



## From Pacific Alliance Medical Center to Allied Healthcare City, Chinatown Needs More

By Katie Wang

On November 30, 2017, Chinatown's Pacific Alliance Medical Center (PAMC) closed due to high costs of earthquake retrofitting, after serving the LA Chinatown community for 157 years. Earlier that same year, the hospital was also fined \$42 million to settle allegations from entering improper financial arrangements with doctors. This closure came at a time when Chinatown was already under attack with more than 50 proposed market-rate developments.

In December 2017, CCED and other community organizations convened a town hall for community members to raise concerns about the neighborhood losing its only hospital and access to important in-language healthcare and emergency services. Residents voiced fear and frustration, demanding accountability from the government. While representatives from the elected offices of city Councilmember Gil Cedillo, LA County Supervisor Hilda Solis, State Senator Kevin de Leon, and U.S. Representative Jimmy Gomez attended, conversations about the hospital closure and the future of Chinatown that followed the town hall were held behind closed doors without any community input.

In July of 2018, Allied Pacific (AHMC Healthcare and Network Medical Management) bought the property for \$33 million to open an outpatient care facility called Allied Healthcare City. Allied Pacific Chairman Kenneth Sim had estimated that a comprehensive urgent care center would open at the end of 2018; however, at the time of print, the Healthcare City still has not opened. The situation is both a victory and a loss for the residents of Chinatown. While we welcome a Healthcare City that would serve the Chinatown community more than market-rate housing, the loss of over 600 jobs and a full hospital that cared for many seniors and families through services offered in many languages has impacted Chinatown greatly. As residents continue to wait for Healthcare City to finally open, Chinatown must continue to fight for resources and development, from healthcare facilities to truly affordable housing, that support the community health of the working-class immigrant neighborhood.

**Layout Design:** Lucy Truong

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## Community Member Profile: Amy Mar



**Left:** For 30 years, Amy Mar offered a warm smile at her newspaper stand on Broadway.

**Right:** Amy Mar shows her support at the press conference announcing CCED's lawsuit against City of Los Angeles. The city approved the 725-unit College Station development with zero affordable housing. **Photo: Bryan Sih**

by Phyllis Chiu

You probably know Mrs. Amy Mar (馬嬋), a senior CCED member. Many people do, because she sold newspapers on Broadway in front of Hop Woo Restaurant for 30 years before she retired. Every day, rain or shine, hot or cold, she greeted customers and passersby with a smile and a friendly greeting. In between making sales and running out to stopped cars to hand regular customers their daily papers, Mrs. Mar always had time to discuss community happenings, listen to concerns, and offer words of encouragement.

Mrs. Mar immigrated to the United States in 1971. In Hong Kong, she had worked as a hairdresser, but in Los Angeles, like many Chinese immigrants in the 1970s, she found work as a seamstress in Chinatown. She and her family lived in an apartment on Cleveland until they were able to buy a house in Highland Park, where she still lives today. After her husband passed away, Amy supported herself and her two daughters by working daily at her newsstand, yet she continued to organize in Chinatown as a founding member of the social justice group Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) in the 1970s to 1980s. Today, she is over 80 years old and still volunteers as a leader of CCED's multilingual All Chinatown Tenant Union, which participates in community outreach, marches, and speaks up for Chinatown residents at community meetings.

Let me tell you some of Mrs. Mar's favorite stories about why she is active.

*When I was working in the sewing factory on Chungking Road, my co-workers would ask me, "Who is that handsome young man who always comes to talk to you?" A lawyer in AAFE would sit and talk with me while I was sewing. He told me, "We young people are here to help you, but we are not fighting for these services for ourselves. We do not live in Chinatown. You do. You're the ones who need these services. If you do not come out to fight, people will say we are making trouble in Chinatown."*

*Back in the old days, Chinatown didn't have any of the things—there was no senior citizen housing, no service center, no childcare facilities—that other communities had. Do you think the government would just give us these things? We had to fight for all of them. One time we marched to the County Board of Supervisors and filled up the whole auditorium. They did not want to talk to us and called for a lunch break. We said fine, we will sit here until you come back. We are taxpayers; this building belongs to us!*

*At the community meeting about PAMC last December, the LA Times reporter asked me, "You don't live in Chinatown anymore. Why are you speaking here?" I said that I still need Chinatown. I come here to eat, to meet my friends, to buy newspapers, to go to the library, to see the doctor. This is my community.*



7 Tenant Associations formed



4 buildings with habitability issues due to landlord neglect



3 buildings fighting evictions



4 buildings with abusive landlords who threaten or harass tenants



3 buildings fighting unfair rent increases



2 buildings fighting cash for keys

## Current CCED Tenant Association Fights as of October 2019

### 651 Broadway

The residents of 651 Broadway fought off illegal rent increases of up to 40% in 2017. Since then, they had to organize against their negligent and abusive landlord Howard Chan. Recently, they entered Rent Escrow Account Program (REAP) to solve long time habitability and harassment issues.

### Hillside Villa

124 units at Hillside Villa received rent increases of up to 200% last year. After tenants fought back, their landlord Thomas Botz verbally agreed to a 10 year no rent increase deal with Los Angeles City Council. In August, Botz pulled out of the deal in an effort to garner more profit. Tenants are continuing to mobilize City Hall to hold Botz accountable to stay in their homes.

### 770 Hill Place

This summer, sixteen families were aggressively harassed by a new investor Roman Group to sign a Cash-for-Keys deal. After persistent organizing, all units received taxable \$50,000 offers. Six families whose lives deeply rely on Chinatown refused the deal to protect their social security benefits and rent control units.

### Bartlett Hill

Tenants living in a tax credit building fought against extreme health hazards during a construction project designed to rehab these locations. This rehab project also permanently displaced dozens of residents who lived at Bartlett for decades, replacing them with new tenants able to pay higher rents.

### 920 Everett

On July 26, tenants in all six units received a notice from their landlord that they had 60 days to move out, the building had been sold to a new owner. The tenants, all Southeast Asian refugee and immigrant families, are fighting to stay in their homes. Demonstration, petitions and media coverage have forced the new owner to withdraw the 60 day notice and halted the eviction process for now.

### Inquilinos Unidos De Los Cinco Puntos

Fighting rent increases of up to 40% and deplorable living conditions. Many have bed bugs, cockroaches, leaks and mold gone un-repaired for years by their landlord, Ken Wong.

### Metro Senior Lofts

In 2018, seniors at 123 units received an 8% rent increase that could threaten their livelihood. The tenants mobilized and fought off the rent increase after pushing for support from the city.

**Design:** Chrystal Li, Sophat Phea

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## “To have thousands of homes, where all poor scholars could find welcome shelter”

By Li Zhong Huang

To the government officials concerned, do you ever feel ashamed for not being able to provide housing for the poor? Not even the simplest homes? The title above was originally written by an ancient Chinese official and poet who—even thousands of years ago—cared about low-income people. Now, look at Los Angeles Chinatown.

In recent years, LA Chinatown has practically become a hot commodity. Many developers have given rise to a new image of Chinatown: a mere close-to-Downtown real estate hotbed. Add into the mix China’s trending practices of real estate speculation and collusion between businesses and politicians—who knows when such twisted acts entered Los Angeles County. Worse are the individuals who act immorally as stooges for the wealthy but heartless developers. One of them, George Yu, who heads the Chinatown Business Improvement District, openly acted against America’s democracy and freedom of speech by brazenly tearing down and destroying poor people’s voices (protestors’ picket signs). His disgusting face was spread across the internet and WeChat for the world to see. The way he lives a life of luxury by feeding off rich business

people is truly sickening!

The American government allows all people to voice their concerns. So why would you destroy the picket signs of such a large group (all within less than two hours after their demonstration)? You have angered the people, and still, karma will one day get back at this pitiful pawn!

Another point: airline companies are another type of business. Aside from expensive first class seats, most of an airplane’s seating (economy class) are meant for ordinary people. So why do some developers persistently build apartments with no affordable housing? They should know that they’ll never be able to make all the money in the world. Also, every location has limited space. Just like CCED’s principle, you must let the rich and the poor be equals. Every person has a place in society, and you must allow all people to live and develop. Otherwise, you will have many luxury apartments but will one day find them empty. Because unlike you, poor people have learned from the aforementioned scholar-official’s famous quote: “To have thousands of homes, where all poor scholars could find welcome shelter.” ■

The author of this article, originally written in



CCED members and supporters post their picket signs at the College Station development site following the Chinatown Is Not For Sale March and Rally. BID Executive Director George Yu ripped the signs down less than two hours later. **Photo: Sophat Phea**

Chinese, is a member of CCED’s All Chinatown Tenant Union, where tenants facing housing issues come together to support each other, share experiences, learn about tenant rights, and build grassroots power. If you are interested in participating, please join our meetings, usually every third Sunday of the month, 1pm-3pm at Kleverdog (418 Bamboo Lane).