

Chinatown funding approved

Conditions upset some aldermen

BY KIM GUTTORMSON, CALGARY HERALD MARCH 9, 2010



A colourful parade marks Chinese New Year's celebrations in Chinatown.

Photograph by: Leah Hennel, Calgary Herald

Chinatown will receive up to \$500,000 for its centennial celebrations from the city, although council will get final approval over each piece of the plan before money is released.

Some aldermen say the 100th birthday has become a political pawn in an election year and is being subjected to rules other groups don't have to face.

Others argue that having to approve specific plans simply clarifies the funding process.

"It gives a higher level of accountability and transparency," said Ald. Ric McIver, who proposed adding the approval of specific plans.

But Ald. John Mar said the Chinatown event -- which will also look for funding from other sources and will include area improvements as well as a street festival -- is being subjected to a double standard.

"Absolutely this has become political," said Mar, adding the funding has gone through the proper city process to date. "Now they're being asked to jump through additional hoops, an unusual process."

Other events in other communities haven't had to come for secondary approval, Mar said.

"So it's not the same level of transparency and accountability as other communities," he said.

But McIver said what he asked for, and what was approved by a majority of council, was clarity for everyone what will happen around the funding. He said some people were confused about what the money would be spent on.

"It's important today we made it explicit and more clear," McIver said. "I thought it was important we clarified it for the public."

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, who voted against the funding, said it was unfortunate plans won't be coming forward before May.

"It's regrettable this didn't happen a year ago," Colley-Urquhart said.

The Chinatown celebration, which involves about 50 community groups, will include legacy projects, such as upgrades to Centre Street and improvements to Sien Lok Park, a street festival and cultural performances. As well, documentary projects that illustrate Chinatown's role in Calgary will also be explored.

kguttormson@theherald.canwest.com

© Copyright (c) The Calgary Herald