

Chinatown Analysis Summary

A detailed analysis was undertaken to further understand development potential, particularly in the short to mid-term, and other factors that might necessitate or contribute to undertaking local area planning process. The results are summarized below:

1. Social and Cultural Overview
2. Financial Feasibility of Development
3. Characteristics of immediately developable sites– how do these factors influence possible development?
4. Capacity - are more units / population needed?
5. What is Chinatown’s relative development potential, compared to nearby communities?
6. Planned capital – are there large capital projects that would necessitate a full ARP?
7. Known City work undertaken in Chinatown – how has the City supported Chinatown recently?
8. What additional policy tools are available to use in Chinatown?

Key findings:

1. Social and Cultural Overview – Chinatown presents a unique context for redevelopment. Although these aspects appear strong, demographics indicate a transition is imminent or underway, and the 2016 engagement revealed concerns about “loss of culture”
2. A financial feasibility study indicated that the surface parking lots are financially viable for development at the existing land uses, heights and densities.
3. The three largest sites will likely develop in their own time. Four of the five smaller sites are constrained and may only result in limited scale redevelopment. Whether land use amendments are required for any of the sites will depend on how the landowner’s plans fit into site-specific conditions.
4. In a moderate development scenario, the current land use districts would more than double the population. There is no need to add more units and population than the current land uses allow.
5. The City’s Developed Areas Growth and Change document indicates that other Centre City communities and nearby established communities have more development capacity, i.e. development is likely to go there first
6. The most significant capital project facing Chinatown is Green Line. No additional local area policy is required to facilitate its development, however it will have a significant impact on the community, warranting some policy attention.
7. A number of large and small City initiatives have been completed in the last decade
8. New planning policy tools and processes since the El Condor application may reduce the difficulties encountered during the review of that application in future applications.

This information presents a snapshot in time of Chinatown, based on information such as current land use districts, forecast information, etc.

1. Social and Cultural Overview

a) Social Aspects

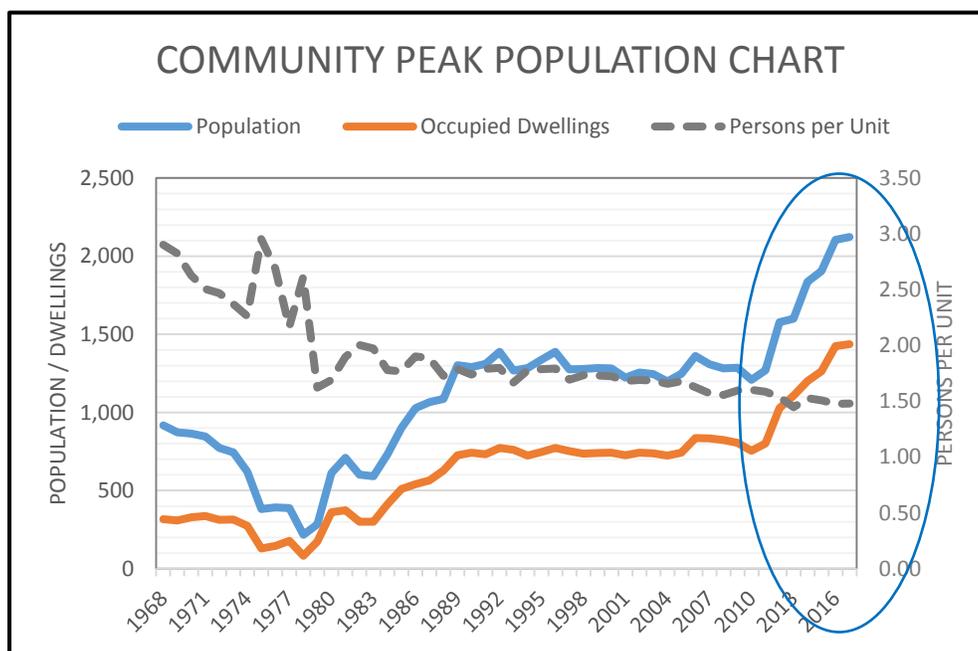
Chinatown provides a highly supportive environment for non-English speaking Chinese, particularly senior citizens. The majority of businesses within Chinatown's core are Chinese / Asian in nature and cater to the community. Chinese speakers can participate in their daily activities without a language barrier. There is access to culturally appropriate food; relatively affordable living options; and it is one of Calgary's most walkable communities.

Long standing, well-connected organizations such as the Calgary Chinese Community Service Association and the Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens' Association offer assistance, social support and activities to the community. The Business Improvement Area and Community Association are both new and indicate the community's commitment to businesses and residents.

Chinatown has unusual demographic characteristics that create a unique social context for redevelopment. According to the 2016 Calgary Civic Census,

- nearly 500 residents of Chinatown were age 75 or over (24% of Chinatown residents). Overall, 31% of residents are aged 65+
- only 24% of dwellings in Chinatown were occupied by owners (city average is 70%)

In 2017, there were 2124 residents. Chinatown has been at peak population and unit count every year since 2012, i.e. the community is growing. This trend is expected to continue for the next few years as the Waterfront complex builds out.



b) Cultural Aspects

Chinatown is a cultural home to thousands of Calgary's Chinese population, people who visit, work or regularly participate in community activities. There are many opportunities to participate in cultural activities and events, through institutions like the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre, as well over 100 culturally based community groups, ranging from artistic pursuits, to family / social organizations, language learning to athletics.

A high level scan of cultural resources confirms the breadth and richness of Chinatown's cultural aspects. Despite this, the 2016 engagement revealed concerns about loss of culture as the community changes.

2. Financial Feasibility

A financial feasibility report was conducted by an external consultant to examine financial aspects of developing mixed use residential in Chinatown, including:

- the general viability of redevelopment existing buildings
- whether the eight vacant sites are viable for redevelopment under the existing Direct Control (DC) Districts or whether changes are likely required to make redevelopment viable.

The report's key finding was that the surface parking lots are financially viable for development at the existing land uses, heights and densities; although there may be reason to consider increasing density. The report indicates possible factors that may contribute to non-development in Chinatown, including:

- Landowners are retaining lots to provide parking
- Landowners are waiting for land values to rise; or, landowners won't sell at any price (*note: the 2016 engagement indicated a cultural tendency to hold land for the future*)
- Some sites are small and constrained; would need lot assembly (complex, expensive, timing)
- There are good quality, highly marketable sites elsewhere in the inner city: East Village, Beltline, Downtown, Eau Claire, DT West, HH/SS, Bridgeland, Inglewood, Mission, Sunalta. *Note: this is supported by Developed Areas Growth and Change (see Section 6 below)*
- Politics / community dynamics

Given average income streams of existing buildings, redevelopment of existing rent-producing buildings is unlikely for much of Chinatown.

When built to maximum densities, the current DC districts from the mid 1980s result in a particular building style (which may or may not be contextually appropriate or fit a developer's vision); however; they do not preclude the possibility of financially viable development.

4. Characteristics of Vacant Sites

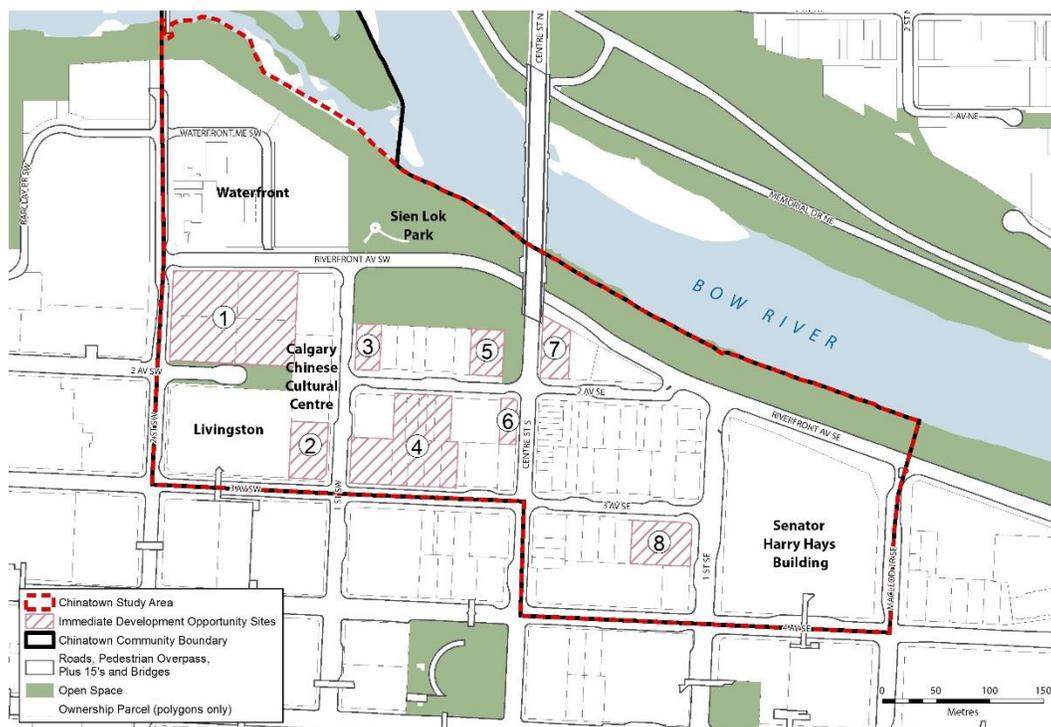
The 8 vacant sites were examined for factors that may affect their development timing and potential.

Analyzed:

- Site Size
- Constraints (site orientation, adjacent sites, setbacks, etc.)
- Past / current development interest

Conclusion:

- 3 large sites - Each site has different circumstances that will affect development timing:
 - Site 1: Large site adjacent to Green Line. A Green Line station will be located at this site. As a result, development is not expected until sometime after Green Line construction is complete.
 - Site 4: Has 1st and 2nd reading on Land Use Application. Requires 3rd reading, pending an approved Development Permit, by December 2018.
 - Site 8: A planning application expected in the short to midterm due to contractual obligation to develop by July 31, 2022. This is the only site in Chinatown with a defined development horizon.
- 5 small sites
 - May yield Incremental infill development in their own time
 - Sites 3, 5, 6, 7 - heavily constrained
 - Site 4 - Past development interest; no known current interest
 - Site 6 - Past development interest; no known current interest



5. Does Chinatown require more capacity (as provide by land use)?

Source: Geodemographics Forecast

- Capacity is based on units and population
- Local Area Plans can add capacity where there is development pressure, but not enough capacity in the current land use to meet this pressure.
- Based on current information, a number of development scenarios were examined. The most likely are provided below
- *Assumption: residential mixed use development*

	Current (2017)	1436 units	2124 people		
	What Develops?	# of new units added	# of new people added	% increase units	% increase population
1	Maximum Scenario 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site 4: DC 84 • Site 1: residential • All other sites 	+1978	+ 3206	137%	151%
		= 3414 total units	= 5330 total pop'n		
2	Maximum Scenario 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site 4: Prop'd 179D2015 • Site 1: residential • All other sites 	+2228	+3610	155%	170%
		= 3664 total units	= 4248 total pop'n		
3	Modest Scenario <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site 1: residential • Site 4: DC84 • Site 8 • Smaller sites do not develop 	+1500	+2511	104%	118%
		= 2936 total units	= 4635 total pop'n		
4	Minimum scenario <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site 4 and 8 only develop • Site 1 is full office (no residential) 	+630	+1020	44%	48%
		= 2066 total units	= 3144 total pop'n		

- If all vacant sites built to maximum existing DC :
 - Modest development scenario: more than doubles the current population
 - Minimal development scenario: 50% increase to the current population
- **Conclusion:** more capacity is not needed; a balanced approach is required
 - There is risk in adding a significant number of new residents into a community with a distinct cultural identity. This has been experienced in Vancouver's Chinatown.
 - Full build-out, while desirable from a city-building and vibrancy perspective, may result in significant negative impact to the existing community; a balanced approach is required.

6. How does Chinatown's capacity compare to other communities?

Source: *Developed Areas Growth & Change (2016 edition)*

- Most relevant metric: Greatest Additional Capacity on Vacant Parcels, with land use:
 - Chinatown's capacity < Beltline, Downtown Commercial Core, East Village, Downtown West, Bridgeland, and Inglewood
 - This trend holds for both Centre City communities and nearby inner city communities
- There is only limited demand in the Centre City overall
- Supports financial feasibility study and developer perception that there is ample supply of large, highly marketable inner city development sites available to build on before Chinatown
- **Conclusion:** Other communities are more likely to develop before Chinatown (more capacity = more opportunity)

Relative Ranking of Community Capacity, based on 158 Calgary communities 1 = community with the most capacity 158 = community with the least capacity		
	Highest # Vacant Parcels	Greatest Add'l unit capacity on vacant parcels with land use
Beltline	1	1
Chinatown	35	32
DT Comm Core	4	5
DT West	22	8
East Village	8	3
Eau Claire	80	52
Bridgeland	14	15
Inglewood	6	19
Hillhurst	19	34
Mission	29	38
Sunalta	26	33
Chinatown's rank among Centre City Communities only	5/6	5/6
Chinatown's rank among Centre City and nearby communities	10/11	7/11

7. Are there capital plans that would necessitate or complement a new local area plan?

- Water Resources – There are no capital plans within built area of Chinatown. Flood mitigation efforts are underway and do not require ARP type work
- Parks – There is a 2014 Master Plan for Sien Lok park that is currently unfunded
- Streetscape Improvements - 3rd Avenue SW is underway (2017-2018)
- Transportation:
 - Roads – Centre Street work is needed
 - There is a 2010 Centre Street Master Plan
 - Green Line – but no additional local area plan policy needed to the development of the Green Line itself. However, the current ARP does not contemplate the Green Line, or the station that will be located at 2 Avenue / 2 Street SW. Green Line will have a fundamental impact on the community as a whole and the immediately adjacent development site, where the station will be located.
- **Conclusion:** Local Area Plan policy is not needed to support large capital projects, however, a plan process is an opportunity to explore land uses and other factors that promote vibrancy and activity around the Green Line station, and connections throughout the community.

8. Known City work undertaken in Chinatown in the last decade (*dates approximate*)

- 3rd Avenue Streetscape improvements (2017-18)
- Sien Lok Interim Upgrade Plan (2017)
- Daiqing Square (approx. 2007)
- Sien Lok Park Master Plan (2013)
- Planning Chinatown Engagement (2016)
- Assistance with setup of Business Improvement Area and Community Association (2015, 2016)
- Retail Vitality Study (2016)
- Lamp post repainting (2015)
- Centre Street Bridge LED lighting (2013)
- Centre Street Visioning (2010) and Master Plan (2010); road upgrade est 2021/22
- Riverwalk - Note: This was a CMCL project (2012)
- Banner Program; Banner Brackets (2010, 2012)
- Wayfinding Signs (2012)
- Road Improvement to add angle parking at Harry Hays (2011)
- Murals (2010)
- Planters (2010)
- Signal Box Wraps (2010)
- Safety Audits
- Wastebins (2010)
- 1 St SE Decorative Lighting (future)

9. What additional policy tools and processes are available to use in Chinatown?

The lack of tools to address the appropriateness of development, particularly as it relates to the community's unique heritage and cultural aspects was a major factor in the 2016 El Condor application. However, a number of new planning policy tools and processes introduced since then may reduce the difficulties encountered during the review of that application, in any future planning applications.

- The community has added organizational capacity: a Business Improvement Area (late 2015) and a Community Association (late 2016). Chinatown now has a clear mechanism to be consulted and participate in planning matters. Previously, there was no official body to circulate applications or speak on the community's behalf. This change also provides the opportunity for better communication between The City and the community.
- Guiding Principles (2016) – provide statements of what is important to the community, as envisioned by the community through the 2016 engagement. These can be used to inform an application review process.
- New Urban Design Review process (2017) – high quality urban design is essential to new Chinatown development. The new Urban Design Review Framework (2017) will be used to provide early design guidance for any Chinatown application. The Centre City Urban Design Guidelines (2015) are an additional tool to review applications.
- Centre City Guidebook (2017) – Centre City Guidebook (Council approved February 2017) – Provides a base layer of common policy to all Centre City communities. The Centre City Guidebook could address Guiding Principles #2-8, however, it needs to be specifically enacted via plan amendment for it to apply.
- Historical Context Paper (underway; expected Q3 2018) – a non-statutory reference document that examines major historical events, persons, landscapes and structures as well as diverse aspects of the community's development. In doing so, it can help build a common understanding between various stakeholders (including The City) of the character-defining elements that contribute to its identity. This will provide additional community context for planners reviewing planning applications.
- Transit Oriented Development guidelines are being developed and are intended to apply where the local area plan is silent on development near transit. The guidelines could also provide a modern policy lens to inform planning applications.

Conclusion: The City has sufficient general policy and tools to address Guiding Principles #2-8 (which speak to the community's physical aspects) when reviewing a planning application; and Guiding Principle #1 to some extent through the Historical Context Paper. What is missing is a strong understanding of how cultural and character elements can provide additional context to both planning policies and planning decisions.