

## Refined Chinatown Phase 2 Scope of Work

### Cultural Plan for Chinatown

#### **Background:**

Over the course of eight months in 2016 extensive engagement was carried out, and many discussions were had about the future of Calgary's Chinatown. Concerns about the erosion of the unique cultural identity and viability of Chinatown, including but not limited to the built environment, have been identified by the community. A common vision for cultural preservation and development is needed to provide some certainty and specific actions that the community and other stakeholders can undertake together to strengthen Chinatown's cultural identity into the future.

While The City will project manage the development of the Cultural Plan this would be a community-owned plan, calling for participation and implementation by a range of stakeholders.

Development of the cultural plan for Chinatown will consider implications for the built environment and integration of elements into the Chinatown Local Area Plan.

#### **Potential Components**

1. **Policy and plan review/synthesis:**

Analyze and synthesize key research, studies and initiatives (e.g. Chinatown Historical Context Paper, Guiding Principles, public art inventory, Canada 150 storytelling project, Exploring Communities-Chinatown paper, demographic studies, tourism and economic development plans, Green Line engagement input). Summarize what they tell us about the current and future state regarding Chinatown's cultural identity as well as its built environment.

2. **Cultural resource mapping and information gathering:**

Based on Statistics Canada's cultural resources framework and using mapping work undertaken by The City of Calgary, I Love YYC Chinatown, Calgary Arts Development and other sources, work with Chinatown stakeholders to compile and analyze key tangible and intangible cultural resources.

3. **Stakeholder consultation to identify opportunities, challenges and priorities for cultural future:**

Undertake leader interviews, community facilitation and alternate listening and gathering strategies with stakeholders both directly and indirectly connected to Chinatown's cultural life. Consider implications for tourism as a contributor to both cultural and economic viability. Translation, inclusion of youth voices, seniors and cultural workers important.

4. **Cultural Plan for Chinatown:**

Based on the above activities, develop a draft cultural plan which includes vision statement(s); cultural development goals and objectives; implications for the built environment; an implementation plan with actions, roles and responsibilities; timelines, governance and resource requirements.

5. **Built environment and cultural integration:**

Provide recommendations for integration of components from the Cultural Plan for Chinatown into the Local Area Plan.

6. **Public consultation and engagement:**

Circulate for input to obtain feedback; refine and improve the plan; discuss the implications of the plan for the community. Finalize and adopt.

7. **Plan launch:** conduct a launch in the community which includes action plans.

## **Culturally-based Local Area Plan**

### **Problem statement:**

Ensure that development proposals for Calgary's Chinatown are evaluated against updated policy that adequately addresses Chinatown's unique history and cultural character. Much of the existing 1986 Chinatown ARP is outdated and no longer fulfills the purpose of providing meaningful development direction. The following will serve as potential components of the new Local Area Plan:

### **1. Community Character and Vision**

**What this is:** The community character and vision section will identify defining features of the look and feel of the community as a whole in terms of what makes it "unique." This work will strive to capture the essence of the existing built-form along with what areas of the community are open to transition. Key findings from the Chinatown Cultural Plan will help finalize the community character and vision section.

**What this will do:** Provide Calgary's Chinatown with a clear description about the community's character based on its unique and distinct character. In certain cases, identify and promote areas to be conserved. In other instances, identify a vision for areas within the community that can gradually and sympathetically evolve with contextual reference to surrounding Centre City communities. This work will allow future built-form policies to be developed and implemented through the review of planning applications.

**Who conducts this work:** Input from the community character statement will be derived from the Chinatown Historical Context Paper, which is currently underway by local historians working with the Sien Lok Society and supervised/vetted by the Calgary Heritage Authority and The City's Heritage team. Findings from other bodies of work undertaken as part of the Cultural Plan and through the Urban Alliance partnership will also assist in the delivery of the Community Character Statement.

**Why do this work?** Chinatowns across North America are facing a number of pressures that threaten their continued existence. Calgary's Chinatown is in stronger position than many others, but a new vision is needed to strengthen community identity in the face of inevitable change, such as demographic shifts, and imminent developments.

**Engagement:** The community will need an opportunity to comment on it this work

### **2. Add the 8 Guiding Principles to the Local Area Plan**

Given Chinatown's overall importance to Calgary, its function as a social and cultural hub for the Chinese community, and changes expected as a result of the future development and LRT project, it is appropriate to define a vision that builds on the 2016 engagement work and supports the Guiding Principles developed in collaboration with the community.

**What are these:** The Guiding Principles are 8 statements that reflect what Chinatown perceives itself to be. The principles are aspirational statements that were unanimously accepted by Council in 2016 December to be used as an interim guide in reviewing planning applications

**What this will do:** The Guiding Principles are forward-looking statements intended to provide direction for new development within Chinatown. Although they were approved by Council in 2016 December, adding them to the Local Area Plan will add an additional layer of assurance that they are visible to Administration, development industry, citizens and carry the weight of a policy. Implementation and acceptance of the Guiding Principles against a significant development application proved to be difficult in 2018. Community stakeholders disagreed with the developer's interpretation of the guiding principles. Additional work on clarity and "visualizing" the principles may be needed as part of integration into the Local Area Plan.

The principles will be added within the body of the document and serve as a foundational work for other key policy areas of the document. May need to be cross-referenced within the Cultural Plan as well.

**Engagement:** The Guiding Principles were derived from community feedback during Phase I engagement and confirmed in Phase 2 Engagement (April-December 2016). They were accepted unanimously by Council. No further specific engagement is required on the principles themselves, aside from engagement on how they are featured within the Local Area Plan (or other document)

### 3. A new Land Use Concept Plan

**What is this:** A statutory map that organizes the Plan Area by providing direction on active corridors (i.e. Centre Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW), community interface and transitions, open/green spaces (Sien Lok Park), and residential/commercial areas

**What this will do:** Sets a new formal land use framework for the community with direction on development expectations. This exercise will specifically remove the land use table and associated map from the APR for a new map. While a 2016 development analysis concluded that only a limited number of changes are needed to the existing heights and density, a more effective Land Use framework will ensure that revitalization efforts are funded and supported through a modern heritage and density bonusing system for: 1) Community improvements 2) Open/green space and 3) Affordable Housing. This work will also clarify density and allowed heights through form-based transition area policies and shadow impact analysis. The need to amend the existing sunlight protection policies to safeguard sunlight access to both public and private realm will also be explored.

**Engagement:** The community and other stakeholders (landowners) will be directly involved with this work, and must have an opportunity to comment on it. Any update that results in wholesale changes will require more engagement and commensurate resources

Note: This work is identified as a critical component in allowing for Transit Oriented Development land use framework in anticipation of Green Line operations in 2026.

### 4. Green Line Integration

**What this is:** The Green Line will become a key connection for Chinatown in relation to The City's overall light rail network. A station will be located on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SW near Daqing Square. The station will offer an opportunity to bring more visitors into the community. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2020 on Stage 1 of the Green Line with a tentative opening day of 2026. Green Line City Shaping has the following goal: "People living in communities along the Green Line have access to cultural destinations, local spaces and a connection to Calgary's heritage". Area developers are aware that the Green Line is the most significant capital project facing Chinatown, with a station to be located at 2 Avenue / 2 Street SW. Updated Local Area Plan policies need to address the capital project and community integration that includes connectivity and pedestrian linkages.

**What this will do:**

- The current ARP does not contemplate the Green Line or the station to be located at 2 Street and 2 Avenue SW. Green Line will affect nearby development sites and increase community accessibility;
- A local area plan process is an opportunity for station area placemaking and to explore land uses that promote vibrancy and activity around the station and identify connections throughout the community;
- Construction is anticipated to start in 2020. On opening day in 2026, the station is expected to have 8200 riders, increasing to over 10,000 in by 2043;
- Green Line may also prompt some landowners towards development.

With the start of Green Line construction in 2020, a timely understanding of development policy in Chinatown is needed.

## 5. Design Guidelines and Signage Plan

**What this is:** Establishing new design guidelines will encourage visually distinctive architectural and built-form design features that celebrate traditional and contemporary characteristics of Chinatown. A defining character of Chinatowns historically has included distinct design motifs, community entrance and gateway features and signage. In order to celebrate and commemorate Calgary's Chinatown, more elaborate guidelines are needed that fully articulate design intent. Strict application of signage regulations has also resulted in signage that is flush with building frontages, in accordance with current land use regulations. New policies can differentiate character areas and precincts within the community and allow for new policies that allow the Approving Authority additional latitude in making decisions.

**What this will do:** This plan will explore ways that Chinatown can incorporate architectural elements (Chinese and Asian motifs) and non-standard signage types. This work will lead to design guidelines based policy and allowances for bylaw variance. It is envisioned that by encouraging both traditional and contemporary characteristics the evolution of Chinatown will offer variety and an eclectic mix in the built-form. Further, a special scheme for signage in Chinatown will allow the community to add to its distinctive character.

**Who conducts this work:** The work will be conducted by an Urban Designer, in conjunction with Urban Alliance.

**Engagement:** The community will be interested in this initiative and will require engagement with building / business owners, potentially via the BIA.

## 6. Evaluate transportation network and market conditions

**What this is:** A comprehensive inter-disciplinary study that will focus on the transportation (pedestrian and vehicular) network, parking analysis and how the two affect the business activity and market conditions in Calgary's Chinatown. For example, does the price of parking in Chinatown affect consumer behaviour and travel patterns in and outside of Chinatown (when comparing it to Centre Street North where a number of Asian businesses have established)? Is there a strong correlation between the supply of parking and market rents, availability of leasable space and foot-traffic in the community? Are provisions for surface parking important for a community located within the core of the city and so close to the CBD (central business district with access to the +15 network)? This study will inform future policies on mobility and infrastructure requirement that will have the most impact on commercial and residential users. Opportunities to capitalize on the integration a future Green Line station within the community will also be a key focus of the study.

**What this will do:** A market analysis that includes an assessment of who lives, who shops and visits Chinatown, and how, and for what reasons can assist in telling what transitions have taken place over the years, and perhaps help predict the forces at-play that will determine the future of Chinatown. Future developments in Chinatown are also bound to take into consideration the opening of a LRT station as part of the new Green Line. Local Area Plan policies that emphasize investment on public infrastructure investments and placemaking will help the transition of Chinatown over the coming 20-30 years.

**Who conducts this work:** The work will be conducted by a researcher from the University of Calgary as part of the Urban Alliance partnership.

### **Engagement:**

In order to undertake this work, Chinatown business owners and operators need to be consulted.