



**Chinese
Chamber of
Commerce of
San Francisco**

Mission Overview

- **The Chinese Chamber of Commerce** was founded in 1917 to support San Francisco's Chinese American community. Our goal is to make Chinatown a thriving place to work, live, and build a business.
- Since its establishment, the Chinese Chamber has been a leading advocate for socioeconomic progress and civic interests in San Francisco.
- The Chinese Chamber is the guardian of many of San Francisco's most prominent public events, including the Chinese New Year Parade, Flower Market Fair, Miss Chinatown Pageant, Coronation Ball, Basketball Jamboree, Community Street Fair, Choy Sun Doe Day, and the Chinatown YMCA Run.
- The Chinese Chamber of Commerce regularly sponsors and collaborates with other nonprofits and community organizations to deliver services to the small businesses and residents of Chinatown.

Membership Overview

- Overall membership includes over 500 merchants citywide;
- Current executive board members on the 109th annual Board of Directors:
 - Donald Luu, President
 - Judy Lee, 1st Vice President
 - George Mak, 2nd Vice President
 - Hon Keung So, Secretary
 - Calvin Louie, Treasurer
 - Richard Wan, Assistant Treasurer
- Current executive board members on the 58th annual Supervisory Board:
 - Wade Lai, President
 - Ben Man Gong, Vice President

What events/resources/tools have been successful to support your small businesses?

Annual Signature Events

- **San Francisco Chinese New Year Festival & Parade**

Hosted by the Chinese Chamber, this iconic multi-week celebration includes a giant dragon, fireworks, flower market fair, Community Street Fair (80+ booths), Miss Chinatown USA pageant, and more. These events attract hundreds of thousands of visitors, generating huge boosts in foot traffic and revenue for Chinatown merchants.

- **Community Street Fair & Flower Market Fair**

Held during Lunar New Year, these fairs transform Chinatown's streets into bustling marketplaces featuring traditional crafts, foods, performances, and vendor booths—bringing visibility and awareness for local mom-and-pops .

What events/resources/tools have been successful to support your small businesses?

Small Business–Focused Weeks & Workshops

- **San Francisco Small Business Week (May)**

The Chinese Chamber partners with the City, SF Chamber, SFPL, and others to co-host Small Business Week. Events include workshops (e.g. “Chinese-language local grants info session” at Hong Kong Bakery sfsbdc.org), networking, panels, and trade expos that connect Chinese-owned businesses to broader resources

- **Small Business Grants & Literacy Workshops**

SF Small Business Center and Montgomery SBDC offer Chinese-language grant updates, financial literacy training, and one-on-one mentoring in person. The Chinese Chamber amplifies awareness among Chinatown merchants and AAPI merchants citywide.

What events/resources/tools have been successful to support your small businesses?

COVID-Era Support Programs

The Chinese Chamber played a coordinating role in these relief efforts:

- **Feed + Fuel Chinatown:** Distributed 122,000 meals via 34 Chinatown restaurants to seniors and low-income residents. Restaurants benefited from increased demand and voucher purchases.
- **Walkway Weekends:** Launched a pedestrian-only street series on Grant Ave to boost outdoor dining and shopping during pandemic recovery—noted for reviving business foot traffic.

What events/resources/tools have been successful to support your small businesses?

Partnerships & Cultural Collaboratives

CMAC & Edge on the Square

- The Chinese Chamber partners with the Chinatown Media & Arts Collaborative “CMAC”, which the Chamber supports alongside entities like the Chinese Culture Center “CCC” and Chinese Historical Society of America “CHSA”, developed artistic pop-up events (e.g. *Neon Was Never Brighter*) in underutilized spaces—combining culture with commercial revitalization.

Civic & Cultural Co-hosting

- The Chinese Chamber of Commerce regularly works with local entities like the YMCA, Chinese Culture Center, SF Symphony, etc. to co-host the Chinatown YMCA Run, Choy Sun Doe Day, Basketball Jamboree, and Miss Chinatown pageant—events that draw crowds and broaden commerce exposure.

What are the biggest challenges you're experiencing and what are the potential solutions?

1. Trade Tariffs & Import Costs

- **Pain point:** With U.S.–China tariffs skyrocketing (up to 145%), 90% of goods in Chinatown are now priced higher, causing merchants to eat costs or raise prices—harming low-income residents.
- **Potential solutions:**
 - Advocate for tariff exemptions on essential goods using Bay Area trade coalitions.
 - Diversify sourcing—stockpiling non-Chinese alternatives from Southeast Asia, or shifting suppliers to Vietnam/Thailand.
 - Promote “Made in USA” manufacturing partnerships to circumvent tariffs.

2. Vacancy & Gentrification Pressures

- **Pain point:** Upwards of 20+ storefront vacancies along Grant Avenue. Rising rents and gentrification risk altering Chinatown’s long standing corridor and neighborhood.
- **Potential solutions:**
 - Partner with the city to offer incentives (grants, tax breaks) to landlords and cultural nonprofits for cultural/civic reuse;
 - Value historic affordability and propose policies to counter luxury development;
 - Activate vacant spaces with arts, markets, and community hubs (e.g., Edge on the Square) to boost foot traffic.

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3. ADA Lawsuits on Small Businesses

- **Pain point:** Over 100 Chinatown mom-and-pop shops targeted by ADA compliance suits—seen as legal extortion before they could recover from COVID.
- **Potential solutions:**
 - Establish a compliance fund/pool to assist with ADA retrofits;
 - Negotiate with claimants for technical help before litigation;
 - Lobby for a city-wide safe harbor or notification process before lawsuits can be filed.

4. Cash Flow Fragility & Economic Resilience

- **Pain point:** Many merchants lack reserves—12% of small businesses have zero cash, and 75% survive less than 6 months without incoming revenue.
- **Potential solutions:**
 - Create emergency micro-loans through Chinatown Community Development Center or community banks;
 - Offer financial literacy programs focused on savings, cash-flow forecasting, and disaster preparedness;
 - Encourage participation in municipal Shared Spaces and event subsidies.

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5. Language, Healthcare & Cultural Isolation

- **Pain point:** Older residents face language barriers accessing healthcare and services; Cantonese is widely spoken but underrepresented in medical interpretation
- **Potential solutions:**
 - Advocate for more Cantonese-speaking caseworkers, hotline reps, and medical interpreters;
 - Partner with SFCC's community organizations to host workshops, clinics, and wellness fairs in Cantonese/Toisanese;
 - Increase mental-health outreach with culturally aligned social services.

6. Balancing Cultural Events & Local Commerce

- **Pain point:** Street closures and events (like lion dances) disrupt deliveries and flow, creating tension between merchants and event organizers.
- **Potential solutions:**
 - Form a merchants–organizers advisory council to coordinate event permits and street plans;
 - Designate specific “event zones” at rotating locations;
 - Limit amplified sound on critical delivery days and restore limited vehicle access.

What are the biggest challenges you're experiencing and what are the potential solutions?

7. Leadership, Governance & Community Trust

- **Pain point:** Scandals linked to former chamber board members undermined trust; a desire for more transparent and younger leadership exists.
- **Potential solutions:**
 - Expand inclusion of younger leaders and women to revitalize chamber governance;
 - Conduct regular ethics reviews and publish transparency reports;
 - Host open town halls and civic forums to boost political engagement across generations.

Are there any additional things that you want the Commission to know about?

Next Steps

1. **Support advocacy efforts** targeting municipal and federal policymakers for tariff relief and ADA reform.
2. **Mobilize cross-sector partnerships:** government, nonprofits, landlords, banks, and healthcare providers.
3. **Strengthen the chamber's internal capacity:** leadership renewal, ethics updates, and expanded community engagement.

By tackling these areas head-on, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce can both defend its traditional roots and pave the way for a vibrant, future-ready Chinatown.

We also welcome the entire Small Business Commission to visit and support Chinatown. Thank you.