



# Chinatown Cultural Plan

# Land acknowledgment



We acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Nation tribes of Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Stoney Nakoda First Nations tribes of Chiniki, Bearspaw and Wesley, and the Tsuut'ina First Nation.

Chinatown is situated close to the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers that have shaped this land and its people for generations. The traditional Blackfoot name of this place is "Moh'kins'tsis", which we now know as Calgary. The City of Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.

This land has sustained Chinatown's communities through arduous challenges, success and growth. As we continue this work, we honour the Indigenous people of the Treaty 7 region for their past, present and future stewardship of this land and look forward to building on the shared histories, memories and experiences between these communities.

## A note to the reader

Thank you for reading the **Chinatown Cultural Plan**. It has been created through the passionate involvement of members of the Chinatown community and The City of Calgary. This Plan recognizes a shared history that is marked by discrimination and racism against people of Chinese and Asian descent, with the desire to build a stronger, inclusive and harmonious future together.

### An important milestone

With so many participants in the planning process sharing their love for Chinatown, we are excited to show everyone how their input shaped the **Chinatown Cultural Plan**. It is a milestone that we can all celebrate. Just like culture itself, this Plan is not static and will evolve over time as people have the opportunity to work with it. We look forward to seeing this process unfold, organically and in surprising ways.

### Language

In creating the Cultural Plan, we wanted to increase visibility of the Chinese language to reflect the experience of being in Chinatown. This is why we decided to include Chinese names for several significant places, buildings and terms. The Cultural Plan is also being published in Traditional Chinese and Simplified Chinese.

### Opportunities to learn

Not everyone is as familiar with the culture of Chinatown and the Asian-Canadian communities it represents. Reading through this Plan is a great opportunity to learn more about this rich culture, and to improve understanding across cultures. In Appendix III, we describe in more detail the cultural meaning of several terms, events and symbols referenced throughout the **Chinatown Cultural Plan**.

### Commitment to anti-racism, equity and inclusion

The City of Calgary aims to become an anti-racist organization and to support efforts that will see Calgary become an inclusive anti-racist community. We seek to listen, learn and build communities where Indigenous and Racialized people and groups have equitable access to City services and programs.

We also acknowledge an increase in anti-Asian racism and violence, and are working to make Calgary an inclusive city where Asian residents feel welcome and safe.

### Publishing information

#### Title

Chinatown Cultural Plan

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21-0018201-ADV-13281

# Acknowledgments

## Chinatown Advisory Group

The Chinatown Advisory Group is a passionate group of community members and leaders whose insights and advice were instrumental to the Plan. We owe them a big ‘thank you’ for their hard work and guidance through the process.

### Members

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## Calgary residents

Many people in Calgary clearly care about Chinatown. We are very grateful for everyone who participated in the engagement activities.

### Interview Participants

Nearly 130 people took the time speak individually with the project team to share their hopes, ideas and worries for the Chinatown of tomorrow.

### Survey Respondents

It was encouraging to see over 1,200 Calgarians respond to the Discover Survey: an online survey to discover people’s experiences and aspirations related to Chinatown.

### Virtual Talks

Over 250 people attended our ‘lunch and learn’ talks to speak on Chinatown’s cultural future. Thank you to all participants and presenters who kindly offered their time and knowledge.

### Roundtable Sessions

Around 200 people participated in our roundtable session, while another 100 joined through online surveys. The project team learned a lot from these smaller conversations.

### Chinatown Cultural Resource Map

Thank you everyone who contributed places and stories to the Cultural Resource Map, and for sharing the map with friends and networks!

## City of Calgary

This work was truly a team effort, representing a broad range of skills and expertise from across the organization. We thank everyone for contributing their time and talent to developing this Plan.

## Community organizations

The Chinatown community can rely on a great number of organizations that offer cultural programs, advocacy, social services and communal spaces. We thank them for sharing with us so candidly what their hopes for Chinatown are.

### Organizations

Calgary Arts Development  
 Calgary Chinatown Artists Residency  
 Calgary Chinatown Community Association  
 Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre  
 Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens’ Association  
 Calgary Economic Development  
 Calgary Municipal Land Corporation  
 Calgary Public Library  
 Calgary Tourism  
 Chinatown Business Improvement Area  
 Chinatown’s artists, and art and cultural groups  
 Chinatown’s business owners and operators  
 Chinatown’s societies, tongs and associations  
 Chinese Cultural Center of San Francisco  
 City of Calgary (administration and Council)  
 Clover Living  
 Diversecities  
 Glenbow Museum  
 Heritage Calgary  
 The New Gallery  
 Sien Lok Society  
 Travel Alberta  
 University of Calgary  
 Vancouver’s Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden



### Mayor's message

The story of Calgary's Chinese community is one that reflects strength and perseverance through challenging times. Chinatown as we know it today has been in its present location since 1910, after the community was displaced twice. Chinese Calgarians have also historically battled through racist policies like the federal head tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Despite discrimination and hardship over time, Chinatown remains home to many incredible people who run family-owned businesses, volunteer in the community and welcome visitors to experience its one-of-a-kind culture. People are the life of Chinatown and strengthening Chinatown's culture is vital to maintaining the sense of place that so many have come to know and appreciate.

Because Chinatown contributes so much toward making downtown Calgary a thriving destination, we embarked on creating the first community-specific Cultural Plan in our city. Many people have dedicated countless hours to ensure that this plan reflects the community's values and hopes for the future. Thank you to all the advocates and everyone involved for your contributions.

This Cultural Plan highlights areas of opportunity and what's possible for Chinatown's cultural future. Now it's time to turn the plan into action. I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish together in creating tomorrow's Chinatown.

Jyoti Gondek  
Mayor



### Councillor's message

The Chinatown Cultural Plan is a significant milestone for Calgary. It is the result of many meaningful conversations with Calgary's Chinese and the Chinatown community about how to take more informed, thoughtful, rationalized, and equitable steps towards redefining this place and society as a culturally rich place for all people to live, work, visit, invest and do business in a manner that celebrates this cultural heritage.

We would be remiss in not acknowledging the countless members of the Chinatown community who have contributed to what Chinatown is today. Chinatown's resilient spirit wears across its aging bricks and streets like a badge of honour. While its history is also marked by a struggle for inclusion and the community continues to endure discrimination, the Cultural Plan will be a beacon of light through the darkness. As we move forward together, there is now an opportunity to create a different history that recognizes there is strength in our diversity.

I want to thank those who had a part in creating Calgary's Chinatown Cultural Plan. These efforts have set the course and provided renewed energy for making Chinatown a thriving cultural community for generations to come. I am honoured to have been a part of this work and am excited to see what comes through implementation of great initiatives and building of new and renewed infrastructure.

Terry Wong  
Councillor, Ward 7



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# Introduction

The **Chinatown Cultural Plan** is Calgary's first neighbourhood-specific cultural plan. Working together with the new **Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan**, this Cultural Plan honours those who have made Chinatown what it is today, and will help ensure Chinatown remains a vibrant place to live, visit, work and do business for generations to come.

## What is culture?

Culture means different things to different people. The **Cultural Plan for Calgary** defines culture in the broadest sense as anything that describes the unique identity of a community or social group. This includes social customs, language, traditions, geography, cuisine, performing arts, fashion, literature, music and religious expression. Culture also includes less obvious aspects of our lives such as heritage, community initiatives, creative industries, advertising, design and fabrication, and much more.

## Why a cultural plan for Chinatown?

Chinatown is one of Calgary's most distinctive cultural communities, with a long and important history to the city, region and nation. The Chinatown community has been the leading voice in its desire to see the evolution of the neighbourhood be anchored in its culture, with development approached respectfully and through a cultural lens.

The **Chinatown Cultural Plan** builds upon Chinatown's cultural strengths to sustain and improve the quality of life for its residents, while welcoming visitors and newcomers.





## What this plan does

The **Chinatown Cultural Plan** outlines the strategic directions for advancing and investing in Chinatown’s cultural future — including cultural experiences and programs; spaces, facilities and amenities; and legacy businesses and tourism. It provides guidance for setting priorities, forming partnerships, assigning roles and securing resources.

This Cultural Plan also informs and complements the **Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan** by introducing cultural considerations for use in the planning process, including for new development and public space improvements. The objective is to ensure that new developments do not come at the expense of Chinatown’s culture, but instead contribute to what makes this neighbourhood such a special place.

## Plan philosophy

In making this Cultural Plan, and the thinking and decisions it involved, the cultural planning team followed the below philosophy:

- **Hope and excitement:** we aim to capture what excites and concerns Chinatown’s residents, visitors and supporters most, and grow people’s desire to see the recommendations brought to life;
- **Honest:** the Cultural Plan is not just about ‘good news’; there are historic and recent acts of discrimination, oppression and violence against people of Asian descent that we must talk about as well, even if this is uncomfortable;
- **Actionable:** planning is only the first step towards actual results; we want to carefully select aspirations that – no matter how ambitious – are still based in reality and can be feasibly realized;
- **Community-centred:** we want the community to see that this is their plan; that people see how their voice has shaped the recommendations, and how they have a role in the next steps; and
- **Funnel energy:** both the community and The City have limited resources, time and funding; to make the best of this, we want to funnel the energy towards the most impactful, meaningful ambitions.



# Chinatown's significance

Calgary's Chinatown is a neighbourhood like no other, with a culture that continues to be meaningful to the lives of its residents and all Calgarians. Shaped over a long and difficult history, it stands today as a reflection of Chinese Canadian history, struggles, achievements and values. Chinatown has managed to thrive, despite ongoing opposition and receiving little to no public support historically.

## Stories of oppression and resilience

The current Chinatown location is the third in Calgary. The first Chinatown was formed around 1885, mainly along 8 Avenue and between 2 Street S.E. and 4 Street S.E. A majority of Calgary's earliest Chinese immigrants were railroad workers on the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in BC. Upon the completion of the railway, the CPR reneged their promise to the workers of a return fare home to China. Unable to return home, these workers had to find a new place to live. From the west, they settled further and further east, with some workers settling in Calgary.

In 1886, the Great Fire destroyed half of the first Chinatown and in 1892, the Smallpox Riot ravaged the community when a large mob vandalized Chinese laundries and caused injury. Despite this, the Chinese population continued to grow and a second Chinatown emerged at 10 Avenue between 1 Street S.W. and 4 Street S.W. Around 1910, the Canadian Northern Railway announced its plan to develop this area, displacing Chinatown once more.

Through the years there were many examples of racism and discrimination faced by the community, as well as ongoing hardship caused by the federal head tax enacted in 1885. The tax was introduced to deter immigration to Canada by Chinese people and was in effect until 1923, when it was replaced with the Chinese Exclusion Act that banned immigration until 1947.

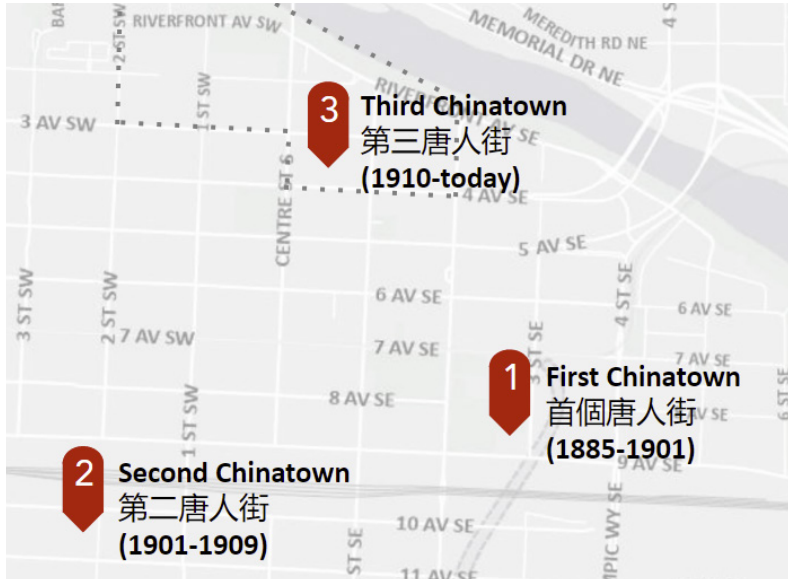


In Search of Gold Mountain, by Chu Honsun, 2000, Sien Lok Park



## The current Chinatown

The third Chinatown was established in 1910. Community leaders negotiated with City officials for a new location, while facing fierce resistance from local groups that attempted to segregate the community. Particularly harmful – and representative of anti-Chinese views widely held in Calgary – were the racist words and actions of James Short, who petitioned against the construction of the first Chinese-owned commercial building in the vicinity of his home. Despite this opposition, Chinese Canadian business people were able to develop the corner of Centre Street and 2 Avenue S.E. and built the Canton Block 廣東樓區. This became the cornerstone of today’s Chinatown. It is here that, despite continued anti-Chinese sentiments and government measures, the community has been able to survive and thrive.



Chinatown’s three locations are a story of displacement, oppression and resilience.

In the 1960-70s, Chinatown’s existence was threatened once more by large-scale infrastructure projects along the Bow River, including a 12-lane freeway that would have meant the destruction of Calgary Chinatown. Community members campaigned against these proposals, with the newly-formed Sien Lok Society leading the dialogue and organizing a ‘National Conference on Urban Renewal as it affects Chinatown’, the first of its kind in North America. Although a majority of these mega-projects were abandoned, two residential blocks at the east end of Chinatown were expropriated and demolished to make way for the Harry Hays Building, resulting in the displacement of 200 residents.



### Hub and spoke

Chinatown has meaning to Canadians of Chinese descent far beyond its boundaries. This broader Chinese community sees Chinatown as its cultural, business and social ‘hub’, providing services and a sense of belonging to those living in Calgary’s other neighbourhoods, or in suburban and rural places (the ‘spokes’). In this sense, a growing number of Chinese residents living outside Chinatown is not a concern, rather an opportunity for a mutually beneficial relationship.



### Continued passion

The culture of Chinatown continues to be significant to so many Calgary residents as it welcomes in new people and evolves with today’s needs, while staying true to its values. Youth are increasingly looking to reconnect to their heritage, and are ready to have conversations with peers and elders about racism and discrimination, and about the changes all generations hope to see for the community in order to move forward together. A continued and renewed sense of excitement comes through clearly.



### Recognizable character

Today’s Chinatown is easily recognizable by characteristic red brick buildings, street lamps, banners, motifs and architectural elements, but also by the people and the community they have built. Compared to other areas in Calgary’s downtown, Chinatown has a lot of residents who support the businesses throughout the day and into the weekends, creating lively and vibrant scenes. Though only a small area, its sense of place is strongly felt because of its colours, scale, cultural activities, people and languages.



### Cultural richness

There is incredible depth in the history and culture of Chinatown. The community has an impressive calendar of annual events, drawing many Calgary residents to the area to celebrate Lunar New Year, Canada Day, and the summertime through the Chinatown Street Festival. Chinatown's culture is more than major events, it is a way of life. There is cultural significance within the everyday traditions, wisdom and skills held by residents, cultural groups and businesses.



### Sense of belonging

For many community members, Chinatown is part of their foundational identity, tied to feelings of pride, sense of belonging, and representation of its people and culture. Chinatown is a place where Chinese-Canadian residents of Calgary and others with Asian backgrounds (including Vietnamese, Malaysian and Thai) see people like them, and where they can be themselves, meet and play with friends, and feel safe. There are many groups who depend on Chinatown to enhance the quality of their daily lives, including seniors and newcomers.

# Why we all need a vibrant Chinatown

All Calgarians benefit from a vibrant, culturally rich Chinatown. This includes those living and working in the community and nearby areas, people with family and cultural ties to the neighbourhood, and those visiting Chinatown to enjoy its food, culture, experiences and services. Chinatown is a cultural asset that holds value, meaning and opportunity for everyone.





### Greater Downtown

Greater Downtown needs Chinatown for its cultural depth and vibrancy. Chinatown gives Calgarians a way to engage with people of different backgrounds, ethnicities and cultures. Its small, independent businesses add a sense of tradition, entrepreneurship and local flavour to downtown.

### Cultural economy

Chinatown's cultural foods, arts, performances, crafts and learning give strength to Calgary's cultural economy and provide employment that is resilient through economic cycles. There is opportunity to grow and diversify Calgary's economy with more cultural practices in Chinatown.



### Tourism experience

As one of Calgary's most culturally distinct areas, Chinatown remains a must-see visitor experience with wide appeal. With smart investments, a new tourism destination is created, offering visitors an impression of Chinese Canadian culture and the diversity of the city.

### Anti-racism and diversity

Chinatown's history greatly informs the dialogue on addressing racism, power disparities and cultural bias within The City of Calgary and its systems. By sharing its own experiences with past and current injustices, the Chinatown community can support other cultural groups as they seek equity and representation.



### All-ages communities

Chinatown offers a model for age-friendly communities where people age in place, feel a sense of belonging and stay involved. Calgary can learn from Chinatown's culture of honouring and providing care to elders, and solidarity between the generations.

### Relationship building

The experience of the Chinatown community in planning its cultural future together with The City of Calgary has resulted in renewed trust and understanding. This could be an inspiration for closer relationships between The City and other cultural or underrepresented communities.

# Cultural resource mapping

Cultural mapping has been recognized by UNESCO as a crucial technique in preserving the world's intangible and tangible cultural assets. We applied this powerful tool to collect, honour and share back Chinatown's diverse cultural resources. Visit the Chinatown Cultural Resource Map and learn about the people, places and culture of this important neighbourhood.

## What is the Cultural Resource Map?

The Cultural Resource Map is an online platform where the community's stories unfold and are pieced together. This map aspires to:

- Capture the cultural values of Chinatown through different lenses;
- Connect places, people and stories in a compelling narrative;
- Increase awareness and appreciation for the cultural assets; and
- Uncover and celebrate previously unknown cultural resources.

## Cultural stewardship

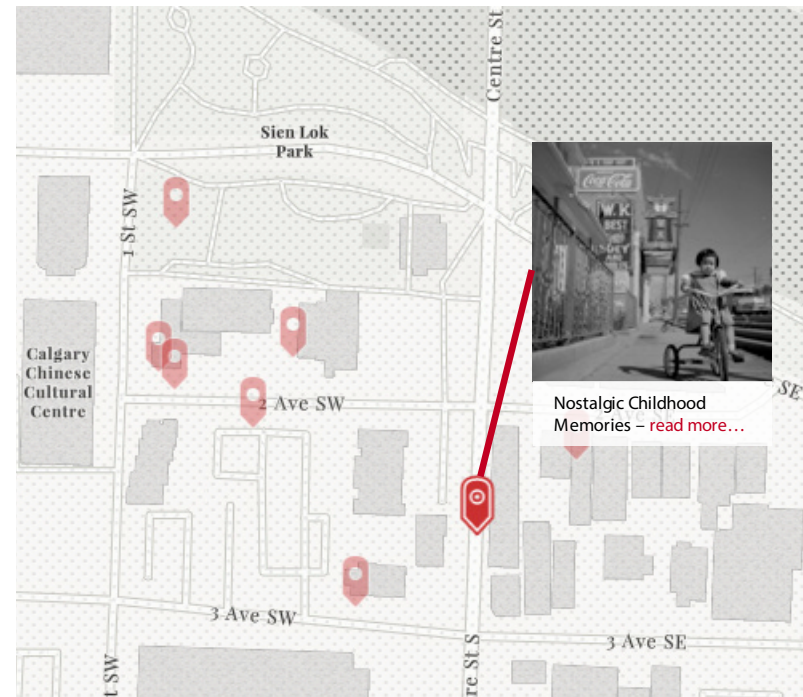
The Cultural Resource Map is a living document, always evolving to capture and reflect the current community. We continue to encourage all Calgary residents as cultural stewards to submit their own stories, memories, images, videos, places of interest and more, and have agency in the shaping of Chinatown's narrative.

## Explore for yourself

By navigating the Cultural Resource Map and reading the community stories, we hope everyone can find a reason to experience what Chinatown has to offer. Discover the map yourself by scanning the QR code on this page or visit: [calgarychinatownculturemap.ca](http://calgarychinatownculturemap.ca)



You will find more QR codes in this Cultural Plan. Scan these to learn about the background and stories of specific themes and topics.





# How to use this plan

The **Chinatown Cultural Plan** can be used by everyone to learn more about the history, significance and ambitions of Chinatown, and to be inspired to enjoy, experience and support its culture.

Here are just some of the many ways in which we can all make use of this Cultural Plan:

## Community groups

Cultural and community groups can demonstrate how their work contributes to the Cultural Plan's aspirations as they seek support and funding from The City and others.

## Artists and creators

The artist community can take inspiration from the Cultural Plan and find ways to align their creative work with the cultural themes and initiatives that Chinatown is hopeful of.

## Business and developers

As small businesses, property owners and developers invest in shops, housing and more, they can first immerse themselves in this Plan to ensure alignment with Chinatown's culture.

## Policymakers

The City and other authorities can align their plans and policies to better support Chinatown's culture, including policies for tourism, economic development and social services.

## City Council

Calgary's Councillors can learn from the Cultural Plan what Chinatown's most immediate concerns and opportunities are, and bring this understanding into their own decision-making.

## Residents of Calgary

Everyone can learn something new about the cultural richness of Chinatown by reading this Plan, and find a reason to visit the community and participate in one of its cultural activities.



# Framing the Chinatown Cultural Plan

The Chinatown Cultural Plan aims to have the broadest possible impact. It builds on the Cultural Plan for Calgary to propel exciting initiatives within Chinatown, and shapes the Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan by applying a cultural lens on how we plan for future development. The Plan is supportive and understands that it is people – not The City – who create and sustain the culture of our communities.

## A Supportive Plan

The culture of Chinatown today is the result of decades of contributions and stewardship by Chinese and Asian-Canadian community members. It is not the place of The City to determine what Chinatown's culture should be, or for The City to take ownership of this culture. Instead, the Chinatown Cultural Plan is a supportive plan; it humbly follows the lead of the community and looks for effective ways to be supportive to the cultural hopes of current and next generations.

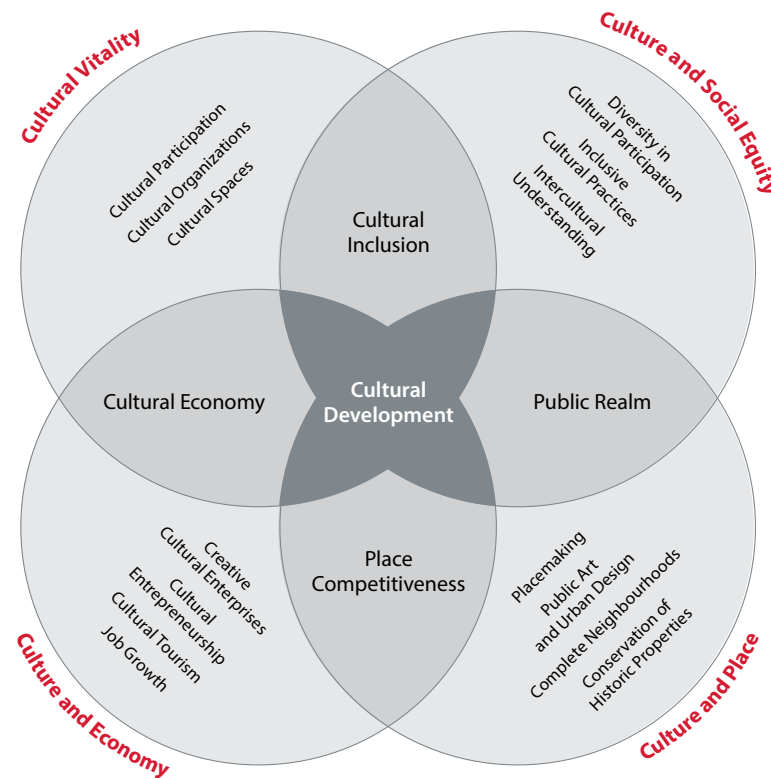
## Alignment with the Cultural Plan for Calgary

The Chinatown Cultural Plan builds on the foundation laid out by the Cultural Plan for Calgary. In the citywide Cultural Plan for Calgary, The City adopted an overarching framework for cultural planning that looks at culture not in isolation, but at how it connects and contributes to every aspect of life and society. This integrated, inclusive perspective on culture very much aligns with how the Chinatown community perceives its own cultural present and future.

## Informing the Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan

Five key themes emerged from engaging with the community about its culture. These themes provide a framework for the Chinatown Cultural Plan, as well as for how to culturally inform the new Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan. For each of the themes, cultural insights and priorities were distilled from community feedback and are incorporated as policies and strategic actions. The result is Calgary's first culturally-informed area redevelopment plan.

## Dimensions of Cultural Planning



# Key themes

Five key themes and areas of opportunity emerged from the community engagement. These themes provide different perspectives – or vignettes – on the rich culture of Calgary’s Chinatown and how it can best be strengthened. The key themes give structure to the **Chinatown Cultural Plan**, and help to organize the recommendations for strategies and actions.

In the next sections, each theme is defined to include strategies and actions.



**A. People, voices and experiences**



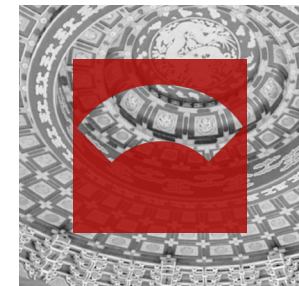
**B. Culture, creative and learning**



**C. Food, merchants and tourism**



**D. Housing, health and social purpose**



**E. Places, spaces and natural environment**



**THEME A**

# People, voices and experiences

Tomorrow's Chinatown is a community that celebrates its diversity, and offers people harmony and a sense of belonging. Community members have very personal connections to Chinatown. Despite being small, Chinatown generates a lot of activity, with different groups represented. From those who call Chinatown home to those establishing their roots – like the seniors who make Chinatown their living room, and new immigrants and youth looking to (re)connect with their heritage – the diverse voices contribute to a rich, dynamic culture.

## Strengths to build on

Chinatown is a place where Chinese-Canadian residents of Calgary and others with Asian backgrounds see people like them, and where they belong and can be themselves. The community is passionate and dedicated to its future. People take pride in Chinatown's accomplishments, survival and resilience, despite past displacement and oppression. Calgary-wide and beyond, people seem to have an interest in Chinese culture, and are excited to be in Chinatown and experience what the community holds.

- Diversity
- Cultural Identity and Language
- Passion and Dedication
- Civic Engagement
- Resilience

## Challenges to overcome

The complex and rich history of Chinatown and its people remains unknown to many and is becoming lost. There is also a long history of racism and discrimination between Calgary (as a city and organization) and Chinatown that needs to be recognized. There are walls and barriers within the community as well, particularly between the generations, between new immigrants and those who are established, and between groups of different Chinese or Asian heritage.

- Complex Histories
- Unknown to Others
- City Relationship
- Walls and Barriers
- What is 'Chinese'?



STRATEGY A1

# Bring cultural groups together

## Why this is important

Chinatown is a place of cultural significance where legacies are celebrated, safeguarded and passed on. Sharing culture with others is a way to welcome people in to participate and contribute, and to strengthen understanding between different cultures and identities.

## Actions

### A1.1 HONOURING CONTRIBUTIONS

There are opportunities to address historical wrongs and injustices towards Calgary’s Chinese community, and to recognize and share the important contributions of Chinese and Asian Canadians to Calgary and its culture.

### A1.3 CHINATOWN ‘REACHING OUT’

Efforts should be made to educate the city as a whole and to celebrate Chinatown’s culture. Chinatown can share its cultural richness with opportunities like Indigenous Day, Multiculturalism Day and more.

### A1.2 LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY

Sharing and understanding language in Chinatown encourages more thoughtful engagement. Education and support can be provided to cross language barriers between English, Cantonese and Mandarin speakers.

### A1.4 CROSS-CULTURAL RELATIONS

The community identifies with those who face similar challenges to be represented due to historic exclusion, and wishes to see these relationships strengthened. This includes with Indigenous, Jewish, Black, Middle Eastern and South Asian groups.

“Chinatown provides a glimpse into a culture that is different than my own.”

Tomorrow’s Chinatown survey respondent



## STRATEGY A2

# Build bridges across the generations

## Why this is important

Chinatown's elders and seniors have many things to say and advice to give to the next generation. Youth are looking to reconnect to their heritage, but experience challenges in making the connection. Genuine dialogue and friendship need to be fostered across age groups.

## Actions

### A2.1 INTERGENERATIONAL TALKS

Let's start having intimate one-on-one or small group conversations between youth and seniors about migration, work, culture and more. These talks can then develop naturally into lasting connections and mentorship.

### A2.3 YOUNG LEADERSHIP

Chinatown's organizations must urgently make efforts to create space for youth to lead and pursue their own ambitions. A critical mass of young leaders is desired in roles that go beyond volunteering.

### A2.2 HANDS-ON LEARNING

Skill sharing is a fun and powerful way to build intergenerational friendships and to pass on cultural heritage. More places and programs are needed for hands-on learning, cooking and apprenticeships – across all ages.

### A2.4 MULTI-GENERATIONAL CO-OP

A building could be converted into a place where people of mixed ages, backgrounds and skills can learn, create and activate Chinatown together: in the building, on the streets and in the community at large.

**"Many of our seniors find belonging and friendship here in Chinatown."**

Tomorrow's Chinatown survey respondent



## STRATEGY A3

# Improve the city-community relationship

## Why this is important

Chinatown and The City both hope for a strong and fruitful relationship. To advance this, conversations need to be had about what caused damage to the relationship in the past, and about the need and advantages of more diverse representation in The City's practices.

## Actions

### A3.1 PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

A good start to build trust and 'togetherness' is to agree on sustainable, tangible and binding principles between The City and community. Chinatown aspires to be seen as true partners in the relationship.

### A3.3 IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT

A multi-year agreement is needed between the community and The City to oversee the implementation of the Cultural Plan. This will ensure stability and sustainability.

### A3.2 CULTURAL TRAINING

The Chinatown community could become cultural ambassadors to The City by focusing on cultural bias and prejudice, and by leading the development of more culturally-aware and respectful engagement.

### A3.4 ANTI-RACISM COMMITMENT

Racism and power disparities continue to affect Chinatown today. The City must take concrete action to address racism, and change systems and policies as part of its commitment to ensure equitable access to City services and programs.

**"Chinatown is a living reminder of the challenges faced by the Chinese community."**

Tomorrow's Chinatown survey respondent





**THEME A**

# Map of aspirations

The culture of Chinatown related to **People, voices and experiences** can be expressed and made tangible in the public realm and private spaces. This map captures just some of the aspirations that can be explored. Many of these can find a place in multiple locations.



**A**

**Honouring History**

The histories of the Chinese community in Calgary can be honoured and celebrated with artwork, commemoration and programming at 和園 Harmony Park.



**B**

**Sustaining Memories**

The memory of the displaced residential community at today's Harry Hays Building can be sustained through creative works, information panels, landscaping and more.



**C**

**Indigenous Friendships**

Friendships between the Chinatown community and Indigenous peoples can be expressed with art and events at the site of the former Friendship Centre, among other places.



**D**

**Community Pioneers**

Tribute can be made to Chinatown's pioneers and founding families, highlighting their contributions and achievements through the years. The 何林樓 Ho Lem Block is just one of many places where this can take shape.



**E**

**Storefront Exhibits**

Storefront façades can become exhibits that pay homage to the stories, cultural values, entrepreneurship and resilience of the Chinatown community.

Images (from top): Cupola at 和園 Harmony Park | Displaced residential area in Chinatown | Former Friendship Centre before demolition | Ho Lem, ca. 1940s | Vancouver Chinatown storefront exhibit



Calligraphy in cursive script (caoshu) on a scroll. The characters are bold and expressive, with varying line thicknesses and fluid connections between strokes. The scroll is laid out on a wooden frame, and the background shows a blurred indoor setting with other scrolls and people.

**THEME B**

# Culture, creative and learning

Tomorrow's Chinatown is a community known for its artistic production, creativity and opportunities for cultural learning. Culture is a strong builder of connection and community within the urban area of Calgary. The Chinese community in Calgary is unanimous in its hope that Chinatown be the centre for Chinese culture. Nurturing the neighbourhood's capacity for artistic production, creativity and cultural learning represents a great opportunity to bring more people to Chinatown and share in its cultural richness.

## Strengths to build on

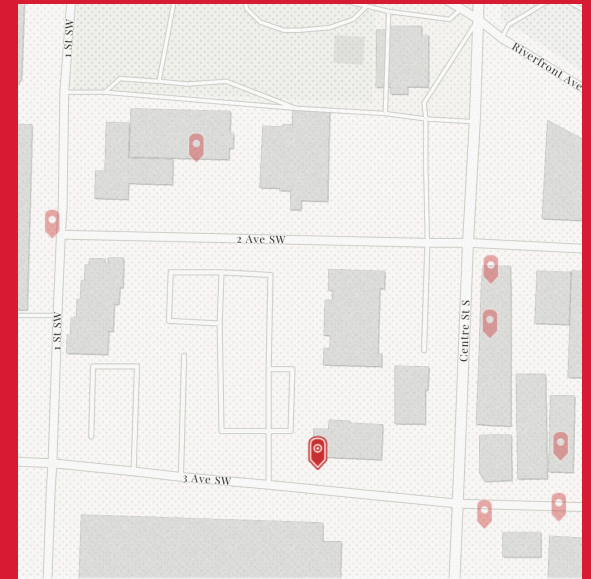
The Chinese Cultural Centre is a key Chinatown attraction for locals and tourists alike. It has the greatest reach across the city, especially through its Chinese New Year festival. Chinatown offers both annual flagship events as well as many hidden cultural gems to discover and learn about. A strength to build on is that in Chinese culture, artistic pursuits are considered lifelong endeavours of self-cultivation, offering opportunities for cultural learning.

- Strong Culture
- Chinese Cultural Centre
- Signature Events
- Hidden Gems
- Lifelong Cultivation

## Challenges to overcome

There is a lack of space for arts and culture in Chinatown. Spaces are either unknown, inaccessible, or not suitable for cultural purposes. Cultural work is often economically unsustainable, with groups competing for the same funding and the work sustained through volunteerism. There is a lot of art and culture in Chinatown, but much of it is unknown beyond the community. Unless addressed, we are at risk of losing traditional knowledge that is held by Chinatown's elders.

- Lack of Arts Spaces
- Difficult to Access
- Unsustainable
- Undermarketed
- Loss of Knowledge



Use the QR code to discover more about this theme on the Cultural Resource Map

## STRATEGY B1

# Expand cultural programs and activities

### Why this is important

By adding new cultural programming and expanding existing offerings, there is an opportunity to attract those who are not familiar with the Chinese culture and younger people who want to learn more about their culture. Support for Chinatown's cultural practitioners is also desirable.

### Actions

#### B1.1 NEW, YOUNGER AUDIENCES

New, younger audiences can be attracted with cultural activities that are more relatable and relevant to their lives. This ranges from film and live music, to anti-racism dialogues and finding friendships or careers.

#### B1.3 CHINATOWN CELEBRATIONS

Every season has its own cultural celebrations in the lunar calendar, many of which are still unknown to Calgarians. The City and community can work together to celebrate lunar events in Chinatown with citywide appeal.

#### B1.2 CULTURAL EDUCATION

Investment is needed in the quality, availability and impact of Chinatown's cultural education. The curriculum should meet the learning goals of all Calgary residents with an interest in Chinese and Asian culture.

#### B1.4 CHINATOWN ARTS COLLECTIVE

A Chinatown arts collective, made up of traditional and contemporary arts groups, can support artist-led grassroots initiatives and public art projects, ensuring the diversity of expression is respected, marketed and celebrated.

**"My hope is that Chinatown becomes that hub where Chinese culture can thrive and survive."**

Tomorrow's Chinatown survey respondent



## STRATEGY B2

# Secure more space for culture

## Why this is important

Chinatown needs more space to develop, express and celebrate its culture. Better use can be made of existing, underutilized spaces; private and public, indoor and outdoor. Securing new spaces would give additional 'canvas' to cultural activities that have citywide appeal.

## Actions

### B2.1 NEW PURPOSEFUL SPACES

More small and mid-sized cultural spaces are needed that are designed for specific purposes. These should accommodate workshops, cooking, film, music, dance, theatre, exhibits, conversations and audio recording.

### B2.3 SPONTANEOUS SPACES

Spontaneous cultural events must be encouraged across Chinatown, with interior spaces, stages, outdoor pavilions and speaker's corners that accommodate events year-round and in any kind of weather.

### B2.2 ACTIVATED SOCIETY BUILDINGS

Traditional tongs and societies have underused social rooms, kitchens and gymnasiums that – with the support of a grant program – could be activated and made available for cultural, community-serving activities.

### B2.4 CULTURAL CANVAS

Rooftops, façades, awnings, bus stops, shutters and utility boxes; almost anything can become canvas for designs that reflect Chinatown's culture. Policy relaxations and art budgets are needed to support this.

**"Chinatown needs more art and performance spaces. This would also add a youthful energy."**

Tomorrow's Chinatown survey respondent



## STRATEGY B3

# Unlock potential of the Cultural Centre

## Why this is important

The 中華文化中心 Chinese Cultural Centre's landmark architecture and many cultural experiences make it a gateway into Chinatown for locals and tourists. It is also clear that there are more possibilities to tap into, making it time to explore how to unlock the Centre's full potential as a cultural destination.

## Actions

### B3.1 ARTISTS SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Centre can support Chinese and Asian Canadian artists with an artist-in-residency program and by recruiting them as guest curator for the big events to create something special for each year.

### B3.3 CITY OF CALGARY PARTNERSHIP

There is opportunity for a stronger (funding) relationship between the Centre and City of Calgary that is based on a renewed vision and working as close partners on promotion, programming and facility upgrades.

### B3.2 WEST AND EAST PLAZAS

The spaces west (Daqing Square) and east (Daqing Ave) of the Centre can be upgraded into vibrant plazas that accommodate cultural events in all seasons, while improving connections with the greater community.

### B3.4 SUCCESSION PLANNING

The Chinatown community has many talented young members with a passion for its culture. The next generation of leaders of the Centre need a process of succession to help connect with willing mentors and take ownership.

**"I would love to see more activities, and learn about Chinese culture and traditions."**

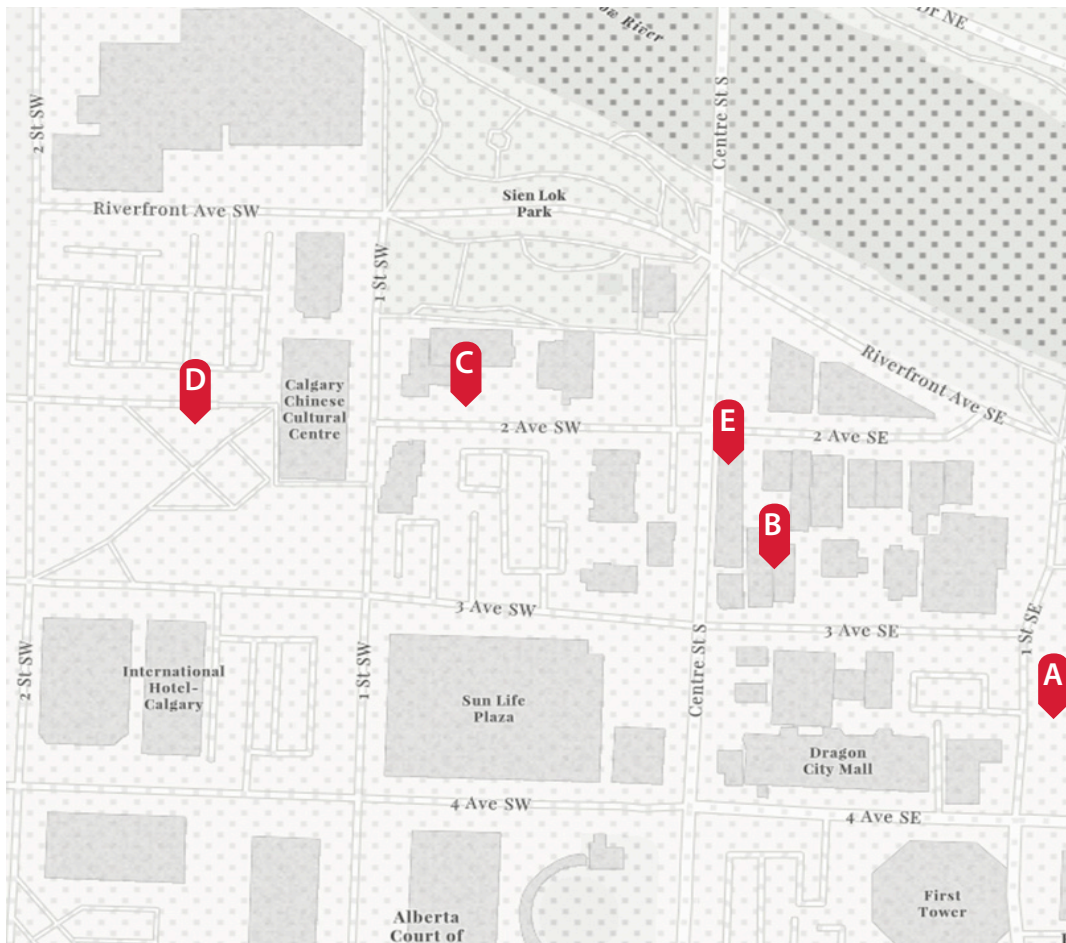
Tomorrow's Chinatown survey respondent



**THEME B**

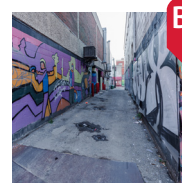
# Map of aspirations

The culture of Chinatown related to **Culture, creative and learning** can be expressed and made tangible in the public realm and private spaces. This map captures just some of the aspirations that can be explored. Many of these can find a place in multiple locations.



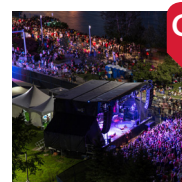
**Murals XL**

Larger than life murals can mark the edges of Chinatown and pay homage to its culture and the people it celebrates. Large, blank walls like those of the Harry Hays Building can provide canvas for this.



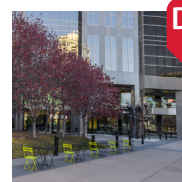
**Jazz Up the Alleyway**

Chinatown's Mural Alley could become a real experience. Desired improvements include hanging ornaments, lighting, nighttime performances, movable seating and patios.



**Outdoor Stages**

Chinatown's commercial streets could become bustling promenades with street programming, unexpected music and arts performances, and a vibrant hawker culture.



**All Season Plazas**

Movable or fixed canopies, tents, light fixtures and street furniture would turn spaces like 大慶廣場 Daqing Square into vibrant plazas that can host events all through the year, rain or shine.



**Luminous Chinatown**

The entrance into Chinatown from Centre Street Bridge could become a visual experience with an abundance of neon, light art and projections on the façades and rooftops.

Images (from top): Murals covering entire buildings | Alleyway, Shanghai, China | Washington Square, New York | Metropol Parasol, Seville, Spain | Light art exhibits





**THEME C**

# Food, merchants and tourism

Tomorrow’s Chinatown is a community valued for its independent businesses that offer cultural food, shopping and tourism experiences. The memory of Chinatown is deeply rooted in its independent business community and the cultural food, shopping and tourism experiences it offers. Many small businesses in Chinatown were started by immigrants out of their savings and built up despite setbacks. Children of family-operated businesses know very well how hard their parents worked and the sacrifices they made to provide a better life for them.

## Strengths to build on

Chinatown’s advantage is the density and diversity of Chinese and Asian cuisines. ‘Mom-and-pop’ shops are the character of Chinatown, providing authenticity and grittiness. Especially valued are the family businesses that offer affordable, culturally relevant goods and services. The daily, personal interactions with small independent business owners are big contributors to Chinatown’s sense of community, and can be an exciting visitor experience with local and international appeal.

- Diverse Cuisines
- Family Businesses
- Cultural Businesses
- Value and Quality
- Visitor Experience

## Challenges to overcome

The retail experience in Chinatown is not strong, with limited shops outside of food businesses. This has resulted in an eat-and-leave model of visiting Chinatown. The impact of economic decline, COVID-19, competition and lack of succession is taking its toll on Chinatown, as seen in the erosion of its small family-owned shops. While retaining and protecting existing businesses is important, there is also a need for their adaptation to attract new audiences and to meet changing demands.

- Eat-and-Leave
- Lack of Succession
- Changing Demands
- Competition
- Economic Hardship



STRATEGY C1

# Support existing and legacy businesses

## Why this is important

Chinatown’s small, independent stores and its strong food culture are assets to cherish and build on. Longstanding, family-operated businesses give the area its appeal and personality that cannot be replaced. Efforts should be made to sustain this legacy for future generations.

## Actions

### C1.1 LEGACY BUSINESS PROGRAM

The capacity of legacy businesses\* can be developed by offering a suite of shared resources. This includes support with staffing, digital/non-digital integration, social media and financing to aid their evolution in a changing market.

### C1.3 ATTRACTIVE STOREFRONTS

The appeal of storefronts needs to be revived with freshened-up façades and interiors that make products and activities visible from the street. An incentive program could stimulate businesses and landlords to invest.

\* A legacy business is defined as: more than 10 years in operation, small and independently owned, provides retail, food and personal services, adds to the culture and character of the area, and is community oriented.

### C1.2 BUSINESS SUCCESSION SUPPORT

Mentorship must be provided to existing business owners to facilitate the transition to the next generation. Stories of successful succession will attract young entrepreneurs, and with them, new ideas and audiences.

### C1.4 COLLECTIVE STORYTELLING

Legacy businesses would benefit from organized, digital/non-digital storytelling that is crowd-sourced by locals and visitors. It helps a broader range of customers connect with the people behind Chinatown’s hidden gems.

“I love the food of Chinatown. It is very unique and it always reminds me of my heritage.”

Tomorrow’s Chinatown survey respondent



## STRATEGY C2

# Attract new enterprises and concepts

## Why this is important

New, exciting additions to the retail mix would make for a more complete experience for today's residents, and bring younger and non-Chinese groups into the community. Grocers, fresh foods, fashion, nighttime businesses, and fusions of modern and traditional, East and West are desired.

## Actions

### C2.1 ACTIVE RETAIL RECRUITMENT

The community is calling for more fresh food, unique cuisines and cultural, community-serving retail. Instead of just waiting, such stores must be actively recruited across the city and nation to set up shop in Chinatown.

### C2.3 CULINARY EXPERIENCE HUB

Chinatown can leverage its food culture by creating a community space and platform that features both historically important and new food concepts. Synergies with food halls, markets and schools can provide an integrated experience.

### C2.2 NEW BUSINESS INCENTIVES

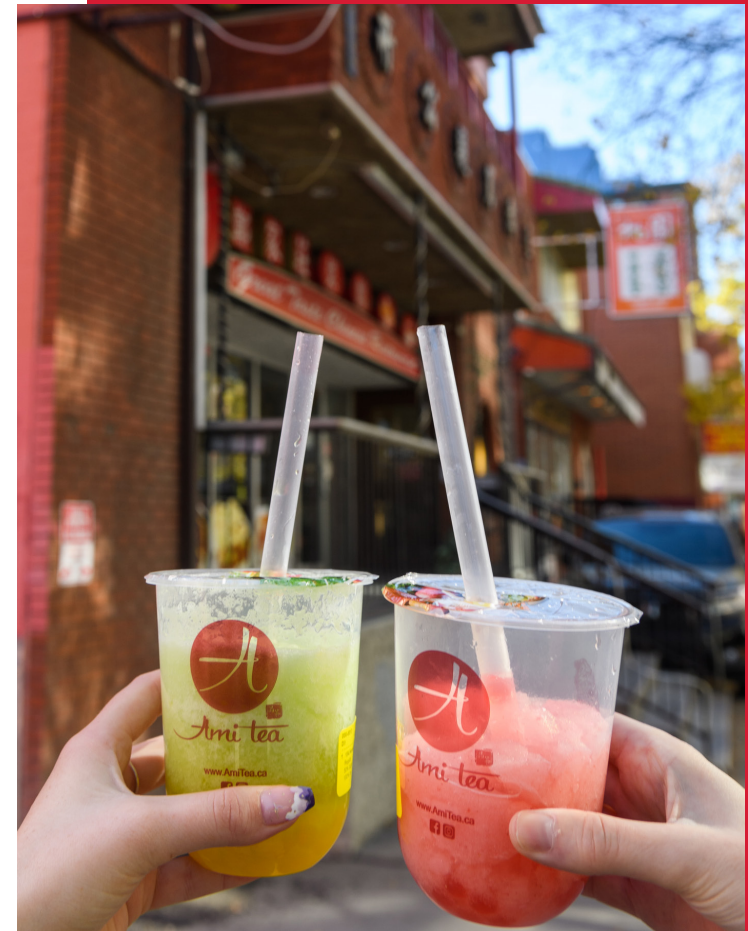
Incentives should be deployed to help emerging talent overcome barriers when starting a new business in Chinatown. Criteria would tie such support to the types of businesses the community most desires.

### C2.4 CULTURAL INDUSTRY

Chinatown is well-positioned to grow Calgary's cultural industry, building on the community's uniqueness. A policy is needed to create jobs in cultural experiences, traditional crafts, digital entertainment and more.

**"I wish for a young generation of Chinese Canadians to open their businesses here."**

Tomorrow's Chinatown survey respondent



STRATEGY C3

# Create a year-round visitor experience

## Why this is important

Chinatown is one of Calgary’s biggest opportunities to offer a genuine cultural destination. New, daily experiences are needed to attract visitors regularly and year-round. This can be enhanced by integrating with other downtown experiences and attractions to create a seamless journey.

## Actions

### C3.1 STREET ECONOMY

Locals and visitors would benefit greatly from economic activity on Chinatown’s streets, including night markets, all-season patios, and (after-hours) food and retail stalls, as well as late-night events.

### C3.3 DESTINATION CHINATOWN

A strategic study and marketing campaign is needed to communicate Chinatown’s community as an (inter)national place of important cultural development and contribution.

### C3.2 CHINATOWN EVERYDAY

The community can be encouraged to show who they are and what they do offering visitors a journey of discovery in which they always find something to do, and build a connection through experiences of daily life.

### C3.4 WELCOMING TO ALL

Everyone should feel welcome in Chinatown. Education can be offered to Chinatown’s tourism and business community to help overcome any language or cultural barriers that exist today.

**“My hope is that more people can experience Chinatown in a way that it stays true to itself.”**

Tomorrow’s Chinatown survey respondent



**THEME C**

# Map of aspirations

The culture of Chinatown related to **Food, merchants and tourism** can be expressed and made tangible in the public realm and private spaces. This map captures just some of the aspirations that can be explored. Many of these can find a place in multiple locations.



**Street Markets**

A street or night market with cultural foods and products would be a welcome amenity. It could take place on a parking lot in summer, and move into one of the malls in other seasons.



**Kiosks and Carts**

Second Avenue and 3 Avenue are good places to stimulate a street economy and hawker culture. This can also help make better connections between areas east and west of Centre Street.



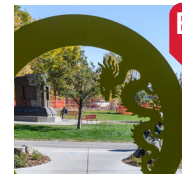
**Visible Products**

Redesigns of front-of-house spaces and façades can make Chinatown's offerings directly visible to pedestrians. Stimulation of the senses encourages people to stop, shop and interact.



**Food Experience Hall**

Places like Dragon City Mall can provide small retail units with pop-up or short-term leases, where food entrepreneurs can test the market and offer patrons something new.



**Instagrammable Spots**

New fun and instagrammable spots will interest people to stay longer and explore unfamiliar areas of Chinatown. These spots can include places to sit, chat, learn, experience and take lots of selfies.

Images (from top): Night market | Street vendors in New York Chinatown | Retail offerings directly visible from street | Food hall, Nice, France | Murals and hangout spot



**THEME D**

# Housing, health and social purpose

Tomorrow’s Chinatown is a community that provides residents the housing and support services they need through all life stages. The Chinatown community is unique in that people both in and outside the neighbourhood are passionate about the area and share a desire to be part of something bigger than themselves. In Chinese culture, community responsibility and civil society come before profit and personal gain, and family and community gathering are important. You are here to honour those before you and propel those after you.

## Strengths to build on

Chinese people consider the well-being of their elders and community a priority, and will make personal sacrifices accordingly. Thanks to past community investments, Chinatown’s seniors have strong supports and their care is prioritized and a point of pride. Chinatown has a long history of volunteerism, civic engagement and activism. Being part of the Chinatown community comes with social responsibility. There is a desire to be a good neighbour, to serve community and to share resources.

- Cultural Values
- Seniors Services
- Strong Civil Society
- Active Volunteerism
- Community Care

## Challenges to overcome

Less young people are becoming involved in Chinatown, which is concerning as existing generations grow older. A lack of youth and family-friendly amenities and housing contributes to that. Chinatown organizations have a reputation of being insular and not collaborating, but this is because they have established support systems and are not so reliant on outside help. Chinatown has yet to adapt to changing immigration, and there is concern about increasing redevelopment pressures.

- Growing Older
- Housing Gaps
- Perceived as Insular
- Demographic Change
- Development Pressure

**Use the QR code to discover more about this theme on the Cultural Resource Map**

## STRATEGY D1

# Invest in an all-generation community

### Why this is important

Chinatown could become a community where young people, families and seniors live together, find their home and take care of each other. Investments in additional housing, amenities and services are required to make Chinatown a complete community for all generations.

### Actions

#### D1.1 MULTIGENERATIONAL LIVING

Living with or in close proximity to (grand)parents to provide care and companionship is a key value in Asian culture. Multigenerational housing options are desired, such as three+ bedroom units and lock-off suites, and spaces for young and old to mix.

#### D1.3 CULTURAL HEALTH CARE

Culturally relevant health services are much needed, including Traditional Chinese medicine, a Chinese-speaking family physician, dentist, walk-in clinic and health lab.

#### D1.2 ACCESS TO HOUSING

New housing is a priority for those already connected to Chinatown, such as seniors looking to be near cultural services, those with family links and new residents from all backgrounds who wish to join a vibrant community.

#### D1.4 PLAY AND EXERCISE

More culturally-inspired outdoor spaces should be dedicated to play and exercise for all ages. In addition to playgrounds, this includes traditional Chinese mind and body exercises, tai chi, wushu, jianzi, kiting, mahjong and Chinese chess.

**“My hope is for future generations to embrace Chinatown as much as my generation has.”**

Tomorrow’s Chinatown survey respondent





STRATEGY D2

# Contribute to the lives of all Calgarians

## Why this is important

Chinatown has always been a welcoming place for Chinese and Asian immigrants; it also has much to contribute to the lives of all Calgarians. Other newcomers looking to find their place in society, or those seeking equity and representation, need Chinatown in their lives as well.

## Actions

### D2.1 CENTRAL NEWCOMERS POINT

Newcomers who seek opportunities in Chinatown would benefit from a central point (digital and physical) where they can find career and volunteering options, education, and social or business connections.

### D2.3 ANTI-RACISM ADVOCACY

The City and its civic partners can, through an agreement and actions, act as an innovative, actionable platform of anti-racism, advocating jointly with Chinatown for a more inclusive city.

### D2.2 FULFILLING VOLUNTEERING

Chinatown needs a more purposeful volunteering process where volunteers can easily find positions that match their passions and skills, and are supported with ongoing orientation, training and evaluation.

### D2.4 COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

Many individuals and groups care deeply for Chinatown. It would be beneficial to have a strategy that guides donations of time, expertise and funds to where they have the most impact and meet pressing needs.

**“Being a first generation immigrant, Chinatown helped me adjust to living in a new city.”**

Tomorrow’s Chinatown survey respondent



STRATEGY D3

# Sustain the traditional tongs and societies

## Why this is important

Chinatown’s tongs, benevolent and family associations played a crucial role in the lives of Chinese immigrants, their families and descendants. As time passed, their original purpose no longer aligns with contemporary needs. A re-imagination is needed to sustain their important legacy.

## Actions

### D3.1 LEGACY ARCHIVE AND CENTRE

The legacy of the tongs (community organizations) needs to be captured and kept alive. Archiving and curation (at a physical place and digitally) is needed to uncover and showcase the documents, images and videos that tell their story.

### D3.3 RELIABLE RENTAL INCOME

Tongs and societies can secure new reliable rental income from leasing out their underused spaces to cultural and community groups. A grants program can support them in pursuing these options.

### D3.2 MODERNIZED PROGRAMS

Support should be provided to societies that wish to modernize their programs towards affiliation on interests and topics. This will increase their relevance and reach, while staying true to their history.

### D3.4 COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

The Chinatown Community Association will play a key role in building community cohesion and prosperity. It would benefit from structural funding, better on-line presence and a physical location.

“Chinatown needs an interactive space that reflects the history of Chinese immigrants.”

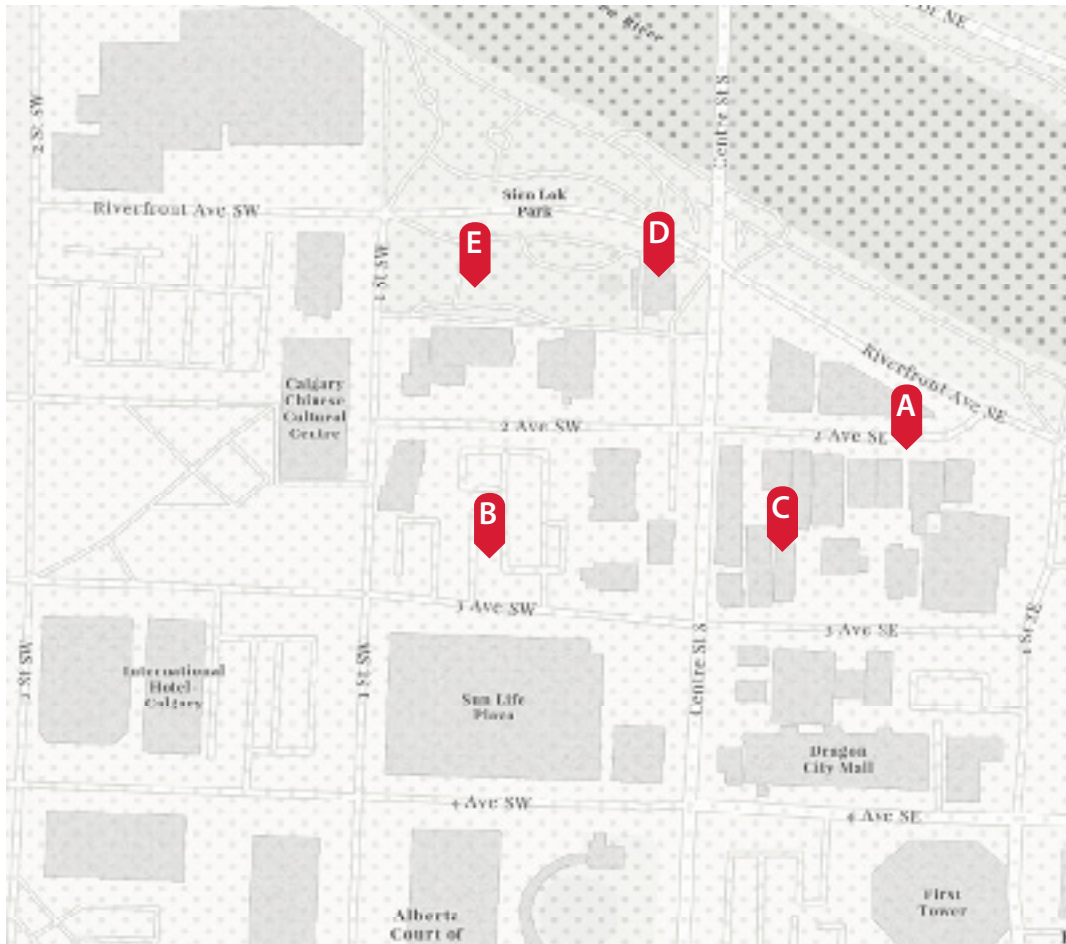
Tomorrow’s Chinatown survey respondent



**THEME D**

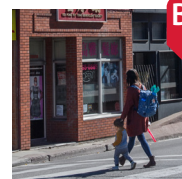
# Map of aspirations

The culture of Chinatown related to **Housing, health and social purpose** can be expressed and made tangible in the public realm and private spaces. This map captures just some of the aspirations that can be explored. Many of these can find a place in multiple locations.



**Space for Play**

Outdoor play is a powerful way to enliven public spaces and inspire cross-cultural learning. Places can be designed for Chinese chess, mah jong, ping pong, jianzi and other kinds of fun.



**Family Proximity**

Innovative housing concepts can redefine multi-generational living, with elderly-friendly units designed for seniors, while the (grand)children live separately in the same estate or nearby.



**Legacy Centre**

Chinatown's legacy is worthy of a physical place where the histories are made accessible for everyone to enjoy. Perhaps the 國民黨大廈 National League Hall is a suitable place.



**Traditional Chinese Medicine**

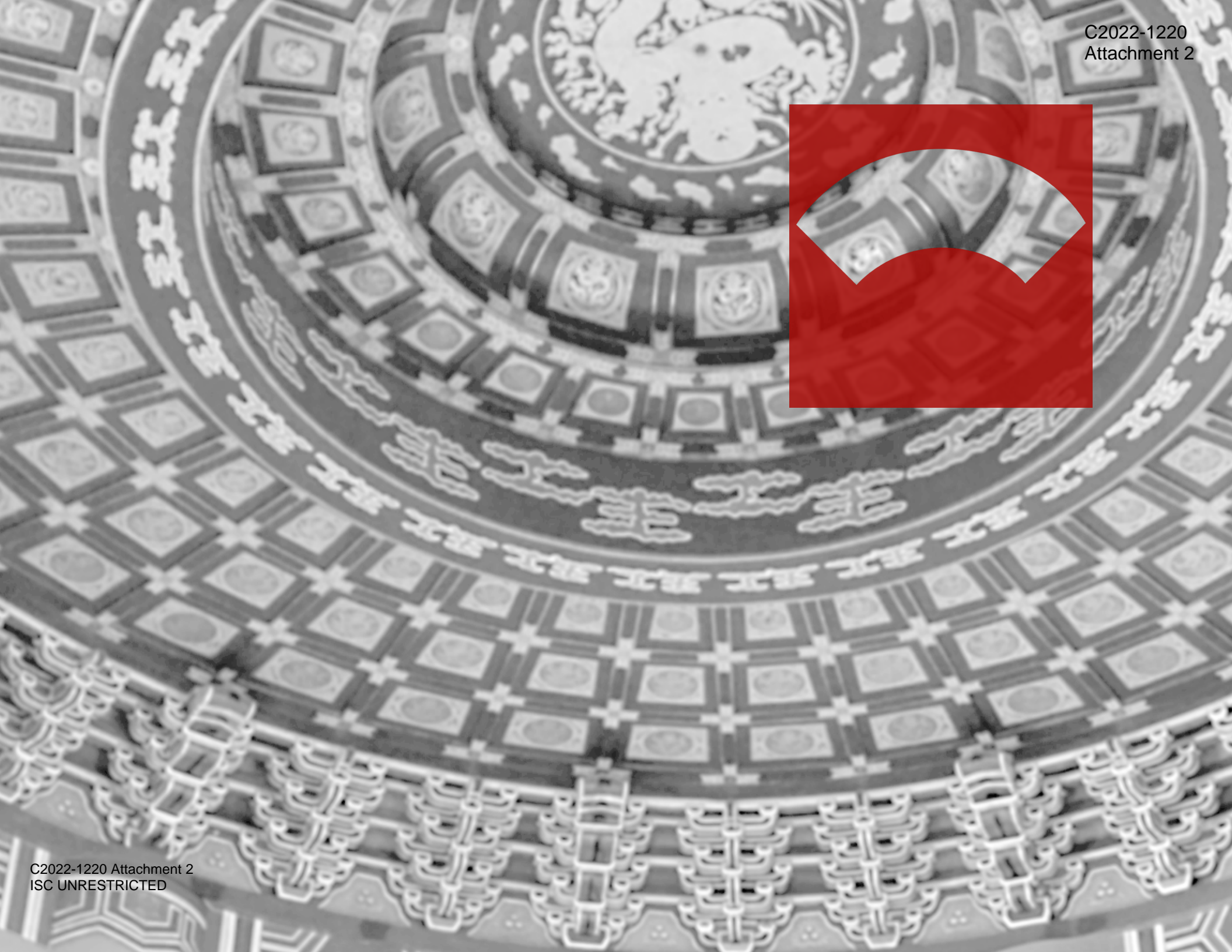
Places that give access to Traditional Chinese Medicine are important to Chinatown's residents. This includes herbal medicine, acupuncture, massage and dietary therapy.



**Seniors Workout**

Parks and courtyards could become places where seniors enjoy each other's company and participate in low-impact exercises, meditation and breathing routines.

Images (from top): Chinese chess at Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Courtyard, Vancouver | Different generations spending time together | Cultural exhibition | Chinese herbal store, Calgary Chinatown | Seniors meditating, Chinatown Montreal



**THEME E**

# Places, spaces and natural environment

Tomorrow’s Chinatown is a community that expresses its culture, history and stories in the physical environment. Chinatown was established in its present location in 1910, after being displaced twice. Its resilience is a point of pride within the community. There is no other Calgary neighbourhood that has such strong expressions of its culture in the built environment. One knows immediately they are in Chinatown through the unique styling and accents of lanterns, lamp posts, Chinese language signage and other cultural markers.

## Strengths to build on

Chinatown’s strong sense of place distinguishes it from other downtown neighbourhoods. Although limited in number, several historic buildings have been preserved and are remarkable for their architecture, stories and use. Chinatown has a strategic location by the river that should be leveraged more. The vibrancy, life and authenticity of its walkable streets are created by the density of Asian businesses and people young and old, their active use of Chinese language, and daily rituals, habits and aesthetics.

- Sense of Place
- Strategic Location
- Unique Styling
- Density and Scale
- Walkability

## Challenges to overcome

Worries about Chinatown being eroded are very real. New developments on its edges are more congruent with other neighbourhoods or designed with their backs to Chinatown, giving the impression that the area is undesirable. Reminders of a painful and racist past are ever present within the built environment, and Chinatown’s vibrancy is in decline as people and businesses leave. There is a lack of spaces for people to linger, and a need for convenient and affordable parking.

- Erosion
- Painful Reminders
- Loss of Vibrancy
- Few Options to Linger
- Mobility and Parking



STRATEGY E1

# Design streets for culture and people

## Why this is important

Chinatown can lead the way and show Calgary what it means to reclaim streets for the needs of people, business and culture. A consistent, people-oriented street design will add life and vibrancy, and communicate to people that they have entered a distinct cultural community.

## Actions

### E1.1 ACCESSIBLE DESIGNS

Chinatown's streets and sidewalks could be more intentionally designed with the youngest and oldest in mind. Traffic safety and accessibility for people with strollers, walkers, wheelchairs and other mobility limitations are major concerns, and more places to linger and socialize are desired.

### E1.3 PEOPLE-ORIENTED STREETS

Chinatown is an excellent location for people-oriented streets that accommodate all sorts of uses, can be closed off for cultural events, and where all traffic modes share space in a safe, vibrant environment – day and night.

### E1.2 EAST-WEST CONNECTIONS

Centre Street requires a full rethink to no longer act as a divider. New cultural and business activities need to be prioritized west of Centre Street to connect it with the existing historic and commercial core.

### E1.4 CULTURAL LANDSCAPING

Opportunities exist to apply Eastern garden philosophies more widely. Examples include Chinese garden designs in streets, parks and at senior housing, vegetable gardens and (indoor) edible landscapes.

**"I like how walkable the neighbourhood is and would like it to get even better."**

Tomorrow's Chinatown survey respondent



STRATEGY E2

# Revive heritage to benefit community

## Why this is important

Chinatown’s heritage is captured in historic buildings, but also in its streetscapes, languages and culture. As built heritage sites are revitalized, the way buildings and streets are used must be considered at the same time so that these sites remain meaningful and accessible to the community.

## Actions

### E2.1 BALANCED HERITAGE TOOLS

New funding and incentive tools should be adopted that ensure heritage revitalization does not lead to the displacement of – but instead to new opportunities for – cultural groups, programs and activities.

### E2.3 REVEAL OF HIDDEN HISTORIES

Cultural and language barriers have kept much of Chinatown’s heritage ‘hidden’ to most. An opportunity is to reveal these histories through info signs, public art, open houses, social media and cultural resource maps.

### E2.2 CHINATOWN’S ‘HISTORIC BLOCK’

The Canton / Ho Lem Blocks and National League Hall should be secured as affordable cultural spaces, and revived with experiences, neon and art works at the alleyway, façades and rooftops.

### E2.4 COMMUNITY-OWNED HERITAGE

A feasibility study is needed into opportunities and models to empower the Chinatown community to purchase, rehabilitate, program and operate heritage buildings or other important cultural assets.

“Being a first generation immigrant, Chinatown helped me adjust to living in a new city.”

Tomorrow’s Chinatown survey respondent



STRATEGY E3

# Strengthen Chinatown's contours

## Why this is important

Many of Chinatown's places with untapped potential are located at its edges. By activating and strengthening these spaces with culture, Chinatown can become more visible and distinct, and make better connections to the riverfront as well as East Village and Eau Claire neighbourhoods.

## Actions

### E3.1 PARK AMENITIES

Sien Lok Park and 和園 Harmony Park would benefit from more amenities such as bike parking and rentals, a park pavilion, food trucks, (covered) seating, dog parks, playgrounds and community gardens.

### E3.3 CULTURAL GARDEN

Sien Lok Park and Prince's Island Park could be favourable locations for a cultural garden with exhibition spaces. This would help attract visitors, act as a gateway feature and better connect Chinatown to the Bow River.

### E3.2 ENTRANCE MARKERS

Chinatown currently does not have a gateway. Residents, businesses and artists could come together to imagine innovative, never-before-seen ways to visually mark the entry points to this special community.

### E3.4 WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

Multilingual, well-designed wayfinding and public signage will raise people's awareness of what community they are in, and tempt them to explore places and amenities they may not be familiar with yet. A dedicated space to post community notices is also desired.

**"I love the proximity to the river and parks, and how you can grab some food and have a walk."**

Tomorrow's Chinatown survey respondent

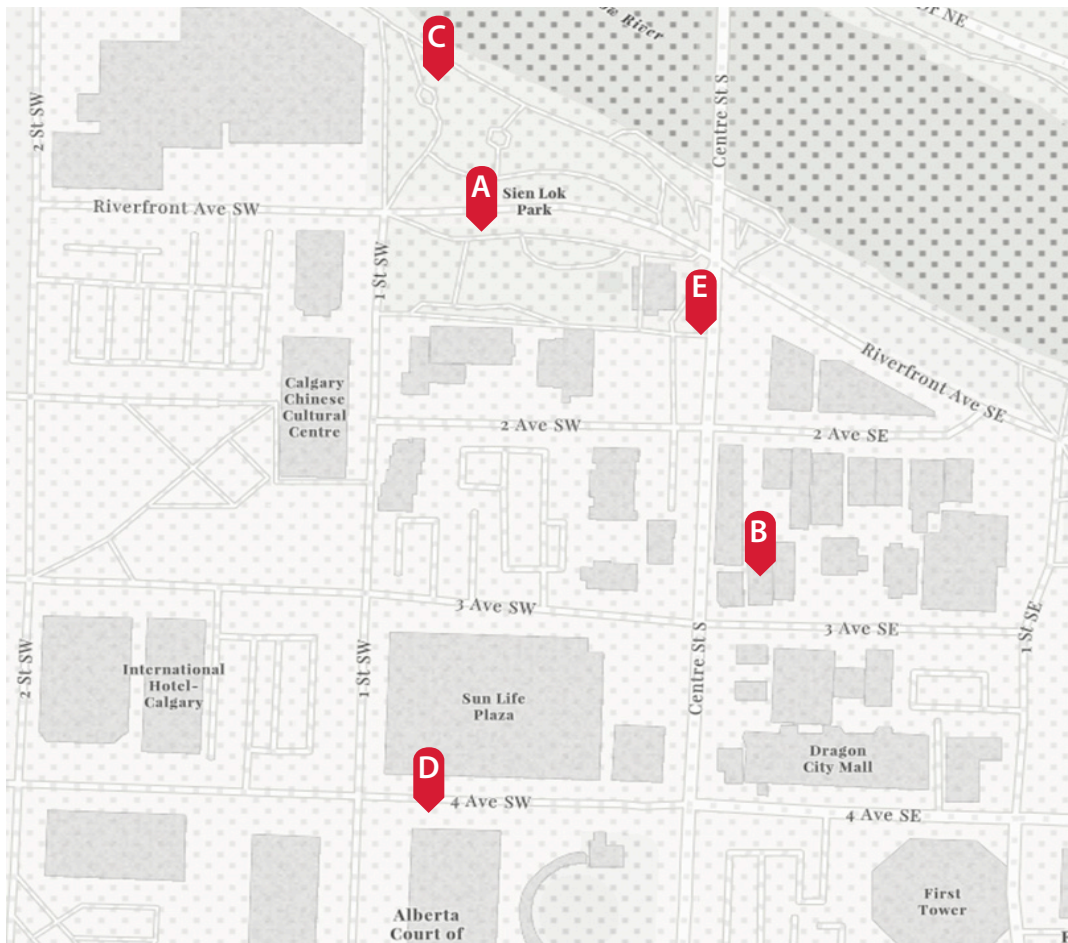




**THEME E**

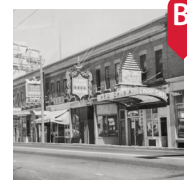
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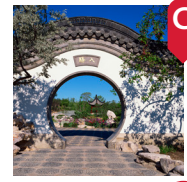
**Park Pavilion**

An open or enclosed pavilion in 善樂公園 Sien Lok Park could offer a place to have tea with friends or family, listen to a performance, rent bikes or explore what else is happening nearby.



**Chinatown's 'Historic Block'**

A key priority is to revitalize Chinatown's main heritage block into a cluster of cultural activity and business, with small and affordable spaces for community groups.



**Classical Chinese Garden**

Despite Calgary's climate, a classical Chinese garden is certainly feasible. Sien Lok Park or the eastern section of Prince's island Park could be good locations for this.



**Cultural Breadcrumbs**

Practical wayfinding can be augmented with more subtle, enigmatic ways to tell people where they are and where to go. Such cultural breadcrumbs can be scattered everywhere.



**Alternative Gateway**

Not all Chinatown gateways have to look the same. Maybe Calgary Chinatown could be a bit different and mark the entry points of its community with large (light) art structures.

Images (from top): Park pavilion, Toronto | Canton Block, Calgary Chinatown | Classical Chinese Garden, Portland USA | Street art, Hong Kong | East Van light structure, Vancouver

# Implementation

The **Chinatown Cultural Plan** identifies the aspirations, strategies and actions to strengthen the culture of Chinatown. The next step is to initiate the implementation. The City wants to sustain a dialogue with the community to move forward as partners with the recommendations, and direct our combined resources towards the most impactful, meaningful ambitions.

A plan is only as good as the positive impact it generates. To make sure that the **Chinatown Cultural Plan** leads to the desired results, we have identified an implementation approach that rests on these three elements:

## 1. Work plans

Work plans will be developed to help transition the Cultural Plan to implementation. These plans will prioritize goals and ambitions, while translating them into achievable actions with assigned stewards. They will serve as living documents that can be updated to ensure responsiveness to changing priorities and alignment with available funding. These plans will serve as the vehicles for project sustainability and collaboration moving forward.

## 2. Community stewardship

The culture of Chinatown is the accomplishment of its people. It is under their stewardship that this culture can best be sustained and prepared for future growth. The Chinatown community needs to be supported in its role as cultural stewards. In line with this, the Chinatown Advisory Group will have to transform into a community-led structure that chairs its meetings, and proposes its own agenda, projects and priorities. Other ways to empower the community must be explored as well, such as training and capacity building, and access to research and (digital) tools.

## 3. Celebrate and reflect

Developing and nurturing a culture of celebration and evaluation is another key component of creating a fruitful collaboration with the Chinatown community. To maintain healthy partnerships, we need to create a habit of ongoing celebration and evaluation where everyone involved in the Cultural Plan can celebrate their relationship as well as the achievements (big and small) themselves. This kind of work is demanding and we need to be mindful of the wellbeing of those involved.



# Appendices

## Appendix I. How the Chinatown Cultural Plan was created

The Chinatown community is knowledgeable and highly engaged. It wanted to have a big say in its future, and to be involved and empowered to make decisions and take action. Hearing this, we adopted an approach of listening, stepping aside and giving space to the community to have the conversations it sees as most important.

### Goals for engagement

We wanted the community engagement process to be transparent, have value and result in tangible actions and outcomes. Our aim was to reach both deeply-involved residents and those with less of a relationship with Chinatown, and make time for personal, in-depth conversations. We made a range of engagement methods available to people to align with their availability, interests and personal preferences.

### A different way of engaging

To meet the particular needs of the Chinatown community as it explores its cultural future, we decided to go beyond the typical approaches of engagement. This was done by:

Dedicating nearly a full year to community engagement, allowing time to discover what really concerns people, and giving everyone the opportunity to gain understanding and evolve their opinions;

Letting citizens decide themselves what topics should be on the agenda, and how and with whom these are to be discussed;

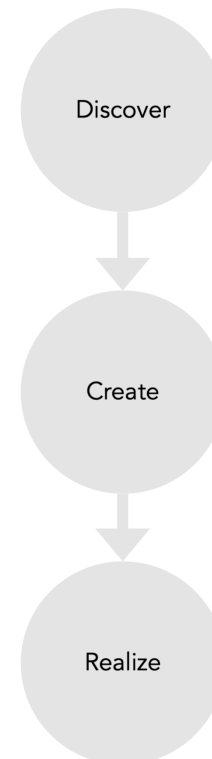
Having sessions open to the general public and others in small, curated groups, and allowing people to speak openly;

Using social media and online tools to reach Calgary residents citywide and communicate that Chinatown needs their input too; and

Sharing interim findings timely and fully to report back to the community, and to give people the chance to guide us.

### The process

The **Chinatown Cultural Plan** was created in three phases:



In the Discover Phase, we engaged extensively with the community to understand Chinatown's cultural values, strengths and challenges. We also invited other Calgary residents to share what they hope for the Chinatown of tomorrow.

In the Create Phase, we had deeper conversations with the community about the major opportunities for Chinatown. In focused, intimate roundtable groups, we discussed priorities, actions and partnerships.

In the Realize Phase, we synthesized all that we learned from the engagement process to develop strategies and action items. The result was the launch of this Cultural Plan and the initiation of its implementation.

## Who we engaged with

We engaged with a wide range of people all over Calgary to hear a diversity of opinions and ideas. Our process invited participants from these demographic groups to join the dialogue:



## Engagement during COVID-19

No one could have anticipated engaging citizens during a global pandemic. Public engagement in the COVID-19 context forced the project team to pivot from one engagement plan to a completely new one. We were required to postpone in-person engagement activities and shift to a virtual approach. Although not ideal, we are thankful for everyone’s flexibility and willingness to participate under these unusual circumstances.

## How we engaged

Despite the limitations under COVID-19, we were able to engage with an estimated 1,750 people through the following:

- **Chinatown Advisory Group:** a group of 25 individuals representing a variety of community affiliations and demographics served on the program advisory group. The group provided guidance to the planning process through their monthly meetings.
- **Individual and Group Interviews:** we interviewed nearly 130 people via online video or telephone in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.
- **Virtual Talks:** five ‘lunch and learn’ talks were held to share knowledge and broaden the dialogue about Chinatown’s future. Topics included identity, youth, film and food. On average, 50 people attended each talk.

You can view the recordings at [dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown](https://dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown)

- **Social Media:** The City of Calgary’s social media channels were leveraged to encourage all Calgarians to participate in the engagement activities.
- **Discover Survey:** an online survey was conducted in English, Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese to discover people’s experiences, aspirations and worries for Chinatown. We received over 1,200 responses from across Calgary.
- **Create Conversations:** 15 online roundtable sessions were held. Around 200 people participated in these smaller, in-depth conversations. Another 100 responses were received through online surveys.
- **Cultural Resource Map:** a Cultural Resource Map was set up to communicate what our process uncovered, and to ask the community to contribute cultural resources that we were not yet aware of.
- **Realize Survey:** over 100 responses were received on a survey about how we can transition the Chinatown Cultural Plan into action.

## Detailed insights

The findings from our community engagement are summarized in the report **Chinatown Cultural Plan – Engagement Insights**. We encourage you to explore for yourself the richness of what the community has shared with us.

You can find the full report at [calgary.ca/chinatown](https://calgary.ca/chinatown)

## Appendix II. Themes, strategies and actions

This is an overview of all strategies and actions of the **Chinatown Cultural Plan**, categorized per theme:

<b>A. People, voices and experiences</b>	<b>B. Culture, creative and learning</b>	<b>C. Food, merchants and tourism</b>	<b>D. Housing, health and social purpose</b>	<b>E. Places, spaces and natural environment</b>
<b>Strategy A1: Bring cultural groups together</b>	<b>Strategy B1: Expand cultural programs and activities</b>	<b>Strategy C1: Support existing and legacy businesses</b>	<b>Strategy D1: Invest in an all-generations community</b>	<b>Strategy E1: Design streets for culture and people</b>
A1.1 Honouring contributions	B1.1 New, younger audiences	C1.1 Legacy business program	D1.1 Multigenerational living	E1.1 Accessible designs
A1.2 Language accessibility	B1.2 Cultural education	C1.2 Business succession support	D1.2 Access to housing	E1.2 East-west connections
A1.3 Chinatown 'reaching out'	B1.3 Chinatown celebrations	C1.3 Attractive storefronts	D1.3 Cultural health care	E1.3 People-oriented streets
A1.4 Cross-cultural relations	B1.4 Chinatown arts collective	C1.4 Collective storytelling	D1.4 Play and exercise	E1.4 Cultural landscaping
<b>Strategy A2: Build bridges across the generations</b>	<b>Strategy B2: Secure more space for culture</b>	<b>Strategy C2: Attract new enterprises and concepts</b>	<b>Strategy D2: Contribute to the lives of all Calgarians</b>	<b>Strategy E2: Revive heritage to benefit community</b>
A2.1 Intergenerational talks	B2.1 New purposeful spaces	C2.1 Active retail recruitment	D2.1 Central newcomers point	E2.1 Balanced heritage tools
A2.2 Hands-on learning	B2.2 Activated society buildings	C2.2 New business incentives	D2.2 Fulfilling volunteering	E2.2 Chinatown's 'historic block'
A2.3 Young leadership	B2.3 Spontaneous spaces	C2.3 Culinary experience hub	D2.3 Anti-racism advocacy	E2.3 Reveal of hidden histories
A2.4 Multigenerational Co-Op	B2.4 Cultural canvas	C2.4 Cultural industry	D2.4 Community mobilization	E2.4 Community-owned heritage
<b>Strategy A3: Improve the City-community relationship</b>	<b>Strategy B3: Unlock potential of the Cultural Centre</b>	<b>Strategy C3: Create a year-round visitor experience</b>	<b>Strategy D3: Sustain the traditional tongs and societies</b>	<b>Strategy E3: strengthen Chinatown's contours</b>
A3.1 Principles of engagement	B3.1 Artists support program	C3.1 Street economy	D3.1 Legacy archive and centre	E3.1 Park amenities
A3.2 Cultural training	B3.2 West and East plazas	C3.2 Chinatown everyday	D3.2 Modernized programs	E3.2 Entrance markers
A3.3 Implementation agreement	B3.3 City of Calgary partnership	C3.3 Destination Chinatown	D3.3 Reliable rental income	E3.3 Cultural garden
A3.4 Anti-racism commitment	B3.4 Succession planning	C3.4 Welcoming to all	D3.4 Community association	E3.4 Wayfinding and signage

# Appendix III. Cultural learning

This is a brief description of the cultural meaning of several terms referenced in the Plan. Of course, there is so much more to learn about Chinatown and its culture. A good place to go next is [calgarychinatownculturemap.ca](http://calgarychinatownculturemap.ca)



### Eye-Dotting Ceremony

Eye-dotting is an important blessing ceremony held for every new (or inactive) lion or dragon costume before its first dance. In Chinese culture, the eyes reflect the spirit. Painting the eyes signifies waking up the lion or dragon, ready to fulfill its duty of bringing protection, good luck, health, prosperity and more. In Calgary's Chinatown, you can experience this ceremony too. It is often performed by traditional societies around cultural celebrations like Lunar New Year.



### Tongs and Chinese Societies

Chinese benevolent societies and family associations are kinship organizations founded by, and for, Chinese immigrants. They can collectively be called 'tongs' 堂, which means gathering place. Chinatown is home to many of these societies, usually formed by people that share a family name, district of origin or native dialect. They offered support and protection during times of racial discrimination and exclusion, and continue to provide social and cultural services today.



### Head Tax and Exclusion Act

The federal government passed the Chinese Immigration Act in 1885, which stipulated that, with almost no exceptions, every person of Chinese origin immigrating to Canada had to pay a fee called a head tax. This head tax was in effect until 1923 when it was replaced by a new Chinese Immigration Act (Chinese Exclusion Act) which essentially banned all Chinese immigration to Canada until 1947. (Source: The Canadian Museum for Human Rights)



### Chinese Garden Wall Openings

Windows and door openings are key architectural features of the Chinese garden. Sometimes they are round, oval, hexagonal or octagonal, or in the shape of a vase or piece of fruit. These openings may carefully frame a branch, or give glimpses of the garden or scenery to people passing by. We chose similar shapes to represent the five key themes of this Cultural Plan, as vignettes through which we can explore Chinatown's culture from a different perspective.



### Chinese Language

The active use of Chinese language is an important contributor to the vibrancy and authenticity of Chinatown. Chinese is written on menus and signage, and spoken by people on the streets. With Chinatown's origins strongly tied to Southern Chinese regions, it is common to see Traditional Chinese characters from those areas, and hear spoken languages, like Cantonese and Toisan/Hoisan. In recent years, Chinatown has also welcomed more Mandarin-speaking populations.



### Lunar Calendar Events

Almost all traditional Chinese holidays are scheduled and celebrated according to the Chinese calendar, tied to harvests, prayers and honouring ancestors. Each festival has its own stories, customs and rituals. Calgary is already familiar with the Lunar New Year celebrations in Chinatown and elsewhere in the city. Other meaningful lunar calendar events we could all enjoy together include the Lantern, Dragon Boat and Mid-Autumn Festivals.

