



**hester street
collaborative**



Asian Americans for Equality

For Immediate Release

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**Take Back Your Park Day:
Citizens of Chinatown and the Lower East Side Seek a Voice in the Re-Design of Allen-Pike Street
Pedestrian Malls**

The *Immigrants & Parks Collaborative* announces **Take Back Your Park Day**, an interactive design event to help the communities of Chinatown and the Lower East Side to re-envision the Allen –Pike Street Pedestrian Malls to serve their needs and to ensure that their voices are heard. *This participatory event is open to all community members, and will be held on Saturday, June 14th from 10 am to 2 pm in the Allen Street Park between Hester and Grand Streets.*

The Allen-Pike Street Pedestrian Malls are a key source of open space in Chinatown, Two Bridges, and the Lower East Side and should serve as a major corridor for accessing the East River Waterfront renovations, yet their current derelict condition does not meet the desperate need for open public space in these densely populated, largely immigrant communities. Despite being one of the top five most densely populated areas in New York City, the percentage of open space for this area's 200,000 people is dismally small: only 0.7 acres of open space per 1,000 people, as opposed to the recommended 2.5 acres per 1,000 people.

As the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation begins the process of redesigning and renovating the dilapidated Allen-Pike Street Pedestrian Malls, the Immigrants & Parks Collaborative, along with local supporters including the UNRAP coalition, is committed to empowering local residents and facilitating their involvement in the capital design process. The Collaborative believes that the development of open space **can** benefit existing communities, rather than displacing them, if the process engages existing residents and acknowledges the unique character of a neighborhood. **Take Back Your Park Day** is an important step in that process.

Organizations from the neighborhood, including a range of cultural, advocacy, and social service-oriented groups will facilitate site analysis, surveys, usage studies, and fun, interactive community design activities to build consensus and generate design recommendations for the New York City Parks Department as they begin a year-long process to renovate the Allen-Pike Street Pedestrian Malls. **"We were looking for ways to reach out to groups who do not usually have a place at the table in civic processes, especially immigrants, youth, and underprivileged community members,"** explained Anne Frederick, Hester Street Collaborative's Executive Director. **"These community activities are designed to be non-verbal, insightful, and fun."** Community members from all walks of life, including a group of 45 middle school students from nearby M.S. 131, are expected to participate in the event. Walking tours emphasizing the rich immigrant history of the neighborhood will be used as a tool for additional information-gathering, and will be held 3 times during the day-long event, at 11 am, 12 pm, and 1 pm.

The **hosts of Take Back Your Park Day**, the Immigrants & Parks Collaborative, are a partnership recently formed to engage residents of Chinatown and the Lower East Side with tools and strategies to revitalize public parks in a way that focuses on community needs. Facilitated by the New York Immigration Coalition and supported by the J.M. Kaplan Fund, the Collaborative is implemented in Chinatown by Hester Street Collaborative and Asian American's For Equality (AAFE). **Take Back Your Park Day** is also supported by the UNRAP Coalition. **"We hope to use this Collaborative to empower Chinatown/ Lower East Side's immigrant community to play a leadership role in the creation of public spaces that meet the community's needs. Many New Yorkers live in small spaces. Neighborhood parks should be seen as an extension of their homes, a place where residents can enjoy nature and connect with their neighbors,"** explains **Margaret Chin**, AAFE's Deputy Executive Director

ALLEN-PIKE STREET MALLS VISIONING DAY EVENTS: Free and open to the public

Community Visioning Activities:

June 14, 2008 10 am – 2 pm Allen Street Mall, between Hester and Grand Streets

Walking Tours:

June 14, 2008

3 Tours, Departing at:

11 am, 12 pm, 1 pm

Departing from Allen Street Mall, between Hester and Grand Streets

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