

Helen T. Chang

Professional Biography

Benjamin Franklin observed that “All mankind is divided into three classes: those that are immovable, those that are movable, and those that move.” As a results-oriented executive with over thirty years experience in the fields of international business, government, politics and community affairs, Ms. Helen T. Chang believes that actions speak louder than words and her professional life has been modeled on this principle. Ms. Chang is a woman that moves and is able to move others. As Director of the City of Houston Mayor’s Office of International Trade and Development, she brings to bear her fast-paced and goal-driven work ethic, as well as high standards, to identify, create / nurture and enhance bilateral ties between the City of Houston and international partners from the government, corporate and not-for-profit sectors to increase investment and trade in the Houston business community.



Ms. Chang graduated with a degree in economics from National Chung Hsing University in Taiwan. She moved to Houston after attaining a M.B.A. from Auburn University in Alabama and a brief detour to Seattle, where she worked as a research statistician. Combining business and management skills with her passion for helping others, Ms. Chang first took a job as an administrator with the Baylor College of Medicine under the legendary Dr. Ralph Feigin.

Drawing inspiration from her own experience as an immigrant to the United States, Ms. Chang began taking on a leading role in Houston’s budding Asian community. She was one of the founders of the Houston branch of the Global Federation of Chinese Business Women, serving as president, and has been a strong supporter of many local cultural / civic organizations, such as the Chinese Community Center, Chinese Civic Center, the Asia Society Texas Center and Asian Pacific American Heritage Association. Her stint as an anchorwoman for Southern Chinese T.V. and a radio talk show host for KGOL 1180 AM helped her develop a range of multi-media skills, which have served her to this day and expanded her recognition as a larger-than-life figure in the local Houston community and abroad. She stayed particularly active on the Boards of the Houston Red Cross, Sheltering Arms, the Houston Community College System Foundation and Selective Services System, as well as the boards of numerous local businesses.

Ms. Chang blazed new trails as a pioneer in Asian-American political circles, becoming an active volunteer, canvasser, fundraiser and booster in election circles and, in the process, developed a keen working knowledge of political and government systems. She has received numerous appointments, such as Trade Consultant for the Texas Senate Natural Resource Committee, Agricultural Ambassador of the Texas Senate Natural Resource Committee, Council Member of the U.S. Department of Education’s Advisory Council on Education Statistics, and Council Member of the Texas Statewide Health Coordinating Council.

In 1992, Houston Mayor Bob Lanier recognized that Ms. Chang’s background with the local Asian community and Texas Medical Center could complement his administration’s health and human services

initiatives by hiring her as his Asian Community Liaison. She was the first Asian-American to be appointed to a Houston Mayor's transition team, and the first Asian-American executive assistant to any City of Houston Mayor.

Under Mayor Lanier, Ms. Chang worked to connect city health service providers with high-need groups within the Asian community, bringing her in touch with additional segments of the international community. In 1998, Mayor Lee P. Brown sought to utilize Ms. Chang's extensive connectedness to Houston's international community and her background in business development by appointing her to direct the first Mayor's Office of International Affairs and Development. She has been reconfirmed for this position by subsequent Mayors -- Bill White and Annise Parker, though under the administration Mayor Annise Parker, Ms. Chang elected to specifically focus on trade and economic development.

Ms. Chang has proposed, organized and coordinated numerous outbound trade missions to China, Korea, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. She has welcomed heads of states, potentates and numerous other decision-makers, and she has initiated and supported over 500 business delegations (groups) to Houston. At Ms. Chang's initiative, the City has signed over 130 international trade and bilateral cooperation agreements / memoranda; she presides over the activities of over seven bilateral partnership committees, which are in charge of implementing the terms of these agreements. She is a representative of the Mayor's Office on the World Trade Supervisory Board of the Greater Houston Partnership, and coordinates the activities of the seven regional councils of the Mayor's International Trade and Development Council.

Ms. Chang has been presented with numerous awards and recognitions, including advisory professor of Tongji University; visiting professor at Nankai and Dalian Universities; honorary citizen of Dalian; international trade advisor to Jianyin Economic and Development Zone, Dalian Economic and Technological Zone, and the China Chamber of International Commerce; Leadership Texas; Who's Who Among Asian Americans; and the International Director of Distinguished Leadership, to name just a few. She has been featured on the cover of July 1994 issue of *Asian Women Magazine* as well as in *The New Asian-American Woman* publication. In the same year, the U.S. Information Agency selected Ms. Chang for a 7-minute T.V. special feature, which was broadcast nationally.

In her personal life, Ms. Chang is the proud mother of Andrew and Audrey Chang. Andrew is currently pursuing a PhD in Bioinformatics and Audrey is a corporate lawyer with a local Houston firm. Ms. Chang spends her free time writing, gardening, practicing her own brand of interior design and managing the habits of two destructively adorable Shih-tzus, Coco and MeiMei.