



CHINATOWN RENEWAL

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2010

“CREATING A THRIVING COMMUNITY”

IN ASSOCIATION WITH SDCB

CSUMB TO TRANSFORM *REPUBLIC CAFÉ*

California State University Monterey Bay in collaboration with the Salinas Downtown Community Board, City of Salinas Redevelopment Agency, and three faith-based organizations plan to transform the unused *Republic Café* into a vibrant Asian cultural showcase. In 2005 and 2007 CSUMB received Hispanic-Serving Institutions Assisting Communities grants. The first grant established a community garden employing 14 homeless persons; organized a 24-member community board; engaged the community in planning efforts to craft



Old Republic Café

Visit the SDCB website!
www.salinasdcb.org

the *Chinatown Renewal Plan*; opened a “Community Learning Center” and a silk-screening co-op employing homeless women. The second grant funded a Green Job Corp, created a Green Demonstration Park, provided for the inventory of homeless service needs, and preliminary work on an Asian Cultural Museum. This work enjoys the full support of the area’s diverse constituencies.

The next step in Salinas’ Chinatown renovation is the transformation of the *Republic Café*. The following steps are

(CSUMB on page 2)

VOICES OF CHINATOWN HARVEST



The Caltrans Environmental Just Planning Grant awarded in January 2009 was launched at the second community meeting held at the Buddhist Temple

on October 15, 2009. The goal of this grant is to bring experts to Chinatown to focus on needs and solutions, considering the broad vision of the 2007 Chinatown Revitalization Plan. More than 100 representatives from the community attended this celebration. The format of this celebration was “world forum” where participants were encouraged to meet around the room and discuss the assumption of the 2007 Plan. Action Teams coordinated by the Salinas Downtown Community

Board have been studying, with expert help, the issues of safety, reconnecting with the greater community, economic development, housing and social services. The results include a consensus for the social services needs and delivery systems, traffic circulation, reconnection priorities, types of business to be encouraged, ways to strengthen existing businesses, and safety measures both short-term and long-term. The Asian Cultural Encounter action team

(Voices on page 2)

CHOP SUEY NEON SIGN REFURBISHED AND LIGHTED UP



Like a beacon in the night, the refurbished “Chop Suey” Republic Café neon sign was turned on for the first time after 21 years, dazzling a cheering crowd on Soledad Street in Salinas Chinatown on October 15, 2009. The crowd included representatives from the Salinas Redevelopment Agency, Salinas Downtown Community Board, Asian Cultural Encounter team, and Leadership Salinas Valley, as well as Wally Ahtye, owner of the Republic Café building, and Salinas native, Mary Chin Lee, who actually worked in the café as a teenager. The neon sign restoration is part of

(Chop Suey on page 2)



CONTACT INFORMATION

CSUMB Community Learning Center
22 Soledad St., Salinas, CA 93901 ✦ 831-770-1770 ✦ Ken_Feske@csumb.edu ✦ www.salinasdcb.org

CHOP SUEY NEON SIGN

(Continued from page 1)

the Salinas Chinatown Renewal Project with plans to transform the old Republic Café into an Asian Cultural Center and museum. For almost an entire year, the campaign to restore the neon sign at a cost of \$15,000 involved the solicitation of donations and holding of fundraisers such as a gala Chinese banquet and Chinese authors' presentation by the Chinese American Citizens Alliance. For a period of three

days, all three Panda Express franchises in Salinas donated 20% of the cost of each purchase to the restoration. Leadership Salinas not only arranged for the Panda Express efforts, but also worked directly with teams hired to do electrical repairs and art work on the neon sign. Eventually, the neon sign will remain lit through the night so that the public can see it and realize that something is happening in Salinas Chinatown! 🌟

CSUMB

(Continued from page 1)

needed to accomplish this goal.

1. **Build an Asian Cultural Center/Museum:** Invest \$261,000 to replace the roof, mediate environmental issues and remodel the first floor. To complete electrical, plumbing, and heating infrastructure \$75,000 more needs to be raised.
2. **Create an Asian Cultural Center:** Identify and gather cultural artifacts that tell the story of the impact of immigrants in the Salinas Valley. Exhibits and displays will be designed

and constructed for a May 2012 projected opening.

3. **Provide employment opportunities for low income unemployed persons** in the construction and operation of the museum.

CSUMB is prepared to assist the Chinatown community to take the next steps in transforming a forgotten neighborhood, dominated by drug-dealing and crime, into a vibrant, culturally-connected and inclusive mixed-use community. 🌟

CHINATOWN ORAL HISTORIES

Since 2007, CSUMB students in the Oral History and Community Memory class have been recording life stories and memories of Salinas's Chinatown from the 1940s – 1960s from the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino communities. Interviews are archived at the CSUMB Oral History and Community Memory Archive, but their eventual home will be the future Asian Cultural Center and Museum, on the site of the old Republic Café. Interviews are open-ended, aiming to gather whatever tidbits of historical and cultural experience people can share. Approximately 40 audio and video interviews have been recorded, but we are seeking many more, especially from the Japanese community. To participate, people can contact Prof. Rina Benmayor at CSUMB, (831) 582-3798. 🌟

@ RISK GALLERY

The @risK Gallery, a project of Dorothy's Place, has recently moved to a new location on Soledad Street. It is now found at 19 Soledad Street. This relocation was possible due to the generosity of the Salinas Redevelopment Agency. Special thanks to Don Reynolds for assisting in this process! The @risK Gallery is pleased to announce an ongoing collaboration with Interim Inc.'s Breakthrough H' Art collective creating mosaic murals. Interim Inc. is building a new housing complex on Sun Street --- Sunflower Gardens --- and has commissioned a group of artists to create mosaic art for the interior and exterior of the building. The artists are a collection of Dorothy's guests,

EVENTS

@risk

First Friday Art Walk, 5-9 pm

February 5, March 5, April 2
14 Soledad Street,
(831) 455-5964

bythtree09@yahoo.com



Asian Festival

April 24, 2010



U. S. Census

March 2010

VOICES

(Continued from page 1)

highlighted the proposed future development of the Salinas Chinatown Cultural Experience and re-building of the Old Republic Café. Adding to the discussion was Cal Poly ---a new partner this past year -- whose students have focused on design guidelines and plans for the community, affordable housing concepts, and museum designs. These very exciting graphic visions inspired the discussion. 🌟



Interim's clients, as well as service providers. This group has already created an amazing ten piece installation of mosaics and is currently meeting weekly to create a series of murals for the exterior of Sunflower Gardens. @risK is currently open on Wednesdays, 1:30-4:30pm, where the artist collective meets to create the mosaic murals. A gallery showing and the exhibition of the murals with the opening of Sunflower Gardens is planned for April. 🌟



About Us - The Salinas Downtown Community Board, SDCB, is a nonprofit agency whose mission is to provide advice and recommendations to local government, government agencies and other community stakeholders on issues focused on improving the quality of life for individuals and businesses located in the downtown Salinas area. **The Chinatown Renewal Project is a collaborative effort of the City of Salinas, CSUMB, & the SDCB.**