



# TOMORROW'S CHINATOWN

**CHINATOWN CULTURAL PLAN**  
DISCOVER PHASE REPORT | MARCH – OCTOBER, 2020

CREATED BY **DUNEFIELD**  
FOR THE **CITY OF CALGARY**

### **Acknowledgment of Traditional Territory**

We acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Nation tribes of Siksika, the Piikinu, the Kainai, the Stoney Nakoda First Nations tribes of Chiniki, Bearspaw and Wesley, and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. The City of Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.





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# INTRODUCTION

In 2019, City of Calgary Council approved funding for the Tomorrow's Chinatown initiative. Tomorrow's Chinatown is a project to collaborate closely with the Chinatown community to create Calgary's first Cultural Plan in coordination with a new Local Area Plan. Working together, these new plans will help support Chinatown's future as a vibrant, culturally-rich place to live, visit, work, and do business, for generations to come.

## What is Culture?

Culture is difficult to define; it 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, film & video industries, advertising, design & fabrication, and much more<sup>1</sup>.

Calgary is home to over 240 different ethnic origins, with 120+ languages spoken and the third highest proportion of visible minorities among Canadian cities<sup>2</sup>. The city's culture continues to grow and evolve to meet the needs of the diverse population, which includes Indigenous peoples as well as newcomers.

## Why Create a Cultural Plan for Chinatown?

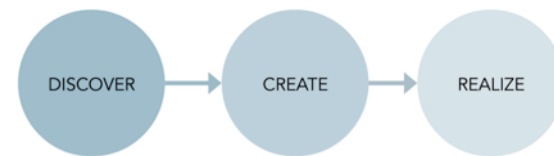
Chinatown is one of Calgary's most distinctive cultural communities, with a long and important history to the region and nation. While the 1986 Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) utilized the best planning tools available at the time, the role of community character and culture were not well understood, recognized or represented. With the current ARP almost 35 years old, it clearly no longer aligns with today's needs.

<sup>1</sup> Cultural Plan for Calgary (p.3) <sup>2</sup> Census Data 2016

Culture shapes communities. A new Local Area Plan that reflects today's challenges and opportunities for Chinatown must be anchored in its culture, developed with cultural considerations and through a cultural lens. The Calgary Chinatown Cultural Plan will be a roadmap to use Chinatown's cultural resources to sustain and improve the quality of life. It will build on the Cultural Plan for Calgary and act as a guide for community planning, decision-making, collaboration and governance.

## Where We Are and Where We Are Going

The City and its cultural planning consultant Dunefield (together the 'project team' for Tomorrow's Chinatown) have created a process consisting of three key phases:



Efforts to date all fall within the Discover phase, focused on gathering and analyzing opinions, research, and resources towards understanding Chinatown's unique values, strengths and weaknesses, and hopes for its future. In the Create phase, the Cultural Plan will be shaped together with stakeholders and the broader community. The Cultural Plan will be launched and its implementation initiated in the Realize phase.

## What this Report Covers

This report covers our activities for the Cultural Plan's Discover phase, which took place between March – October, 2020. It provides an update to the public on the progress so far, who has been engaged so far and how they were engaged, and summarizes what we have heard and learned. It also serves to identify gaps in our work to be addressed moving forward.



# PROJECT BACKGROUND

## History

Shaped over a long and often difficult history, Chinatown stands today as a Calgary neighbourhood like no other. Working with local historians and heritage experts, The City of Calgary commissioned the Chinatown Historical Context Paper as foundational work to Tomorrow's Chinatown. To know the history is to give living meaning to the culture and place of Chinatown. It allows the past and present to be brought forward into a vibrant and hopeful future together.

The history of Calgary itself is a complex one that confronts a racialized and colonial past that has left a legacy to this day. The area on which Calgary was developed sits on Treaty 7 territory, the traditional home of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations, and the Métis Nation. The city's history includes two previous Chinatowns that were displaced. The third and current Chinatown was established in its present location in 1910.

## Project Scope

The Calgary Chinatown Cultural Plan will outline the strategic directions for advancing and investing in Chinatown's cultural future — including cultural products and services; festivals, events and programs; and institutions, spaces and facilities. It will provide guidance for setting priorities, forming partnerships, assigning roles, and securing resources.

The Cultural Plan will also inform and complement the Local Area Plan by:

- Outlining a vision for community character, cultural preservation and evolution to guide Chinatown's future;
- Introducing cultural considerations for use in the planning process, including for new development (buildings, public space) in Chinatown;
- Identifying ways the community and stakeholders, including The City, can work together to strengthen Chinatown's cultural identity.

## Interesting Links

### INFORMATION RESOURCES



#### Chinatown Historical Context Paper

<https://bit.ly/3h9nrCA>



#### 1986 Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan

<https://bit.ly/3k7HIQt>



#### Cultural Plan for Calgary

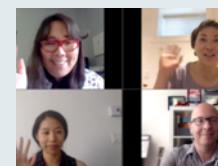
<https://bit.ly/32ftQId>

### ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



#### Tomorrow's Chinatown Engagement Page

[engage.calgary.ca/tomorrows-chinatown](https://engage.calgary.ca/tomorrows-chinatown)



#### Let's Talk Culture! Video Recordings

[dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown](https://dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown)

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The project team strives for the engagement process to be different – to go beyond the typical, and to be more than just ‘going through the motions’. We aim to reach both deeply-involved stakeholders and those with less of a relationship with Chinatown, and dedicate time to having personal, in-depth conversations.

The Chinatown community is knowledgeable and already highly engaged. It wants to have a big say in its future, and to be involved and empowered to make decisions and take action versus playing only an advisory role. Hearing this, our project team focused on an approach of listening, stepping aside, and giving space to the community to have the conversations they see as most important.

## Engagement under 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. The project team unfortunately has had to postpone in-person engagement activities, in accordance with The City of Calgary policies and public health recommendations.

In addition, the Vancouver-based Dunefield team has not been able to travel to Calgary during the Discover phase, beyond one Chinatown visit in mid-February. We have since shifted to an entirely virtual approach. Although not ideal, we are thankful for everyone’s flexibility. As we move into the Create phase, we are excited that we have resumed our visits to Calgary in October, to experience Chinatown first-hand, build relationships, and to meet stakeholders where they are.

## Goals for Engagement

The Calgary Chinatown Cultural Plan has set three goals for community engagement to ensure the process has value, is transparent, and results in tangible actions and outcomes. These goals are:

- To seek out diverse stakeholders across different ages, experiences, and levels of Chinatown involvement and knowledge;
- To make a range of engagement methods available to stakeholders for their convenience and personal preferences; and
- To inform stakeholders of how their input is used, and how they can stay involved and continue to contribute to the project.

## Who We Engaged With

During the Discover phase, the project team aimed to engage a wide range of community stakeholders to ensure a diversity of opinions and ideas. Our process invited participants from the following demographic groups to provide their input:



## What We Engaged On

We asked stakeholders to help us understand what is unique about Chinatown. Our questions and topics included: What does this place mean to you? What is your favourite memory of Chinatown? What makes it special today, and what opportunities do you see to make it even more special? How would you describe Chinatown's culture? The responses will help us determine the priorities for the Cultural Plan.



A framework of Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow was used to ensure that future directions are firmly rooted in the history of Chinatown and responsive to the needs of its present community. We asked people to reflect on their earliest memories of Chinatown and how the community has changed since, including their relationship with it. We then explored what strengths and gaps they see in Chinatown's culture today. Finally, we invited them to share aspirations for the Chinatown of tomorrow.

## How We Engaged

Despite the limitations under COVID-19, the Discover phase has strived to achieve robust and meaningful engagement through the following:

- **Individual and small group interviews:** we interviewed nearly 100 individuals via online video or telephone between March and October, 2020. Interviews were conducted in English, Cantonese and Mandarin. (See page 14)
- **Chinatown Advisory Group:** six meetings were held, on June 29, July 20, August 10, August 31, September 31 and October 5.

- **Virtual talks:** four sessions were held, on June 24, July 29, August 26 and September 30, and covered: Culture and Identity, The State of the Arts, New Blood and Film & TV. The talks were conducted in English, with an average attendance of 50 attendees per session. Their recordings have also been made available. (See page 24-27)
- **Online survey:** an Engage Calgary online survey was open to the public between the dates of June 8 and September 14, 2020. The survey was available in English, and traditional and simplified Chinese. Over 1,200 survey responses were received. (See page 28)

Through these methods, the project team has engaged with an estimated 1,500 individual stakeholders at the time of this report. More details of these engagement activities can be found on pages 13-36.

## Addressing Gaps

Several key stakeholder groups have been more challenging to reach for varying reasons. This includes Chinese seniors who are not normally online and also considered a vulnerable population under COVID-19; business owners who are rightfully occupied with the response to the pandemic; and the tongs, benevolent and family associations with whom trust must first be built.

Our team has already initiated targeted engagement activities to reach these segments in the coming months. We will work closely with community partners in the next project phase to make sure their voices are heard and included in the Cultural Plan.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to all the individuals and stakeholder groups who informed the Discover phase of the Calgary Chinatown Cultural Plan. This includes interview participants, City of Calgary staff, survey respondents, and speakers and attendees of the virtual talks. We greatly appreciate everyone's time and efforts, even more so under these unusual and stressful circumstances of COVID-19.



# THE KINDS OF QUESTIONS WE ASKED

## YESTERDAY

What did Chinatown mean to you growing up?

What is your favourite memory of Chinatown?

What changes have you witnessed in Chinatown?

Is there something that Chinatown has lost in recent years that is irreplaceable?

Have you been involved in Chinatown's planning process?

## TODAY

What is your relationship with Chinatown today?

What makes Chinatown distinct and special to you?

What are strengths and gaps in Chinatown's culture?

What is something happening in Chinatown that you are excited to see more of?

What aspects of Chinatown do you feel less positive about?

## TOMORROW

What are your hopes for the future of Chinatown? What opportunities do you see?

What are fears you have for the future of Chinatown?

What relationship do you aspire to have with Chinatown?

What contribution do you wish to make to it?

What does good community engagement look like?



# WHAT WE HEARD

The data collected in the Discover phase has been analyzed and distilled into observations, summaries and (visual) data. Details outlining specific engagement responses, concerns or goals can be found in the section Community Insights (page 13 and beyond).

## Key Themes

A number of Key Themes and areas of opportunity have emerged within the data. These are:

- People, Voices and Experiences
- Food, Merchants and Tourism
- Culture, Creative and Learning
- Housing, Health and Social Purpose
- Places, Spaces and Natural Environment

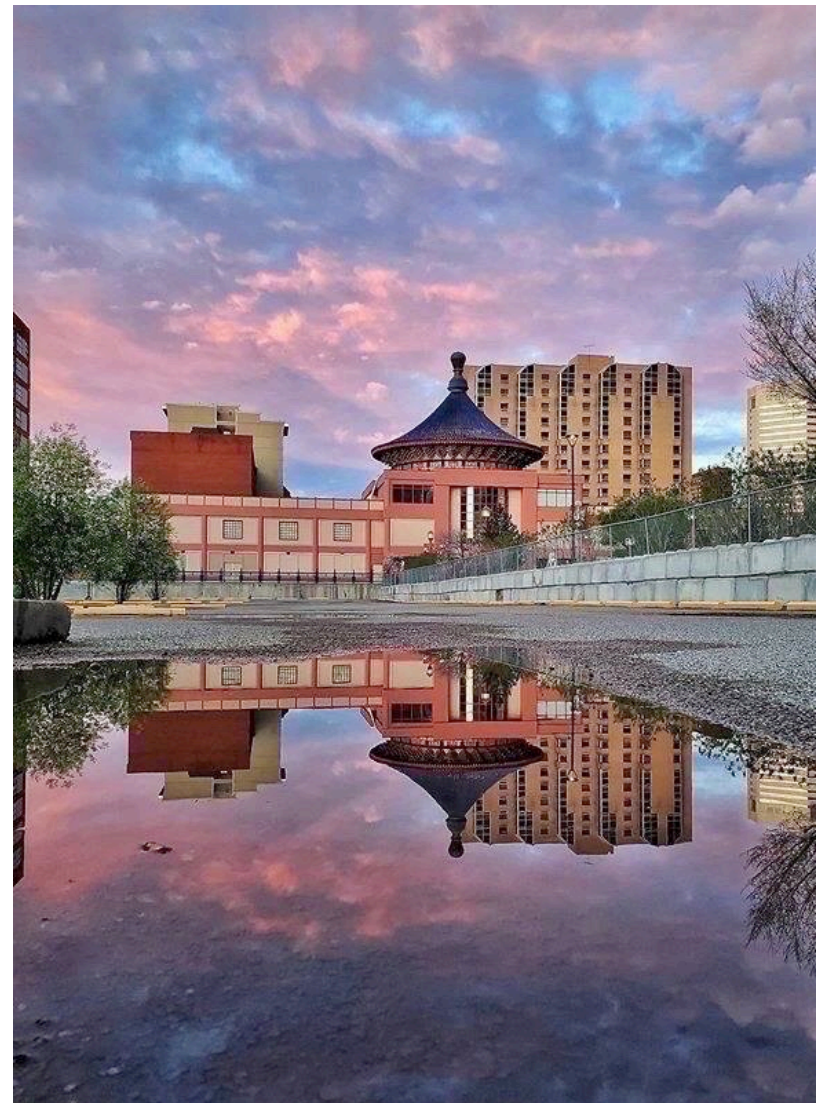
These Key Themes will give structure to the Cultural Plan; they are the chapters to be fleshed out over the next months.

## Findings

The next pages summarize our research findings organized by Key Theme. For each Key Theme, we distilled what we heard, capturing the most substantial comments on the strengths, gaps and opportunities for the Chinatown of tomorrow. We strongly encourage you to explore the source material on page 13 and beyond to see for yourself the richness of what the community has shared with us.

The research findings will inform the creation of the Calgary Chinatown Cultural Plan in the next project phase, as follows:

- Identify key issues for community conversation and discussion;
- Outline priorities for the Cultural Plan, define actions that are tangible, feasible and have impact, and explore partnerships;
- Provide stories, assets and resources to build and start to populate a Cultural Resource Map for Chinatown (see page 12); and
- Introduce cultural considerations into the Local Area Plan process.



## THEME 1: PEOPLE, VOICES AND EXPERIENCES

Tomorrow's Chinatown as a community that celebrates its diversity, and offers people harmony and a sense of belonging



### STRENGTHS

Diversity  
Cultural identity  
Passion / dedication  
Civic engagement  
Resilience

### GAPS / ISSUES

Complex histories  
City relationship  
What is "Chinese"?  
Unknown to others  
Walls and barriers

### OPPORTUNITIES

Dialogue with City  
Empowerment  
Emerging youth  
Intergenerational  
conversations

### CONVERSATIONS WE SHOULD HAVE

What does building bridges between the generations look like?

And between diverse groups that identify as Chinese, Asian or otherwise?

How do we rebuild the relationship between the community and City?

Community members have very personal stakes and connections to Chinatown. Despite being a small community, Chinatown generates a lot of activity, with different groups and voices represented. From those who call Chinatown home to those establishing their roots – like the senior residents who make Chinatown their living room, and newer immigrants and youth looking to (re)connect with their heritage – the diverse voices contribute to a rich, dynamic culture.

### Strengths

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

### Gaps / Issues

The complex and rich history of Chinatown and Chinese-Calgarians remains unknown to many and is becoming lost. There is also an uncomfortable history of racism and discrimination between Calgary as a city and Chinatown as a community 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.

### Opportunities

This is a chance to rebuild the relationship between The City and the Chinatown community, based on acknowledgement of the past, mutual respect and empowerment of the community. Opportunities must also be made to connect a growing group of engaged youth with seniors to interweave generations that don't currently talk to one another due to difficult journeys, vulnerabilities and language gaps. A certain "catching up" is needed to adapt to the needs of Chinatown's new generations.



## THEME 2: FOOD, MERCHANTS AND TOURISM

Tomorrow's Chinatown as a community valued for its independent businesses that offer cultural food, shopping and tourism experiences



### STRENGTHS

Mix of uses  
Diverse cuisines  
Cultural businesses  
Mom-and-pops  
Value

### GAPS / ISSUES

Eat-and-leave  
Lack of succession  
Changing demands  
Competition  
Economic hardship

### OPPORTUNITIES

Night / street market  
Hold people longer  
Tourism products  
New audiences  
Art + business collab.

### CONVERSATIONS WE SHOULD HAVE

How to appeal to changing tastes while retaining our traditions?

What does a year-round experience of Chinatown look like?

What new businesses should we attract to Chinatown, and how?

The memory and experience of Chinatown is deeply embedded in its independent business community and the cultural food, shopping and tourism experiences it continues to offer. Many existing 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 work and the sacrifices they make to provide a better life for them.

### Strengths

Chinatown's advantage is the density and diversity of Chinese and Asian cuisines that can be found within a city block. Mom-and-pop businesses are the character of Chinatown, providing a unique authenticity and grittiness through their small market aesthetic. Specifically valued are the independent, working class family businesses providing affordable, essential goods and services. The daily interactions and personal relationships with small business owners, and their stories of struggle and entrepreneurship, are big contributors to Chinatown's sense of community.

### Gaps / Issues

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 the (global) economy, competition and lack of succession is taking its toll on Chinatown, seen in the erosion of its small mom-and-pop businesses. 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.

### Opportunities

There is a desire and opportunity to move beyond today's eat-and-leave model, to attract new audiences and encourage people to spend more time and money in Chinatown. New tourism products can be developed and linked with existing Calgary attractions into a year-round experience. A night or street market would be an asset for Chinatown, as well as creative collaborations between artists and merchants or restaurants.

## THEME 3: CULTURE, CREATIVE AND LEARNING

Tomorrow's Chinatown as a community known for its artistic production, creativity and opportunities for cultural learning



### STRENGTHS

Strong culture  
Chinese Cultural Ctr.  
Hidden gems  
Signature events  
Lifelong cultivation

### GAPS / ISSUES

Lack of arts spaces  
Undermarketed  
Unsustainable  
Difficult to access  
Loss of knowledge

### OPPORTUNITIES

(Re)activate spaces  
Asian film festival  
Museum / library  
Pop-up events  
Creative economy

### CONVERSATIONS WE SHOULD HAVE

The Chinese Cultural Centre: how do we unlock its full potential?

How do we activate / secure more spaces for creative & cultural uses?

What new cultural assets and programs does Chinatown need?

Culture is a strong builder of connection and community within the urban sprawl of Calgary. The Chinese community in Calgary is unanimous in its hope that Chinatown be the centre for Chinese culture. Developing and nurturing the neighbourhood's capacity for artistic production, creativity and cultural learning represents a great opportunity to bring people to the area with a regularity and purpose beyond shopping and eating.

### Strengths

The Chinese Cultural Centre remains a key attraction and gateway for locals and tourists alike into Chinatown and Chinese culture. It has the greatest reach across the city, especially through its Chinese New Year festival. Chinatown offers visitors 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.

### Gaps / Issues

There is a lack of spaces for arts and culture use in Chinatown. Spaces are either unknown, inaccessible, or of a poor standard. Cultural work is often economically unsustainable, with groups competing for the same funding and the work sustained through Chinatown's deep culture of community volunteerism. There is a lot of arts 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 the older generation.

### Opportunities

We could make better use of existing spaces, including Chinese society buildings and the Chinese Cultural Centre. New initiatives, including establishing an Asian film festival, or a museum on immigration histories, can help change the perception of Chinatown. Small-scale events such as cultural pop-ups can bring life to unexpected community spaces, both indoor and outdoor. Chinatown's location, density and walkability make it a good place to develop a creative and innovative industry.



## THEME 4: HOUSING, HEALTH AND SOCIAL PURPOSE

Tomorrow's Chinatown as a community that provides residents the housing and support services they need, through all life stages



### STRENGTHS

Cultural values  
Seniors services  
Strong civil society  
Community care  
Active volunteerism

### GAPS / ISSUES

Ageing out  
Housing gaps  
Perceived as insular  
Demographic change  
Developm. pressure

### OPPORTUNITIES

Succession planning  
Family housing  
Port of arrival  
Connect to satellites  
Build capacity CA

### CONVERSATIONS WE SHOULD HAVE

What investments are needed to attract young (Chinese) professionals and families to the area?

What is the future of Chinatown's traditional organizations?

Who depends on Chinatown and how can we build capacity to meet their needs?

The Chinatown community is unique in that people both in and outside the neighbourhood are passionate about the area, sharing a sense of community responsibility and desire to be part of something bigger than themselves. In its culture, community and civil society come before profit and personal gain, and family and community gathering and belonging are important. You are here to honour those before you and propel those after you.

### Strengths

Culturally, Chinese people consider the well-being of their elders and community a priority, and will make personal sacrifices accordingly. Chinatown's seniors have strong supports and their care is prioritized and a point of pride, thanks to past investments. Chinatown has a long history of volunteerism, civic engagement and activism. There are expectations and a willingness to be a good neighbour, to serve community, to actively invite community in, to show up for community, and to share resources.

### Gaps / Issues

There is a trend towards less people becoming involved in Chinatown, especially the next generation, which is concerning as older generations age out. A lack of youth and family-friendly amenities and housing may contribute 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. There is concern about the increasing redevelopment pressures on the community.

### Opportunities

Succession planning can be encouraged by involving younger generations and making space for them in Chinatown's traditional organizations. Investments in liveable family housing can help attract younger Chinese/Asian professionals and families to live in and make Chinatown their home. There are also opportunities to expand Chinatown's role within Calgary, by offering services to "satellite" Chinese neighbourhoods and by playing the role of a port of arrival to all types of newcomers.

## THEME 5: PLACES, SPACES AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Tomorrow's Chinatown as a community that expresses its culture, history and stories in the physical environment



### STRENGTHS

Sense of place  
Location  
Unique styling  
Density / scale  
Walkability

### GAPS / ISSUES

Erosion  
Painful reminders  
Loss of vibrancy  
Few options to linger  
Mobility / parking

### OPPORTUNITIES

Gathering spaces  
Sien Lok / PI Park  
James Short motion  
Stronger boundaries  
Connections

### CONVERSATIONS WE SHOULD HAVE

Where does Chinatown's deep sense of place come from, and how can it be strengthened through urban design?

How do we make better connections with other neighbourhoods?

How can Chinatown find opportunity in better accessibility & mobility?

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

### Strengths

Positive steps have been made in Chinatown to preserve buildings with historical significance; unremarkable buildings have been made remarkable through stories of their use and history. Chinatown has a strategic location by the river that could be leveraged. The vibrancy, life and authenticity of Chinatown's walkable streets are created by the density of Chinese businesses and people young and old, their active use of Chinese language, and daily rituals, habits and aesthetics.

### Gaps / Issues

Worries about Chinatown being eroded are very real. New developments on its edges are more congruent with other neighbourhoods or designed with their literal backs to Chinatown, giving the impression that the area is undesirable and unworthy. 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 the area. There is a lack of spaces for people to linger, and of convenient and affordable parking options.

### Opportunities

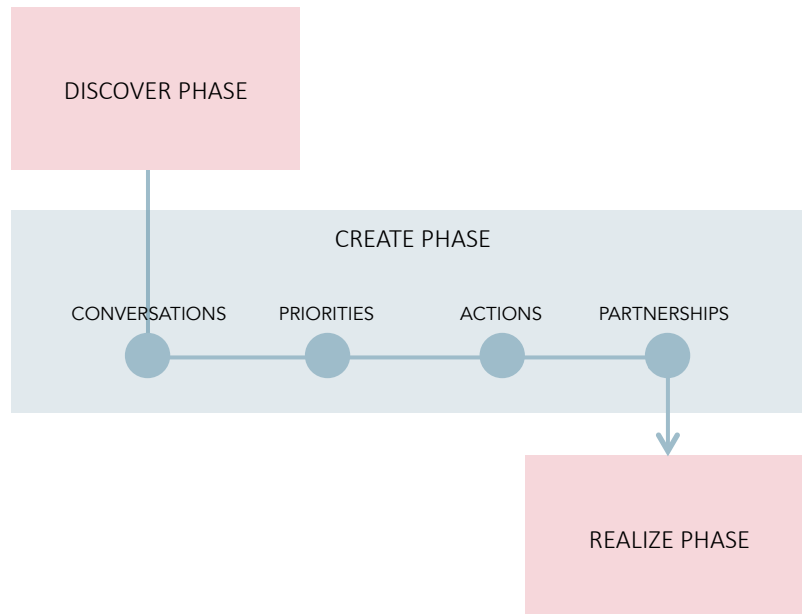
Although small, Chinatown does not necessarily need to be bigger, but more unique. Strengthening its boundaries and adding attractive gathering spaces would help achieve this. Greater connection is desired with East Village, Eau Claire and downtown, with the goal to be distinct versus being consumed. Ideas for greater physical connection include improving Sien Lok and Prince's Island park spaces, and placemaking along the riverfront and up Centre Street to Crescent Heights.



# WHAT IS NEXT

## Create and Realize Phase

The next two phases of the planning process are Create and Realize. The Create phase (October 2020 – March 2021\*) involves working with key stakeholders and the broader community to draft the Cultural Plan. We will have deeper conversations about the major opportunities and challenges for Chinatown, choose priorities and actions, and discuss how we can forge new, exciting partnerships.



During the Realize phase (April 2021\* and onwards), the focus will be on launching the Cultural Plan and initiating its implementation strategy with tangible actions and next steps.

\* Dates are indicative

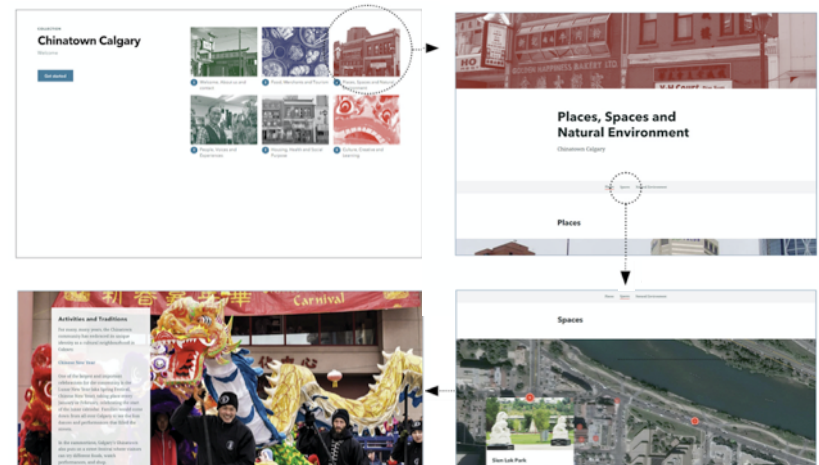
## Cultural Resource Map

The Discover phase has captured so many stories, resources, photos, videos, facts, and much more, that we wish to share back, honour and make as widely accessible as possible. We do this by making a Cultural Resource Map, as an extension of the Cultural Plan. It is a platform where the community's stories unfold and are pieced together to collect the unique cultural assets and legacies of Calgary's Chinatown.

We aspire the Cultural Resource Map to:

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

The Cultural Resource Map will be a living document, continuously evolving to capture and reflect the current community. We encourage residents as cultural stewards to submit content and have agency in the shaping of Chinatown's narrative.



Some examples of what this could look like

#### PHOTO CREDITS

Cover / back page	Dunefield
Page 6	City of Calgary
Page 7 (left to right)	Clover Living (Instagram) Cyril Brabant (Instagram)
Page 8 (left to right)	Jason Leung, unsplash.com Chinatown BIA (Instagram)
Page 9 (left to right)	Jiajia Li (artist); Xu Yong (photo) <a href="http://www.flickr.com/people/davebloggs007/">www.flickr.com/people/davebloggs007/</a>
Page 10 (left to right)	Dunefield
Page 11 (left to right)	City of Calgary / Glenbow Archives <a href="https://pixabay.com/users/yycfredferguson-603078/">pixabay.com/users/yycfredferguson-603078/</a> SFU Calgary Chinatowns 1888-2015, David Chuenyan Lai and Lloyd Sciban
Page 24	Ashley Oshiro (artist)
Page 25	City of Calgary
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Page 27	Jeremy Yap, unsplash.com

## COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

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ONLINE SURVEY..... p.28

# Interviews by Key Theme

**Over 90 interview participants were engaged in one-on-one or small group meetings by online video or telephone, between March 31 and October 31, 2020. The resulting wealth of insights and perspectives is distilled and organized here by Key Theme. Our approach aimed to summarize what people said – as individuals and as a community – and to try to interpret an underlying meaning. Interview comments are people’s opinions that were not corrected for factual accuracy.**

## Theme 1: People, Voices and Experiences

### CHINATOWN’S PLACE IN CALGARY

The fact that Calgary has a Chinatown is an asset towards its standing as a global city. Calgarians may admit to not visiting Chinatown often, but they like the idea that there is one in their city, recognizing its value.

There are shared values and goals to be identified between Calgary as a city and Chinatown as a community. There is also an uncomfortable history of racism and discrimination between the two that needs to be recognized. Maintaining the heritage of Chinatown and its role in Calgary’s history is important, especially its history of displacement and resilience.

Calgary’s Chinatown is not as visible as in other cities, for example, Toronto and Vancouver. It is surprising how many Calgarians have not visited Chinatown. Chinese culture is still relatively new to Calgarians and Albertans; Chinatown makes it approachable and accessible.

There is hunger for culture and community within the urban sprawl and suburbia of Calgary. Citizens have a general interest in Chinese culture, and are excited to be in Chinatown and interested in what the neighbourhood holds. There seems to be respect for the culture even if it may be token. There is no reason for a cultural community within Calgary to be lost or to disappear.

Non-Chinese and non-Asians are well treated and respected guests in Chinatown, but they will never fully understand the culture and community. Disparity exists between how broader audiences see the area, versus those who use and rely upon it whose opinions should matter more.

There is fear of history being lost through the planning process. Not enough young Calgarians know about the history of Chinatown; they assume it is a cultural district planned and created by The City.

### REPRESENTATION

Chinatown is a reflection of Chinese Canadian history, achievements, and values. There is basic Chinese Canadian history, but also the unique cultural history of the Chinese in Calgary and its significance to the city. Chinese Canadian history contains a gap in stories of Calgary and prairie Chinatowns, including of their small family restaurants that are disappearing.

The history of Chinatown and Chinese-Calgarians remains unknown and is becoming lost, from the stories of early immigrant labourers, to community activism, to historical Indigenous-Chinese relations. There is also the painful history of exploitation, racism and discrimination, and its legacy of intergenerational trauma. Those wanting to participate in the Chinatown discussion need to do their homework. Storytelling and story-gathering are important, as well as the role of historians in the process.

There are aspirations shared by Chinese Canadians and Calgarians at large to make Chinatown a place and community to be proud of. Currently, it is not seen as vibrant or appealing.

Community members have very personal stakes and connections to Chinatown. The area is part of their foundational identity, tied to feelings of pride (or lack of), sense of belonging (or not), and representation of Chinese people and culture beyond tokenism.

Do Calgarians actually see its Chinese members as a group of people? Chinatown is a place where Chinese Calgarians see people like them, and where they belong and can be themselves.

Personal connection to Chinatown remains strongest through the experience of immigrant Chinese families and their reliance on the area for essential services, including housing, jobs, groceries, language services, children’s education and cultural celebrations. Newer, westernized generations with upward mobility are less dependent on the area for goods and services, however, their reliance on the



place for cultural learning and experiences, sense of belonging, and pride in being Chinese is just as vital.

Working class Chinese parents of previous generations brought their kids to Chinatown for weekly Chinese school, dim sum and grocery shopping. Middle-class parents of the newer generation have a broader worldview and want their kids to have diverse experiences throughout Calgary neighbourhoods and cultures. Specifically, they do not want to force their kids into the community, as was often their experience growing up.

As minorities and immigrants in Calgary, it is important for Chinese people to be proud of who they are, to know their roots and where they came from, what it means to be Chinese, and to have Chinatown to go to where they belong and feel safe. It is good to see young people practicing and promoting their own cultures as part of Canadian culture.

Being proud of one's Chinese identity and culture is important; if you know and are proud that you are Chinese, then you know you're Canadian. It allows you to be present as a Chinese Canadian and Calgarian to talk about the issues. Chinatown should be to talk about the issues, which requires talking to the people of the community and really listening to their concerns.

Chinese Canadians identify with Indigenous peoples through similar lived experiences and struggles for representation, and are proud of their historical cross-cultural relationship. How might a future free from colonization look?

Chinatown has always been a place for underrepresented and vulnerable populations; their voices are important and need to be heard. The voices and stories of seniors are of particular importance, as they hold the history that we don't want to lose.

Intergenerational dialogue is very important to Chinese people and families. Older Chinese people have things to say and advice to give to the next generation. Organizing activities that can be enjoyed by both young and old is a great first step towards breaking down barriers, including those of language.

It is hard for Chinese people to share their histories and thoughts. Opportunities must be made to connect with seniors and to interweave generations that don't

talk to one another due to difficult journeys, traumas, vulnerabilities and language gaps. Personal healing is required towards community healing and hope.

Focus on the personal stories of those who live or grew up in Chinatown. It's the people of Chinatown who make the place unique and who are endearing. Meeting people in person and one-on-one leads to lasting relationships.

Despite being a small community, Chinatown generates a lot of activity, with many different groups and voices. This can be perceived as a lack of unity or agreement, with the community appearing fractured and meaningful collaboration difficult. Community politics are frustrating, keeping some from becoming involved. There is need for a more connected and coordinated community, and united voices.

The Chinatown community suffers from different points of view which are typically overstated, as "Chinatown doesn't agree on anything." But that is part of the fabric of Chinatown that adds a level of complexity.

There is a lot of mention of Chinatown community, but not much community experienced. People are secluded, with no conversation or dialogue. Chinatown's future needs focused community-building, including more social listening, to build the brand of Chinatown emotionally.

Creating community among youth in Chinatown happens when everyone feels accepted, especially when language is a barrier. Creating and holding space for people to reconnect with their heritage is important, as well as genuine dialogue and friendship.

Chinatown must be personal to be relevant, however, it cannot be based purely on nostalgia. It must have contemporary meaning. Historical relevance is important, but it can be very negative and offer little path forward. Its focus on discrimination presents a snapshot of history only, unless it is used as a mechanism to move forward, for example, through teaching and learning.

Chinatown has a strong sense of community, but it is small and can be perceived as insular or unfriendly, but there are also cultural reasons for this. Chinese communities have been in Canada for a long time. They have always kept to themselves, and been quiet and guarded against racism.

Something has been lost between the generations, and between family and community. Language loss is a part of it, as well as being uprooted and so removed from one's ancestral homeland.

If we listen to the quickly disappearing old-timers, they have stories and experiences that are unique and about the earliest of days of Calgary, and yet these are not documented and most people will never hear it.

There is a life cycle among Canadian-born Chinese of growing up with Chinatown, then apart and away from the area, only to come back to reconnect with one's identity, culture and community. Chinatown may have changed over the years of being away, but it is ever present as a touchstone.

### NEWER CHINESE IMMIGRANTS

Newer Chinese immigrants do not come to Canada with aspirations to live in Chinatown. From the perspective of someone from modern China, the area needs development and prosperity. They came to Canada seeking career opportunities that have dried up in Calgary's economic downturn.

Calgary's economic downturn has impacted newcomers seeking career opportunities. They moved to Canada to seek a more meaningful / balanced life.

Mainland Chinese have growing numbers and influence in Calgary that will eventually dominate its Chinese community. The group is insular, views the original Cantonese-speaking immigrants as unwelcoming, and have certain perceptions and ideas for Chinatown. There is opportunity and strong reasons to engage this growing demographic in the future of Chinatown, starting with its history.

Interest in Chinatown is created through personal history and connection, versus what is taught in schools, for example, about the building of the railroad. Newer Chinese immigrants do not readily identify with Chinatown or Chinese Canadian history, but resonance can be found in the immigrant experience and migration histories.

Among newer Chinese immigrants, it is harder for them to integrate into the Chinatown community than it is to Canadian society.

Chinatown has remaining focused on serving those of lower education and incomes looking for a better life. It has not adapted to cater to the changing demographics of Chinese immigrants, their language, backgrounds and preferences.

There is a concern that Chinatown is always in competition with other Chinese neighbourhoods, especially Crescent Heights and new Chinese malls. The Chinese population is not monolithic; there is more than one community and opportunity available. Chinatown is very important, but remains only one manifestation of Chinese Canadian history and community, reflecting specific demographics, issues and amenities.

Chinese identity is also not monolithic, it is very nuanced, often along political lines, for example, those identifying as Taiwanese or of Hong Kong heritage. There is also a shifting perception of Chinese in Canada, with the rise of China as a superpower and now with COVID-19. Planning needs to account for different Chinese cultures and backgrounds, with different sets of values at play.

The definition of Chinese has become more diverse with the background of new immigrants from Taiwan and mainland China. The diversity of the Chinese population is its strength, but also a challenge when different groups don't get along, usually along different politics.

The area remains Chinatown by name, but the experience of it has evolved into a cultural hub for the entire Asian diaspora. There is increasing visibility of Asian voices, including South Asian, which is good learning and exposure for Western audiences to different cultural values and value systems.

Some find the Chinatown name isolating, implying the area is restricted for Chinese people and Chinese language.

Formerly a predominantly first-generation immigrant Chinese community, Chinatown is today a good mix of ethnicities and hybrid identities, with different Chinese and Asian backgrounds, mixed family backgrounds, and multiple generations of Chinese Canadians.

The younger generation is often viewed as demanding in its desire to see and affect change in Chinatown. However, in their own words, Chinatown has not adapted to the needs of its new generations, so a certain "catching up" is needed.

### Theme 2: Food, Merchants and Tourism

#### TOURISM

Calgary is not a tourism city and Chinatown isn't really a tourist district. There's not a lot of context or marketing of what the neighbourhood is or why it is there. Opportunity exists to strengthen this storytelling.

There are challenges to referring visitors to Chinatown to spend time there. The area is small, parking is limited, and shops and facilities lack consistency in their operating hours and customer service experience.

The physical design of Chinatown is seen as functional and practical; its shops and spaces are considered community amenities. The City's planning process needs to think of Chinatown as a community serving the needs of Calgarians, versus as a destination only for tourists and visitors.

#### MOM-AND-POP

Mom-and-pop businesses are the character of Chinatown, providing a unique authenticity and grittiness through their small market aesthetic. Specifically valued are the independent, working class family businesses providing affordable, essential goods and services within the community.

The daily interactions and personal relationships with small business owners and their stories of struggle and entrepreneurship are big contributors to Chinatown's strong sense of community and belonging.

Many existing food or service businesses in Chinatown were started by immigrants out of their savings and without a sustainable plan or business model. Children of family businesses know how hard their parents work and the sacrifices they make to provide a better life for them.

The impact of the global economy is taking its toll on Chinatown's local economy, seen in the continued erosion of its small mom-and-pop businesses. Many Asian businesses have moved in, creating a broader, more diverse pan-Asian character and identity to the area. The presence of retail chains and western businesses is of concern, disturbing the rhythm of shops and appearing out of place.

The desire to retain and protect existing small businesses is balanced against the need for change, and young Chinese-/Asian-Canadian entrepreneurs are establishing themselves in Chinatown with their own take on the mom-and-pop shop. While their presence signals hope and optimism for some, for others they are a sign of gentrification and disconnect with the essential needs of the community, particularly those of the Chinese seniors population.

#### FOOD BUSINESSES

The memory and experience of food in Chinatown remains strong and central. Yet, its businesses are losing out to increasing competition from outside the area, in both uniqueness and quality. A competitive advantage remains in the density and diversity of Chinese and Asian cuisines that can be found within a city block.

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, with no one really walking around and browsing, and generally not much to do.

Typical visits of Chinatown among younger generations—specifically high school students with allowances—are for bubble tea and snacks with friends. Their focus on eating and spending money sustains the area's many bubble tea shops within 2-3 blocks. These interactions, however, are highly transactional and transient, as grab-and-go on the way to elsewhere. There is a desire and opportunity to engage youth beyond the current eat-and-leave model, to encourage their depth of understanding and investment in Chinatown.

There is a need for people to spend their time as well as money in Chinatown, especially youth, who desire to linger, hang out and establish relationships with the area. Amenities for this are viewed as lacking. Bubble tea and snack shops are designed as grab-and-go; restaurants and cafes are small, with limited seating capacity. The area could benefit from improved indoor/outdoor public spaces that people and especially youth can frequent without being seen as loitering.

#### RETAIL MIX

The mix of uses including residential in Chinatown's compact neighbourhood offers excellent retail opportunity, however, the current mix of uses does not appear to be right for everyone, with certain types of stores missing.



While retaining and protecting existing small businesses is important, there is also a need for their adaptation, particularly to attract new mainstream audiences as the current customer base ages out. There are universal ways of doing business and remaining competitive that apply to Chinatown's cultural businesses. Some ways of doing things are part of the neighbourhood's character and represent social and cultural values; some don't want to see too much change or "whitewashing" of these.

As with any commercial area, new shops and their audiences are welcome additions to the neighbourhood. They are seen as new blood and modernity needed in complement to Chinatown's long-time businesses.

### ECONOMIC POLICY

Taxation in Chinatown is high for businesses (on par with downtown rates), rent is expensive and larger square footages are prohibitive for small business owners. Shops operate out of older buildings that need maintenance and upgrades. Many such properties are being held for their redevelopment potential.

Simple policies and incentives may work best for Chinatown's tightly knit, on-the-ground community that is not covered by The City's community economic development strategy. The community continues to be very vocal around parking issues and to lobby for relaxations as a potential quick-win. Gatherings in Chinatown (especially for meals) happen among family and friends, involving multiple households and vehicles.

Chinatown was established in its present location after being displaced twice in the city, with the purchase of the Canton Block by community leaders. Such initiative and agency over its own economic development has allowed Chinatown to survive without relying on government support.

## Theme 3: Culture, Creative and Learning

### ARTS & CULTURE IN CALGARY

Chinatown is one of Calgary's most distinctive cultural communities, with a long and important history in the region. It is uniquely positioned to leverage opportunities within the city's growing creative and culture industry.

Culture is a strong builder of connection and community within the urban sprawl of Calgary. The Calgary arts community represents an opportunity for Chinatown to build and strengthen connections across the city, especially with those who do not identify naturally with the area.

Whereas Downtown is known for its performing arts venues and East Village for its artist housing, there is an opportunity for Chinatown to build a strong art community through dedicated artist use facilities. Spaces in the area are affordable, but too small and often run-down. The lack of mid-sized arts venues is a city-wide problem and opportunity for Chinatown.

There is an interest in Chinese culture and experiencing it in person, especially through artistic encounters. The arts have the ability to bring Chinese culture to Calgarians who haven't had much exposure.

There may be conflict and disagreement between groups and individuals, but the Chinese community in Calgary is unanimous in its hope that Chinatown be the centre for Chinese culture. This should be considered a win-win for both The City and community.

There is ample funding support of Chinese/Asian artists within Calgary, for example, through Calgary Arts Development, as well as opportunities to become part of the fabric of Chinatown.

New initiatives such as the Chinatown artist-in-residence program and interest in establishing an Asian film festival seek to change the perception of Chinatown and Chinese art and art practices. Issues of cultural identity can be explored and discussed through the arts, which can bring together east and west, old and new. Contemporary art and artistic expression work to challenge stereotypes, expectations and the exoticisation of ethnic culture.

Community programs exploring Chinatown culture and history have been well received among Calgarians. This is important to show to The City and developers to help grow their cultural competency.

The importance of arts and culture in the lives of seniors has become much better understood through COVID-19, for example, the role of art-making and Chinese language for maintaining seniors' social connection and mental health.

Cultural work is not only not profitable, it is seen as unsustainable, with Chinatown groups competing for the same pot of casino funding. Community members want to see cultural programs be as accessible as possible, which usually means free of charge. The work is sustained through Chinatown's deep culture of community volunteerism. It is not unusual for volunteers to be involved in the area for decades, especially in their retirement.

### EVENTS

Chinatown has a set calendar of annual flagship events celebrating Chinese New Year, Canada Day, and the summertime through the Chinatown Street Festival. The celebrations are big draws to the area of visitors from across Calgary.

The Chinese community keeps to itself most of the time, but the Chinese New Year festival is the one event where people of different backgrounds actively come together to celebrate the biggest festival in Chinese culture. Programming at the Chinese Cultural Centre runs the entire month, with banquets scheduled over the three months around the New Year, bringing significant numbers of people and their business to Chinatown. In contrast, the Street Festival is not perceived to benefit area businesses, with its visitors buying from event vendors.

The Chinatown community continues to have a strong event programming focus, but it is not necessarily perceived as being eventful.

Those who have attended and volunteered in Chinatown's big festivals know them to be labour intensive, offering a spectacle and only temporary sense of belonging. There is deeper meaning behind the how and why that is of interest to local audiences, especially younger Chinese Canadians.

Chinatown gets visitors for its festivals, but not at other times. For many, it represents their single annual visit of the area while they wait for the next event to return. Smaller, monthly events are needed in complement, to create a habit of visiting regularly and year-round. Chinatown's evolution as a centre of culture needs enough events to engage and hold the attention of Calgarians throughout the year, ideally monthly.

The Chinese calendar has lots of festivals throughout the year—dragon boat festival, Chingming festival, mid-autumn festival, winter solstice—representing lots of potential for year-round connectivity with the area.

Community members want to experience more sustainable, informal, year-round events in Chinatown that offer everyday learning and relatable experiences. Small-scale events such as cultural pop-ups in unexpected community spaces have been suggested.

More than seasonal events, everyday activities are needed to sustain Chinatown as a community, through the act of living, working, enjoying night life, etc. Weekend visits for dim sum are popular, but what about the rest of the week?

There are so many cultural things happening in Chinatown but there is lack of a cohesive Chinatown brand, giving the impression of things being random, amateur, scattered, and exclusive (for those in-the-know only).

### LEARNING

Teaching and learning in Chinatown represent a great opportunity to bring people to the area with a regularity and purpose beyond shopping and eating.

Chinatown's role as a site of learning has strong roots in the experience of Chinese school while growing up Chinese Canadian. Children have an impression of Chinatown as a site of learning and Chinese Canadian history, but not for fun. Language learning and education models need to change to be fun, family-oriented and reflect contemporary needs and realities.

In Chinese culture, artistic pursuits are considered lifelong endeavours of self-cultivation. Students and performers range in age from children to seniors, and span diverse Chinese backgrounds and languages. Many Chinese Canadians are very knowledgeable, and continue learning on their own and throughout their lives.

Traditional Chinese art forms remain relevant, however, their presentation needs to broaden to allow for greater engagement, discussion and learning. Younger people are important to consider, particularly those who grew up here and want to explore and learn about their culture.

There are many traditional performing arts groups, for example, Cantonese opera and lion dance, with visual arts groups less visible. How can groups learn from one another, and is there interest in doing so, for example, to develop more contemporary and interdisciplinary practices?

Chinese culture is not about more dragons, it is a way of life. There is culture within the everyday knowledge, wisdom and life skills held by Chinatown seniors to be passed on, including food traditions, language and healing practices. The younger generation wants to learn these, and directly from community elders through less formal, culture-inspired activities.

First impressions of Calgary Chinatown are not necessarily high, especially when compared to other Chinatowns in Canada. However, there is incredible depth to be found in the community's history and culture, if one takes the time to explore and get to know it.

Ways of getting to know Chinatown are seen as hard to come by, especially among those with no links to the community. There is also no natural node or pathway to connect with people or to find more information in or about Chinatown. General knowledge on the North American Chinatown can be found, but there is limited info specific to Calgary Chinatown available.

Arts and culture programming needs to be made more accessible, as it is currently difficult to find. While programs may be rich in their teaching, Chinatown organizations have a skills gap in their marketing and administration of them that has not evolved. Programs are hidden, relying on word-of-mouth and with no online or social media presence. Registration systems are antiquated, requiring in-person sign-up.

There is a gap in learning and teaching the history of Chinese migration to Canada and in knowledge of why Chinatown exists, even among those of Chinese heritage, which can lead to a perception of Chinese people being perpetual foreigners. Calgarians need to be educated on why places like Chinatown were formed, in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. It is important for the Chinatown Cultural Plan to tell this history of discrimination that is being forgotten.

The history and culture of Chinatown becomes most relevant and of interest when it is personal and experiential. Learning one's family history and cross-cultural learning with other groups makes the area personal.

Walking tours are effective in showing the history, functions and people of the neighbourhood; they are a way to literally invite people into the community.

### CULTURAL FACILITIES

It is unknown how many arts and culture spaces there are in Chinatown, but there are lots of groups. Many traditional Asian activities, including calligraphy and Chinese opera, are happening in spaces closed off to others, especially to non-Asian audiences. This is viewed as a missed opportunity to engage the wider Calgary community, mainstream audiences and potential new members. In contrast, new cultural groups like The New Gallery are a big step towards bringing new audiences to Chinatown.

Major event spaces include the Chinese Cultural Centre, Dragon City Mall and the parking lot behind it, and The New Gallery. A strategy to activate different spaces in the community can make the area feel bigger.

There is a lack of spaces for arts and culture use in Chinatown. They are either unknown, inaccessible (due to gatekeeper or cost), or of a poor or non-professional standard. There is a lack of spaces for performing arts, in particular, and professional artists and productions must book outside Chinatown. They are well-received in other communities and excellent ambassadors of the Chinese culture and community.

Multifunctional facilities are needed to meet the cultural mixed uses of the Chinatown community, including a banquet hall, museum, library, and for uses spanning exhibition, performance, film screenings, meetings, workshops and classrooms. This can be achieved through collaboration between groups with spaces, a new space, or through investment in the Chinese Cultural Centre.

The Chinese Cultural Centre is a registered charity with a cultural and educational mandate. Its construction and opening in 1992 was a huge accomplishment and validation of the Chinese community in Calgary. Its landmark architecture and special events make it an attraction and gateway for locals and tourists alike into Chinatown and Chinese culture. The organization has the greatest reach outside Chinatown and across the city, especially through its Chinese New Year festival.

The museum space at the Chinese Cultural Centre plays an important role in telling the history of the Chinese in Calgary and in Canada. Its operations and exhibition could be improved for increased accessibility and visitor engagement, given this very specific, unique and important role it plays in the community.



The Chinese Cultural Centre is very important culturally and continues to do a lot for the community through its spaces, classes and events. However, it is clear that the organization has fallen on financial hardship, which has impacted its operations, programming and decision-making. Community stakeholders voice many shortcomings, but continue to see deep potential within the Centre as a cultural and community venue, recognizing that many problems are due to lack of funding and financial support.

### Theme 4: Housing, Health and Social Purpose

#### THE GREATER GOOD

Chinatown stakeholders want to see a balanced approach taken to making decisions, with consideration for the social and cultural values of their community, as well as economics. The impacts of the global economy are taking their toll on Chinatown's local economy and vulnerable seniors population, through the rise of chain retailers, property values and redevelopment pressures.

The community considers it their right to push back against the free market capitalism of development and for it to fit with the existing community character and culture. Chinatown is not just a piece of land for investment; it was built on the backs of Chinese.

Culturally, Chinese people consider the well-being of their elders and community, and will make personal sacrifices accordingly. Community and civil society always come before profit and personal gain. Family and community gathering and belonging are prioritized. You are here to honour those before you and propel those after you. Among younger Chinese Canadians, this duty can be perceived as a burden and baggage to be left behind.

Being part of the Chinatown community (doing business and taking up space) comes with social responsibility. There are expectations to be a good neighbour, to serve community, to actively invite community in, to show up for community, and to share resources.

#### VOLUNTEERISM / CIVIC ENGAGEMENT / PLANNING

Chinatown has a long history of volunteerism, civic engagement and activism. The community is unique in that people both in and outside the neighbourhood

are passionate about the area, sharing a deep sense of community responsibility and desire to be part of something bigger than themselves.

Chinatown organizations have been around for the long haul. They 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. Relationships in Chinatown are based on trust and often span decades and generations. As a result, it is about who you know (i.e. who knows and can vouch for you) and not so much your skills or abilities, which can be frustrating for those with ambition.

The people and organizations in Chinatown are experts on their community and direct investments need to be made in them. They should be given the agency and power to determine their fate, versus being told what is possible or available.

Chinatown and Chinese voices want to be as valued as those of other communities, and not seen as just angry Chinese people who don't get along. Plans need champions and like-minded people to implement, otherwise they're just plans.

Cultural bias is inherent within the planning process. It is hoped that city planning processes impacting Chinatown can incorporate a cultural and historical lens. Plans and their thinking need to be flexible, variable and non-linear, presenting multiple scenarios of what Chinatown can be, from best to worst case.

There has been a trend towards less people becoming involved in Chinatown, especially the next generation, which is concerning as older generations age out. People leaving the area and lack of investment from The City paints a bleak picture, and there is a feeling of disillusionment and disenfranchisement that keeps people away. Core issues have been identified and attention brought to them by the community, but there has been no action seen. Chinatown tends to be an afterthought. The area and the community deserve more respect.

Succession planning is urgently needed across the Chinatown community, but there is a lack of organizational capacity and skills in this area. The work is challenging for any organization, but viewed in Chinatown as a cliff versus a steady incline. Involving younger generations and making space for them is a priority.

#### SENIORS CARE (AND HOUSING)

Chinatown's seniors have strong supports and their care is prioritized and a point of pride, thanks to community investments into seniors housing and services

made in the 1970s. These investments need to be maintained and protected against redevelopment pressures, including the way of life they support.

Chinatown is at the forefront of community-centred seniors care. The area is a model for an age-friendly neighbourhood; members can age in place with their needs met within the immediate community. Aging is happening across Calgary with the wave of baby boomers. The need for seniors housing and supports is very acute, but temporary over the next 15-20 years. Chinese seniors living throughout Calgary aspire to live out their twilight years in Chinatown.

The demographic of Chinatown residents is heavily skewed towards seniors. To outsiders, this can give the appearance of the area being a “seniors ghetto”, where people “abandon” their parents, and as a place for seniors only. There is a recognized need and desire expressed by stakeholders across the board to diversify the area’s demographics, specifically to attract young Chinese/Asian professionals and their families.

If attracting younger Chinese/Asian professionals to live in and make Chinatown their home is a community priority, similar thought and investments into comprehensive housing and services are required to meet the needs of this demographic. For example, liveable family units for purchase in new developments, a library with kids/language sections, a playground, night life, and amenities for everyday living.

It is important that Chinatown remains a mixed-use but primarily residential neighbourhood. Existing seniors housing and older rental stock must be maintained and protected, but also complemented by new market housing. New condo developments, however, are seen as lacking in liveability and falling short of the needs of Calgarians, with units being unaffordable, with small unfriendly layouts and no amenities for young folks. There is also concern that they contribute to increasing redevelopment pressures within the community.

It is observed that the growth of suburban Chinese communities doesn’t always include social services, which is a concern but also an opportunity. Chinatown organizations have started to outreach to “satellite” Chinese neighbourhoods, to offer supports while diversifying and broadening clientele, services and missions.

Chinatowns around the world were formed around the experience of the 20th century Chinese immigrant. As immigration patterns have clearly changed, what

is the role of Chinatowns in the 21st century? The popular question of “who is Chinatown for” can also be asked as “who needs Chinatown and for what”?

Chinatown has always been a place for immigrants, but there are other types of newcomers served by the area, for example, those relocating to Calgary from elsewhere in Canada, trying to enter a new community, or seeking to reconnect with their roots. In this way, Chinatown continues to play the role of a port of arrival.

Chinatown is a culturally significant place where Calgarians can see, eat and do unique things. More than this, it is a place where people can learn about and experience culture. Chinatown communities continue to be experts in providing extremely strong and tangible experiences of culture. There is social purpose to this role that needs broader recognition, appreciation and respect.

### Theme 5: Places, Spaces and Natural Environment

#### LOCATION

Chinatown was established in its present location in 1910, after being displaced twice due to racism and discrimination. Its survival and resilience is a point of pride within the community, but likely not a well-known history of the neighbourhood or city.

Chinatown’s location is viewed as unique and enviable, but often experienced as “on the way” to elsewhere, particularly Eau Claire, downtown and Prince’s Island Park. Community members struggle with how to make Chinatown the destination, for people to visit, stay and spend time.

Chinatown has a strategic location by the river that some would like to see better leveraged. However, this relationship is not straightforward, with considerations for Indigenous histories and the risk of flood. Land carries many memories and expectations to be taken into consideration when undertaking planning.

Sien Lok Park is not well known (beyond the community) or designed, and is not considered a destination as a seniors park. In contrast, Prince’s Island Park is well built and designed, and very popular and visited by Calgarians at large. What urban design changes can be implemented at Sien Lok Park? Recommendation is made to revisit plans to improve and invest in this key community green space.

### SENSE OF PLACE

Chinatown is unique among Calgary neighbourhoods in that one doesn't need to live or physically be in Chinatown to care deeply about the area and its future. Chinese people in Calgary continue to see Chinatown as the cultural heart of their community, even when many have moved away to other neighbourhoods and don't actually live or spend much time there.

There is no other Calgary community that has such strong physical expression of its culture. One knows immediately they are in Chinatown through the unique styling and accents of lanterns, lampposts, Chinese language signage and other cultural markers.

The vibrancy, life and authenticity of Chinatown's streets are created by the density of Chinese businesses and people young and old, their active use of Chinese language, and daily rituals, habits and aesthetics. Public and private spaces are activated with shopping and street vending, the sounds of mahjong and Cantonese opera. This vibrancy continues to decline as Chinese people and businesses leave the area.

Although small, Chinatown does not necessarily need to be bigger, but more unique. It can be made to feel bigger by activating different parts of the community versus using the same spaces.

### BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Positive steps have been made in Chinatown to preserve buildings with historical significance; unremarkable buildings have been made remarkable through stories of their use, programming and history. The New Gallery at Canton Block is a step towards bringing new uses and stories to an existing building.

The Chinese Cultural Centre and Dragon City Mall are often cited as area landmarks, for their unique architecture, large size, and the raw potential of their spaces for community activation.

How can the story of Chinatown be told through the physical environment and experience of the place? Toronto's Distillery district was cited as a successful example of integrating the area's history into the marketing, storytelling and promotion of the physical place.

Worries about Chinatown being eroded are very real among stakeholders. New tower developments being built on the edge of Chinatown are more congruent with the design pattern of Eau Claire, making them appear part of that neighbourhood. In addition, new buildings are being designed to face away from Chinatown or to dissociate with its name, giving the impression that the area is undesirable and unworthy. E.g. Waterfront building, the Bow building.

Strengthening Chinatown's boundaries is a priority. The debate continues over whether or not erecting a Chinatown gate will help address this.

Reminders of Chinatown's painful and racist past are ever present within the built environment. The Harry Hayes building representing government stands as a fortress that terminates Chinatown abruptly. The anti-Chinese legacy of James Short whose namings are now undergoing change. More recently, new condo developments that are being designed with their literal backs to Chinatown.

### ISOLATION / CONNECTION

There is fear of Chinatown being isolated and perceived as irrelevant among Calgary neighbourhoods. Greater connection is desired with East Village, Eau Claire and downtown, with the goal to remain unique and distinct versus being consumed. Ideas for greater physical connection include the extension of the +15 network, strengthening existing Sien Lok and Prince's Island park spaces, and improved placemaking along the riverfront and up Centre St to Crescent Heights.

Chinatown is perceived to have grown north along Centre Street and across the river into Crescent Heights, where newer Chinese immigrants have established businesses and a suburban community. An opportunity is seen here to grow Chinatown beyond its formal boundaries, as well as to connect the immigrant experience, stories and communities of the Chinese in Calgary, currently experienced as separate and disconnected.

Centre Street is currently narrow, not pedestrian friendly, and neglected. Hopes are expressed that the streets become better designed for walkers and wheelchairs. The streets are not level now. Accessibility is a must.

There are accessibility issues associated with a number of key Chinatown spaces, particularly restaurants located upstairs, downstairs, or otherwise hidden. Changes and limits on vehicle access or parking are viewed as an additional barrier to community access.



# Virtual Talks



## Date and Time

Wednesday, July 8, 2020 / 11:45am-1pm

## Attendance

53 attendees

## Resources

Video Recording | Chat Box | Slides | Report:  
[dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown](https://dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown)

## Video Chapters

Intro (0:00)	Felicia Guan (31:53)
Matt Patterson (11:30)	Discussion (33:13)
Tony Wong (28:47)	Closing (1:09:51)

**Tomorrow's Chinatown: Let's Talk Culture!** A fun, informal, interactive and informative series of community conversations over lunch hour. Each session features an big topic or interesting aspect of Calgary Chinatown and its culture, like food, arts, youth, storytelling and more.

## Episode #1: Culture and Identity

Chinatown is unique among Calgary's neighbourhoods, shaped by its history, people and culture. How can we have concrete discussions about such intangible topics so that we can preserve and enhance the culture of Chinatown? Matt Patterson spoke about his report "Culture and Identity of Calgary Chinatown", resulting from research on 13 Chinatowns, census data, interviews and news reports. Tony Wong and Felicia Guan shared their perspectives on Chinatown's culture, what this community means to them and what their hopes are for its future.

## Speakers

Matt Patterson – Assistant professor of Sociology, University of Calgary

Felicia Guan – Graduate student in Sociology, University of Calgary

Tony Wong – Active Chinatown volunteer, incl. President of Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre

## Key Outcomes and Insights

- Chinatown's culture can be better understood as manifests of three distinct but reinforcing areas: formal culture, culture as people, and intangible culture.
- There are complex experiences of identity, intergenerational conflict and trauma that result from the long history of Chinese immigration and settlement in Canada.
- The historical need within Chinatowns for housing, economic lifeline and social support have largely been fulfilled, including by the tongs and benevolent associations. What is the purpose of these organizations and the community into the future?
- We need more activities and cultural events that appeal to youth and wider audiences; more day-to-day reasons for any Calgarian to come to Chinatown.
- Many elements make Chinatown a good place to develop a creative economy and become a cultural hub. This includes walkability, but the area needs more indoor/outdoor communal spaces for people to develop relationships, with one another and with the area.
- Chinatown may not entirely represent Chinese culture but should not be dismissed as inauthentic; its culture is a real expression of real Chinese people in Canada.



### Date and Time

Wednesday, July 29, 2020 / 11:45am-1pm

### Attendance

47 attendees

### Resources

Video Recording | Chat Box:  
[dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown](https://dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown)

### Video Chapters

Intro (0:00)	Su Ying Strang (5:00)
Jiajia Li (17:04)	Discussion (15:00)
Paula Pang (28:05)	Closing (30:00)

### Episode #2: The State of the Arts

Is it important for Chinatown to be known as a site of artistic production, consumption and traditions? What would this take to achieve? What are the opportunities for arts and culture? What programming, spaces and (micro)grants are available and are needed? Our panel of local artists and cultural professionals shared their perspectives on Chinatown's cultural development. We were also joined by a member of The City of Calgary's arts and culture team to talk about new micro-grants programs.

### Speakers

Jiajia Li – Classically-trained flutist and faculty member at the Mount Royal Conservatory  
 Paula Pang – Guzheng performer, teacher and member of China Nationalities Orchestra Soc.  
 Su Ying Strang – Director of The New Gallery

### Key Outcomes and Insights

- We need more cultural programming in Chinatown for others to better understand Chinese culture, and for Chinese-Canadians to learn about and reconnect with their own culture.
- Cultural activities can help create a holistic view of what Chinatown has to offer, expand the experience of Chinatown and help protect the assets in the community.
- There is a lot of arts and culture in Chinatown, but much of it is unknown beyond the community. It takes many years to discover and learn about these hidden gems.
- How do we go beyond sharing perfected performances, and also show the process of production, training, learning?
- We should make better use of underutilized and undermarketed spaces, incl. Chinese Cultural Centre and society buildings. How to secure cultural spaces in light of succession planning?
- Artists need to be fairly compensated in exchange for creating liveliness in the community.
- Microgrants are a good way to try new things, but we also need more sustainable ways of financing cultural activities. The grant process is exhausting.
- Opportunity for partnerships between artists and restaurants etc., to do collaborations that are beneficial to both the creative and business community.
- Chinatown being an anchor for cultural production would provide it sustainable relevancy.
- How can we broaden our reach to other communities and across audiences? Communication and promotion is not a strength of artists. We may need an arts council.



### Date and Time

Wednesday, August 26, 2020 / 11:45am-1pm

### Attendance

59 attendees

### Resources

Video Recording | Chat Box | Slides:  
[dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown](https://dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown)

### Video Chapters

Intro (0:00)	Desmond Lee (40:04)
FOONYAP (12:18)	Kasia Nguyen (49:34)
Carrie Yap (17:28)	Fung Ling Feimo (51:11)
Mike Lee (26:41)	Discussion (52:27)
Teresa Tam (33:02)	Closing (1:07:26)

### Episode #3: New Blood

Chinatown's future needs new blood, not just of new leaders but of an entire generation. In this talk, we hear from a range of youth\* on their relationship with Chinatown growing up and now. What opportunities and barriers (real or perceived) exist for their participation? What change do they want and need to see in the community in order to continue moving forward together?

\*Defined as adults, age 25-40, making decisions over their time, money, careers, and young families and households.

### Speakers

FOONYAP – Critically-acclaimed violinist and vocalist

Carrie Yap – Co-founder of The Tea Parlour, milliner and urban planner

Mike Lee – I Love YYC Chinatown

Teresa Tam – Visual artist and Chinatown artist-in-residence

Desmond Lee – Jing Wo Cultural Association, Chinese Cultural Centre

Guests from Chinatown Advisory Group: Kasia Nguyen, Fung Ling Feimo

### Key Outcomes and Observations

- Youth are looking to reconnect to their heritage, and ready to have difficult conversations about inequality, racism and discrimination.
- It is not easy to break into the Chinatown community and convince people to collaborate, and to have and 'hold' space for youth activities. Youth do not recognize themselves in Chinatown, nor feel accepted or welcomed as they are.
- A challenge is that the structure of community has evolved and no longer aligns with that of the traditional family associations.
- Many Chinese-Canadian youth have previously rejected or have discontent with their heritage. They may experience trauma upholding their roots and ancestors, while not feeling Chinatown is there for them.
- What would encourage youth to live in Chinatown: diverse and affordable housing, public transit and bikeability, and more cultural and community experiences, not just consumption.
- Culture needs to continuously take root in new people and evolve while staying true to its principles in order to continue to have relevance.
- We need to hold space for both traditional and contemporary approaches/expressions of culture and community.



### Date and Time

Wednesday, September 30, 2020 / 11:45am-1pm

### Attendance

37 attendees

### Resources

Video Recording | Chat Box:  
[dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown](https://dunefield.ca/tomorrows-chinatown)

### Video Chapters

Intro (0:00)	Lily Cai (33:47)
Terry Wong (6:13)	Lynne Lee (36:39)
Wilson Wong (13:59)	Judy Eng-Hum (46:48)
Brian Wong (20:49)	Luke Azevedo (51:23)
Gabriel Yee (27:05)	Discussion (57:16)
	Closing (1:13:24)

### Episode #4: Lights, Camera, Action!

Film and TV are powerful media to express culture, tell stories and develop understanding of our histories. What role could film and TV play in celebrating and portraying Chinese-Canadian culture and the Calgary Chinatown community? Would Chinatown benefit from hosting Asian film or media events? What other opportunities for cinematic culture do we see?

### Speakers

Terry Wong – Executive director of Chinatown BIA  
 Wilson Wong – Creative director at Everbrave.ca, partner of CalgaryMovies.com  
 Brian Wong – TV producer and broadcaster  
 Gabriel Yee – Film director at 403K films  
 Lily Cai – Board president at Marda Loop Justice Film Festival  
 Lynne Lee – Festival director of Vancouver Asian Film Festival  
 Judy Eng-Hum – Chief event organizer of Alberta Asian Arts Festivals  
 Luke Azevedo – Calgary commissioner for Film, TV and Creative Industries

### Key Outcomes and Observations

- Chinatown as a concept comes to life through the full body of creative work. Film and TV creators have the opportunity to showcase Chinese-Canadian culture with pride, and tell the many stories about the Chinatown community that people do not know about.
- Not many Asian Canadians work in the film industry, and as a result their stories and perspectives are underrepresented and untold. Inclusion is important to make people feel welcome and at home, as well as inspired to pursue a creative career for themselves.
- To include the Chinese-Canadian community in Calgary's creative economy, we must pass the hurdle of having parents and families see creative careers as viable and meaningful.
- An Asian film festival could add culture back to Chinatown and provide more representation. It could help develop a community of Asian artists and content producers, and be a platform for action, with discussion panels, Q&As, a marketplace, and other activities.
- Chinatown lacks proper venues for film screenings, with previous theatres being lost and existing cultural spaces either unaffordable or not meeting technical requirements.
- Considering COVID-19, an Asian film festival could be a combination of online streaming, outdoor showings, and film screenings at (pop-up) film venues.



## Online Survey

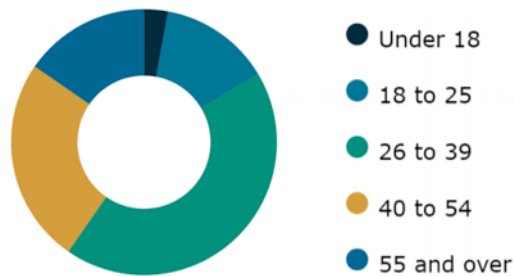
More than 1,200 people participated in an online survey between June 8 and September 14, 2020. The survey was available in English, and traditional and simplified Chinese. The responses help us understand what is unique about Chinatown today, what the place means to people, and what hopes they have for the Chinatown of tomorrow.

The next pages contain an initial survey analysis, along with sample responses, top key words and common descriptors. We will continue to analyze the responses over the next months, and distill new insights to inform both the Chinatown Cultural Plan and Local Area Plan.

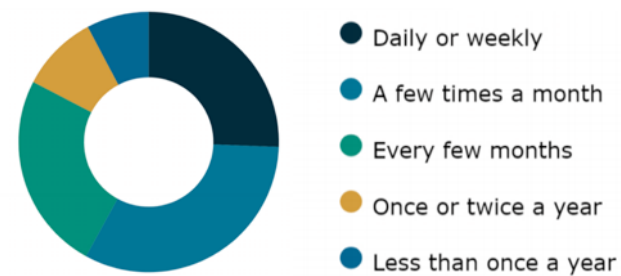
Number of survey responses:

Total	English	Trad. Chin.	Simpl. Chin.
1,226	1,170	38	18

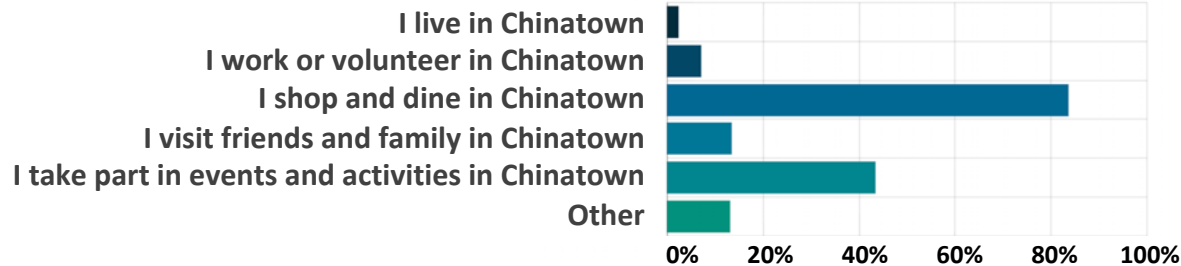
**Q1** What is your age?



**Q2** How often do you visit Chinatown?



**Q3** What is your relationship with Chinatown?



**Q4** Tell us about your earliest memory of visiting Chinatown. What did you do? What was memorable about it?

Top key words, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

<b>under 18</b>	30
<b>18 – 25</b>	151
<b>26 – 39</b>	504
<b>40 – 54</b>	270
<b>55 and over</b>	181

Top key words, by age:

<b>under 18</b>	<b>18 – 25</b>	<b>26 – 39</b>	<b>40 – 54</b>	<b>55 and over</b>
chinese new year	family	family	restaurants	restaurants
chinese school	food	dim sum	food	dim sum
dim sum	shop	food	family	lunch
grandma	restaurants	restaurants	dim sum	chinese culture
bubble tea	dragon city mall	cultural centre	grocery	bakery

Sample responses:

是在十年前，那时候感觉唐人街非常热闹，亲切。喜欢来这里逛街，买菜，吃饭 / Earliest memory was 10 years ago, chinatown was very vibrant (hot+noisy) at that time, friendly. I like to shop, buy groceries and eat here.

It was 1980. I came to Calgary from Red Deer visited Chinatown very often on weekends to have dinners with friends and families who lived in town. The experience of the feel of Chinese culture in Chinatown is invaluable.

My first date, with my now wife, was for dim sum in Dragon city mall.

When my family first moved to Calgary, one of our first stops was Silver Dragon for dim sum. Being Chinese-Jamaican and new to Calgary, we were seeking familiarity, comfort, and a welcoming environment. Chinatown became an important place to gather.

Going for Dim Sum at Silver Dragon, as well as seeing Chinese New Year celebration. It was very interesting to experience different culture.

**Q5** What do you love about Chinatown? What makes it special to you among other Calgary neighbourhoods?

Top key words, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

<b>under 18</b>	32
<b>18 – 25</b>	154
<b>26 – 39</b>	511
<b>40 – 54</b>	279
<b>55 and over</b>	181

Top key words, common descriptors:

<b>Food</b>	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Restaurants</b>	<b>Shop</b>	<b>People</b>
chinese	food	shop	food/restaurants	culture
asian	people	culture	culture	food
good/great	chinese	bakery	shopping	“place”
bubble tea	“place”	bubble tea	unique shop	restaurants
variety, food	history	grocery	variety, shop	chinese

Unsurprisingly, respondents often “connect” multiple things; e.g. “Dim sum and then shopping...”

Sample responses:

It is a cultural niche that represents past and current Chinese culture and provides food and services that no other neighbourhoods can provide.

As a Chinese Canadian, whose great grandparents were some of the first Chinese in Calgary, the significance of this neighbourhood is deeply personal, both in terms of culture and family history.

喜愛唐人街的親切感，與別不同之處是一種情懷，希望將中國好的文化傳承下去。/ I love the familiarity of Chinatown, it feels different from other places, and I hope that the good things about Chinese culture get passed on.

Find unique asian items at the markets, I have fond memories of it growing up, fun place to celebrate chinese new year, good restaurants.

I am impressed how the Chinese keep their culture alive, don't impose it on anyone and take care of themselves without asking for a handout from any level of government.

**Q6** List up to three things to complete the following sentence: No visit to Chinatown is complete without... (e.g. places, activities, hidden gems, experiences, etc.)

Top responses, all respondents:



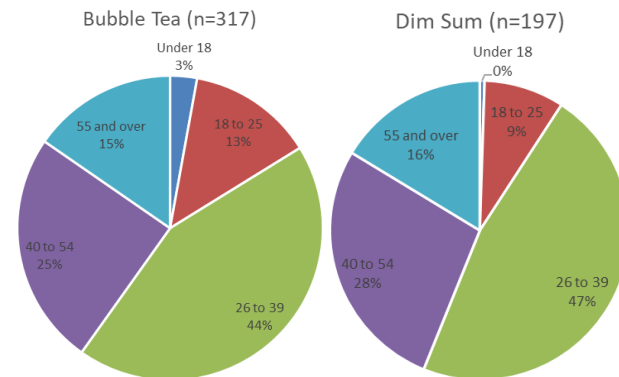
Total responses by age:

under 18	32
18 – 25	151
26 – 39	496
40 – 54	263
55 and over	170

Top 10:

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. bubble tea       | 6. cultural centre |
| 2. food             | 7. restaurants     |
| 3. dim sum          | 8. shopping        |
| 4. bakery           | 9. chinese food    |
| 5. dragon city mall | 10. silver dragon  |

Age gap? new vs. old



Sample responses:

No visit to Calgary is complete without a visit down Centre street through the heart of Chinatown! Walking along the river. Just walking through here / the +15 and taking in all the textures. I see it as an integral part of Calgary itself!

沒有去過唐人街文化中心，去銀龍感受推車仔的飲茶文化，等于沒有到過唐人街。/ Cultural Centre, and experiencing culture and dim sum carts at Silver Dragon.

Trying something new: a new dish, store, hobby, whatever it happens to be. There's such a variety in chinatown that i love.

Good food, atmosphere and experience needs attention.

Experiencing the food and shopping; participating activities such as festivals, tai chi lessons; visiting Chinese Cultural Centre and Sien Lok Park.



**Q7** Tell us about something in Chinatown that you want to see or experience more of, and why?

Top responses, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

under 18	32
18 – 25	149
26 – 39	480
40 – 54	255
55 and over	163

Top 10:

1. food
2. events
3. culture
4. people
5. parking
6. festival
7. restaurants
8. night market
9. chinese culture
10. cultural events

Event examples:

cultural	community
night market	market collectives
street festival	chinese new year
food stalls	outdoor

Sample responses:

More events happening in/around Chinatown. It has so much potential to be a vibrant hub post-work day, like 17th Ave.

More mom & pop restaurants. More events that support the makers of Calgary. I would love to see Market Collective there again.

期望能在唐人街見到多一點書店、茶館、南北不同的美食店。原因：發展多樣性、獨特性吸引不同的人去消費。費 / I hope to see more bookstores, tea houses, and different gourmet shops in Chinatown. Reason: to attract different types of people to consume by diversifying and developing uniqueness.

More engagement, more Chinese authentic and also more different cultures. I love Canada for being multicultural and the inclusion of that in events and individual communities but would like to see associations gather normally not just in their own groups.

更有活力，更漂亮，將傳統文化和現代生活更好的結合，在繼承我們文化的同時，展現出美和現代的一面。 / More vibrancy, more beauty, better integrate tradition and modernity. To show the beauty and modernity while inheriting our culture.

**Q8** What are the challenges you see in Chinatown today? What isn't working and needs attention?

Top word descriptors, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

under 18	29
18 – 25	140
26 – 39	482
40 – 54	272
55 and over	175

Top challenges to explore, with example descriptors:

Parking	Building	People	Others:
<b>24%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>	gentrification
expensive/affordable	old/new, historical	attracting/more	younger generation
hard to find	expensive (rent)	aging/young	centre street
accessible	seniors' living	racism	"place"
			small business

Sample responses:

沒有一個全面性的計劃，各自表述，雜亂無章！/  
Lacks one comprehensive plan, everyone is doing their own thing, messy!

A lot of the buildings are run down. It is a little bit far from downtown but yet parking is still the same cost. It could use more walking only streets.

The traffic, it needs to be more pedestrian and cycle friendly. Also, some kind of transit or easy location for parking for those not living close.

Too many associations voicing different opinion, lack of cohesiveness and cooperation between each association. More younger people to involve in developing a newer and modernized Chinatown.

Challenges overcoming the economic downturn; prejudice. A lot of the buildings and signs in Chinatown are old.

**Q9** What are your hopes for the future of Chinatown, and why? What opportunities do you see?

Top hopes, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

<b>under 18</b>	28
<b>18 – 25</b>	142
<b>26 – 39</b>	456
<b>40 – 54</b>	252
<b>55 and over</b>	166

Top 3 hopes with example descriptors for exploration:

People	Business	Culture
community	3 <sup>rd</sup> ave, stephen st, centre st	events/opportunities
next generation	small/local	rich history
young/old	opportunities	old buildings
Chinese/different cultures	younger generation	“place”

References to people, business and culture are often mixed within respondent’s answers.

Sample responses:

I hope it becomes more active with people interested in the history and people who genuinely support the businesses there to grow. I hope that it continues to stay quirky and interesting. I want it to be a cultural hub like in larger cities.

多些活動，吸引多些年輕人參予活動及多些購物 / More activities to attract more young people to participate in activities and more shopping.

Bring back some traditional activities to cultural centre and Chinatown. Open to all - like more tai chi, Kung fu, painting, learning Mah Jong, cooking. Incentives for business owners to bring their businesses back to Chinatown.

More addressing of the troubles immigrants faced: the marginalization, the head tax, the limitation on speech, culture, etc... A lot of Calgary is blind to how various Asian cultures have been treated.

More colour and décor. while this might be a bone of contention to some, I think visually representing culture through public art would serve Chinatown well. Local artists!

**Q10** What are some fears you have for the future of Chinatown?

Top fears, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

under 18	28
18 – 25	142
26 – 39	456
40 – 54	252
55 and over	166

Top of mind items related to fears, that must be explored:

- |              |                              |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| 1. business  | 5. gentrification            |
| 2. people    | 6. restaurants               |
| 3. culture   | 7. condo/developer/high-rise |
| 4. community | 8. racism                    |

Sample responses:

Needs a modern refresh relevant to how people live today not 50 or 100 years ago. Important to keep history but we don't live that way anymore.

I fear that it will not survive and that people will not look at it as a destination spot to go to especially for tourists and Calgarians.

我担心会有种族歧视的问题。 / Racism issues

I fear that Chinatown will become gentrified, and force out the Chinese and Asian people who nurtured that space since the beginning. I also fear that some of the anti-Asian racism that we've seen since Coronavirus will continue through lack of patronage.

设施跟不上时代的进步，不适合年轻和相对年轻的人居住。 / Aging facilities not catching up to the times, unsuitable for younger people to live.

Many Calgarians find that the "good" Chinese and dim sum restaurants are not in Chinatown. Many unique and beloved Asian restaurants and cafes are even just up the road on center Street. I wish Chinatown had a stronger reputation for its food.



### Q11 Is there anything else you want to share with us?

I miss seeing families bring their kids and grandparents there to go for lunch and visit other unique shops.

I like to see a diverse unique Chinatown. Always clean and always safe such that every Calgarian can visit and enjoy.

Chinatown plays an important role in shaping and defining the identity of so many Chinese individuals. It is a place that holds significance, builds confidence and pride. A place of racial learning, understanding and tolerance. We need to save it.

Wish list: Community Interactive Asset Map using Google map technology, regular City commercial cleanup of alleyways, utility boxes wrapped in artwork (current box at SE corner of Centre Street bridge is an insult to Canton Block and community history).

Chinatown creates a sense of place for immigrants and their children to experience their culture, and also allows for awareness of the diversity in communities within Calgary.

Parking is limited and expensive. Future C-train must go through Chinatown.

Ensure that this is a place for all Calgarians to enjoy and don't just cater to the small special interest groups.

Protect & retain such amazing culture, which also brings more foreign visitors to stay longer to visit Calgary. Tourist experience

### Please help us preserve Calgary's Chinatown!

Attracting young people is important as they will be the ones that go out and be on social media. Many non-Chinese friends or colleagues tell me that they love going to Chinatown to eat or visit. I was surprised but think it needs modernization in planning.

Any new developments in the area should definitely have ground-level store fronts. The charm of Chinatown is the variety of small shops / businesses in a dense area.

Chinatown is not just of people living there but for the entire communities of Calgary because it has history and culture.

Proud to live in a city with a Chinatown with historic and future value.

Consider that Chinatown is not only of importance to Chinese Calgarians, that other groups have an interest and should be involved in its development. Thank you for your efforts.

I am a half Chinese and my family has spent so much time in Chinatown. My dad's family grew up there - I hope the city recognizes and appreciates the unique beauty of Chinatown and everything it offers Calgary.

I love Chinatown a lot and I don't want to jeopardize its future with densities and uses you wouldn't have in other residential communities. Please respect Chinatown as a residential neighbourhood and use the same measuring stick as Crescent Heights.

Continue to maintain the unique cultural Chinese identity with good mix of chinese shops so as to continue as a must visit tourist attraction.

...and many, many more...



# TOMORROW'S CHINATOWN

**CHINATOWN CULTURAL PLAN**  
DISCOVER PHASE REPORT | MARCH – OCTOBER, 2020

CREATED BY **DUNEFIELD**  
FOR THE **CITY OF CALGARY**