

# Chinatown Youth Center Initiative (CYCI) FACT SHEET

## Introduction to the Chinatown Youth Center Initiative (CYCI)

The planning process for a Chinatown-based youth center began in 2007, as a result of escalating physical confrontations in the Oakland area between youth of various Asian ethnicities. Youth violence occurred at schools, on the streets, and at playgrounds, and highlighted the need for a space where Asian/Pacific Islander (API) and other young people feel safe and have access to services.

Since 2001, a collaborative of community based organizations, public agencies, and representatives of local elected officials—convened by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), an Oakland-based nonprofit research agency—has met to address issues related to API youth violence prevention. This group gave input on an NCCD report (*Under the Microscope*, 2003; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2007), a comprehensive data profile of API youth in Oakland.

Based on data about unmet needs of API youth as well as growing concerns about inter-ethnic conflicts, this collaborative, now called the Chinatown Youth Center Initiative (CYCI), started planning for a new youth center. The CYCI envisions a center that is located in the Oakland Chinatown area, open to all youth, and targeted to meet the needs of a diverse API youth population.

- **Goal:** The center's goal is to offer coordinated, comprehensive youth development and violence prevention services, empowering young people (ages 12-17) to lead satisfying, healthy, and productive lives.
- **Theme:** The center's theme is "ready for the future," with programming in three core areas: arts, culture, and heritage; future preparation including college readiness and job training; and health and wellness.
- **Location:** The CYCI is working closely with local partners and elected officials to develop a long-term site for the center in the Chinatown area.
- **Lead agency:** Asian Health Services is the lead agency in the youth center planning process.

## CYCI Participants and Supporters

**Planning Committee, 2009-10** / Provides leadership and decision making

- Alameda County Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker
- Asian Health Services (lead agency)
- Community Health for Asian Americans
- East Bay Asian Youth Center
- Gilbert Gong, Community Member
- National Council on Crime and Delinquency
- Oakland Asian Cultural Center
- Youth Movement Records

**Members and Supporters, 2009-10** / Provide advice, resources, and ideas

- Alameda County Probation Department
- Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice
- Asian Immigrant Women Advocates
- Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy & Leadership
- Assemblymember Sandré Swanson
- Banteay Srei
- Bay Area Legal Aid

## Major Donors/Contributors

Many thanks to these generous donors for providing planning funding or capital pledges for the long-term site.

- Alameda County Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Oakland City Councilmember Patricia Kernighan
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- The California Endowment

## CYCI's Pilot Youth Center Opens in Spring 2011

CYCI's pilot youth center, with limited programming, will begin operating in March 2011 at the Oakland Asian Cultural Center (388 Ninth Street, Suite 290) in Pacific Renaissance Plaza. Activities will include:

- Fun, interactive monthly events such as arts workshops
- Ongoing meetings of established youth programs

Youth center programming will ramp up at OACC during summer and fall 2011.

## **Youth-Driven Approach**

At its core, the CYCI's approach is youth-driven. The youth center's geographic area, vision, mission, and program areas are informed by survey data collected in 2008 from over 500 local young people, representing a variety of races/ethnicities. Surveys showed that youth are interested in visiting a center for a range of activities, with top choices including job training and college advising. In terms of location, youth were most interested in seeing a center developed in Chinatown, where the large majority said they feel safe and comfortable.

Other data sources illustrate the need to actively support the healthy development of API youth. For example:

- In Oakland, Asian 7th graders and 9th graders had the largest proportion of respondents who reported being harassed or bullied on school property due to race, ethnicity, or national origin, compared to other racial/ethnic groups. (California Healthy Kids Survey/OUSD, 2009-10)
- Almost half of Cambodian young adults in Oakland (ages 18-24) do not have a high school diploma, while Cambodian and Laotian youth have the third and fourth highest juvenile arrest rates, respectively, of all races/ethnicities in Oakland. (2000 Census; Alameda County Probation Department, 2006)
- In a national survey, Asian youth had the highest percentage of respondents who felt they had no one to talk to about their serious problems, compared to other racial/ethnic groups. (SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2008)

The CYCI's youth advisory council, named the Oakland Youth Empowering Advocates (OYEAs), has met regularly since 2008 to provide input and feedback on key aspects of the planning. As the center becomes fully operational, youth will continue to have opportunities to engage in peer leadership, decision making, and staffing.

## **CYCI Accomplishments**

Since 2007, the CYCI has achieved many milestones on the road to developing the youth center, including:

- **Established a core group to guide the planning process.** This includes a group of general members; a Planning Committee that provides oversight and decision making; and a youth advisory council (OYEAs).
- **Gathered input from local youth and parents on what they would like to see in a youth center.** As part of this process, over 500 youth and 45 parents completed surveys; four focus groups were also held.
- **Developed a vision, mission, logic model, and core program areas for the center,** drawing on data collected during the community input process as well as on the diverse expertise of the CYCI membership.
- **Convened and continue to support a youth advisory council,** comprised of 10-15 youth from a range of ages and races/ethnicities. Led by a youth organizer, youth members give input on youth center decisions, while gaining valuable experience in leadership development, public speaking, and action research.
- **Incubated programming** including Cuzzins (a mentoring program for transitional age youth) as well as activities at Lincoln Square Recreation Center such as a program incorporating basketball and life skills.
- **Co-sponsored events.** This includes the Futures Expo, an annual career and educational exploration event attended by about 200 high school students, presented in partnership with Laney College.

## **Benefits to the Larger Community**

In addition to meeting the needs of young people, the youth center will benefit the larger Chinatown community in a variety of ways, such as:

- Increasing youth leadership and positive engagement with the community by providing a centralized, safe space for young people to be involved in productive activities after school
- Linking youth with opportunities to gain skills that will train them to be effective entry-level workers
- Reducing violence and improving life outcomes for young people through increased understanding of cultural and historic roots as well as through community building across cultures and races/ethnicities

## **Get Involved with the CYCI!**

- Attend a Community Mixer in February (date TBA).
- Join our email list to get updates. Send your email address to [oaklandcyci@gmail.com](mailto:oaklandcyci@gmail.com)
- We will be having monthly events for young people starting in March – invite youth to attend!