, ethnic Chinese, and other AAPIs who settle in the region. As younger generations move to other NY metro areas – including the other boroughs, Long Island, New Jersey, and Connecticut – they continue to identify Manhattan’s Chinatown as their cultural home, making weekly trips to visit family, purchase food and supplies from Chinese businesses, eat in restaurants, and renew cultural and heritage connections. Not only does access to a variety of ethnic shops attract AAPIs to Chinatown, the availability of merchants who speak a myriad of dialects – such as Cantonese, Mandarin, Fujianese, Taishanese, Shanghainese, Wenzhounese, and Vietnamese – encourages them to return frequently. Revitalizing Manhattan’s Chinatown is critical to maintain this cultural home for the region’s future generations.

The proportion of lower-income households is higher in Chinatown than citywide, and the proportion of higher-income households is lower. As a result, its residents alone cannot sufficiently sustain its businesses. Chinatown is supported by a larger community of 1.2 million AAPI’s in the NY metro area, who make regular pilgrimages to purchase groceries, visit barbers, herbalists, and social service providers.
Chinatown may be best known for its many affordable restaurants. They are popular among tourists and locals, government employees from the nearby Civic Center, and jurors exiting courthouses along Chinatown’s southwestern border. However, the pandemic and related anti-Asian discrimination have had a harsh impact on the neighborhood’s restaurants.

No other Chinatown community in the U.S. serves as an epicenter of travel as Manhattan’s Chinatown does. Travelers sustain its small businesses and provide essential support to the local economy. The neighborhood is near interborough and interstate arteries like the Manhattan Bridge, Brooklyn Bridge, Williamsburg Bridge, and Holland Tunnel. Its many interstate buses transport close to 6 million travelers in and out of Chinatown annually. At peak travel times, there are over 200 bus routes, covering 70 towns and cities. Intra-city commuter vans also operate daily from 9 am to 9 pm, connecting Manhattan’s Chinatown with Brooklyn’s in Sunset Park and Queens’s in Flushing.

The infrastructure that makes the area critical – bridges and tunnels – has also physically divided it. For example, the entrance to the Manhattan Bridge feeds two vital corridors – Canal Street and Bowery – but it cuts a wide swath through the neighborhood to the waterfront, severing lots into odd shapes that neither are developable nor serve as proper public spaces. The typically small Chinatown apartments offer little room for respite. Chinatown’s three parks – Columbus Park, Sara Delano Roosevelt Park, and Seward Park (which also serves the Lower East Side) – are extremely well used; they are the de facto outdoor living rooms of Chinatown. Enhancing and expanding green and open spaces in the neighborhood – including reclaiming and activating lost spaces – is a CT-DRI goal.

Rationale for Selecting this Downtown Area:
After decades of economic struggles, Chinatown is ready to rebound. Manhattan has the oldest of NYC’s Chinatowns. It is a critical, historic region that documents and sustains Northeastern AAPI cultural identity and roots. It was a portal through which many AAPIs entered the U.S. and remains important today. Chinatown is a prime location for recovery and restoration funds to bolster tourism, revive the local economy, and create jobs. Providing anchors within its boundaries for the region’s multigenerational AAPIs and global visitors as a base for economic revitalization and job creation, improving connectivity between Chinatown and the region, and creating cohesion among the street-level open spaces are critical to CT-DRI’s plan to transform this downtown area.
As we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the neighborhood’s economy continues to struggle. Chinatown was designated for 9/11 public and private recovery and renewal investments, but funds trickled into the neighborhood. One Police Plaza and Park Row once directly linked Chinatown with the Civic Center, the Brooklyn Bridge, and points south. Their closure has hurt businesses by making the area difficult to access. While the street reopened to foot traffic in 2017, persistent global threats make the reopening of Park Row to civilian vehicles unlikely. The Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown seeks to address this barrier by creating new portals and linkages to the neighborhood.

Before the first case of COVID-19 was identified in New York State, Chinatown had already begun to struggle to attract visitors. During Lunar New Year celebrations, Chinatown is traditionally bustling, with celebrants bringing smiles and revenue to restaurants, shops, and hair salons. However, Chinatown was subdued during Lunar New Year 2020 and 2021. Visitors were reluctant to enter the area due to the discriminatory and inflammatory “China flu” identification.

The pandemic has caused the closure of 75% of Chinatown’s businesses. It also fomented Anti-Asian hate, which has intensified the impact of shutdowns and slowed recovery as merchants struggle to attract new and returning residents and tourists. A Pew Research Center study reports that one in three AAPIs fear threats and physical attacks in reaction to the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes nationwide. In addition to near-daily reports of anti-Asian incidents, social media is filled with unreported incidents of assaults and attacks. Most AAPI elders fear leaving their homes. There is therefore great need to create safe areas for Asians to congregate.

Readiness for DRI:
Older civic leaders in Chinatown and new generations do not always agree, but they are remarkably well aligned on measures necessary to keep Chinatown vital and relevant today: the need for new employment opportunities, affordable housing, accessibility and support for older adults. During the pandemic, younger AAPIs proactively stepped up to mitigate immediate and emerging issues, such as food insecurity, public safety, and vaccine access. They are more engaged than ever and are eager to have a meaningful impact in their cultural home.

The Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown is a group of long-time civic and social service leaders who have worked to ensure a vibrant Chinatown. We have collectively developed multiple plans to leverage opportunities and address issues in this downtown area, some of us for decades. Chinatown has also been the focus of numerous studies conducted by planning associations, city planning students, and academic institutions. Their continued interest reflects a recognition of the critical role Chinatown plays in the region’s economy, both with respect to the tourism trade and the needs of AAPIs.

Readiness to Leverage Existing Investments:
The Coalition plans to leverage both public and private projects in the CT-DRI planning process. Once inaccessible due to its location at the foot of the Manhattan Bridge and a tall solid wall at street level, Forsyth Plaza has undergone recent renovations that reclaim the space for public use. The NYC
Department of Transportation has added a grand staircase leading from the street to the plaza, an American with Disabilities Act-compliant ramp, benches designed by acclaimed Chinese artist Xu Bing, plantings, and bike parking to serve the Manhattan Bridge bike path. Co-applicant Think!Chinatown (TIC) organized multiple events at the space during the pandemic. At TIC’s first event, lifelong Chinatown residents exclaimed that they were stepping foot on Forsyth Plaza for the first time in their lives.

During the pandemic, the community desperately needed gathering places to heal from grief and escape fear of anti-Asian violence. Forsyth Plaza became such a place. TIC led many opportunities throughout the pandemic to claim and activate safe public spaces to promote recovery and healing using art and culture. In many ways, this CT-DRI proposal extends TIC’s and other Coalition partners’ ongoing work.

**Chinatown Arts Week** is an annual Chinatown-wide festival celebrating the cultural richness of Manhattan’s Chinatown. Through events that are free and held in spaces across Chinatown, including at Forsyth Plaza, the festival brings the generations together and connects the community with a wider arts audience. The festival will relaunch in October and mobilize the many arts groups in Chinatown.
Coalition partners TIC and Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), and Neighborhoods Now jointly piloted Chinatown Nights in 2021. This summer series features arts and food at the iconic gateway of the Manhattan Bridge colonnade. Chinatown Nights features an art installation lightbox and cultural exhibitions that showcase Chinatown-focused programming alongside local food vendors. Chinatown Nights will continue as a recurring incubation program to support local vendors and will add live public performances and additional vendors. With additional investment, Chinatown Nights can expand to include a night market.

Beyond these arts and culture events, Coalition partners are already invested in or preparing to launch projects designed to meet the community’s most critical needs and engage its residents and merchants in recovery:

- Chinese-American Planning Council and AAFE have built and redeveloped affordable housing throughout Chinatown, including a new Safe Haven for seniors near the proposed DRI anchors.
- The NYC Department of Transportation has committed $4 million to the second phase of the Allen/Pike Street pedestrian malls renovation. This project will support CT-DRI’s goal to reclaim and activate green/open spaces throughout Chinatown and to direct residents and visitors to the waterfront. Allen/Pike Street intersects with East Broadway and is one block from two of CT-DRI’s proposed anchors.
- The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation has dedicated nearly $1 million for the restoration of the Kimlau Memorial Monument. Kimlau Square is located at Chatham Square and adjacent to a future Second Avenue subway station, and it is poised to become an important economic anchor in Chinatown.
- The NYC Department for the Aging has committed $80 million to rebuilding historic 70 Mulberry Street as nonprofit space. Formerly P.S. 23, the building is a converted City-owned building that was destroyed in a fire. 70 Mulberry housed several nonprofit organizations, including a senior center, a children’s performing arts program, a social service organization, and areas designed for storage of more than a century of documents that archive the history of Chinese in the U.S. Those uses will be programmed into the new building.
- The Mayor’s office has committed $35 million to acquire a building for the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), which would give this institution a permanent home for its historic collection. MOCA’s artifacts were partially housed at 70 Mulberry and were damaged by the fire.

Despite these exciting developments, cultural spaces remain sorely lacking in the neighborhood. Pre-pandemic, Chinatown bustled with shoppers and diners during the day, but quieted at sunset because
there are no cultural or other attractions to hold their interest. Most restaurants generate the bulk of their revenues during lunch, and have the capacity to serve many more dinners. Increasing publicly accessible cultural spaces to introduce evening programming would transform Chinatown into a 24/7 district. A marketing campaign – stay, eat, play – would carry this message and connect regional AAPIs and tourists with the renewed Chinatown.

**CT-DRI: Next Steps**

In reviewing the many revitalization plans produced over the past 20 years, the Coalition recognized that leveraging and refreshing our prior planning efforts and the post-pandemic spotlight on Chinatown can catalyze a transformation. The community is accustomed to participatory consensus-driven planning. We will engage in a local planning process to test and refine our proposed projects and identify new ones to support our vision.

There is a unique opportunity to create three anchors along East Broadway – one of Chinatown’s busy commercial corridors. Starting with the East Broadway Mall (anchor #1), it is under the Manhattan Bridge and is owned by the City and privately operated. The City recently took direct control of the property, and the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services will launch a process to secure a new operator. The Coalition will submit a plan to convert the East Broadway Mall and operate it as a cultural and
performance center, a space for rotating art exhibitions, a business incubator, and street-level retail spaces.

The **East Broadway Triangle**, located along the eastern façade of East Broadway Mall, is a one-acre plaza that has been used for many years by the Chinatown Business Improvement District (BID) and other organizations for free holiday events. During the pandemic, the BID recommitted to organizing its annual Mid-Autumn Moon Festival at the East Broadway Triangle. The BID has also committed to organizing future night markets in this space. Forsyth Plaza north of East Broadway Triangle. The elevated triangle at the foot of Manhattan Bridge has a narrow street-level extension under the Manhattan Bridge that houses the Forsyth Street produce market, which connects the two triangles.

**East Broadway Triangle, Forsyth Plaza and the Forsyth Street produce market** form a contiguous City-owned open space (anchor #2) that is managed by the NYC Department of Transportation. The Coalition envisions combining the two triangles, adding enhanced infrastructure, and programming interconnected arts and culture events.

The bustling **Kimlau Square** (anchor #3) is at East Broadway’s western end and is often recognized as Chinatown’s southern gateway. The City Council recently committed close to $1 million to repair and renovate the damaged monument and may commit additional resources to renovate the entire plaza. This location is critical to all of downtown Manhattan as the future home of a Second Avenue subway stop. With the right investments, it can become the “Columbus Circle of Lower Manhattan.”
Notably, most of the interstate bus lines have stops at or near anchors 1 and 2, making the area easy to access and often the first point of interest after their bus ride by both commuters and visitors.

Reclaiming and activating spaces would give the community a safe place to gather. The spaces can host highly anticipated, recurring events to attract new and returning visitors. CT-DRI is also committed to empowering members of the community to program these spaces. In the CT-DRI local planning process, the Coalition will create collaborative opportunities to engage residents, AAPIs across the region, and tourists in this new cultural anchor.

The proposed local planning process will encompass highlights from existing plans developed over recent years and identify effective new strategies to engage both AAPIs from the NY metro area and returning tourists from around the world. The ultimate goal is to preserve and return Chinatown to a vibrant downtown area.

**DOWNTOWN IDENTIFICATION**

1) **Boundaries of the proposed DRI area**

Detail the boundaries of the targeted downtown area or neighborhood, keeping in mind that there is no minimum or maximum size, but that the area should be concentrated and well-defined. Neighborhoods beyond traditional central business districts are eligible if they can meet other criteria making them ripe for investment. Include a map that clearly delineates the area to be included in the downtown revitalization area.

Chinatown in Lower Manhattan is adjacent to the Civic Center and Financial District to the south, historic SoHo and NoHo to the north, and is an entry point into Manhattan and New York City from Brooklyn, Staten Island, and New Jersey. In the map below, Chinatown is bounded by a blue outline. The Census tracts shaded in purple have a population of 50% or more Asians. Please see Appendices for the map legend and a hyperlink to an interactive map.
Chinatown’s most accepted boundaries are Delancey Street to the north, the East River to the east, the Brooklyn Bridge to the south, and Centre Street to the west. The area is one mile from north to south and 1.2 miles from east to west at its broadest points. The approximately one square mile area is compact and easily walkable. Bilingual Chinese-English storefront signs are a visible indication that one is within – or near – the Chinatown downtown area.

Chinatown has many historically rich highlights and critical infrastructure that make it a regional connector:

- The Williamsburg Bridge, Manhattan Bridge, and Brooklyn Bridge connect Lower Manhattan to Brooklyn and Long Island.
- The Holland Tunnel connects Chinatown and TriBeCa to the Westside Highway and New Jersey.
- The FDR Drive bounds Chinatown to the east and connects it to northern Manhattan and Upstate New York.
- The Staten Island Ferry Terminal in southern Manhattan is a short walk.

Most major subway lines have stops in Chinatown, including the 4, 5, & 6 lines, A, C, & E lines, B, D, & F lines, J & Z lines, and the N, Q, & R lines. The 1, 2, & 3 lines have a stop just west of Chinatown. Among the three major subway stops, 15 million commuters enter and exit through the Canal Street station (6, J, Z, N, Q, R), seven million through the Grand Street station (B, D), and four million through the East Broadway station (F). Chinatown is served by multiple bus lines, all of which also stop in the adjacent Civic Center.
There are four major commercial corridors in Chinatown: Canal Street, Bowery, East Broadway, and Grand Street, which intersect throughout Chinatown:

**Canal Street** is an east-west artery notable as a route for interstate truck drivers and commuters between New York and New Jersey. The Charles B. Wang Community Health Center – a federally qualified health center – is located on Canal Street and is an essential Chinese-language health care provider. The main commercial strip on Canal Street runs from the Bowery to Broadway and includes Asian markets, banks, jewelry stores, and souvenir shops. It is popular among both locals and tourists. NYC’s largest Buddhist temple – the Mahayana Buddhist Temple – which draws visitors from around the region, is located at the intersection of Canal Street and Bowery.

The north-south artery **Bowery** offers restaurants, food shops, jewelry stores, lighting stores, and restaurant supply stores. It is one of NYC’s most recognizable street names. Bowery also houses Confucius Plaza, a Chinatown residential building constructed after a groundbreaking AAPI civil rights moment in 1974 when Chinatown residents came together to protest the discriminatory hiring practices during its construction.

Chatham Square, the southern terminus of Bowery, is a critical nexus in Manhattan. Kimlau Square is in Chatham Square, as will be a Second Avenue subway station. With the right investments, this placement is expected to transform Chatham Square/Kimlau Square into the “Columbus Circle of Lower Manhattan.” East Broadway, Worth Street, Park Row, Bowery, St. James Place, Mott Street, and Oliver Street all radiate from Chatham Square, converging at Kimlau Square. Kimlau Square is home to General Lin Zexu’s statue, a Qing Dynasty official who helped to ignite the Opium War by banning the drug, to the chagrin of British officials who enjoyed the revenue. The monument’s placement in 1997 not only sent a strong anti-drug signal, but also underscored the ascending prominence of immigrants from Fuzhou Province who gained a stronghold on East Broadway.

**East Broadway** extends from Chatham Square east toward the Lower East Side, connecting the Two Bridges, Chinatown, and Lower East Side communities. The western portion of East Broadway evolved in recent decades into Little Fuzhou due to the influx of Chinese immigrants from Fuzhou Province, while the eastern portion contains “Shtiebel Way” (the street was once lined with storefront synagogues to serve the Jewish settlement throughout the early 1900s). Seward Park and two New York Public Library branches are located on East Broadway.

Like East Broadway, **Grand Street** straddles Lower Manhattan’s Chinese and Jewish communities. Some of the oldest housing cooperatives in the U.S. are at its eastern end. It has multiple houses of worship serving Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist faiths. The Chinatown section of Grand Street houses Chinese markets and shops, restaurants, and eastern and western pharmacies.
2) Past investment, future investment potential

Describe how this DRI area will be able to capitalize on prior private and public investment and catalyze future investments in the neighborhood and its surrounding areas. Describe recent planning efforts that support public and private investment in the proposed DRI area.

The proposed Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative capitalizes on recent public and private investments in resiliency, placemaking, and neighborhood infrastructure to build and enhance the community’s cultural anchors, increase growth and resiliency of small businesses, and improve connectivity with surrounding communities.

**Public:**

The Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, a joint New York State and City corporation formed after the 9/11 attacks to plan and support redevelopment of Lower Manhattan, distributed nearly $10 billion in federal grants aimed at rebuilding Lower Manhattan. Funds were awarded to various projects including parks and green space creation, memorials, rebuilding infrastructure, and cultural initiatives. The Coalition will pursue remaining funds that are earmarked for Chinatown to support projects in our strategic investment plan.

With joint funding from New York City and the federal government, the $1.45 billion East Side Coastal Resiliency Project will protect 110,000 New Yorkers – including 28,000 NYCHA residents – from the impacts of climate change by reducing flood risk to communities, properties, businesses, critical infrastructure, and public open spaces. The project will create an elevated East River Park and new landscaping around Corlears Hook, both within our boundaries. The first phase, already underway, begins in the southern portion and includes Chinatown.

The NYC Department of Design and Construction recently completed a multi-million-dollar redesign and upgrade of the East River Esplanade, including the southern portion of Chinatown along the East River. The Coalition’s plan to connect the community’s green and open spaces to attract residents, local regional visitors, and tourists will leverage the work already completed on the Esplanade.

There is a series of smaller scale resiliency projects around South Street Seaport and in NYCHA complexes throughout Chinatown, which are funded by a $50 million FEMA allocation set aside for Superstorm Sandy repairs and a $3 billion FEMA allocation for permanent repairs and post-Sandy resiliency. The affected NYCHA complexes in Chinatown include: Alfred E. Smith Houses ($56.5 million), LaGuardia Houses ($28.3 million), Two Bridges URA ($17.5 million), Baruch Houses ($129.5 million), and Lower East Side ($3.1 million). These run along the southern and eastern borders of our downtown area.
Following the Lower Manhattan Climate Resiliency Study completed in 2019, which was a comprehensive review of current and future climate risks and impacts on Lower Manhattan, the Lower Manhattan Coastal Resiliency project identified investments totaling approximately $500 million and additional planning initiatives to increase Lower Manhattan’s climate resiliency. Project plans are still evolving. The Coalition will work with the appropriate agencies to request investments for our projects.

The NYC Department of Transportation has allocated $4 million in capital funding to support phase two of select sections of the Allen Street Malls. The Allen Street Malls are an important part of the Coalition’s wayfinding to guide residents and visitors to the East River and the East River Esplanade.

New York City has allocated nearly $1 million in its capital budget for the coming years to support the restoration of the Kimlau Memorial Monument, at the western anchor for our proposed project. The monument has sustained tremendous weather and environmental damages. Because Kimlau Square is heavily used by area residents for relaxation and by local community groups for events throughout the year, it is critical to restore the entire square to ensure public safety. The City Council will consider additional future capital funds to support the restoration of Kimlau Square beyond the monument.

Several Coalition partners have proposed low-income housing preservation and development projects to be considered in the strategic investment plan. Coalition members will tap into both public and private financing options for these projects, including banks, the Public Private Apartment Rehabilitation Program, and other economically targeted investment funds.

The State has launched an $800 million COVID-19 Pandemic Small Business Recovery Grant Program. The program provides flexible grant assistance to currently viable small businesses, micro-businesses, and for-profit independent arts and cultural organizations that experienced pandemic-related economic hardship. As we plan projects to assist our community’s small businesses, we will ensure they leverage the State’s funds—as well as any future federal Paycheck Protection Program or similar opportunities—to enhance our project outcomes.

**Public/Private:**
Coalition partner Chinatown BID is an affiliate of the Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation (CPLDC). The CPLDC organizes weekly events throughout the Chinatown downtown area, including annual events at the East Broadway Triangle. It has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to repave and repair this plaza to ensure public safety. The CPLDC’s board of directors will be reviewing a proposal to make a significant investment from its reserve funds to support the CT-DRI project, particularly to fund improvements and enhancements to the East Broadway Triangle/Forsyth Plaza anchor.

Think!Chinatown organized Chinatown Nights (a summer series) and Chinatown Arts Week (a mid-autumn series) at Forsyth Plaza in 2020 and 2021. These popular arts and culture events attracted longtime Chinatown residents and visitors from the region and brought revenue for restaurants and
shops. The late-night activities keep visitors in Chinatown longer than they traditionally stay, which brings additional activity to the small businesses. TIC is entirely funded through public and private fundraising activities and is committed to continuing to provide free programs at Forsyth Plaza and other reclaimed spaces through CT-DRI.

The Two Bridges/Seaport community south of Chinatown is actively fundraising to design and install 3D mapping projections that will support CT-DRI’s projects. There is strong support to integrate neighboring communities with Chinatown to create an interconnected Lower Manhattan community. One idea that has gained support is lighting under the Brooklyn Bridge arch, which is a portal between Two Bridges/Seaport and Chinatown.

Several housing projects that have secured financing that may be used to support interconnected CT-DRI projects:

- AAFE has secured funding from the Borough President and City Council to acquire and rehabilitate a 40-unit single-room occupancy (SRO) building at 80 Canal Street and is actively working with the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) on rehab construction financing.
- AAFE is working closely with two community partners – CAAAV and TakeRoot Justice – to upgrade SROs for roughly 20 longtime Chinatown low-income residents under HPD’s Shared Facilities RFEI.
- AAFE is also working with the NYC Department of Homeless Services to convert a hotel into a 120-unit Safe Haven for seniors (located at East Broadway and Forsyth Street), which will include outreach, intake, and clinical facilities with Asian language capacity to combat senior homelessness. There will be dedicated floors with safe spaces for women only. Once completed, AAFE and the program’s operator will co-program activities to engage seniors at the new cultural community anchor.
- Chung Pak/Everlasting Pine HDFC is in the process of refinancing its 96 Baxter Street building to allow capital repairs to all 88 units of this senior housing building. Coalition partner Chung Pak LDC has already secured $8 million to upgrade Everlasting Pine’s windows, install a central HVAC system, update the fire alarm system, and install an all-season rooftop solarium. Work will begin in October 2021. Chung Pak is committed to dedicating a portion of the refinancing funds and leverage potential private funds to support local economic development activities.
- Coalition partner Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) is in the process of constructing a new building at 64 Norfolk Street, which will provide new headquarters for CPC, 115 affordable senior housing units, an additional 93 all-ages affordable housing units, and a community center that will serve Lower Manhattan residents.

The Welcome to Chinatown (WTC) Fund was co-founded by a team of young AAPI volunteers at the start of the pandemic to invest dollars from online donations to support local businesses. To date, more than $550,000 have been invested in Chinatown, chiefly in grants to small businesses and meals purchased to alleviate food insecurity. The Fund has demonstrated the capacity of the region’s younger
generation to support this downtown area. Its members recognize the importance of Chinatown as their cultural home and were moved to build a mechanism to support and sustain Chinatown and ensure its long-term survival.

A concerted initiative to develop a consolidated strategic investment plan for the Chinatown downtown area is critical to the success of existing and emerging projects. The strategic investment plan will magnify their impact through a coordinated, cohesive multi-sectoral approach, and will connect existing projects with new targeted projects to yield a synergistic transformation of Chinatown and prepare it to be a post-pandemic cultural and economic hub for the region.

Please see “Public Support” below for recent planning efforts that support DRI projects.

3) Recent or impending job growth
Describe how recent or impending job growth within or near the DRI area will attract a diverse workforce and population to an active life in the downtown, support redevelopment, and make growth sustainable in the long-term.

Asian-owned businesses experienced the biggest decline in working business owners through the end of 2020, more than any other demographic group, according to research conducted by the University of California Santa Cruz. It estimated a 20% decline in Asian-owned businesses from February 2020 to December 2020. In Chinatowns across the nation, which often rely heavily on tourism, an estimated 75% of storefronts were nonoperational at some point in 2020. The corresponding job loss is staggering. At the same time, Paycheck Protection Program data from the U.S. Small Business Administration shows Asian-owned businesses trailed other demographic groups in the number of loans approved.

At the same time, Manhattan’s Chinatown has several inherent features that prime it for a strong comeback. First, it is strategically located at the intersection of downtown Manhattan and other key parts of the borough, and it has robust transportation and transit access. Second, it is supported by 1.2 million AAPIs living across the region, who view it as a cultural home. Third, its economy is dependent upon a diverse mix of business types and sizes that serve local audiences and visitors. Finally, it has an existing cultural economy that can be used as a base to stoke an authentic and sustainable recovery.

According to the NYC Independent Budget Office, as of 2017, the City was home to 3,900 cultural entities employing 44,000 New Yorkers, with over 80% of those workers located in Manhattan. Cultural jobs paid $3.3 billion in wages, $2.9 billion of which was associated with jobs in Manhattan. By supporting arts and cultural programs to engage returning locals and tourists during the day and after dark, we can bring the arts industry revenue and support restaurants and other businesses that have long sustained Chinatown. We will develop a strategic investment plan that will create new jobs in Chinatown’s arts and cultural sector, support the existing food and service industries, and reopen the ones shuttered by the pandemic.

To preserve the character of Chinatown and ensure livability for the neighborhood’s largely low-income and the aging households, we will prioritize protecting and expanding affordable housing opportunities.
During our local planning process, we will ensure programming to help local residents and businesses maximize all job growth opportunities presented by COVID recovery dollars and programs that target downtown areas such as Chinatown from federal, state, local, and private resources. The message we plan to send to the region is: “We are creating opportunities to bring public and private investments into our community. Come back to Chinatown if you left during the pandemic. Stay and thrive with us if you remained throughout the crisis. We will reinvigorate Chinatown together.”

We also plan to engage and empower younger generations of Asians to be part of Chinatown’s long-term sustainability. During the pandemic, younger generations proved they have the creativity and empathy to support Chinatown in a crisis. By bringing the public and private sectors and community members together to strategically shape the physical and social characteristics of Chinatown around an arts and cultural core, CT-DRI will develop a plan with creative placemaking elements that will keep bringing people back when we are no longer in crisis.

4) Quality of life

Identify the properties or characteristics that the DRI area possesses that contribute, or could contribute if enhanced, to the attractiveness and livability of the downtown for a diverse population of varying ages, income, gender identity, ability, mobility, and cultural background. Consider, for example, the presence of developable mixed-use spaces, varied housing types at different levels of affordability, walkability and bikeability, healthy and affordable food markets, and public parks and gathering spaces.

Chinatown boasts surprising diversity with respect to ethnicity, age and gender, while maintaining a strongly rooted Chinese history and culture. Together these provide a unique identity and a firm foundation for growth.

The neighborhood’s Chinese community has become increasingly diverse over time. For a century, it comprised primarily of Taishanese immigrants. The 1970s and 1980s saw an influx of immigrants from Hong Kong and Guangdong. In the late 1980s through the 1990s, immigrants from Fuzhou, who largely spoke Mandarin along with their native Fuzhou dialect, moved into the region in large numbers. The Fuzhounese settlers chose the eastern edge of Chinatown as their new homes, in what came to be known as Little Fuzhou, and were responsible for the expansion of Chinatown east of Bowery. Today, the Asian population, though still representing a majority of neighborhood residents, has declined as a share of the overall population by 15% as other ethnic groups have moved into the neighborhood. Residents of the neighborhood are evenly split 50/50 between women and men.

In addition to its younger populations, Chinatown has a significant and growing community of senior citizens. Chinatown’s many low-rise buildings house parents and grandparents who remain deeply loyal to the neighborhood. According to the American Community Survey (2014-2018), Manhattan Community District 3, of which Chinatown is a part, is poised to see 60% growth in the size of its population over the age of 65. This is among the largest projected leaps in the borough. In addition, 11.2 % of residents in Chinatown have a disability compared according to the American Community Survey (2014-2018).
This creates a prime opportunity to carry out the recommendations made by the Office of the Manhattan Borough President and the New York Academy of Medicine in 2021’s “Steps to a More Age-Friendly Manhattan.” The report recommends a series of steps to support senior citizens and the mobility impaired. Several are immediately relevant to CT-DRI:

★ Scale up the CityBench program, and install more benches in parks.
★ Resolve conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists through improved street design.
★ Install more public bathrooms and water fountains.

Increasing the placement of creative, attractive street furniture, planning for more and better bike infrastructure, and exploring public bathrooms are all components of CT-DRI (see Section 7, below). Collectively, they will improve the quality of life for mobility-impaired residents, including the elderly and disabled.

A key project goal – connecting the community’s green and open spaces and expanding physical elements such as seating to help our less-mobile community members get around and digital wayfinding strategies to bring the community to these spaces and to the waterfront – will ensure that Chinatown’s residents and visitors can find their way to the parks and plazas that serve as their exterior living rooms.

Preserving and expanding affordable housing for residents of all ages is similarly a core goal of this proposal. Indeed, many of the programs described in the investments section above are designed around affordability. We will use creative placemaking principles to enhance our neighborhood and increase access to opportunities for life, work, and play. Reclaiming and activating public spaces is a core element of our plan. For example, one of the proposed anchors – the combined East Broadway Triangle and Forsyth Plaza – will become an arts and cultural center with continuous programming to enhance how the community lives and plays. This anchor has the added benefit of being adjacent to Sara D. Roosevelt Park, which continues along Forsyth Street north of Forsyth Plaza and is one of Chinatown’s three major parks.

The 2002 “Rebuild Chinatown Initiative” report developed by several members of the Coalition identified the community’s lack of connections with the waterfront as an important weakness that must be addressed to improve Chinatown. CT-DRI will develop effective strategies to achieve this. We have already piloted the heads-up display model – which is a successful element of Legible London’s wayfinding – around Chinatown. In a heads-up display, the images on a wayfinding structure change depending on where a person stands to improve navigation. It helps lost individuals find their way without existing knowledge of the neighborhood’s orientation. This is especially important in communities with a language barrier or an aging population that needs more contextualized information.
In addition to creating new experiences, CT-DRI will capitalize on the attractions that already exist in Chinatown, including:

- historic Columbus Park (with daily Chinese opera performances, tai-chi classes, basketball courts, a children’s wading pool, and sprinklers all in one place)
- daily access to dim sum, a large variety of restaurants, many specialty import stores, artisanal locally made specialty foods (such as Fujianese fishballs, noodles, and tofu)
- the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA)
- NYC’s largest Buddhist temple (also home to NYC’s tallest Buddha statue)
- the Tenement Museum (which recently added interactive exhibits and oral history recordings featuring Chinese immigrants who lived in nearby tenement apartments)
- the Museum at Eldridge Street
- the Church of the Transfiguration (on Mott Street at the heart of Chinatown, which provides multilingual services)
- the Manhattan Bridge (with its grand archway and colonnade designed by one of the most famous architectural firms of the early 20th century, Carrere and Hastings)

These attractions are walkable and easily accessible from all points of the compact Chinatown area.

The CT-DRI local planning process will identify and enhance opportunities for “cultural translation.” Many visitors and outsiders may not know how to engage with the wealth of culturally specific elements in Chinatown. We often overhear tourists ask for recommendations at restaurants and shops. Some level of cultural education is required to inform and empower consumers to buy. Cultural translation is the basis for the joint TiC-NYC Department of Small Business Services “All In” video series about shopping with Chinatown aunties and uncles, and its Everyday Chinatown series. CT-DRI will reconnect residents and visitors to these attractions through programmed events, cultural translation, and wayfinding.

The defined Chinatown downtown area is approximate 0.6 square miles. It is itself walkable and provides walkable connections to other parts of the City. All three bridges that connect Chinatown with Brooklyn – the Manhattan Bridge, Brooklyn Bridge, and Williamsburg Bridge – have pedestrian walkways and bike paths. Chinatown itself does not have many bike lanes. Some were installed through the years but were temporary. Bike lanes in some directions are entirely nonexistent. For example, Grand Street offers an east to west bike lane, but there is none for west to east. The City is in the process of making several once-temporary bike lanes permanent. Coalition members recognize that the lack of bike lanes that connect the bridges to Chinatown streets is an issue to be discussed in our local planning process.

Access to affordable multicultural food and other supplies is a key element of quality of life, particularly for a largely immigrant population. Asian food markets in Chinatown already provide this. Chinatown has many shopping corridors that meet a variety of needs. The three main parks – Columbus Park, Sara D. Roosevelt Park, and Seward Park – and the playground of P.S. 1 near Kimlau Square have all
undergone multiple upgrades and renovations in recent decades. We will include them in our local planning process and address improvement needs in our strategic investment plan.

The pre-pandemic Chinatown downtown area drew locals to its cultural and shopping opportunities and tourists to its food and history. CT-DRI will revitalize Chinatown and bring back locals and tourists to ensure long-term economic sustainability.

5) Supportive local policies

Articulate the policies in place that increase the livability and quality of life of the downtown. Examples include the use of local land banks, modern zoning codes or New York State Stretch Code, comprehensive plans, Clean Energy Communities or Climate Smart Communities designation, complete streets plan, transit-oriented development, non-discrimination laws, age-friendly policies, and a downtown management structure. If policies that support livability and quality of life in downtown are not currently in place, describe near-term efforts by the municipality to create and implement such policies.

Coalition member and CT-DRI co-applicant Think!Chinatown was engaged in the creation of CreateNYC (see participatory process described below). The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) established a Cultural Plan Citizens’ Advisory Committee to engage communities across the City in participatory planning processes and collect ideas for how arts and culture can support a broad array of issues such as equity and inclusion, social and economic impact, affordability, neighborhood character, public spaces, and health. One of the key takeaways from the citywide process was that 97% of New Yorkers value arts and culture and want to see more music and art in their neighborhoods. The results of the planning process convened by TIC was incorporated into DCLA’s “CreateNYC” report, and most of the elements are included in this proposal. This is NYC’s first-ever comprehensive cultural plan and is intended to serve as a roadmap to a more inclusive, equitable, and resilient cultural ecosystem in which all residents have a stake.

CT-DRI addresses many of the issues in the 2016 Open Space Conservation Plan developed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). While Chinatown has three large parks, they are already in constant use by the community. More spaces are needed to provide the community with outdoor living rooms. Our plan supports DEC’s objectives to promote outdoor recreation; ensure land for a healthy public and vibrant economy; and protect, use, and preserve our natural resources and cultural heritage.

Our goal to reclaim and activate green/open spaces in Chinatown also supports the NYC Parks: Framework for an Equitable Future, which is a strategy to invest capital, programming, and maintenance resources in parks where the need is greatest. We will seek City funds to support this goal.

To improve the City’s livability, a number of pedestrianization and mural projects have been created throughout NYC, including an asphalt mural on Doyers Street (photos below) in the heart of Chinatown. Coalition partner Chinatown BID works with the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) each year to commission and create a new asphalt mural. Doyers Street is part of the innovative Open Streets
program, which closes a selection of streets to vehicular traffic to create a temporary open space for residents and businesses.

While limited, there are several protected bike lanes in Chinatown, including on Centre Street and Lafayette Street, Park Row (which also has pedestrian connections), Chrystie Street, Grand Street, and along the Allen Street Malls.

CT-DRI will seek technical assistance from the five New York City region sites designated as New York State Certified Business Incubators and Innovative Hot Spots sites to support the proposed business incubator at our East Broadway Mall anchor. The hot spots and incubators provides ground-level services that make a dramatic difference in start-ups to achieve success. While we do not seek their incubation services, we are certain their tools and resources will be helpful to CT-DRI’s own business incubator facility.

6) Public support

Describe the public participation and engagement process conducted to develop the DRI application, and the support of local leaders and stakeholders for pursuing a vision of downtown revitalization. Characterize the commitment among local leaders and stakeholders to preparing and implementing a strategic investment plan.

The Chinatown community has had a long history of public participation and engagement in developing plans to improve the community. This CT-DRI proposal is a reflection of these past efforts and a product of a recently formed Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown in the wake of the pandemic.

Some of the earliest plans include “China Village,” an urban renewal proposal developed through a community planning process from 1950 to 1954 and “Chinatown Revitalization Plan” in 1974 which reflected a genuine community consensus building process led by Chinatown icon Norman Lau-Kee. Many of the issues identified in the 1974 report still exist today because of limited resources.

More recently, in 2002, several of the CT-DRI Coalition members and others convened by Asian Americans for Equality completed a community planning process to identify and articulate Chinatown’s current needs and develop a plan for the future. This was a truly participatory process that convened and surveyed the community’s stakeholders representing residents, businesses, and civic leaders, including all age groups from high school students to middle-aged garment workers to seniors. This
massive effort yielded a visioning document – “Rebuild Chinatown Initiative: The Community Speaks” – with concrete goals and strategies and remains relevant today.

In the past 20 years, various Coalition members have worked with other entities – including urban planning school professors and students, DOT, and the Pratt Center for Community Development. In 2008, the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) was formed as a community-based planning initiative on the future of Manhattan’s Chinatown. The goal was to support residents, workers, businesses, and visitors. Stakeholders include civic leaders from all three Lower Manhattan Community Boards, many of whom are in the CT-DRI Coalition. It currently supports a plan for Chinatown that limits the heights of new buildings, requires all new residential buildings built on NYCHA land to be affordable to low-income residents, directs the use of local income levels to determine the affordability of rent as a means to increase the number of affordable housing units, and limits the number of new hotels to be built in Chinatown because they often displace tenants and do not support CWG’s affordability goals. CWG commissioned a 2013 study, later published in the “Preserving Affordability and Authenticity” report. Built on five years of community planning – including ongoing community discussions that engaged a broad range of stakeholders from Manhattan Community Boards 1, 2 and 3 – it suggested a plan to address potential displacement and cultural loss due to rezoning. The recommendations aim to preserve Chinatown and the Lower East Side.

In 2017, TIC designed and facilitated a multi-dialect workshop/day of planning to ensure Chinatown’s voice was included in the citywide CreateNYC Culture Plan. TIC convened more than 30 participants from around Chinatown, including City Council Member Margaret Chin, staff from community service organizations, and community members representing a range of ages, length of time in Chinatown, and occupations. The session was held in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Fujianese. Participants were recruited using ads in multiple Chinese language newspapers, flyers distributed through various community organizations, email, and Facebook posts. We used bilingual tools to collect suggestions on how to design and direct programs and policies to preserve Chinatown’s neighborhood character. Key recommendations – which are reflected in this CT-DRI proposal – were compiled and submitted to the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and incorporated into the CreateNYC plan.

After the fire destroyed 70 Mulberry Street, the community protested the City’s original plans to demolish the building and demanded an independent assessment to determine what existing elements can be preserved as a foundation for rebuilding. Civic leaders launched a three-month long study, including online and offline community engagement and feedback from locals on what programs, services, nonprofit programs, and residential and commercial offerings should be included in a new structure. While the feedback was intended to target the future 70 Mulberry facility, the information about community needs are included in the CT-DRI planning.

In preparation for the CT-DRI application, Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer convened Chinatown leaders to review priorities in existing plans and reports and to develop a new plan that reflects priorities that emerged throughout the pandemic. Because of our community’s long history of
joint community needs assessments and planning, we quickly came to consensus. Our goals are reflected in this document.

In addition to Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, members of the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown (list in formation) include:

- **American Legion Lt. B. R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291** – The American Legion was chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a Patriotic Veterans Organization dedicated to mutual aid. It is the nation’s largest veterans service organization, committed to mentoring and sponsoring youth programs, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security, and continued devotion to fellow service members and veterans. The American Legion Lt. B. R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291 was established in late 1944 in memory of American officers of Chinese descent and was named after Lt. Benjamin Kimlau who was killed in action during World War II while serving as an Air Force bomber pilot.

  - Post 1291 has been a critical service provider to active and retired service members in Chinatown as well as a youth and other community members. For example, it has provided capital funds for the construction of community centers in Chinatown and teaches immigrants basic English. The Post will participate in the CT-DRI local planning process and be an essential partner in planning and implementing the restoration of Kimlau Square.

- **Asian American Federation (AAF)** – Established in 1989, AAF’s mission is to raise the influence and well-being of the pan-Asian American community through research, policy advocacy, public awareness, and nonprofit support. With more than 70 partner organizations, AAF is the largest umbrella leadership organization in New York serving diverse Asian American communities that make up the fastest-growing population in NYC, NYS, and the U.S.

  - AAF provided population data and historic knowledge about Chinatown to assist CT-DRI’s initial planning process. It will support the local planning process by reaching and engaging its members and partners in the participatory process and by continuing to provide data to drive decision making.

- **Asian Americans For Equality (AAFE)** – Founded in 1974, AAFE uses community development strategies to advance racial, social, and economic justice for Asian Americans and other systematically disadvantaged communities, guided by AAFE’s experience as Asian Americans and a commitment to civil rights. AAFE has a track record for urban planning, advocacy, convening and successfully engaging community stakeholders in participatory assessment, goal setting and planning, and most of all, implementing comprehensive neighborhood plans. Through its capacity to operationalize comprehensive and sophisticated toolkits for sustained community advancement, AAFE has developed and managed more than 1,200 units of
affordable housing and 50 commercial spaces in over 100 buildings in Chinatown and citywide; provided $50 million in direct small business lending and technical assistance; leveraged $400 million in primary mortgages for first time homebuyers; and provides direct social services to over 20,000 seniors, youth, low- and moderate-income households, and immigrants each year.

- AAFE has played an important role in the City’s recovery throughout its history. Through its subsidiary affiliate Renaissance Economic Development Corporation, AAFE deployed $8.15 million of Emergency Recovery Loan capital to 400 small businesses during the COVID pandemic alone, with $1.2 million of that going to 58 Chinatown small businesses. Through a grant from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, AAFE disbursed $150 million in residential grant funds to stabilize Lower Manhattan post 9/11 and invested $30 million in tenement rehabilitation and affordable housing preservation in Chinatown for 152 units of housing. Reclaiming essential green and open spaces for the community has been an important goal for AAFE. In the years after 9/11, AAFE advocated for the Allen/Pike Street median redesign and $6 million capital improvement with Hester Street Collaborative and other local partners.

- As a partner of CT-DRI, AAFE will actively recruit community participants and join in the local planning process. In addition, as part of the project’s focus on affordable housing, it will pilot a NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development Shared Facilities model of pandemic-resilient modernized single-soon occupancy housing for low-income Chinatown residents under a $10 million conversion and will conduct a gut rehab of an existing tenement, with $2 million already committed by the City Council in capital funds. AAFE will address the rise in homelessness among Asian seniors and other Chinatown residents via a $30 million hotel conversion into a culturally appropriate Safe Haven with clinic services.

★ BetaNYC – Founded in 2008, BetaNYC improves lives in New York City through civic design, technology, and data and is a key local leader and national partner in civic technology, open data, and open government. BetaNYC empowers individuals and local communities to build a civically engaged technology ecosystem and provide for an honest and inclusive government.

- BetaNYC wants New York’s government to work for the people, by the people, for the 21st century by demystifying data and facilitating access to it to allow anyone to use it to drive decision-making. Its team has provided critical data resource and mapping assistance to the Coalition during the initial CT-DRI planning process and will continue to do so, particularly to support a bike and pedestrian accessibility study to improve the quality of life and livability for all in Chinatown.
**Chinatown Business Improvement District (BID)** – The BID was formed in 2012 and works with the Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation to operate its services and programs, which aim to create a vibrant, clean and safe Chinatown. The BID helps to brand the Chinatown district and market small businesses. It facilitates networking among merchants, hosts community events, and advocates for improvements in Chinatown.

- The Chinatown BID is an important connection between Chinatown’s merchants and the community. It will serve in that role throughout the local planning process as well as help to organize and engage Chinatown business owners. In addition, the BID has the capacity to set the stage for large-scale convenings and events in both indoor and outdoor venues. We expect concessions will be made during the local planning process to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The BID will help set up convenings, including provide indoor and outdoor meeting furniture and post-event clean up.

**Chinatown Manpower Project (CMP)** – CMP is a nonprofit workforce and economic development organization. It promotes economic self-sufficiency and career advancement and serves communities of diverse backgrounds with a strong track record among the Asian American immigrant population.

- CMP will actively participate in the local planning process, including bringing its knowledge and experience in workforce and economic development to ensure project plans have a jobs creation focus.

**Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)** – CPC was founded in 1965 as a social service organization that creates positive social change. Its mission is to promote the social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC advances and transforms communities and ensures equitable access to the resources and opportunities the community needs to thrive.

- As the nation’s largest Asian American service provider, CPC will bring its extensive knowledge about the community’s needs and best practices to address concerns that affect the well-being and quality of life of all Chinatown residents to the local planning process.

**Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA)** – Founded in 1883, CCBA is one of the oldest community organizations in Chinatown. It is the parent organization of the Chinese Community Center. It represents and serves Chinese Americans in NYC through social services, promoting Chinese cultural heritage and traditions, bridges Chinese American immigrants and mainstream groups, sponsors educational and recreational activities, and advocates on behalf of small businesses.
**CCBA** will bring its knowledge of Chinese heritage and culture to the local planning process to ensure project ideas will appeal to the Chinatown community.

**Chung Pak Local Development Corporation** – Chung Pak LDC’s mission is to improve the quality of life of residents in Manhattan Community Boards 1, 2, and 3 by developing, operating, and maintaining commercial and recreational facilities. Among its current portfolio is an 88-unit senior housing in Chinatown that includes commercial spaces, a children’s day care center, and a community health center.

Chung Pak is a critical service provider to Chinatown’s immigrant community, particularly seniors. It will bring its experience in senior programming to the local planning process to ensure that project plans will successfully address livability and quality of life issues for Chinatown’s seniors as well as managing commercial tenants within its non-profit facilities.

**New York City Councilmember Margaret Chin**

**Think!Chinatown (T!C)** – T!C is an intergenerational nonprofit based in Manhattan’s Chinatown that listens, responds to, and builds Chinatown’s capacity as a strong and vibrant immigrant neighborhood in NYC. Its mission is to foster intergenerational community through neighborhood engagement, storytelling, and the arts. T!C believes the process of listening, reflecting, and celebrating develops the community cohesion and trust necessary to take on larger neighborhood issues. TIC aims to overcome barriers of community organizing where socio-economic factors, language, and cultural barriers create challenges for immigrant communities’ autonomy to make decisions in their own neighborhood. Think!Chinatown was built to push from within the Chinatown neighborhood to shape better policies and programs that define the community’s public spaces, to celebrate cultural heritage, and to innovate how our collective memories are represented.

T!C is the co-applicant with Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer. It will work with the Coalition, the local planning committee, and the State-identified consulting team to ensure Chinatown’s revitalization needs will be fully assessed and addressed in the strategic investment plan.

The Coalition is committed to the DRI’s local planning process and to developing a strategic investment plan that will truly reflect the community’s needs and revitalize Chinatown to ensure the long-term health of every facet of the community.

**7) Transformative opportunities and readiness**

*Describe opportunities to build on the strengths described above by providing a list of transformative projects that could be ready for implementation with an infusion of DRI funds within the first one to two years (depending on the...*
scope and complexity of the project). Projects may be public or private, and could address economic development, transportation, housing, and community development needs. Project descriptions should include demonstration of readiness, proposed cost and funding sources, and identification of the project sponsor. For private for-profit projects, DRI funds may not exceed 40% of the total project cost (with a 10% bonus available for projects that commit to meaningful carbon reduction goals, including full electrification and net-zero building performance). While DRI funding may be used to cover the entire cost of a public or not-for-profit project, leveraging of investment dollars from other sources (i.e., private, local, federal, or other state sources) is strongly encouraged.

If awarded, the Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative will establish and convene a local planning committee to develop a variety of transformational projects to include in a strategic investment plan. The Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown has set its goals and discussed several potential initial project ideas to include in the final plan. We expect these projects to include some that will require DRI investment and others that will support DRI projects without requiring additional funding support.

Manhattan’s Chinatown needs to catalyze an era of revitalization by identifying a new economic engine, one that complements its existing industries and can have a ripple effect on the region. The Coalition’s vision is to:

- create a new economic engine driven by arts and culture,
- establish Chinatown as a cultural home to the 1.2 million AAPIs in the NY metro area to maintain their presence as an economic base,
- bring back tourists and regional visitors to rebuild Chinatown’s historic economic base, and
- improve the quality of life in Chinatown so that its residents and visitors can enjoy a revitalized and renewed downtown area.

To achieve this vision, we have developed the following preliminary project list. All proposed projects expect to be ready to break ground in under two years.

**Anchor 1: A Cultural Community Anchor at East Broadway Mall**

**Projected Cost: $25 million**

Chinatown is home to hundreds of active AAPI artists and performing arts troupes, as disparate as traditional Chinese opera to avant-garde modern dance. They have lacked a “home base” to rehearse and perform. The Coalition proposes to convert the partially vacant East Broadway Mall into a center for culture and performing arts with a business incubator and ground-level retail tenants. The Coalition would ensure current retail tenants remain in place.

The mall is located on one of the busiest commercial corridors in Chinatown, at Forsyth Street and East Broadway. The newly imagined space would provide the community a live theater, gallery spaces, a dance studio, and workshop rooms, in addition to the retail and business incubator spaces.

In 2005, with initial funding from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation Rogers Marvel Architects and Webb Management Services undertook a Phase I feasibility study to assess the creation
of an arts center in Chinatown. The resulting document established the project’s viability and defined the program, business plan, administrative model, and site requirements. Fitting within 39,000 total square feet, this anchor performing arts center would be the first of its kind along the Eastern seaboard, centering on the largest AAPI community in the Western Hemisphere.

Since 2005, the search for a site in a Chinatown has been unsuccessful, but this year, a fortuitous opportunity emerged when the City reclaimed control of the 50,000 square foot East Broadway Mall. Once a bustling multi-level center of shops and restaurants that held large-scale wedding banquets and community civic events almost nightly, the mall is currently nearly vacant with only a handful of retailers remaining.

The NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services is in the process of opening a bidding process to secure a new operator for the mall. The Coalition plans to submit a bid with a bold new plan for the mall. The existing mall can more than adequately accommodate a 39,000 square foot performance center, while also allowing the remaining existing retail to remain on site and benefit from increased foot traffic. A new cultural welcome center for storytelling, arts and neighborhood engagement is also under consideration. It would introduce visitors to the Chinatown community and Chinese culture through food and oral history. Chinatown aunties and uncles of different regions would lead hands-on cooking classes and storytelling in various dialects.

Siting a cultural and performing arts anchor in Chinatown would be the catalyst Chinatown needs to build a permanent new industry and acquire a long-term economic engine. Additional space can be unlocked with the creative construction of a sound-attenuated seating enclosure to occupy the underutilized exterior one-acre plaza (East Broadway Triangle).

Location of East Broadway Mall – 88 East Broadway – under the Manhattan Bridge.
Anchor 2: East Broadway Triangle/Forsyth Plaza

Projected Cost: $5 million

The vision for this anchor is to combine the one-acre East Broadway Triangle, the recently renovated Forsyth Plaza, and the Forsyth Street produce market to produce a contiguous open space. With additional infrastructure improvements, this combined area would become an ideal location to host day-long events that could include a night market and cultural activities to engage residents, local merchants, and visitors.

- **Infrastructure for Forsyth Plaza Night Market:** New infrastructure would include street furniture, lighting, and striping to organize vendors.
- **Improvements to the East Broadway Triangle:** Improvements may include façade clean up and beautification, signage, and plaza repaving.
- **Functional public structures:** New structures, such as the red steps in Times Square, would be destination points for locals and visitors.

Anchor 3: Kimlau Square

Projected Cost: $5 million (Nearly $1 million in local investment already in place)
The bustling Kimlau Square at the center of Chatham Square is often recognized as Chinatown’s southern gateway. It received Landmark designation in June 2021 and is the first NYC landmark to specifically recognize Chinese American history and culture. Because of its location as an entry portal into Chinatown, Kimlau Square has long been an important meeting place for the community. It hosts Veterans Day and Memorial Day events, as well as cultural holidays and festivals. As the site of a future Second Avenue Subway stop, it could become the “Columbus Circle of Lower Manhattan” with planning and investment.

★ **Renovate and update Kimlau Square**: Plans include the expansion of the boundaries of the square into East Broadway, along with repairs to the pavings, restoration of the statue, and installation of new seating and other elements to support festivals, parades, and cultural events.

★ **Repair Kimlau Memorial Monument**: At the Square, an 18-foot-tall memorial commemorates Lt. Benjamin Kimlau – a Chinese American pilot who died in World War II – and the many Chinese American soldiers who lost their lives defending the United States. After 60 years of exposure to the environment, the arch is damaged and cracked. The City Council committed $1.139 million in capital budget funds to the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation to repair the arch. With additional funding, this important work can be properly completed.

**Transportation Infrastructure**

**Projected Cost**: $2 million

★ **Infrastructure and street furniture for pedestrian activity**: This Chinatown-wide element would improve the quality of life for residents and visitors and is particularly important for seniors, the disabled and the mobility impaired. According to an NYC Independent Budget Office report on age-friendly neighborhood practices commissioned by the Manhattan Borough President’s office, adding street furnishings in street corridors increases the likelihood that seniors with mobility issues leave their homes and participate in community activities, minimizing isolation and health concerns. Since benches allow people to stop, rest and enjoy their environment, street furnishings would be placed throughout the community, focusing on arteries with high foot traffic and close to senior housing.

★ **Bike/pedestrian accessibility study**: Bike paths and greenways are currently lacking in Chinatown. Moreover, bike paths come off the interborough bridges and do not immediately connect to a bike lane. We propose a study to identify opportunities to increase the use of bikes as an alternative to driving, as well as improve bicycle and pedestrian connections to mass transit options. The study would be conducted in conjunction with BetaNYC with potential support from participants in the CUNY Innovative Scholars program.

**Public Art**

**Projected Cost**: $2 million
Rotating public art displays for public plazas and space: CT-DRI proposes identifying potential locations to build out infrastructure necessary for rotating art displays, similar to Doris Freedman Plaza at East 59 Street and Fifth Avenue. Possible locations include Forsyth Park, the area under the Manhattan Bridge overpass, the colonnade entrance to Manhattan Bridge, and the East Broadway Triangle.

Outdoor stage in Sara D. Roosevelt Park: A removable outdoor stage should be placed in the park for regular civic events, festivals, and cultural programming.

Technological Enhancements
Projected Cost: $2 million

- Multilingual, self-guided tour and wayfinding mobile app: After developing the app’s infrastructure, ongoing operational costs can be supported through paid promotional messages by local businesses.
- Public Wi-Fi hotspots: These hotspots could be established throughout the core of Chinatown by requesting support from the Manhattan Borough President to site LinkNYC kiosks in public plazas and establish a partnership with NYC Mesh. This would provide critical connectivity infrastructure to members of the community and support the mobile app’s creation.

Marketing/Branding
Projected Cost: $25 million

The community has proposed a number of marketing and branding projects. These will be assessed during the local planning process for inclusion in the strategic investment plan.

- Re-envision the West Chinatown Information Kiosk (slated for demolition by the DOT) with a modernized, interactive welcome experience to serve locals and tourists. With a network of digital displays, updated content, and active programming, this new welcome experience will empower residents and visitors to engage with the many local shops and cultural organizations.
- Create a Chinatown-wide marketing plan to attract tourists and regional residents to visit Chinatown. Marketing synergies will be sought with the Historic Seaport District, Little Italy, and across Lower Manhattan.
- Integrate loading platforms and roll down gates with art that depicts Asian culture and heritage.
- Install wayfinding guide lights and welcome portals with the goal of directing residents and visitors to the string of interconnected small green spaces throughout the community.
- Design and implement night activities to engage residents and visitors to remain in Chinatown beyond daytime sightseeing. Elements may include installing infrastructure to support night markets, similar to those in Asia, and 3D projection displays and events.

Environmental/Ecological Projects
Projected Cost: $3 million
To soften the urban jungle of downtown, create **public green spaces and gardens** at libraries and other buildings. (ex. Chatham/Seward Park branches of New York Public Library, Confucius Plaza public space, Alfred E. Smith Houses and other NYCHA complexes throughout Chinatown.)

**Automated public bathroom** facilities: There is a severe lack of public bathroom facilities in Chinatown. Restaurants often limit use of their facilities to customers, and stores are reluctant to give access. The City piloted a public bathroom program several years ago, which we will explore for Chinatown.

**Enclosed commercial garbage, recycling, compost collection opportunities** include working with the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board to implement strategies to divert recyclables and organic waste away from landfills and ensure compliance with **NYC’s Commercial Organics Rules** for food service establishments and retail food stores.

### Affordable and Senior Housing

**Projected Cost:** $500 million (at minimum, project sponsors will largely raise other public and private financing for these projects)

- 80 Canal Street Chinatown single-room occupancy housing preservation – 40 units
- Safe Haven for seniors to reduce senior homelessness – 120 units, with dedicated women-only floors to ensure safe spaces
- Chung Pak/Everlasting Pine HDFC to preserve senior housing – 88 units

### 8) Administrative Capacity

*Describe the local administrative capacity to manage this planning and implementation initiative, including the ability to oversee contracts for awarded municipal projects using existing staff and resources.*

The lead applicants for the CT-DRI proposal are the Office of the Manhattan Borough President and Think!Chinatown.

**Office of the Manhattan Borough President** – The Office of the Manhattan Borough President has spearheaded recent community planning initiatives at the South Street Seaport, in East Midtown, and in other neighborhoods to address development and zoning issues. Borough Presidents appoint members to Manhattan’s Community Boards, convene its Borough Board, play a formal role in all land use applications in the borough, and allocate capital expense funding throughout the borough.

**Think!Chinatown** - Think!Chinatown, formed in 2017, leverages community investments and volunteer power to activate public spaces and support visible projects, often with arts and culture as the fuel. These include the restoration of the community center after the fire at 70 Mulberry and improvements to the Allen Street Mall. Think!Chinatown’s director and co-founder, Yin Kong 邝海音, is a community-based designer and curator living and working in Chinatown. Yin holds a Master of Architecture in urban design from the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London and a Bachelor of Arts in urban studies from Columbia University. Her work was presented at the Venice Biennale of Architecture.
in 2016 and the Shenzhen Biennale of Architecture in 2007 and 2009. In 2019, she was a fellow of both the New Museum's Ideas City and Coro's Neighborhood Leadership programs. In 2020 she was a David Prize finalist.

9) Other

Provide any other information that informs the nomination of this downtown for a DRI award.

The world is emerging from a pandemic that has seen global death tolls unlike any in human history. Manhattan Chinatown is still suffering the long-term impact of 9/11, Superstorm Sandy and other catastrophic events that affected our community. COVID-19 exacerbated those challenges and added on an extra layer of hardship that as a resulted of anti-Asian hate and discrimination. As the Chinatown downtown area struggles to reopen, we are working to replace lost businesses and tourism revenue. Moreover, as the incidences of anti-Asian violence escalates our community needs for safe spaces to congregate and to reconnect with each other as we heal from the pandemic and the hate.

The Manhattan Borough President and the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown propose a strategy that will enable us to recover, bring back residents, businesses, and lost jobs, and revitalize the community by empowering multiple generations of leaders from among the 1.2 million Asians living in the New York metropolitan area. We welcome and encourage everyone to return to Chinatown, help us transform the downtown area, and build a foundation for long-term sustainability and vitality. DRI funding would kickstart some of the programs and leverage existing investments. We eagerly look forward to the local planning process and engaging the community in a true consensus-building activity to catalyze this transformation on multiple fronts.

10) $20 Million Request

For applicants wishing to be considered for $20 million in DRI funding, provide a clear but concise justification of why your community should be awarded $20 million.

The Office of the Manhattan Borough President and the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown respectful request be to be considered for a $20 million investment in DRI funding.

Significant Anchor:

The proposed planning process will consider three anchors, including one significant anchor to convert the existing East Broadway mall into a cultural community anchor. This structure is key to CT-DRI’s vision to:

- create a new economic engine driven by arts and culture,
- establish Chinatown as a cultural home to the 1.2 million AAPIs in the NY metro area to maintain their presence as an economic base,
- bring back tourists and regional visitors to rebuild Chinatown’s historic economic base, and
- improve the quality of life in Chinatown so that its residents and visitors can enjoy a revitalized and renewed downtown area.
To establish a new arts and culture economic engine in Chinatown will require a substantive and visible keystone from which to build a foundation. The site itself has tremendous potential for connecting the local Chinatown community and the broader NY metro area’s AAPIs. It is located near the foot of the Manhattan Bridge and is near both interstate and interborough bridges, tunnels, and one of Manhattan’s two highways. It is surrounding by the three streets (East Broadway, Canal Street, and Allen Street) from which hundreds of interstate buses operate, serving states along the Eastern seaboard and as far west as Ohio. Millions of travelers will board or disembark from buses as close as on the same street and no further than two to three blocks away.

As described above, the proposed space to be converted is not only sufficiently large to accommodate a live theater space, it has the ability to accommodate ancillary spaces (e.g. dance studios, arts organizational workshop space, and a box office); educational youth programming; vocational training for locals in the arts industry; a business incubator (to provide technical assistance to struggling existing and emerging new small businesses); and galleries to support rotating art displays. Moreover, the remaining tenants can be relocated to the western side of the mall, where there is more foot traffic to support their business, so they will not be displaced.

The cost to complete such a transformation is anticipated to be $25 million. While the Coalition will reach out to public and private funders and individual donors to support the project, a DRI investment would kickstart the project and provide a vote of confidence to trigger more significant support.

Site Control and Project Commitment
The site reverted to public ownership on September 1, 2021 and is now under the management of the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), which is currently determining how to engage a new operator/licensee. The Office of the Manhattan Borough President has reached out to various agencies, including DCAS, which is generally supportive of the DRI application. If selected for a DRI investment, the Coalition will formalize an agreement with the City for the project next year during the course of the local planning process.

The concept emerged from the Coalition’s discussions to prepare for this DRI application. All members are committed to not only making the East Broadway Mall anchor a success, but also to engaging in the local planning process to assess and select the projects to be included in the final strategic investment plan.

Funding Sources:
Because the East Broadway Mall anchor only reverted to City control this September, the Coalition has yet to reach out to funders to determine potential investments. The Coalition members are committed to collaborating to raise public and private funds should it be selected for a DRI investment.

Zoning and Regulatory Requirements:
All of the project sites proposed by the Coalition are on public property. We are unaware of any zoning or regulatory requirements that may constrain our intended purposes. If any should surface during the local planning process, the Coalition will work with appropriate City agencies to address them quickly.

**DRI Coordination and Implementation:**
The co-applicants for the proposed CT-DRI process are the Office of the Manhattan Borough President and Think!Chinatown. TIC leverages community investments and volunteer power to take on many visible projects, often with arts and culture as the fuel to promote the community’s most urgent concerns and always with the sharing of the AAPI heritage at the core. TIC plans regular events in collaboration with partner organizations throughout Chinatown to bring a sense of safety and healing to the region’s AAPIs. TIC’s team is adept at engaging community partners and volunteers and ensuring inclusion through multilingual tools and assets. They have adopted a consensus-building model to engage the community in planning and implementing projects that can be applied to the DRI local planning process to ensure the final strategic investment plan will truly represent the community’s wishes and be able to meet its economic revitalization needs.

TIC will work with the Manhattan Borough President’s representative, the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown’s partners, the DRI planning consultant, and additional convened community members to develop a robust strategic investment plan.

The Coalition has expressed a strong desire to operate as a committee by consensus. Members are committed to being active participants throughout the process and to step up to take leadership roles for different aspects of the planning and implementation as appropriate. The members include some of the oldest social service organizations in Chinatown and the largest community, economic, and housing development nonprofits, which have completed significant, transformational projects through the decades. The wide range of strengths and capacities will ensure each project selected for implementation will be ably led and shepherded to successful completion. Please see the list of Coalition members above.
APPENDICES

Map of Downtown Area
Note: We invite readers to review an interactive version of the map, which has clickable project pins with additional information about each site and demographic information for the relevant Census tracts.

Proposed Project Sites

- 80 Canal Street (new 40-unit SROs)
- 91 East Bway (new 120-unit Senior hsg)
- 96 Baxter Street (88-unit senior housing)
- 88 East Broadway (Anchor #1)
- Columbus Park (Park with daily programs)
- East Broadway Triangle (Anchor #2, part 1)
- Forsyth Plaza (Anchor #2, part 2)
- Kimlau Square (Anchor #3)
- Sara D. Roosevelt Park (Park on Forsyth St)
- Seward Park (Park at Eastern Chinatown)
Letters of Support
September 10, 2021

Mr. Winston Fisher, Co-Chair  
Mr. Félix V. Matos- Co-Chair  
New York City Regional Economic Development Council  
633 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10017  

Re: Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative Application  

Dear Co-Chairs Fisher and Matos,  

It is with pleasure that I express my support for the Manhattan Borough President and the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown’s joint application for $20 million in Regional Economic Development Council funding, through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. As the world emerges from a global pandemic, we recognize that Manhattan Chinatown has sustained a disproportionate level of economic damage and its need for economic development support is vital.  

The Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown, whose members are project partners for this DRI application, is a group of civic and social service leaders who have worked to ensure a vibrant Manhattan Chinatown for decades. Collectively they seek to activate public spaces for cultural and small business use. The revitalization of these spaces would be a means to attract crowds to drive its small businesses, create a driver of tourism in the city and personal income among Chinese New Yorkers across the boroughs.  

The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) is one of the oldest community organizations in Chinatown. The parent organization of the Chinese Community Center, the CCBA was founded in 1883 and has represented Chinese Americans in New York City ever since. Historically it has performed a quasi-governmental role in the Chinese community. Throughout its history, business ownership has been a goal of many residents of Chinatown, and has been supported both financially, and through training, by the CCBA.  

An investment from the Regional Economic Development Council in this project will reinforce our shared commitment to ensure New York City’s growth and recovery, especially where the need is greatest.  

Please contact Gary Tai at (917) 330-2972 in my office or ccbany@yahoo.com if you have any questions.  

Sincerely,  

[Signature]  
Justin Yu  
President
September 10, 2021

Empire State Development
Attn: Joseph Tazewell, Regional Director
Regional Economic Development Council: New York City
633 Third Avenue, 36th Floor
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Tazewell:

The New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) recognizes the outsized ways that Manhattan’s Chinatown contributes to New York City’s economic, historic, and cultural vitality, and we wholeheartedly support this application for Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) funding submitted by the Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown. At a time where small businesses have suffered the effects of COVID-19 and adapted to changing guidelines, a neighborhood that relies on heavy foot traffic for the vitality of mom-and-pop shops is an ideal recipient for DRI assistance.

As longtime supporters of the Lower Manhattan’s diverse communities, NYCEDC sees the importance of supporting this vibrant neighborhood. Nearby NYCEDC has several marquee projects, including but not limited to Essex Market, Essex Crossing and the investments made in resiliency along the Lower Manhattan corridor. Essex Market, just a few blocks northeast of Chinatown, provides affordable and culturally relevant foods and programming that draw from the Lower East Side’s unique diversity. To the southeast, we recently completed design on the Brooklyn Bridge-Montgomery Coastal Resilience project, which will protect the Two Bridges community from sea level rise and storm surge while providing dynamic and accessible waterfront open space. To the south, investments in the Historic South Street Seaport have revitalized the City’s birthplace as a must-visit destination for New Yorkers and tourists alike.

We believe that the Manhattan Borough President’s Office, in partnership with Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown will provide the type of leadership that propels such an investment to success. A DRI grant will knit Lower Manhattan together even more tightly than before and will help us all build back better.

Should you have additional questions, please reach out to Wil Fisher at wfisher@edc.nyc or 212-312-3776.

Sincerely,

Rachel Loeb
President & CEO
September 13, 2021

Mr. Winston Fisher, Co-Chair
Mr. Félix V. Matos, Co-Chair
New York City Regional Economic Development Council
633 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Re: Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative Application

Dear Co-Chairs Fisher and Matos,

It is with pleasure that I express my support for the Manhattan Borough President and the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown’s joint application for $20 million in Regional Economic Development Council funding, through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. As the world emerges from a global pandemic, we recognize that Manhattan’s Chinatown has sustained a disproportionate level of economic damage. Its need for economic development support is vital.

The Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown, whose members are project partners for this DRI application, is a group of civic and social service leaders who have worked to ensure a vibrant Manhattan’s Chinatown for decades. Collectively, they seek to activate public spaces for cultural and small business use. The revitalization of these spaces would be a means to attract crowds to drive its small businesses, promote tourism in the city, and increase personal income among New Yorkers across the boroughs.

As the world emerges from a crippling global pandemic, we recognize that Manhattan’s Chinatown has sustained a disproportionate level of economic damage. The timing of Anchoring Chinatown’s Downtown (ACD) is critical. Before the first case of COVID-19 was identified in New York, Chinatown was already struggling to bring in visitors and business. Much lower numbers of Lunar New Year celebrants came to Chinatown in February 2020 and 2021. Fear tainted festivities among locals, and many were reluctant to enter the area due to discrimination and racism. “Closed” signs were far too prominent on doors and gates, as the small businesses that relied heavily on foot traffic shuttered in the past 18 months. Now, many businesses are re-opening or continuing their essential operations. This project will help resolve the challenges our small businesses face and provide the necessary runway for our community to succeed.
An investment from the Regional Economic Development Council through this project will reinforce our shared commitment and ensure that we promote New York City’s growth and recovery, especially where the need is greatest. I urge you to seriously consider the merits of this application and await your response.

Please contact me at niouy@nyassembly.gov if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou,
65th Assembly District
September 13, 2021

Mr. Winston Fisher, Co-Chair  
Mr. Félix V. Matos- Co-Chair  
New York City Regional Economic Development Council  
633 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10017

Re: Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative Application

Dear Co-Chairs Fisher and Matos,

I am writing to express my support for the Borough President and Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown joint $20 million application for Regional Economic Development Council funding via the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI). It is so important that as New York City recovers from this global pandemic we recognize the disproportionate levels of economic need in Manhattan, specifically in Chinatown. Asian Americans suffered not only from the physical effects of COVID-19 but also from the racist and xenophobic implications because of the origin of coronavirus.

The Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown consists of many groups of civic and social service leaders who have worked to ensure a vibrant Manhattan Chinatown for decades. Collectively they seek to activate public spaces for cultural and small business use. The revitalization of these spaces would be a means to beautify the area for locals, boost tourism in Lower Manhattan, and attract crowds to create consistent revenue streams among Chinese small businesses.

There are two applications in front of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. The first project would activate a large commercial building well-known to the Chinatown community by creating a cultural center complete with a live theater, gallery spaces, dance studio, and spaces for retail tenants. The building is situated on a bustling commercial corridor and would greatly benefit from state funding so the location can continue to serve Chinatown, particularly Chinese New Yorkers who speak Fujianese, a less common dialect.

The second project would create a combined green space from Forsyth Plaza and East Broadway Triangle, compete with street furniture, lighting for vendors and performances, plaza improvement for greenmarket hours while encapsulating sound from the overhead Manhattan Bridge. The beautification of this street corridor would create a welcoming open space for residents and New Yorkers looking to shop, dine, and spend free time in one of the city’s most culturally diverse neighborhoods.

An extremely important part of the outdoor beautification proposal is the redesign and widening of Kimlau Square. Kimlau Square is the cornerstone artery that connects Chinatown from the bounds of East Broadway to the top of Bowery, to the Civic Center, and down to the Seaport. Despite shortfalls in its design, this meeting point has become a place for the community to gather together for press conferences, vigils, celebrations, and community events. To date, I have secured $1,139,000 in capital funding (of which $581,000 came from Speaker Corey Johnson) to repair Kimlau Memorial Arch. This location is so special and has symbolized Chinatown’s strength and resilience through difficult times: September 11, Superstorm Sandy, the COVID-19 pandemic. Kimlau Arch has served as a constant reminder that Chinese-Americans are an integral part of our city and nation’s fabric. The memorial itself symbolizes the ultimate sacrifice that many Chinese Americans made in service to this country and the perseverance of the Chinatown community, who has risen and grown stronger after each setback.
An investment from the Regional Economic Development Council in this project will reinforce our shared commitment to ensure New York City’s growth and recovery, especially where the need is greatest. Please contact my Chief of Staff Gigi Li at gli@council.nyc.gov should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Margaret Chin
Council Member, District 1
September 13, 2021

Mr. Winston Fisher, Co-Chair  
Mr. Félix V. Matos, Co-Chair  
New York City Regional Economic Development Council  
633 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10017

Re: Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative Application

Dear Co-Chairs Fisher and Matos:

I am writing in support of the application by the Manhattan Borough President and the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown for $20 million in Regional Economic Development Council funding through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. As the world emerges from a global pandemic, we recognize that Chinatown has sustained a disproportionate level of economic damage and its need for economic development support is vital.

The Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown is a group of civic and social service leaders who have worked to ensure a vibrant Chinatown for decades. Collectively they seek to activate public spaces such as Kimlau Square, one of the more visible focal points in Chinatown. With funding provided through this grant, it is our hope that we would finally have the ability to implement a plan to upgrade, beautify and expand Kimlau Square and make it more of an asset to the community.

An investment from the Regional Economic Development Council in this project will reinforce our shared commitment to create and sustain thriving public spaces for New Yorkers. NYC Parks welcomes the opportunity to participate in this initiative.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

William Castro
September 15, 2021

Mr. Winston Fisher, Co-Chair  
Mr. Félix V. Matos, Co-Chair  
New York City Regional Economic Development Council  
633 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Fisher and Mr. Matos:

I write to express my strong support for the joint application of Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown for Downtown Revitalization Initiative funding. The $20 million the application seeks will assist Chinatown to recover from the disproportionate level of economic damage sustained by this community since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsidizing the several projects proposed in the application will kickstart the economic development our Chinatown neighborhood desperately needs.

The Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown, whose members are project partners for this application, is a group of civic and social service pioneers who have worked tirelessly to preserve a vibrant Chinatown. They are rooted in Chinatown and have advocated passionately on behalf of the community throughout the pandemic. Together, the coalition seeks to activate public areas for cultural and small business use in the hopes of providing more community spaces, cultural programming, and business development opportunities for residents and visitors alike. The revitalization of these spaces would help attract crowds, bolster small businesses, foster tourism, and promote self-sufficiency among Chinese New Yorkers across the city.

An investment from the REDC in this project will reinforce our shared commitment to ensuring New York’s growth and recovery, especially where the need is greatest. Throughout this past year, my office has worked to support and aid the small businesses and communities hit hardest by the pandemic. This funding will build significantly on that work and ensure that Chinatown remains a neighborhood that is not only essential to New York’s appeal as a destination for tourists and other visitors, but also a significant cultural hub for the region’s ethnic Chinese communities.

I urge you to strongly consider this application to support the Borough President and the coalition’s organizations in continuing their vital work. If you would like to discuss this matter, please contact me directly or via Emily Leng in my office at 212-298-5565.

Sincerely,

Brian Kavanagh
Mr. Winston Fisher, Co-Chair
Mr. Félix V. Matos, Co-Chair
New York City Regional Economic Development Council
633 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Re: Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative Application

Dear Co-Chairs Fisher and Matos,

I am writing to express my support for the Manhattan Borough President and the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown’s joint application for $20 million in Regional Economic Development Council funding, through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. Manhattan’s Chinatown has suffered disproportionately from the economic damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and this funding is vital to local economic development.

I understand that the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown (Coalition), which is a project partner for this DRI application, is a group of civic and social service leaders who have worked to ensure a vibrant Manhattan Chinatown for decades. I understand the Coalition works to activate public spaces for cultural and small business use and that the revitalization of these spaces is meant to attract crowds to support local small businesses, increase city tourism, and benefit Chinese New Yorkers across the five boroughs.

I hope the New York City Regional Economic Development Council will give the Coalition and Borough President’s application your most favorable consideration, consistent with all applicable rules and regulations. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact Shelby Garner in my office at 212-860-0606.

Sincerely,

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

CBM/shg
Mr. Winston C. Fisher, Co-Chair
Mr. Félix V. Matos, Co-Chair
New York City Regional Economic Development Council
633 Third Avenue, 36th Floor
New York New York 10017

Re: Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative Application

Dear Co-Chairs Fisher and Matos,

I write to express my unequivocal support for the Manhattan Borough President and the Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown’s joint application for $20 million in Regional Economic Development Council funding, through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI).

As New York emerges from a global pandemic, I recognize that Manhattan’s Chinatown community has sustained a disproportionate level of economic injury. Its need for economic development support is vital. The Coalition to Revitalize Chinatown, whose members are project partners for this DRI application, is a group of civic and social service leaders who have worked to ensure a vibrant Manhattan Chinatown for decades. Collectively they seek to activate public spaces for cultural and small business use. The revitalization of these spaces would be a means to attract crowds to drive its small businesses, create a driver of tourism in the city and personal income among Chinese New Yorkers across the boroughs.

The Manhattan Chinatown suffered disproportionate economic damage during the global COVID-19 pandemic. A few factors are adding difficulties to the community’s recovery. For one, the physical infrastructure of Chinatown – bridges and tunnels –physically divides Chinatown, leading to sustained negative impact by physical barriers and long-term damages at levels unseen elsewhere in New York City. Additionally, part of Chinatown is in a flood zone and has experienced devastating floods in the past. In fact, I helped secure over four hundred million dollars in federal funding to implement a flood resiliency system to protect Chinatown and the surrounding waterfront public housing neighborhood. I believe the timing of Anchoring Chinatown’s Downtown (ACD) is critical. The coalition’s proposed project to reclaim and activate spaces for the community will greatly strengthen the community’s response and preparedness to natural disasters.
Improving the connectivity between Chinatown and the region by creating cultural community anchors will ensure Chinatown remains a cultural oasis for the region’s multi-generational Asians and global visitors who contribute to the local economy.

An investment by the Regional Economic Development Council in this project will reinforce our shared commitment to ensure New York City’s growth and recovery, especially where the need is greatest.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I encourage your agency to provide this application full and fair consideration, consistent with applicable rules, law, and regulation. If I can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact me or my District Director, Evelyn Cruz at (718) 599-3658.

Sincerely,

NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ
Member of Congress