

DAILY NEWS

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Hoping that planned BID will keep Chinatown streets tidy

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CHINATOWN IS BIDDING on a cleaner future.

The lower Manhattan neighborhood moved one step closer Wednesday toward forming a Business Improvement District, after a survey of 2,300 local businesses found overwhelming support for it.

Proponents of the BID proposal are preparing to take the next step: presenting it to Community Boards 1, 2 and 3.

"The benefits of having a BID in Chinatown is that we'd have cleaner sidewalks, we'd have graffiti removed, we'd have an organization [acting as] a direct link to government officials," said David Louie of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

For the past three years, Chinatown had been able to perform most of the daily upkeep without a BID, thanks to funding provided by the Lower Manhattan Development Corp. But that program, known as Clean Streets, has been scaled back over the years in the face of dwindling funding, and it is set to end Dec. 31.

"That [LMDC] money is running out this year," Louie said. "We need a vehicle to maintain clean streets and other services."

The proposed BID would have a budget of \$1.3 million for its first year, more than three-quarters of which would be allocated toward street-cleaning and trash removal services.

The LMDC has pledged its support for a BID, and City Councilwoman Margaret Chin thinks it's a necessary step for Chinatown's future.

"The community needs to come together and plan this," Chin said. "The main thing is, is that we don't want to go back to Chinatown where the streets are dirty and the garbage is overflowing the garbage cans."

In order to fund the BID, 35% of business owners would pay \$200 a year, another 74% would pay no more than \$1,000 annually and residents would kick in just \$1 each year.

If the proposed BID received approval from Boards 1, 2 and 3, each of which represents a portion of Chinatown, the City Council would ultimately vote on the proposal.

"We hope to be able to get this approved by March or by the beginning of April," said Louie. "Then signed into law and be operational by July 1."