

Legislation Text

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Recognizing the historical significance of Chinatown and honoring the vital contributions of Chinese-Americans on the 150th Anniversary of Chinatown in Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, The year 2020 marks the 150th Anniversary of Chinatown in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Chinatown originated in the late nineteenth century as a small business district along the 900 block of Race Street. The first business, a laundromat at 913 Race Street, opened its doors in 1870. It was recognized as the birthplace of Chinatown by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in 2010; and

WHEREAS, The laundromat's owner, Lee Fong, was one of many Chinese immigrants that settled in Philadelphia and other East Coast cities after enduring harsh discrimination and anti-Chinese sentiment in the West; and

WHEREAS, While Philadelphia proved to be a less hostile environment for Chinese immigrants, strict immigration policies prevented true Chinese-American communities from forming. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 placed a ten-year freeze on all Chinese immigration, and Chinese women and children were not admitted into the U.S until after World War II; and

WHEREAS, These roadblocks relegated Chinatown to a male dominated business district, or "Bachelor Society." The arrival of women and children transformed Chinatown into the vibrant community of today - with churches, schools, and social centers working to improve quality of life and preserve Chinese culture; and

WHEREAS, Today, Chinatown plays a key role in our City's diverse culture and economy. Its advantageous location in downtown Center City, near public transportation, attracts visitors from across the City to experience the community's authentic restaurants, small businesses and cultural celebrations; and

WHEREAS, Territorially, Chinatown has undergone massive expansion and transformation through the years. The neighborhood now spans East to West from 8th Street to 13th Street, and North to South from Spring Garden Street to Filbert Street; and

WHEREAS, Gentrification and outside development projects, however, have threatened the territorial integrity of Chinatown. Most notably, the Vine Street Expressway was built through the heart of Chinatown - splitting the community in half. Following its construction, residents of Chinatown successfully organized to create the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, or PCDC. The organization fights to prevent further intrusion and preserve the community's traditional culture; and

WHEREAS, Despite roadblocks along the way, Chinatown has blossomed into one of Philadelphia's most storied neighborhoods. The community continues to serve as a gateway and resource for Asian-Americans and new-immigrants in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, On its 150th birthday, we honor Chinatown's vital contributions to our City's culture and economy

and celebrate its continued success; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby recognizes the historical significance of Chinatown and honors the vital contributions of Chinese-Americans on the 150th Anniversary of Chinatown in Philadelphia.

RESOLVED FURTHER, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC).