



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Amy Koo
Asian Community Development Corporation
T: 617.482.2380 ext212 F: 617.482.3056
amy.koo@asiancdc.org
www.asiancdc.org

MacArthur Foundation Awards \$170K To Bring Virtual Participatory Urban Planning For Boston Chinatown Residents

BOSTON, MA. APRIL 16, 2009 – Asian Community Development Corporation and project partners, Emerson College and Metropolitan Area Planning Council, received funding for their collaborative project, *Participatory Chinatown*, one of nineteen projects from around the world awarded funding to explore digital media's ability to help people learn. Funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the 2009 Digital Media and Learning Competition awarded a total of \$2 million. Participatory Chinatown was the only winning project from Massachusetts.

The Innovation in Participatory Learning category of the competition funds projects that use digital media to help learners of any age use new technologies to share ideas, comment upon one another's projects, and plan, design, implement, or simply discuss their goals and ideas together. Participatory Chinatown seeks to transform the planning practices shaping Boston's Chinatown - from disjointed transactions between developers and communities to a persistent conversation shaped by participatory learning.

Participatory Chinatown is designed to engage residents of all ages, languages, and backgrounds because it allows users to interact in a virtual, visual space. Physical deliberation, virtual interaction, and web-input are integrated into an engagement process that encourages residents of all ages and abilities to participate. No prior urban planning experience is necessary; interest is the only prerequisite for involvement. To break down cultural and language barriers to participation, neighborhood youth will play a vital role as informal staff and interpreters who mediate between the virtual environment and other community members. Participants sit side-by-side in physical space and simultaneously co-inhabit a 3D virtual space where they engage in rapid prototyping and testing of urban design proposals.

Participatory Chinatown is a collaborative effort of the Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC), Emerson College, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Assistant Professor Eric Gordon of Emerson will direct research and design of the participatory learning experience. With 21 years of community development experience, ACDC will lead community participation and youth engagement. MAPC will provide technical support with both data models and lessons learned from its experience with community planning processes.

The Competition is funded by a MacArthur grant to the University of California, Irvine, and to Duke University and is administered by the Humanities, Arts, Science and Technology Advanced Collaboratory (HASTAC), a virtual network of learning institutions. "We are developing a vibrant community of learning leaders that includes youth, international researchers, practitioners and theorists, non-profits and

commercial enterprises and ranging across all the different fields from the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and engineering. It's starting to feel not only like a new field but an actual movement" said Cathy N. Davidson of Duke University, co-founder of HASTAC along with David Theo Goldberg of the University of California Humanities Research Institute.

Detailed information about the winning projects and the competition is available at www.dmlcompetition.net.

###

Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC) is a 20-year old community based non-profit organization serving the Asian American community of Greater Boston by developing affordable housing, promoting economic development, fostering new leadership, and building capacity within the community through education, advocacy, and action. Established in May 1987, ACDC works with the community to realize a common vision of vibrant, healthy and just neighborhoods. The organization has developed over \$100 million of mixed-income housing in Boston's Chinatown and operates a portfolio of complementary community development programs geared towards the Asian community. For more information, please visit www.asiancdc.org.

Emerson College, founded in 1880, has evolved into a multi-faceted college that is internationally recognized for excellence in its fields of specialization, which are communication, marketing, communication sciences and disorders, journalism, the performing arts, the visual and media arts, and writing literature and publishing. Department of Visual & Media Arts offers undergraduate and graduate programs in film, video, television, radio and audio, new media and media studies. The programs recognize that the visual and media arts are powerful forces that affect the minds, emotions and behavior of humankind, and they seek to educate students to become informed and ethical leaders as well as creative and successful practitioners. Visit <http://hub2.org/> for more information.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council is a regional planning agency serving the people who live and work in Metropolitan Boston. An independent state agency, MAPC's mission is to promote smart growth and regional cooperation, which includes protecting the environment, supporting economic development, encouraging sustainable land use, improving transportation, bolstering affordable housing, ensuring public safety, advocating for equity, and fostering collaboration among municipalities. MAPC staff work to advance the agency's mission through technical assistance to cities and towns, data analysis and mapping, research, collective purchasing, public engagement, and public policy advocacy. Visit <http://www.mapc.org/> for more information.

About the MacArthur Foundation:

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation supports creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. In addition to selecting the MacArthur Fellows, the Foundation works to defend human rights, advance global conservation and security, make cities better places, and understand how technology is affecting children and society. More information is available at www.macfound.org.

About HASTAC:

A consortium of humanists, artists, scientists, social scientists and engineers from universities and other civic institutions across the U.S. and internationally, the Humanities, Arts, Science and Technology Advanced Collaboratory (HASTAC) is committed to new forms of collaboration for thinking, teaching, and research across communities and disciplines fostered by creative uses of technology. The infrastructure for HASTAC has been largely provided by the John Hope Franklin Center for Interdisciplinary and International Studies and the Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke University and the University of California Humanities Research Institute. More information is at www.hastac.org.

###