

## **Application to The City of Calgary Council Innovation Fund**

**Date:** 2019 March 5

**Name of Project:** Chinatown Cultural Plan and Local Area Plan

**Sponsor:** Councillor Farrell and Councillor Chu

**Affected Business Unit(s) and/or Departments:** Community Planning & Calgary Recreation

**Amount of Funds Requested:** \$250,000

### **Project Description:**

Chinatown is unique in its history, character and composition and is one of Calgary's most distinctive neighbourhoods. Chinatown is a community with strong cultural, social, and heritage aspects, and serves as an important economic contributor to the Downtown through regional tourism.

The existing Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) for Calgary's Chinatown is over 30 years old. It is considered to be outdated and not aligned with the Municipal Development Plan or other significant City policies and corporate objectives. To sustain and enhance Chinatown into the future, this project will support the development of a Cultural Plan and a culturally-based Local Area Plan as approved unanimously by Council through the Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan Phase 1 Report (PUD2018-0514).

The Cultural Plan for Calgary was approved by Council in November, 2016. Foundational to its implementation is the integration of a cultural lens across all facets of local government planning and decision-making through the practice of planning culturally. Given the history and dynamics of Calgary's Chinatown, there is a need to preserve and grow its unique culture through a Chinatown Cultural Plan and have its cultural vision inform future land use and development decisions through a culturally-based Local Area Plan.

Culture is anything that defines the unique identity of a community or social group, including such characteristics as social customs, seasonal traditions, geography, cuisine, oral traditions, fashion, visual and performing arts, literature, music, and religious expression.

Funding from the Council Innovation Fund will cover the anticipated consulting costs for the Chinatown Cultural Plan, funding for the Urban Alliance partnership, and partially cover the cost of the engagement consultant.

### **Project Benefits – Why is this project needed, and why now?**

The existing Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) for Calgary's Chinatown dates back to 1986. The format of the document is outdated and it provides limited development direction. For example, the document does not anticipate the future integration of the Green Line station or contain policies that promote mixed-use and Transit-Oriented Developments. Further, the ARP policies are not well aligned with the Municipal Development Plan or other significant City policies and corporate objectives.

The City is moving towards a more deliberate and formalized approach to include a cultural lens in planning and decision-making across the Corporation. Chinatown provides an opportunity to develop and pilot this practice in relation to the planning policy and engagement practices, which will inform The City's approach to other community plans and engagement approaches city-wide.

Calgary's population over the years has become increasingly diverse, and that diversity is not well observed in the planning process. Lessons learned from the proposed work in Chinatown will influence current processes and procedures related to both engagement and planning. Chinatown's demographic trends also indicate that a transition is underway, with pressures that do not align with the community's vision of how the community should evolve. This was apparent in 2016 when an application to redesignate a site was met with a high degree of controversy within the community and required extensive City planning, communications, and public engagement resources. With many Chinatowns across North America struggling, providing timely support to Calgary's Chinatown will help develop a vision for appropriate and sustainable development.

Significant work was completed since 2016 and the community is eager to continue working with The City on a long term vision for Chinatown. A recent undertaking by The City on Chinatown's Historical Context Paper to document its history fits well with the cultural planning process. Combining a Cultural Plan with a new Local Area Plan in Chinatown would be a first for Calgary and could serve as a pilot project for a new way of informing future Local Area Plans. Undertaking a culturally-based Local Area Plan in Chinatown offers the opportunity to develop the practice of planning culturally at The City, incorporate insightful lessons into future planning processes, and offer the opportunity to test engagement techniques.

Given Chinatown's overall importance to Calgary, and the growing momentum within and around the community, now is the appropriate time to identify planning direction and develop a cultural vision for Chinatown's future. A critical component in developing a Cultural Plan and a culturally-based Local Area Plan will be community consultation and engagement that will be undertaken in various languages and with methods adapted to the local context. Previous public consultation and engagement as part of preparing other Local Area Plans across the city have typically been in English only and followed a standardized approach. Funding from the Innovation Fund will enable Administration to advance and potentially enhance the city-wide processes on consultation and engagement with ethnically diverse groups. Lessons learned as part of the work undertaken on Chinatown will be captured and shared for use in future consultations with other ethnically diverse communities across Calgary.

As referenced earlier, the existing Chinatown ARP does not contemplate the Green Line or the station to be located at 2 Street and 2 Avenue SW. The Green Line will affect nearby development sites and increase community accessibility. A new culturally-based Local Area Plan for Chinatown is a significant opportunity for station area placemaking, exploring land uses that promote vibrancy around the station, reflecting the character and promoting the attractions of

Chinatown and identifying connections throughout the community. Further, a new policy framework can ensure development readiness of critical vacant sites while bolstering the resiliency of the Downtown, and assist with profiling Chinatown as a cultural hub and a regional tourism destination.

### **How does this project meet the Criteria of the fund as set out in the Terms of Reference?**

Administration's work on the Chinatown Cultural Plan and the culturally-based Local Area Plan aligns with the Council Innovation Fund's purpose to support one-time funding for projects that can impact policy and procedures. Work on these plans supports innovation in allowing the community's culture to inform the built-form policies of the Local Area Plan. In the long term, innovation will be demonstrated through the documentation of lessons learned, and examples of cultural considerations for Local Area Plans. This will further the practice of planning culturally and inform developing practices on consultation and engagement with multi-cultural populations across the city.

The Chinatown Cultural Plan and culturally-based Local Area Plan work advances the following Citizen Priorities:

- A Prosperous City – Supporting The City of Calgary and Calgary as a whole to continue to attract diverse talent, build resiliency, and act as a place where there is opportunity for all.
- A City of Safe and Inspiring Neighbourhoods – Supporting the realization of safe, accessible, and inclusive neighbourhoods that foster the opportunity for diverse community members to participate in civic life and equally benefit from City services.
- A City That Moves – Ensuring access to safe and affordable transportation choices. Supporting understanding of differing safety and accessibility priorities for diverse groups, as well as identifying tangible actions to address these different needs.
- A Healthy and Green City – Supporting the delivery of equitable City services that reflect the diverse needs of Calgarians with respect to recreation and living opportunities.
- A Well-Run City – The City of Calgary is further supported as a high performance organization that leverages diverse talents, engages in evidence-based, conducts quality decision-making, and delivers efficient and effective services.

### **Project Overview and Budget**

Consulting costs to deliver the Cultural Plan and culturally-based Local Area Plan are outlined in Table 1. Further work on the project and hiring the consultant(s) will start immediately following the consulting budget approval. The direction approved by Council as part of PUD2018-0514 on 2018 June 25 requires significant resources, likely over an extended time, and cannot be entirely supported through Planning & Development's consulting budget. It is estimated that the consulting cost to deliver the Council-directed Chinatown work will cost

approximately \$500,000. The overall project costs will be higher once internal costs are factored.

**Table 1: Anticipated Chinatown Consulting Costs**

| PROJECT EXPENSE                                                                                                           | ESTIMATED COST   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Cultural Plan                                                                                                             | \$110,000        |
| *Local Area Plan                                                                                                          | \$25,000         |
| Urban Alliance Partnership                                                                                                | \$60,000         |
| Engage Consultant                                                                                                         | \$100,000        |
| Communications & Engagement Implementation                                                                                | \$125,000        |
| Translation Services                                                                                                      | \$50,000         |
| Total                                                                                                                     | \$470,000        |
| Project Contingency                                                                                                       | \$30,000         |
| <b>Total consulting costs including contingency</b>                                                                       | <b>\$500,000</b> |
| <b>*Note:</b> the Urban Alliance partnership will assist with the delivery of the Local Area Plan and policy development. |                  |

NOTE: The figures provided above are based on a draft project scope of work. Actual costs may vary based on the successful candidate from the Request for Proposal (RFP) process and approval of specific Urban Alliance research projects. Expense items have been split, where possible, based on the findings from research proposals, relatable projects, and The City's 2017 Expression of Interest (EOI).

As part of the Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan Phase 1 Report (PUD2018-0514), Council directed Administration to report back to Council, through the Standing Policy Committee on Planning & Urban Development, with a detailed scope of work by no later than 2019 July. It is expected that the project scope will be finalized in early Q3 2019.

Community Planning and Calgary Recreation will jointly manage the project. The budget split between these two business units is not yet determined. The recommended approach would be for all funds from the Council Innovation Fund to be administered by Community Planning. Recreation will recover their costs from Community Planning by means of a Letter of Agreement. A summary of key findings and an update on the project work will be provided to Council through PFC no later than Q3 2020.