



Identity and Culture in Calgary

CHINATOWN

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TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report focuses on an area on the south banks of the Bow River that is currently known as Chinatown and, in part, examines the development of this neighbourhood within the larger context of European colonialization and settlement. The City of Calgary must be recognized as being situated within the traditional territories of the Blackfoot and the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Siksika, the Piikuni, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina, and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations, including Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nation. Chinatown, distinctly, sits near the intersection of the Bow and Elbow Rivers and the traditional Blackfoot name of this place is "Mohkinstsis". The City of Calgary, is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was made possible with the support and contributions of dozens of people. The research for this report was supported by a grant provided by the City of Calgary. We would like to thank our partners at the City of Calgary, Janet Lavoie (Arts & Culture) and Fazeel Elahi (Community Planning, Planning & Development) who provided guidance and direction. We would also like to thank Professor Eliot Tretter (Geography, University of Calgary) who served as co-investigator on the grant, helped to oversee the research, and provided helpful feedback on the final report. As well, this partnership was made possible by the Urban Alliance, a partnership established by the City of Calgary and the University of Calgary to facilitate research collaboration. Within the Urban Alliance, we thank Barry Phipps (University of Calgary) and Kiyoshi Robson (City of Calgary) for their support in making this partnership happen.

Much of the research for this reported was conducted by the 22 undergraduate students who were enrolled the seminar *Cities and Culture: Chinatowns* (SOCI453) in the Winter of 2019: Ridwan Abdi, Courtney Andrews, Michelle Benz, Dhriti Chakravarty, Matthew Doyle, Emily Easton, Chantal Escobar, Nikki Gray, Sara Haidey, Jenny Huang, Walija Hussain, Alexander Kong, Samantha Lam, Vivianne Lariviere, Chase Mckort, Melissa Obi, Kaylee Orritt, Kelsey Smith, Alecia Soloveoff, Brooke Webster, Mariah Wilson, and Theodore Zubot. As part of their coursework, these students interviewed 11 stakeholders involved with Chinatown, conducted extensive observation fieldwork around Chinatown, analyzed nine Chinatown reports from other cities, and prepared their own reports based on what they learned over the term. Additionally, within the weekly seminar meetings, Matt Patterson and the students brainstormed and discussed many of the issues that would eventually make it into this final report.

We would also like to thank the 11 Chinatown stakeholders who were interviewed for this report. Their insightful understanding of Chinatown was essential to the creation of this report. Though only a small number of directly quotations from the interviews made it into the final report, many of the ideas contained in these pages were also expressed within the interviews.

Several scholars and experts also provided suggestions, comments, and feedback during the preparation of the report. We would like to thank community historian Fung Ling Feimo, June Chow of Dunefield Consulting, Professor Lloyd Wong (University of Calgary), Professor Phillipa Chong (McMaster University), Professor Pallavi Banerjee (University of Calgary), and Professor Amin Ghaziani (University of British Columbia).

We would also like to thank Teresa Woo-Paw and the *ACCT Foundation* for organizing a roundtable on Chinatowns across Canada, and for the participants in that roundtable: Charles Chiu (Toronto), Karen Cho (Story Booth Media, Montreal), Kevin Huang (HUA Foundation, Vancouver), Michael Lee (Chinese Benevolent Association, Edmonton), Melody Ma (#SaveChinatownYVR, Vancouver), Lillian Pan and Terry Wong (Chinatown District BIA and Chinatown Community Stakeholders' Committee, Calgary), Dr. Ying Zheng (University of Lethbridge).

The cover photo was taken by Harry MacKenzie, 2019. Accessed from https://www.reddit.com/r/Calgary/comments/d02v63/china_town_stroll/ and used with permission of the photographer.

The Executive Summary was translated into Chinese by Bryan Kuk.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide advice and relevant contextual information in support of the City of Calgary’s proposed Cultural Plan and Area Redevelopment Plan for Chinatown. At the heart of these plans is a desire to preserve and enhance the cultural identity of Calgary Chinatown. This report is intended to help define and translate “cultural identity” into more concrete planning policies by drawing on a variety of data sources from within Calgary Chinatown and from Chinatowns across North America. These sources includes existing studies, reports, and plans from 13 different Chinatowns in North America, interviews with 11 stakeholders involved in Calgary Chinatown, census data, and news reports concerning Calgary Chinatown over the past 20 years.

The report is divided into three main sections. The first section (Chapter 2) details the history of Chinese people and Chinatowns in Canada. It demonstrates how these neighbourhoods have given rise to a unique and authentic culture that reflects the experiences of migration and discrimination experienced by Chinese Canadians and the perseverance and ingenuity that these communities have demonstrated in the face of these challenges. The next section (Chapter 3) examines Calgary Chinatown today. In doing so, it examines demographic trends, the characteristics of Chinatown’s built environment, and the perspectives that local stakeholders have in terms of what is important for the preservation of Chinatown’s identity and the major threats to that identity.

The third major section (Chapter 4) presents an overview of how Chinatowns are being planned in 12 other North American cities. This section details the most common recommendations made in these plans and how the plans define the “culture” of their respective neighbourhoods. We also look at how the plans relate the notion of culture to other planning issues such as housing, transportation, and employment.

Throughout these three sections, we argue that the cultural identity of Calgary Chinatown manifests itself in three distinct but mutually-reinforcing realms: *private*, *community*, and *public*. Chinatown’s *private realm* provides a place of residence for older, lower-income immigrants who require specialized services and amenities. Its *community realm* provides a place for the regional Chinese-Canadian community to meet and access culturally-relevant services and experiences. Finally, Chinatown’s *public realm* is a place for all members of society to learn about, experience, and celebrate Chinese-Canadian identity and history. From this theme, the report’s conclusion derives five major recommendations for planning Calgary Chinatown. First, make housing affordable. Second, support community cultural spaces and services. Third, celebrate public expressions of Chinese identity. Fourth, strengthen the boundaries separating Chinatown from the rest of downtown Calgary. Fifth, engage the Chinatown community in addressing the four previous recommendations.

As suggested by the final recommendation, this report is intended to serve as the beginning of the planning process, not the end. The authors hope that the information and recommendations contained in the report will help the Chinatown community and the City of Calgary discuss culture and identity in more concrete terms and with reference to similar planning processes that are ongoing in Chinatowns throughout North America.

內容摘要

本報告旨在提供建議和相關的背景信息，以支持卡爾加里市的唐人街通過“文化計劃”和“區域重建計劃”。這些計劃的核心是維護和增強卡爾加里唐人街的文化特色。本報告旨在通過卡爾加里唐人街內部和北美唐人街各種數據，來幫助描述“文化身份”的定義，並將其轉化為更實際的規劃政策。這些資源包括來自北美 13 個不同唐人街的現有研究、報告和計劃，也有活躍於卡爾加里唐人街的 11 名利益相關者的採訪、人口普查數據，以及過去 20 年中有關卡爾加里唐人街的新聞報導。

該報告分為三個主要部分。第一部分（第 2 章）詳細介紹了加拿大華人和唐人街的歷史。它展示了這些社區如何產生了一種獨特而正宗的中國文化，反映了加拿大華裔移民者所經歷的移民和歧視情節，以及他們如何面對這些挑戰所表現出的毅力和創造能力。下一部分（第 3 章）將會討論當代的卡爾加里唐人街。在此過程中，我們研究了人口趨勢、唐人街建築環境的特徵，以及當地利益相關者在維護唐人街身份最重要的意義以及對其身份的主要威脅。第三主要部分（第 4 章）概述瞭如何在北美其他 12 個城市中規劃唐人街。本節詳細介紹了這些計劃中提出的最常見建議，以及計劃內如何定義其各自社區的“文化”。我們還將研究其計劃如何將文化概念與其他計劃問題聯繫起（例如關於住房、交通和就業）。

在這三個部分中，我們認為卡爾加里唐人街的文化特徵體現在三個不同但又相互促進的領域，分別有：私立、社區、和公共。唐人街的私立領域為有需要專門服務及設施的市民，例如年紀較大的居住者和收入較低的移民提供了居住地方。唐人街的社區領域為加拿大華裔社區提供了聚會和與華裔文化相關交流的服務場所，以及讓人們接近更多華裔有關連的經歷。最後，唐人街的公共領域提供機會給社會人們學習、體驗和慶祝加拿大華裔身份和歷史的地方。報告的結論從這一主題出發，得出了規劃卡爾加里唐人街的五項主要建議。首先，提供可負擔的住屋。第二，支持華裔社區文化空間和服務。第三，慶祝華裔身份的公眾表達。第四，加強分隔唐人街與其他卡爾加里市區的地區的邊界。第五，讓唐人街社區參與和商討如何解決之前的四項建議。

從最終建議來看，本報告旨在作為規劃過程的開始，而不是結束。本報告的作者希望報告中包含的情報和建議能夠有助於唐人街社區和卡爾加里市，通過提供更具體的文化和身份有關的討論，並參考另外在北美的唐人街，它們目前如何進行類似的規劃流程。

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A CULTURAL PLAN FOR CHINATOWN

On June 25th, 2018 Calgary City Council directed city staff to begin preparing a cultural plan for Chinatown. This directive came after council approved a controversial development project that proposed two 28-storey condominium towers and a 12-storey hotel for a surface parking lot in the southwest corner of Chinatown. While the developer withdrew the proposal in 2019, the project sparked an opposition movement within the Chinatown community among people who felt that this development and others like it threatened the neighbourhood. The Chinatown cultural planning process is intended to address their concerns.

Prior to the initiation of the Chinatown cultural plan, the City of Calgary undertook a community consultation process. The results of that process were published in November 2016 with a report entitled *Planning Chinatown: What We Heard Report*. The report revealed that culture and cultural preservation were among the most important issues concerning the community:

Overall, a common thread heard in both phases of engagement was that stakeholders want to preserve the culture, language and heritage of Chinatown. Also heard was that Chinatown has unique cultural identity and history and that any new development efforts or revitalization of the area needs to support a Chinatown that is sustainable, thriving and culturally vibrant for all people living and visiting Chinatown. (p.3)

Concerns over the preservation of Chinatown’s “unique cultural identity” are raised during a time when the City of Calgary has become increasingly aware of the important role that culture plays in the planning and governance of the city.

What exactly is “culture”? According to the City of Calgary’s recently published Cultural Plan, culture refers to...

...anything that defines the unique identity of a community or social group. Those characteristics often include social customs, seasonal traditions, geography, cuisine, oral traditions, fashion, literature, music and religious expression. However, culture also includes less obvious aspects of our lives such as heritage (both built and natural), community initiatives and the creative economy, which can include film & video industries, advertising, design & fabrication, performing arts and much more. (MDB Insight 2016:3)

As is often the case with matters of culture, such definitions raise more questions than they answer. If culture “defines” the unique identity of Chinatown’s community, what exactly is that definition? The purpose of this report is not to offer a definitive definition – in fact, the report explicitly recommends against it. Rather, this report outlines important historical and sociological factors that have contributed to shaping Chinatown as a distinct neighbourhood that is cherished by many people in the city. While it

may be impossible to explicitly define, the cultural identity of Chinatown has inspired generations of people to fight for the neighbourhood's preservation since its establishment in the early 20th century. As evidenced by the response to the recent condominium proposal, this fight continues to this day.

It should be noted that this report was conducted within the span of months. Its findings and recommendations are preliminary and only intended to inform a broader cultural planning process that will consult with members of the Chinatown community and the public at large.

OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

While this report does not provide an explicit definition of Chinatown's cultural identity, it does suggest that cultural planning within Chinatown be oriented toward establishing balance and mutual-support of *privately-oriented, community-oriented* and *publicly-oriented* culture. *Privately-oriented culture* refers to the role that Chinatown has traditionally played as a place of residence for older, lower-income immigrants who are attracted to the neighbourhood because of its lower rents, walkability, and access to specialized services and amenities. Through their presence in the neighbourhood, these residents in turn provide Chinatown with its distinct culture and street life.

Community-oriented culture includes the services, institutions, and social networks that Chinese-Canadians may find difficult to access within mainstream society. This culture supports collective life and local identity within Chinatown for both residents of the neighbourhood and Chinese-Canadians living in the region. Meanwhile, *publicly-oriented culture* "promotes public expressions" of Chinese identity to society as a whole (Qadeer 2016:5). Often this identity is expressed through the provision of cultural and consumer experiences aimed at visitors entering the neighbourhood from outside. While privately- and community-oriented culture has provided Chinatowns with the social support necessary to hold these communities together, publicly-oriented culture has served as an economic lifeline to the neighbourhoods, bringing in revenue and creating employment opportunities.

In making these points, this report draws on a variety of information and data, including...

- A wide-ranging literature review of studies of Chinatowns across North America, Chinese migration in Canada, and urban issues more generally including gentrification and cultural planning.
- Statistical information from the Canadian Censuses, Calgary Civic Censuses, and other relevant reports.
- 11 interviews with community leaders and other stakeholders involved with Chinatown
- 17 Chinatown plans and reports from 12 other cities in Canada and the United States
- Local reporting on Calgary Chinatown between 2001 and 2019 (primarily from the Calgary Herald)
- A variety of plans and reports written for Calgary Chinatown including the City of Calgary's 1986 Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan and more recent reports funded by the Federation of Calgary Communities and the Chinatown District Business Improvement Area

The report itself is divided into five chapters. This introduction (Chapter 1) provides an overview of the report and the events that led to its creation. It also explains what it means to examine Chinatown from a “sociological” perspective and offers some conceptual clarity over the terms “Chinese” and “Chinatown” and how they will be used throughout the rest of the report.

Chapter 2 provides a brief history of Chinatowns and Chinese people in Canada. As part of this history, particular attention will be paid both to the issue of culture and to the way in which Calgary Chinatown fits into larger historical trends. This chapter pushes back against the idea that Chinatowns are simply pieces of East Asia that have been imported to Canada. Rather, they are reservoirs of a unique culture and identity that emerged out of the experiences of Chinese migrants to Canada who faced enormous levels of discrimination and sometimes violence. Out of this experience, Chinese Canadians have had to build their own cultural and social institutions, but also created cultural and consumer experiences aimed at the rest of Canadian society, which continues to attract visitors and tourists to this day.

Chapter 3 of the report provides a snapshot of Calgary Chinatown today, making use of census data, interviews with Chinatown stakeholders, media coverage and other reports on the neighbourhood. This section covers a variety of issues and concerns raised by members of the Chinatown community. In particular we look at (1) the overall sense of threat among members of the community, (2) the erosion of Chinatown into the surrounding downtown business district, (3) the status of Chinatown in the face of Chinese-Canadian suburbanization, (4) demographic changes within Chinatown, and (5) the role of Chinatown as a “cultural reservoir” for Chinese-Canadians in Calgary.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of 17 Chinatown plans and reports from 12 cities across North America. In this section, we examine the three major ways that notion of “culture” was defined and used within the reports. First, “formal culture” referred to concrete things such as architecture, cultural institutions and programming, and speciality products and services. Second, “culture as people” associated Chinatown’s culture with various groups of people, historical experiences, and geographic locations. Third, “intangible culture” refers to a subjective notion of place that makes Chinatowns feel distinct from other neighbourhoods. In discussing each of these usages of the term “culture”, we examine how cultural issues are often implicated in other concerns such as housing, social services, transportation planning, and community politics.

Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the report by highlighting a common theme found throughout the previous four chapters: the need to strike a balance between creating an affordable, desirable neighbourhood for residents, local spaces and institutions that support an active community life, and vibrant public expressions of Chinese identity that attract visitors into the neighbourhood. Based on this idea, the report concludes with five main recommendations for the Chinatown cultural plan, which we summarize below.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Make Housing Affordable

- Ensure the preservation of existing units of affordable housing

- Implement inclusionary zoning rules to ensure that new development includes affordable housing units

2. Support Community Cultural Spaces and Services

- Partner with existing cultural and community organizations within Chinatown
- Ensure that new development projects provide community spaces that continue to support and accommodate the social and cultural needs of a growing neighbourhood
- Conduct research into the status of key businesses that provide important culturally-relevant products and services such as grocery stores

3. Celebrate Public Expressions of Chinese Identity

- Support festivals and events that raise the profile of Chinatown within Calgary
- Support improvements to the public realm to ensure that Chinese-Canadian heritage is celebrated within the built form of the neighbourhood, and that navigating Chinatown is safe, easy, and pleasurable for everyone

4. Strengthen the Boundaries Around Chinatown

- Develop design guidelines to ensure that new development within Chinatown is oriented toward the existing built form of the neighbourhood and contributes to street life within neighbourhood
- Use public art, architecture, and other elements of the built form to create visible gateways into Chinatown
- Prioritize movement within (as opposed to through) Chinatown by prioritizing pedestrian safety and traffic calming

5. Engage the Community

- Ensure that the following four recommendations are oriented toward the desires and needs of the Chinatown community, including residents and other stakeholders

CHINATOWN IN SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

This report was written by sociologists and examines Calgary Chinatown from the perspective of this academic discipline. Bringing a sociological perspective to Calgary Chinatown means a few related things. First, it means recognizing connections between particular cases and larger societal trends. Calgary Chinatown may be its own unique neighbourhood, but it is also part of a larger group of North American “Chinatown” neighbourhoods that share similar histories and confront common challenges. What can the experiences of Chinatowns across North America teach us about developing a cultural plan for Calgary Chinatown?

Second, a sociological perspective means using systematic empirical research to understand the world from other people’s perspectives and place those perspectives within the context of larger social forces.

Behind opposition to any development project we often find complex notions of place and cultural identity that are unable to properly be expressed within the context of urban political struggle. This study aims to draw out these notions of place from stakeholders inside and outside the Chinatown community and situate them within a larger social and historical context.

Third, sociology provides a set of analytic tools that we can use to better understand murky issues such as “culture”, “identity”, and “ethnicity”. One of the great challenges of a cultural plan is to translate these seemingly abstract issues into a concrete set of guidelines, rules, and goals. Sociology can provide a middle ground by providing more concrete definitions of abstract social issues without going so far as to formulate guidelines or rules.

With this third point in mind, we conclude this introductory section of the report by discussing the terms “Chinatown” and “Chinese”, the complexities contained within them, and how they will be defined for the purposes of the report.

CHINATOWNS VERSUS CHINESE PEOPLE

In both popular culture and academic literature, Chinatowns are often depicted as “an idiosyncratic oriental community amidst an occidental urban environment” (Lai 1973:101). From this point of view, Chinatown becomes a window into an ancient, Eastern cultural tradition for the white majority population. However, scholars today recognize that this depiction is misleading for couple reasons. First, the relationship between Chinatowns and Chinese people is not straightforward. Chinatowns are, and always have been, home to many non-Chinese people, including other immigrant and racialized minority groups. Likewise, the demographic and cultural profiles of Chinatowns are not at all representative of Chinese Canadians as a whole.

Second, many of the cultural elements associated with Chinatowns such as the distinct architectural motifs (Choy 2008) or the cuisine (Hui 2019) are actually products of North America. Rather than being imported directly from China, this culture emerged out of a struggle by Chinese migrants to carve out an existence within a white-dominated society.

Additionally, the very term “Chinese” is incredibly complex, particularly within Canada (Li 1998a:4-5). “Chinese” can refer to a nationality, a country of origin, a diverse group of spoken languages, membership in a cultural or ethnic group, and specific cultural products and practices. Chinese is also considered by Statistics Canada to be its own separate racial group equivalent to “white” or “Black”.

Given all of this complexity, how can we make sense of the terms “Chinatown” and “Chinese” for the purpose of developing a Chinatown cultural plan? A good place to start may be to shift away from thinking about Chinese (and, by extension, Chinatown) as a fixed ethnicity, race, or nationality with certain properties, and instead treat this term as an ever-evolving social category that has been shaped over time and continues to develop today. Indeed, this report and the larger Chinatown cultural plan may play some role (however small) in shaping perceptions of Chinatown and Chinese culture.

“CHINESE” AS A SOCIAL CATEGORY

Historically, ethnicity has been “defined in terms of the cultural characteristics of group members,” whereas race has been “defined in terms of physical or genetic characteristics or as an ascriptive characteristic” (Satzewich and Liodakis 2010:13). More recently, however, sociologists have begun to question the usefulness of trying to distinguish between ethnicity and race. Culture, after all, is quite ascriptive. One has little choice in the language they learn or the food they eat growing up. Meanwhile, racial categories are products of culture rather than biology. This is evidenced by the arbitrary differences between categories such as “white” and “Black” that refer ostensibly to skin colour and nationality-based categories like “Chinese”, “Japanese”, and “Korean”. If race refers to people’s visible traits, then we have been culturally trained to see certain people as similar and others as different.

As an alternative to fixed racial and ethnic groups, sociologists have increasingly turned their attention toward the general process of categorization whereby people are divided into groups that often seem intuitive and natural. As Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov (2004) explain,

Race, ethnicity, and nation are not things in the world but ways of seeing the world. They are ways of understanding and identifying oneself, making sense of one’s problems and predicaments, identifying one’s interests, and orienting one’s action. They are ways of recognizing, identifying, and classifying other people, of construing sameness and difference, and of “coding” and making sense of their actions. They are templates for representing and organizing social knowledge, frames for articulating social comparisons and explanations, and filters that shape what is noticed or unnoticed, relevant or irrelevant, remembered or forgotten. (p.47)

Applying this perspective to Chinatowns requires us to recognize the ways in which Chinese people have historically been classified as “non-Canadian” by the government and white majority population, including through disenfranchisement, restricted economic rights, and explicit violence (Li 1998a:11). It also requires us understand the various ways that people do or do not identify themselves as Chinese and how expressions of this identification have changed historically. Finally, we should also be aware of the various ways in which internal differences within the category “Chinese”, such as those between Cantonese and Mandarin speakers or Canadian-born Chinese and immigrants, can become salient under certain circumstances and not under others.

Thus, while the term “Chinese” will be used frequently in this report, it refers to a social category that is always in flux. The development and durability of this category has been fundamentally shaped by the history of Chinese migration to Canada as part of the larger process of European colonialization. We explore this history in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2. A HISTORY OF CHINESE PEOPLE AND CHINATOWNS IN CANADA

As mentioned, Chinese people and Chinatowns are not equivalent. Nonetheless the formation of Chinatowns in Canada is fundamentally tied to the experiences of Chinese people who have migrated to and lived in Canada over the past two centuries. Furthermore, as Anderson (1990) argues, the term “Chinese” itself cannot really be understood outside the interactions between Chinese and European migrants in North America, the European-dominated colonial system that brought them into contact, and the forces that kept Chinese people segregated in particular neighbourhoods and occupations within Canadian society. In this section, we consider the history of this interaction in four distinct eras. While the focus is on Chinatowns in Canada generally, specific attention will be paid to Calgary Chinatown and how it fits into larger historical trends¹.

PRE-HEAD TAX ERA (1858–1885): GOLD MOUNTAIN AND THE CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY

Chinese people have been present in North America since the 18th century. However, most histories of Chinese Canadians begin in the mid-19th century in the aftermath of the Opium Wars when the British Empire established the colony of Hong Kong within the Guangdong region of China. The wars and European colonial occupation added to what was already a period of economic and political crisis in Guangdong (Amos and Wong 2009:5). The establishment of Hong Kong (and Macau before it) also plugged Guangdong, a traditionally insular society, into a global network of European-dominated colonial trade (Zhou 1992:20-21).

Coinciding with the California gold rush of the late 1840s, tens of thousands of people from Guangdong began to migrate to North America, which famously became known as “Gold Mountain”. These migrants were predominantly men from rural areas in the Pearl River delta of southern Guangdong, speaking mostly Taishan and similar dialects (Lai 1988:17). Though San Francisco was the initial port of entry, by 1860 between 6000 and 7000 Chinese people were living in the colony of British Columbia (Li and Lee 2005:646). As a result, Chinese people constituted about 13% of British Columbia’s total population.

¹ For a more specific history of Calgary Chinatown that pays specific attention to the construction of the built form, see Williams, Gartly, and Rubman (2019).



Figure 2.1 Chinese gold miners near North Bend, British Columbia (1889/90).

City of Vancouver Archives, Fonds AM1376, Item CVA 1376-375.24

Drawn initially to British Columbia by the Fraser Valley gold rush of the late-1850s (*ibid*), Chinese migrants eventually worked in a variety of industries, supporting the colony's economy through the exploitative "coolie" system. Most notably, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway between 1881 and 1885 relied heavily on Chinese migrants and "more than 15,000 Chinese took part in the construction of the British Columbia section" (*ibid*).

Among whites in Canada, Chinese migrants were seen as a necessary (and temporary) evil (Anderson 1990:34-37). While governments and business interests relied on Chinese labour, they nonetheless viewed the presence of Chinese people as a threat to Canadian society and the "Caucasian" race (p. 37). Thus, unlike European immigrants, who were typically accepted as permanent residents of Canada, Chinese immigrants were treated "as aliens who could be used as labour in lower-paying jobs" and then expelled from the country (Li 1998a:24).

As a result of these attitudes, Chinese people received few rights in Canada. When British Columbia became a province in 1871, it explicitly disenfranchised all Chinese residents. Further legislation imposed a variety of economic restrictions, including limits to property ownership and the exclusion of Chinese people from many industries and occupational fields (Anderson 1990:38-44). The provincial government even went so far as to boycott any business that employed Chinese workers (Anderson 1987:581).

Thus, this idea of Chinese people being a singular group with immutable characteristics became something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Chinese migrants at the time represented a small and

relatively homogenous group of made up mostly of male, Taishanese-speaking labourers from the Pearl River delta. The restrictions they faced in Canada forced these migrants into highly segregated neighbourhoods and a narrow set of permitted occupations, further enforcing a homogenous character distinct from the rest of Canadian society.

HEAD TAX/EXCLUSION ERA (1885–1947): RESTRICTED IMMIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHINATOWNS

With the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the federal government passed the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885. This act imposed a head tax on all Chinese migrants entering Canada. While this tax was intended to restrict Chinese immigration, the number of Chinese people in Canada actually increased throughout the late-19th and early 20th-centuries (Lai 1988:60). In response, the head tax was repeatedly increased. Eventually, in 1923, the government passed a new Chinese Immigration Act (also known as the “Chinese Exclusion Act”) that effectively banned all Chinese immigration.

During this period of restricted immigration, Chinese people who had previously been concentrated in British Columbia spread throughout the rest of Canada (p.61), particularly in Ontario and the Prairies. As they spread across Canada, they settled into concentrated neighbourhoods within larger towns and cities. Despite the legal and economic restrictions they faced, many Chinese people were able to acquire property (in certain restricted areas), often by pooling their resources together (Lai 1991:20).

Following this broader trend, Chinese migrants began arriving in Calgary in the late-1880s, establishing laundries, restaurants, and grocery stores (p.87-89; Sciban and Wong 2013:66). Initially settling in two distinct clusters close to the railway, they were eventually evicted by landlords in 1910 as property values rose due to railway expansion (Lai 1988:89). As a result, that same year, several Chinese merchants combined their wealth to purchase land near what is now the Centre Street Bridge, which was considered at the time to be undesirable property (*ibid*). In this location, they built the “Canton Block” building. This building and the Chinatown that emerged around it continue to exist today (Sciban and Wong 2013:67; Williams et al. 2019:25). At the time that the Canton Block was built, Calgary’s Chinese population was 485 and would grow to over 1000 by 1931 (Lai 1988:90).

According Zhou (1992) the “Chinatowns” that emerged across North America did so for both involuntary and voluntary reasons (p.33). The involuntary reasons include the abovementioned social, political and economic restrictions that prevented Chinese people from taking part in most aspects of public life in Canada. However, “the Chinese were also inclined to cluster (or segregate themselves) in Chinatown for practical reasons” (p.33). In particular, Zhou argues that early Chinatowns “served three functions” (p.34). First, they provided a relative safe residential space within an overall hostile society. Second, they “served as an economic base” where Chinese people could find “economic niches that were left vacant by the larger economy and not in direct competition with the white working class” (p.34). These niches included laundry and food services (p.35; Li 1998a:53).

Third, “Chinatowns functioned as social centres of support that gave the workers in an alien environment the illusion of home” (p.35). Within Guangdong, clans are incredibly important aspect of social life (p.26). Thus, associations based on clan and other commonalities such as dialect and ancestral

county became meaningful fixtures of social life within Chinatowns (Lai 1991:51; Sciban and Wong 2013). These associations provided important institutional resources for a population that had been systematically excluded from mainstream society. In general, the associations...

...cared for the welfare of their members; they facilitated potential integration into Canadian society in terms of housing, economic support, and employment. They provided lodging, assistance in finding work, loans, legal advice, recreation facilities, a means to deliver remittances to families in China, and financial assistance for burial. (Sciban and Wong 2013:69)

In addition to the functions they served for the Chinese community, these urban enclaves gave rise to a larger cultural conception of “Chinatown” that spread among North America’s white majority population. From this perspective, “‘Chinatown’ was not a neutral term, referring somehow unproblematically to the physical presence of people from China... Rather, it was an evaluative term, ascribed by Europeans no matter how the residents of the territory might have defined themselves and each other” (p.30). Media depictions of Chinatown at the time not only emphasized exoticism and orientalism (Lin 1998:173), but also filth and moral depravity that was always at risk of contaminating the rest of the city (Anderson 1987)². Justified by these stereotypes, Chinatowns became frequent and convenient targets of anger, hatred and mob violence from the white majority. At their extreme, these impulses resulted in the anti-Chinese riots in Vancouver in 1887, Calgary in 1892, and Vancouver again in 1907 (see Figure 2.2).

² Anderson (1987) argues that the stereotypes projected onto Chinatowns and Chinese people “signified many impulses that Europeans feared and attempted to repress in themselves” (p.590). The Chinese became convenient scapegoats onto whom these characteristics could be projected.



Figure 2.2. Damage to 500 Carrall Street after the 1907 anti-Asian riots in Vancouver.

City of Vancouver Archives, Fonds AM1576, Series S6, Subseries 12, File F47, Item 2011-010.1691

However, the same stigmatization and stereotyping that made Chinatowns a target of hatred and violence also attracted a voyeuristic fascination among white people. As early as the 1880s, Chinatowns in big cities such as New York became a popular “rubbernecking” destination for middle-class whites (Lin 1998:174). By the 1890s, “chop suey” had become a “craze” among non-Chinese diners (Lee 2008:49-65; Liu 2009). The dish, innovated in North America, perfectly combined a sense of mysterious exoticism with a bland flavour profile that would not offend the white middle-class. Documenting this “craze” in 1903, the *New York Times* played up the sense of mystery behind the dish:

Innumerable attempts have been made to get Chinamen to tell what chop suey is made of. Chinese cooks have been hired by families, but they never seemed to be able to impart the secret of the dish to others... Everything seems to depend upon the mushrooms and the mysterious black or brown sauce that is poured over the stew. Chop suey enthusiasts declare that to get the dish in perfection, it is still necessary to go to the stuffy little places in Chinatown; where less attention is paid to appearances... (*New York Times* 1903:20)

As the success of chop suey restaurants attests, Chinese entrepreneurs were by no means passive in the development of popular cultural conceptions of “Chinatown”. Rather, they creatively leveraged their

position as stigmatized outsiders to innovate new cultural products and experiences that appealed to the very population that stigmatized them in the first place.

A similar argument can be made about the distinct architecture that characterizes Chinatowns across North America. As documented by Choy (2008), this “pseudo-Oriental style” (p.43) traces its origins to the efforts of Chinese merchants in San Francisco to circumvent the city’s plan to relocate Chinese residents after Chinatown was destroyed during the 1906 earthquake³. As politicians debated a new city plan that would push the Chinese from the centre to the fringes of the city, the merchants quickly set about rebuilding their neighbourhood. To do so, they hired American architects to design buildings that would look attractive and distinctly Chinese to the white majority. These architects...

...knew little and cared less about the architecture of Asia. Their exposure to Chinese architecture was limited to images of pagodas and temples with massive curved roofs with eaves curled at corners, forms and expressions already centuries old. Their challenge was to transform these ancient forms into a new Sino-architectural vocabulary using Western methods of construction and local building materials in conformance with local building codes. (p.45)

The result of these efforts was the *Sing Fat* and *Sing Chong* buildings that still sit at the corners of Grant Avenue and California Street today. The merchants’ strategy was to “deliberately promote Chinatown as a tourist mecca, in the hopes that its improved image would help ameliorate the relationship with the community at large” (p.44). In this respect, the strategy was successful in generating enough good will to allow Chinese residents to remain in Chinatown. It also led to the creation of a new style of architecture that would spread to cities across the world. Nonetheless, buildings could do little to ease the overall conditions of racist discrimination that Chinese people faced in both the United States and Canada.

³ It should be noted that the destruction of Chinatown was caused less by the earthquake itself and more by the authorities who decided to dynamite the area in a failed effort to control fires that broke out during the earthquake (Choy 2012:40-42).



Figure 2.3 “Chinese” architecture and street furniture on Grant Avenue, San Francisco, 1938

San Francisco Public Library Archives, AAB-3838

Thus, the cultural profile of Chinatowns exploded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, giving rise to innovations in cuisine, architecture, and other forms of culture, while also attracting racist stereotypes, discriminatory laws, and even violence. This cultural profile, however, contrasts with the fact that, due to continued immigration restrictions, Chinatowns remained demographically and geographically tiny. Within a decade of the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923, the Chinese population in Canada began to decline from over 46,000 in 1931 to 32,000 by 1951. Lai (1988) terms this the “withering” period in the history of Canadian Chinatowns. With the residents of Chinatown unable to bring over family members or renew their population, the idea of Chinatown as being a place of social and economic “decline” became another self-fulfilling prophecy.

POST-WAR ERA (1947 – 1985): IMMIGRATION REFORM AND URBAN RENEWAL

While Chinese-Canadians struggled for civil rights throughout the early 20th-century, the Second World War provided an important opportunity for progress. Chinese-Canadians who enlisted were successful in demanding political rights in 1945 (Li 1998a:91). A year later, these rights were extended to all Chinese-Canadian citizens (those most Chinese-Canadians were not considered “citizens” at the time). In 1947, the “Chinese Exclusion Act” was repealed. Nonetheless, throughout the 1940s and ’50s Chinese immigration continued to be restricted to less than 2000 people per year, consisting mostly of the wives and children of Chinese men already living in Canada (p.95-96). These continued barriers to citizenship also served to minimize Chinese enfranchisement (Feimo 2019).

Throughout the 1950s and '60s, Canada's immigration laws were repeatedly reformed. Admittance criteria based on race and country of origin eventually gave way to criteria based on educational and professional skills. As Li (1998a) notes, it took "twenty-four years before the Chinese [Exclusion] Act was repealed in 1947, and another twenty years after that before Canada finally set a universal standard for assessment of all prospective immigrants, including Chinese" (p.94).

Even as anti-Chinese laws were being repealed, however, Chinatowns began facing a new threat in the postwar era: the rise of slum clearance and urban "renewal" schemes. Supported at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, these schemes were typically presented as altruistic efforts to improve the housing of low-income communities. In practice, however, urban renewal was often used as an excuse to displace poor and non-white communities from increasingly valuable downtown land, pushing them to less accessible areas on the outskirts of the city (Hannigan 2014:258). Chinatowns in particular were hit hard during this period. Notably, Toronto's Chinatown was virtually destroyed in the 1950s to make way for the construction of a new city hall, Nathan Phillips Square⁴.

More commonly, Chinatowns were being eaten away at the edges through massive and often government-backed development projects, such as the Harry Hays building in Calgary (built 1978) and the Complexe Guy-Favreau in Montreal (built 1983). Lamenting these trends, Chan (1986) wrote of the "gigantic, large-scale, ultra-modern federal and provincial government buildings [that] hover over and encroach upon the low-lying buildings of Chinatown like tombstones, seemingly reminding the Chinese people that the days of their urban space are numbered" (p.70).

Urban renewal projects were typically run in a paternalistic and "top-down" manner with little to no consultation with the communities who faced displacement. In response, Chinese communities across Canada began to politically organize to oppose, or at least influence, these projects. In Calgary, for example, the Sien Lok Society was founded in 1968 to bring Chinese Calgarians together in opposition of a planned expressway that would have run straight through Chinatown (Sien Lok Society 1969). In 1969, the society hosted a "National Conference on Urban Renewal as it Affects Chinatown" that brought together representatives from Chinatowns across Canada and federal, provincial and municipal political leaders to discuss the importance of preserving Chinatowns (*ibid*).

In the end, the planned expressway was defeated and much of Calgary's historic Chinatown was saved from demolition⁵, including the aforementioned Canton Block. As was happening in Chinatowns across North America, political mobilization against urban renewal forced the government to actually engage with the community. In Calgary, this engagement led to a series of new, more inclusive plans and reports, including the *Calgary Chinatown Design Brief* (1976) and the *Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan* (1986). Urban renewal projects still proceeded in the neighbourhood, but at a smaller scale and

⁴ Residents and visitors to Toronto will be familiar with the Chinatown centred on Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street. This Chinatown developed during the 1950s and '60s after the destruction of the original Chinatown which was located further east at Dundas and Elizabeth Street. Prior to its status as a Chinatown, the Spadina/Dundas area had been predominantly a Jewish enclave (Lai 1988:164).

⁵ Similar expressway projects were defeated in Vancouver's Chinatown and Toronto's second Chinatown.

with significantly more community consultation⁶. These projects include Oi Kwan Place (1976) and Bowside Manor (1980), which housed a combination of subsidized residential apartments, community spaces, and retail units (Williams et al. 2019:40; Lai 1988:135-38). By the end of the 20th century, virtually all of the housing in Calgary Chinatown was contained within mid-rise, mixed-use apartment buildings, many of which provided subsidized housing for seniors. However, many of these buildings, including Bowside, have seen their public subsidies expire after 30 years, putting the state of affordable housing in Calgary Chinatown into question.



Figure 2.4. Bowside Manor in Chinatown, Calgary.

Photo by Melissa Obi (2019).

⁶ The question of who represents the Chinatown community continues to be controversial in Calgary and elsewhere. Several organizations have formed to advocate for different visions of how the neighbourhood should be developed (Lai 1988:135-38).

CONTEMPORARY ERA (1985-PRESENT): MULTICULTURALISM, ETHNOBURBS, AND TRANSClaves

The political activism of the 1960s coincided with new ideas about culture and identity emerging within Canadian Chinatowns (Ng 1999). In particular, there was increasing promotion of, and identification with, being “Chinese-Canadian” (p.104-06). Behind this identity was the notion that Chinese immigrants and their Canadian-born children should participate fully within Canadian society while continuing to pass on their culture, identity, and language to future generations. In other words, Chinese-Canadians could “integrate” rather than “assimilate” to Canadian society (*ibid*).

The rise of “Canadian-Chinese” identity anticipated a broader shift toward thinking of Canada as a “mosaic” made up of distinct but equal cultures (Anderson 1990:218). This idea was later formalized in Canada’s official policy of multiculturalism adopted in 1971 under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. In the words of Trudeau, the policy was designed to “support and encourage the various cultures and ethnic groups that give structure and vitality to [Canadian] society. They will be encouraged to share their cultural expression and values with other Canadians and so contribute to a richer life for us all” (quoted in Li 1994:377).

The second trend was the rise of the consumer-oriented city. By the 1970s, deindustrialization and suburbanization had left many North American cities in a state of economic crisis. Amid this crisis, consumption-based activities such as tourism, sports, entertainment, and culture were promoted as the new economic lifeline for cities (Zukin 1995; Hannigan 1998). By the 1980s, city governments and real estate developers were embracing the idea of “themed” neighbourhoods that could draw in tourists and suburban day trippers by offering exciting (but safe) consumer activities (Hannigan 1998).

As a result of these two trends, by the 1980s Canadian Chinatowns had generally been recast within Canadian political discourse from unsightly slums that needed to be eradicated, to vibrant cultural districts that needed to be “celebrated and protected for [their] uniqueness” (Anderson 1990:212). Business and community leaders within Chinatowns were able to take advantage of this change. After all, since the early 20th-century, Chinese communities across North America had developed ways of leveraging their status as stigmatized outsiders to appeal to the tastes of the white consumers and tourists. Now, however, these activities received new government-backed legitimacy. As a result, Chinatowns across Canada saw government investments in a variety of cultural and beautification initiatives, including the erection of paifangs (gates) and installation of Chinese-themed street furniture such as lampposts and multi-lingual tourist kiosks. Government funds also supported the creation of several major cultural institutions such as the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden in Vancouver (1986) and the Chinese Cultural Centre in Calgary (1992).



Figure 2.5. Stylized lamp post and Chinese Cultural Centre in Chinatown, Calgary.

Photo by Melissa Obi (2019).

In almost all cases, government funding for these initiatives was combined with significant private donations that were coming from an increasingly affluent class of Chinese-Canadian professionals and entrepreneurs. Since the reforms of the postwar era, Chinese immigrants to Canada were generally more urban, affluent and educated than previous generations (Li 1998a: 95-102), with the large majority being Cantonese-speakers from Hong Kong. In fact, immigration from Hong Kong spiked dramatically in the 1980s and '90s due, on one hand, to an economic boom that gave many Hong Kong residents the financial means to emigrate and, on the other hand, political uncertainty surrounding the planned transfer of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1997 (Li and Li 2017:122). This uncertainty was exacerbated after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing. Canadian immigration from Hong Kong peaked in 1994 at 44,000 people (representing about 20% of all immigrants to Canada for that year) and declined sharply thereafter.

While this new group brought investment in historic Chinatowns, particularly in the areas of real estate and banking (Li 1998a:134-35, Lin 1998:87), they increasingly settled in suburban areas. As a result, Chinese "ethnoburbs" (Li 1998b) began to form in places such as Richmond in British Columbia and in Scarborough and Markham in Ontario. In addition to being home to large numbers of Chinese-Canadian residents, these ethnoburbs are also characterized by significant Chinese commercial and retail activity, including large landmark shopping centres such as Pacific Mall in Markham (Leung 2017). However, as Li

(1998a) documents, opposition among white suburban residents and politicians to several of these malls indicates that social and residential mobility has not erased the stigma of Chinese people as unwanted outsiders (p.147).

By most measures, Chinese ethnoburbs have not replaced historic, inner-city Chinatowns. Rather the two types of neighbourhoods seem to exist together as part of what Ghaziani (2019) calls a “cultural archipelago”. According to this concept, while minority groups often appear to have a single, coherent identity from the perspective of the mainstream society, they are nonetheless highly diverse. Particular subsets of a minority group and certain expressions of minority identity tend to take root in different locations within larger metro areas. For example, Chan (1983) documented how Montreal’s traditional Chinatown continued to hold appeal for poorer, elderly Chinese women, even as Chinese people were generally moving to the suburbs. To this day, inner-city Chinatowns across Canada continue to provide low-income housing in terms of formal subsidized units and informal, unlicensed rooming houses, both of which tend to serve a different population than the “ethnoburbs”.

In addition to providing residential spaces, Chinatowns also continue to serve as “cultural cores” for larger Chinese populations that are largely dispersed throughout the city (Davies 2006:116). In this role, Chinatowns act “to protect and maintain [Chinese Canadian] heritage” (*ibid*). Likewise, Chinatowns can also be considered “commercial districts marketing ethnic goods and services” to Chinese and non-Chinese consumers alike (Li 1998a:115). In recent decades, however, this commercial activity has become increasingly “transnational,” involving Asia-based corporations as well as local, independent retailers. Kim (2018), for instance, documents how national governments and multinational corporations based in East Asia are establishing clusters within the cores of major North American cities, such as New York. The purpose of these “transclaves,” as Kim calls them, is to promote Asian business and culture on a global stage. Indeed, the position of historic Chinatowns in the centres of major metro areas make them particularly well suited for showcasing East Asian cultural produces to a global audience.

Interestingly, the surviving sliver of Toronto’s original Chinatown (along Dundas Street) is now home to a cluster of Japanese chain stores, including *Tsujiri*, *Uncle Tetsu*, *Muji*, and *Uniqlo*, and is increasingly being referred to as “Little Tokyo” despite Japanese residents making up only about 3% of the neighbourhood population (compared to Chinese people who constitute around 20%).

In Calgary as well, Asia-based global franchises such as *Chatime* sit next to older, independent retailers. While the proliferation of these global brands in North American Chinatowns has created new economic activity, it remains to be seen how the top-down expansion of these global brands interacts with the local communities who inhabit the neighbourhoods.

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE

Despite the successive challenges posed by Chinese exclusion, urban renewal, and suburbanization and the rise of Chinese ethnoburbs, recognizable Chinatowns continue to exist in city centres across Canada. In many cases, these neighbourhoods are still home to large numbers of Chinese residents and their vibrancy and walkability continue to draw in tourists and visitors from elsewhere in the city. Nonetheless, Canada and Canadian cities are changing rapidly and there is a great deal of anxiety within

many Chinatown communities about whether the identity and culture of these neighbourhoods will survive. This anxiety is evident in recent political organizing in Chinatowns across Canada, including in Vancouver (Dimoff 2018), Calgary (Crowther 2016), and Toronto (Nasser 2019). Such activism is reminiscent of the urban renewal battles of the 1960s.

GENTRIFICATION

One of the most high-profile political issues surrounding Canada's Chinatowns is gentrification, which refers to...

...the process in which neighborhoods with low [socio-economic status (SES)] experience increased investment and an influx of new residents of higher SES. Other markers of gentrification include changes in physical, cultural, and demographic characteristics. Improvements in amenities, such as safety or shopping, and increases in housing values and rents also commonly characterize gentrification. (Hwang and Lin 2016:10)

Gentrification has received significant attention from scholars, politicians, and community activists because it is potentially associated with the physical displacement of poorer, long term residents. Due to their location within the inner-cities of large metropolitan areas, most historic Chinatowns in North America have experienced gentrification (Lin 2008; Sze 2010; Naram 2017).

The effect of gentrification on North American Chinatowns is complex. In general, incoming residents are younger, wealthier and less likely to be Chinese than existing residents. Whether or not these new residents are physically displacing the older population is unclear. In their study of Philadelphia and Boston's Chinatowns, Acolin and Vitiello (2017) found that incoming residents moved into new housing built on formerly empty lots and did not displace existing residents. Moreover, they found that while the residents of the Chinatowns were becoming proportionally *less* Chinese, property owners were becoming proportionally *more* Chinese.

Whether or not gentrification brings physical displacement of existing residents, incoming residents may cause "social displacement" wherein traditional communities lose power and prestige within the neighbourhood (Brown-Saracino 2004). Social displacement is associated with the loss of services and amenities that once catered to the older population. Such trends present several challenges, including issues of food security, as access to fresh and culturally-specific groceries become more difficult (Ho and Chen 2017). Even this issue is complex, however, since many Chinese-Canadian entrepreneurs welcome new amenities in Chinatown that cater to a younger clientele (Pottie-Sherman 2013).

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Another major change with the potential to affect Chinatowns are shifting demographics. In 1998, the PRC overtook Hong Kong as the main source of Chinese immigrants to Canada (Li and Li 2017:120). By 2016, the Canadian census showed for the first time that Mandarin-speakers (the official language of the PRC) overtook Cantonese-speakers. Meanwhile, the number of Canadian-born Chinese people and

people of mixed ancestry continue to grow, leading to new notions of identity. Notable within these groups is the rise of “Pan-Asian” identities (Park 2008). Such changes raise questions over how the identity and culture of Canadian Chinatowns relates to a Chinese-Canadian population that is larger and more diverse than at any point in Canadian history.

ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

Beyond Chinatowns in particular, it should be noted that Chinese people in Canada continue to be “othered” and racialized. Controversies continue to surround the development of Chinese malls in the suburbs. Fears over Chinese real estate investment has entered political discourse and affected public policy in Vancouver and Toronto. As well, racist stereotypes of Chinese people as anti-social and overly ambitious continue to be spread in the media. For example, *MacLean’s* 2010 article “Too Asian: Some Frosh Don’t Want to Study at an Asian University” contended that an “over-representation” of Asian students was worsening the university experience for whites. In all of these controversies, we see parallels of the same racist beliefs that drove the anti-Asian riots of the late 19th and early 20th-centuries: that Chinese people can never truly be Canadians and any sign of success or upward mobility is a threat to whites. Thus, despite all the changes, it is important not to forget that Chinese people still confront the type of racist beliefs that influenced the creation of Chinatowns in the first place.

Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that today’s Chinatowns continue to serve the three basic functions identified by Zhou (1992) that led to their development in the 19th century: a place for residence, an economic base and a source of social support. The main difference today is that Chinatowns do not serve this function for all or even a majority of Chinese people, but rather a specific subset of the population and, perhaps, other non-Chinese minority groups who face similar challenges within Canadian society. To explore these ideas in more depth, we now turn to an analysis of Calgary Chinatown today.

CHAPTER 3. CALGARY CHINATOWN TODAY

Developing a cultural plan for Calgary Chinatown requires us to understand the social and cultural features that make this neighbourhood distinct and how it fits into the larger landscape of the city as a whole. It also requires that we understand what community members think is important about their own neighbourhood. In this chapter, we draw on interviews with 11 Chinatown stakeholders, census data, newspaper reports, and observational research to better understand the characteristics of Calgary Chinatown today.

The chapter begins by highlighting the overarching sense of threat or vulnerability that Chinatown community members feel about their neighbourhood. After discussing this sense of threat, the chapter discusses four major issues that were raised by community members: (1) the eroding boundaries of the neighbourhood, (2) the suburbanization of Chinese-Canadians in Calgary, (3) demographic shifts within the Chinatown neighbourhood (particularly related to age), and (4) the role that Chinatown plays as a “reservoir” of Chinese-Canadian culture. For each of these issues we present the views of our interview participants, as well as providing larger context based on our research.

METHODOLOGY

In discussing Chinatown today, this report draws on four main sources of data. First, we examined statistical information from the Canadian census and the Calgary civic census over the past 20 years. Second, we conducted observational research in and around Chinatown, recording information on buildings, businesses, streetscapes and other aspects of the built environment. Third, we reviewed newspaper coverage of Chinatown between 2000 and 2019, examining the newsworthy events and issues relating to the neighbourhood and how Chinatown was discussed by journalists and those they interviewed.

Our fourth source of data are 11 in-depth interviews conducted with local stakeholders who are involved with Calgary Chinatown. These stakeholders include leaders of local organizations such as the Chinese Cultural Centre and the Business Improvement Association. They also include local tour guides and artists. As well, we interviewed City of Calgary staff who are involved in the Chinatown cultural planning process. The purpose of the interviews was twofold. First, we wanted to understand how Chinatown fit into the biographies of our informants and what aspects of the neighbourhood had played an important role in their lives. Second, we asked them for their views and opinions on Chinatown, focusing specifically on their ideas for what aspects of Chinatown should be preserved, what should be changed, and what challenges or threats should be avoided.

Almost all of our participants requested that we identify them by real names. For those participants who requested anonymity, we have used pseudonyms. Thus, unless we explicitly note that we are using a pseudonym, all quotations in this chapter are attributed to the real names of our participants.

A SENSE OF THREAT

Before addressing specific issues raised in our research, it is important to note a sense of threat that pervaded our interviews and the newspaper reports that we analyzed. For many members of the Chinatown community, the fate of their neighbourhood hangs in the balance, and even seemingly small issues have the potential to tip Chinatown in one direction or the other.

The idea that Chinatown is under threat is not surprising given the historical context discussed in the previous chapter. In general, our participants were keenly aware of Chinatown's history and the long list of external threats against which Chinese-Canadians have had to struggle, including the head tax, Chinese exclusion, anti-Asian violence, and urban renewal projects. Indeed, many of our participants pointed to the history of the neighbourhood as evidence for why it was being threatened and in need of protection. For example, Dale Lee Kwong, an artist and Chinatown tour guide, raised the history of Chinese relocation in Calgary:

For me it's the basic history. It's important that I talk about [how] it's the third Chinatown, how city council has tried to run us out of the previous locations, and how it's a constant battle for this current Chinatown. And I don't think people realize how sick and tired we are of that happening.

As evidenced by this quotation, we observed a deep sense of distrust of powerful organizations in the public and private sector, such as Calgary City Council, and a related sense that the Chinatown community needed to be constantly vigilant in fighting to protect the neighbourhood. In fact, members of the Chinatown community frequently point to the history of grassroots struggle as a central part of the neighbourhood's identity. "[Calgary Chinatown] remains a shining beacon of those who struggled despite incredible odds [and] crushing racism" says Kevin Wong, former president of the Sien Lok Society, in a short documentary that was heavily circulated online by members of the Chinatown community (Storyhive 2016).

In the view of our participants, this history of struggle is essential to understanding the status of the neighbourhood today. According to Alice Lam, a member of the youth-oriented organization *I Love YYC Chinatown*, it is important for the rest of the city to understand this struggle:

I found it very surprising to see how hard we had to try to protect Chinatown from development that did not fit within the context of the neighbourhood and realized that one of the underlying reasons was because people just didn't know the history of all the effort that has gone into growing Chinatown into what it is today.

CHINATOWN AS A "FABRIC"

One of the reasons this sense of threat and struggle is important is because it serves a lens through which many members of the Chinatown community understand even relatively mundane issues within the neighbourhood. For example, in 2001, the Alberta Chinese Community Congress unsuccessfully

petitioned the City of Calgary to reduce street parking rates. In presenting the issue, the organization placed parking within the context of neighbourhood preservation, arguing that “parking fees are destroying the social, cultural and business *fabric* of Chinatown” (K. W. Chang, quoted in Wilton 2001, italics added). More recently, Chinatown community leaders opposed the retail of both recreational and medical cannabis products in the neighbourhood. As with the parking issue, cannabis was framed by community leaders as an issue of cultural preservation: “Chinatown is our heritage, the roots of our culture... We don’t think a cannabis store is aligned with all the other businesses in the Chinatown area” (May Han quoted in Rumbolt 2018).

As illustrated in the K. W. Chang quotation above, “fabric” and related metaphors are commonly used to characterize Chinatown. According to one of our participants, this metaphor refers to the “overall flow and feel... of traditional neighbourhoods” and maintaining the “fabric” was important for preserving and “respecting” Chinatown’s culture. In likening Chinatown’s culture to a fabric, community members call attention to the fact that the neighbourhood is comprised of many interwoven threads that can be easily torn or unravelled.

THE HON DEVELOPMENT

These perceptions of Chinatown as delicate and under threat are relevant to understanding community opposition to the recent condominium proposal that was the impetus for the Chinatown Cultural Plan in the first place. In April 2016, City Council held the first of many hearings concerning a proposal submitted by Manu Chugh Architects Ltd., representing Hon Developments, to build three high-rise towers within Chinatown on a large parking lot just to the southeast of the Chinese Cultural Centre. Coinciding with the hearing was a protest outside City Hall organized by Chinatown residents and advocates against the proposal, with many protestors fearing that approval would “forever change the fabric of their beloved community” (Howell 2016). Council eventually approved the project (Klingbeil 2016), but also agreed to create a new “culturally based” area redevelopment plan for Chinatown (Howell 2018). Meanwhile, Hon Developments withdrew the proposal indefinitely in the spring of 2019 (Potkins 2019).

While the general sense of threat is an important lens through which members of the Chinatown community view large and small projects within their neighbourhood, we can also identify more specific concerns and viewpoints that community members have with regard to their neighbourhood. The rest of this section highlights a few of the most common issues raised in our interviews and contextualizes these concerns using other sources of information such as census data.

ERODING BOUNDARIES

One of the common concerns raised among our participants was that unsympathetic development along the boundaries of Chinatown is leading to the neighbourhood’s “erosion” into the rest of downtown – a term used by a community organizer who we refer to with the pseudonym “Qie”. Of particular concern for Qie and many of our other participants is the growth of Calgary’s already large central business

district, which borders Chinatown to the southwest. Fazeel Elahi, a city planner who has worked closely with the Chinatown community, explained this situation:

Chinatown used to be 10 or 12 blocks, and slowly over time, the edges of Chinatown have been built out or developed in a form that's more in keeping with the downtown setting of Calgary, as opposed to that of Calgary's Chinatown. Which is a little bit lower in height and things of that nature. And so what we've heard from the community stakeholders and leaders is that slowly year after year, even over a period of decades, the actual community and Chinatown is being eroding, it's being eaten. It's turning into more of a downtown community as opposed to retaining its sort of distinct cultural traits.



Figure 3.1. Harry Hays Building.

Photo by Sara Haidey (2019).

One development that was particularly concerning for Chinatown community members was the Harry Hays building (see Figure 3.1), a Federal government complex that was constructed on the eastern side of Chinatown between 1974 and 1978. The sprawling, fortress-like building occupies two entire blocks that had been home to 30 houses which were expropriated, displacing 200 residents in the process (Williams et al. 2019:37). To this day, community members see the building as a symbol of the indifference and hostility of powerful outsider organizations toward Chinatown. Dale Lee Kwong told us:

I'm really pissed off about the Harry Hays building and that people don't know that it's technically part of Chinatown. They [the people who run the building]

should contribute more to the community.... To me it's just an eyesore in Chinatown and an unknown thing. And this thing they did [through expropriation] should be acknowledged. They should have a plaque that such and such building was here and we kicked them all out and we relocated them and this is a part of Chinatown.

The Harry Hays building is one example of a trend that can be seen all around Chinatown: gigantic, fortress-like buildings that are oriented toward the rest of downtown while throwing up impenetrable concrete walls around Chinatown. This trend is not limited to the period of urban renewal of the 1950s, '60s, and 70s, during which the Harry Hays building was constructed. It has been continued with recent buildings including Sun Life Plaza (1984), Livingston Place (2007), and the Bow Tower (2012), all of which face away from Chinatown, cutting the neighbourhood off from the rest of downtown, while also devouring land.

The latest example of this phenomenon can be seen in the recently completed "Waterfront" residential complex developed by Vancouver-based Anthem Properties Group (completed in 2019). The complex was built within the official boundaries of Chinatown, but was marketed as being located "in the heart of Eau Claire" (waterfrontcalgary.com), a district that neighbours Chinatown to the northwest⁷. In Waterfront's sleek promotional website, there is not a single mention of Chinatown. The images on the site depict locations around downtown Calgary, but none in Chinatown. There is a picture of an Italian Café located five blocks away from Waterfront, but none of Sien Lok Park or the Chinese Cultural Centre that are located directly adjacent to the residences. The people in these images are exclusively white.

Long after the marketing campaign ends, the architecture of the Waterfront residences will persist. As with so many other projects built in Chinatown, Waterfront faces outward. All of the street-level retail units were placed on the Eau Claire-side of the complex. Facing Chinatown, meanwhile, is a parking garage entrance, exhaust vents, and a steel fire escape door. The one architectural gesture that the building makes toward Chinatown is a small metal dragon gate on a pathway between the residences and Sien Lok Park (see Figure 3.2).

⁷ Waterfront's "Eau Claire" branding is ironic given that the "Eau Claire" neighbourhood is widely considered to be a failure (Toneguzzi 2013). In the late 1980s, developers envisioned a bustling downtown destination similar to Vancouver's Granville Island, but the vision was never realized. Today, much of Eau Claire remains undeveloped surface parking lots. At the centre of the neighbourhood is a sprawling and underused suburban-style shopping mall that is slated for demolition (*ibid*).



Figure 3.2. Dragon gate between Waterfront residences and Sien Lok Park.

Photo by Kaylee Orritt (2019).

The development and marketing of Waterfront as part of “Eau Claire” rather than Chinatown exemplifies a larger phenomenon that sociologists have observed within gentrifying communities. According to Hwang (2016), long-time residents and newcomers tend to have different ideas about the identities and boundaries of their neighbourhoods. Newcomers, who tend to be wealthier and mostly white, redefine neighbourhood boundaries in order to exclude streets and blocks associated with poorer and minority residents (*ibid*). In redefining neighbourhood boundaries, newcomers potentially undermine existing civic organizations and create more competition for limited public resources (p.123).

CHINATOWN AND SUBURBANIZATION

Just as Chinatown community members felt that their neighbourhood was being eaten away at the edges by adjacent districts in the city centre, they were also concerned with trends occurring on the suburban edges of the city. As mentioned in the previous chapter, postwar Chinese migration to Canada resulted in the creation of Chinese “ethnoburbs” (Li 2005) in large metropolitan areas across Canada. In Calgary, ethnoburbs such as Edgemont have caused some alarm among members of the Chinatown community who feel that Chinatown is now in a competition for customers and residents. Several of our

participants raised concerns that Chinatown was no longer the only source of everyday Chinese goods such as groceries:

There's the supermarket complex up in Forest Lawn and they have one of everything, one Chinese bakery, one pho place, one bubble tea shop, one grocery store. You don't need to come to Chinatown, so I mean I think this is the on-going struggle all the time. (Dale Lee Kwong)

I think there was a time that we did more grocery shopping [in Chinatown] than now. I guess now you have T&T, and Superstore [in the suburbs]. (Qie)

People forget about [Chinatown] and people are going up to Panorama for T&T up there or the one in the North East. (Terry Wong)

This concern over retail competition was echoed by many of our participants and addressed in a recent report funded by the City of Calgary and the Chinatown District Business Improvement Association, which identified several “major competitive shopping areas” such as Centre Street North, Pacific Place Mall, International Avenue, and Harvest Hill Crossing (J.C. Williams Group Ltd. 116:28). To this list we might also add the New Horizon Mall, which opened in Balzac in 2018 by the same developer behind Markham's successful Pacific Mall.

Fear of the decline of Chinatown in the face of suburbanization has been exacerbated in the local media, particularly on the opinion pages of the Calgary Herald (e.g. White 2016; Parker 2016). In one opinion piece, White (2016) dismissingly referred to Chinatown as a “senior's ghetto” in arguing in support of the Hon development and the attraction of new residents and youth-oriented retail.

CHINESE PEOPLE IN CALGARY

While we are not in a position to evaluate the retail economics of all of these Chinese-oriented shopping areas in Calgary, we do warn against a tendency to think of Chinese people in Calgary as a single, monolithic group who can be served by a single shopping area. The Chinese (and East-Asian) population of Calgary is large and diverse enough that multiple Chinese and Asian-oriented shopping areas would be expected.

According to the 2016 Canadian census, the Calgary metro area is home to just under 70,000 people who report a Chinese language as their mother tongue, 90,000 who identify as Chinese visible minorities, and over 100,000 people report some ethnic Chinese ancestry. If we focus on those who identify visibly as Chinese, Calgary has the 11th largest Chinese population in North America in absolute terms (see Figure 3.3). Taken as a proportion of the overall metro population, Calgary's Chinese population (at 7%) is the 5th largest in North America behind only Vancouver (20%), Toronto (11%), San Francisco (10%), and San Jose (9%).

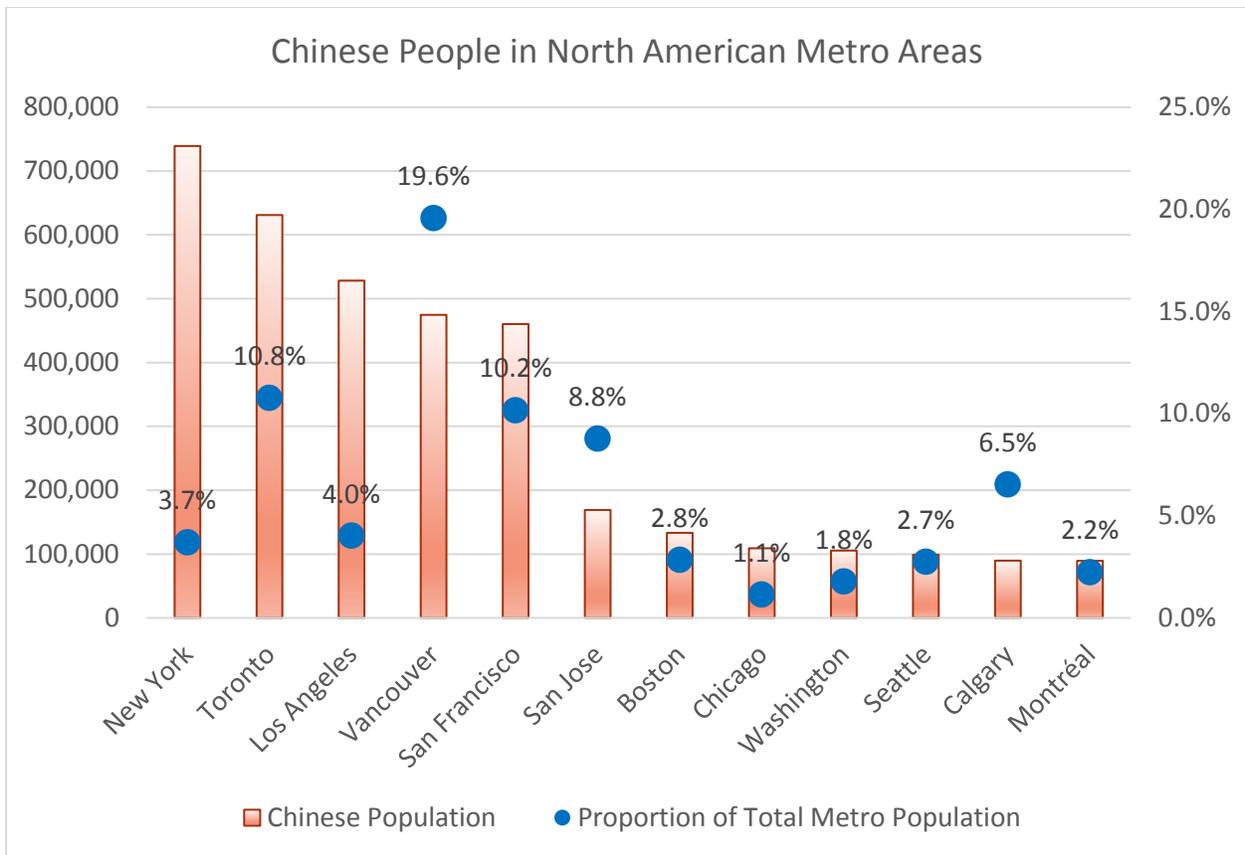


Figure 3.3. Chinese People in North American Metro Areas.

The Canadian data in this chart is based on the number of people who self-identified as a Chinese visible minority by Census Metropolitan Area and Census Agglomeration in the 2016 Canadian Census. The America data is based on the number of people who self-reported their race as Chinese only in the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate.

Where does Calgary’s Chinese population live? Consistently over the last 20 years, the densest clusters of Chinese residents can be found in and around downtown Chinatown and in the north-central suburbs, including Hamptons, Edgemont, and Sandstone Valley – as demonstrated in Figure 3.4. Figure 3.4 also indicates a general movement of Chinese people away from areas like Rundle and Marlborough in the east and toward the western suburbs and north-central areas of the city.

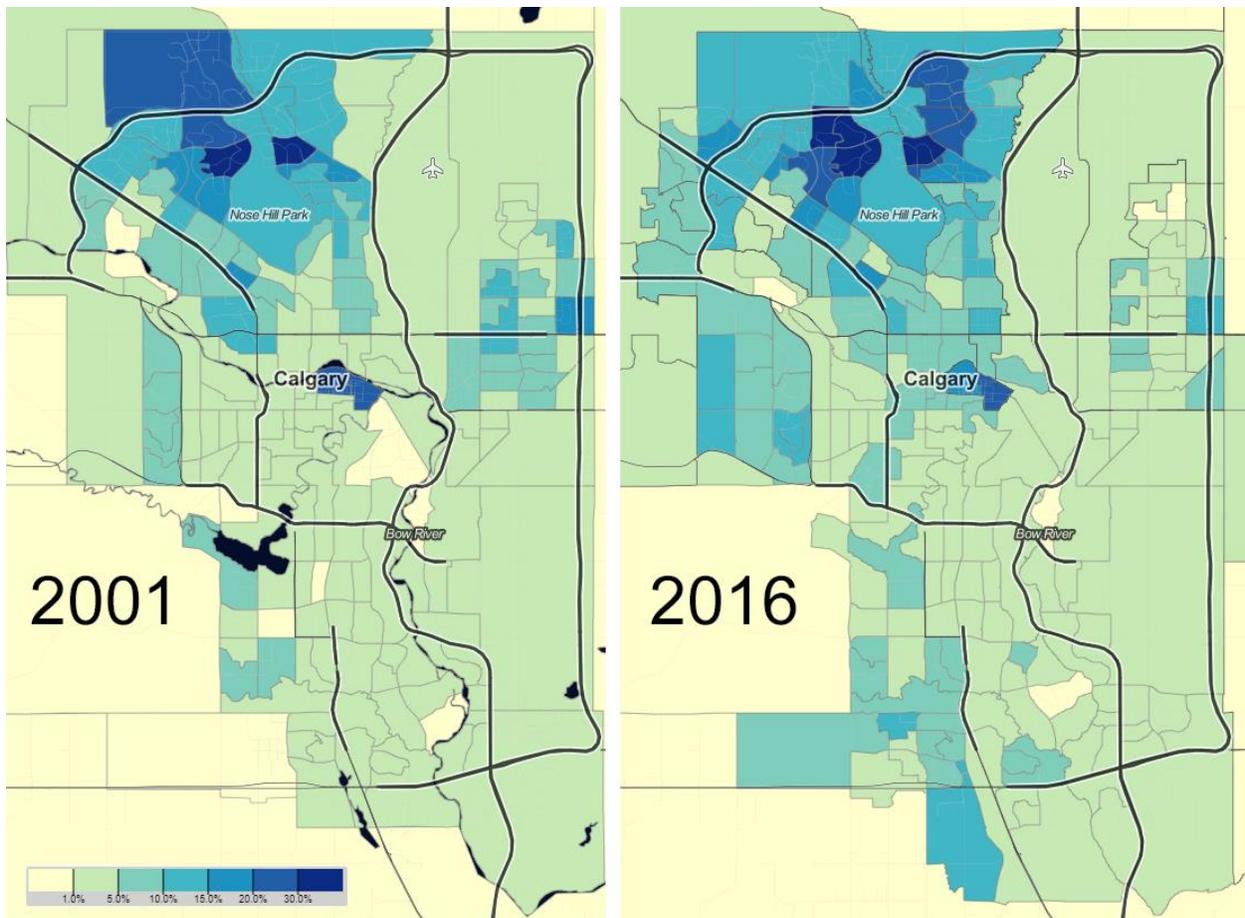


Figure 3.4. Chinese people as a proportion of total population by census tract, Calgary.
 Based on “visible minority” category. Map created using censustracker.ca.

Focusing only on concentrations of Chinese people should not overshadow the fact that Chinese people live all over the city. As can be seen in Figure 3.5, almost every neighbourhood in the city has at least 100 residents who identify as Chinese visible minorities.

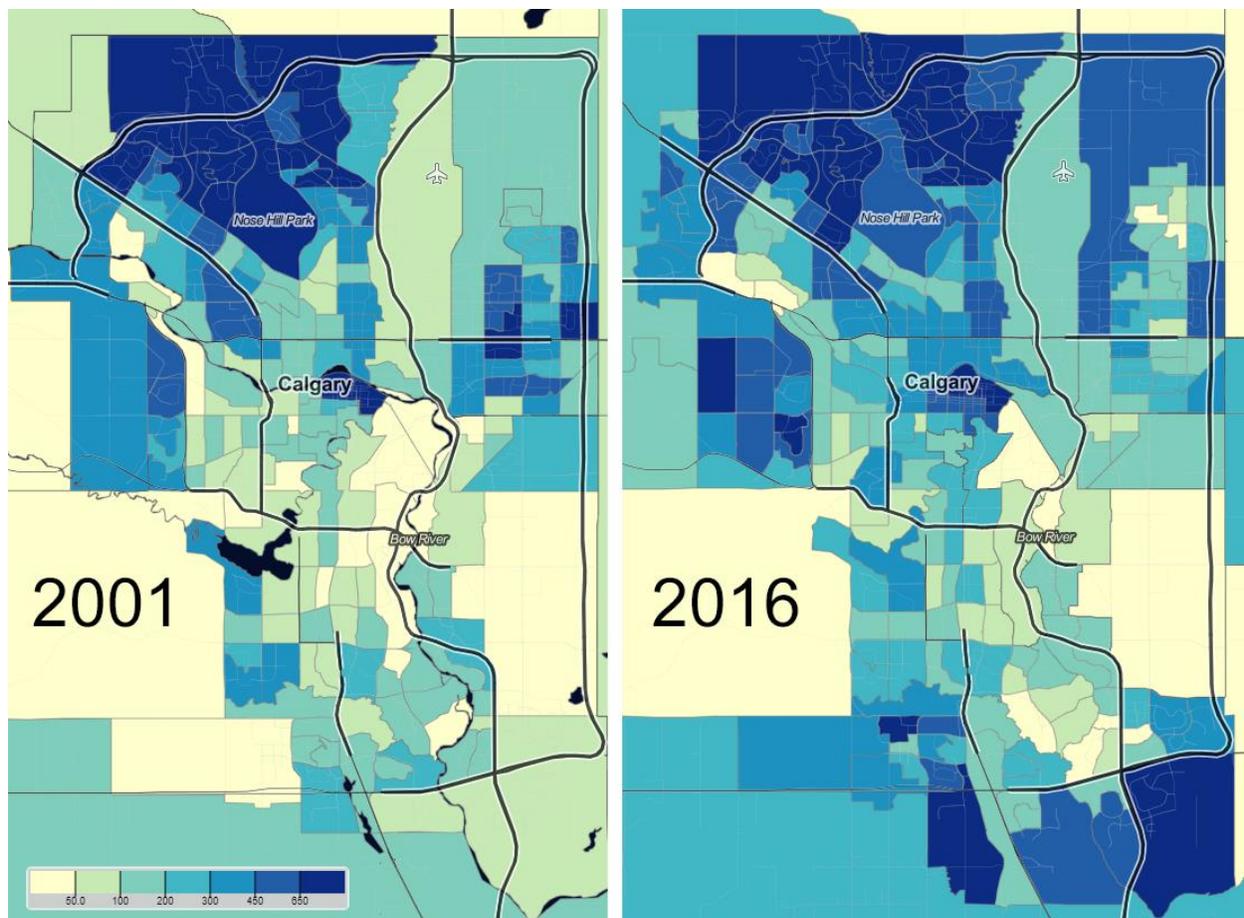


Figure 3.5. Total Chinese people per census tract, Calgary.
 Based on “visible minority” category. Map created using *censumapper.ca*.

Keeping in mind the idea of the “cultural archipelago” – that different expressions of Chinese identity tend to be situated in different neighbourhoods – we can also identify distinct geographic clustering by subgroups of Chinese people. While not shown here, Cantonese-speakers tend to be more common in the mid- and northeast parts of the city (where Chinese populations are shrinking generally), whereas Mandarin-speakers tend to be more common in the West (where the population is growing). Within the major clusters in the northern suburbs and in inner-city Chinatown, Cantonese-speakers tend to slightly outnumber Mandarin-speakers.

Thus, rather than thinking in “zero-sum” terms, we recommend considering what makes Chinatown unique in its own right and how it relates to the other neighbourhoods in the city. With this in mind, we turn to demographic characteristics of the neighbourhood and a deeper discussion of what our participants identified as being particularly important to the culture of Chinatown specifically.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN CHINATOWN

As the Calgary civic census indicates, Chinatown has been undergoing a significant demographic shift in the last 10 years. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the population had been quite stable at around

1300 people. This period of stability followed a major jump in the population during the 1970s and '80s when many of Chinatown's subsidized housing projects were developed as part of urban renewal.

As Figure 3.6 demonstrates, between 2007 and 2017 the number of dwellings in Chinatown more than doubled from under 1000 to about 2000. This was paralleled by a similar increase in residents and a slight decrease in household size.

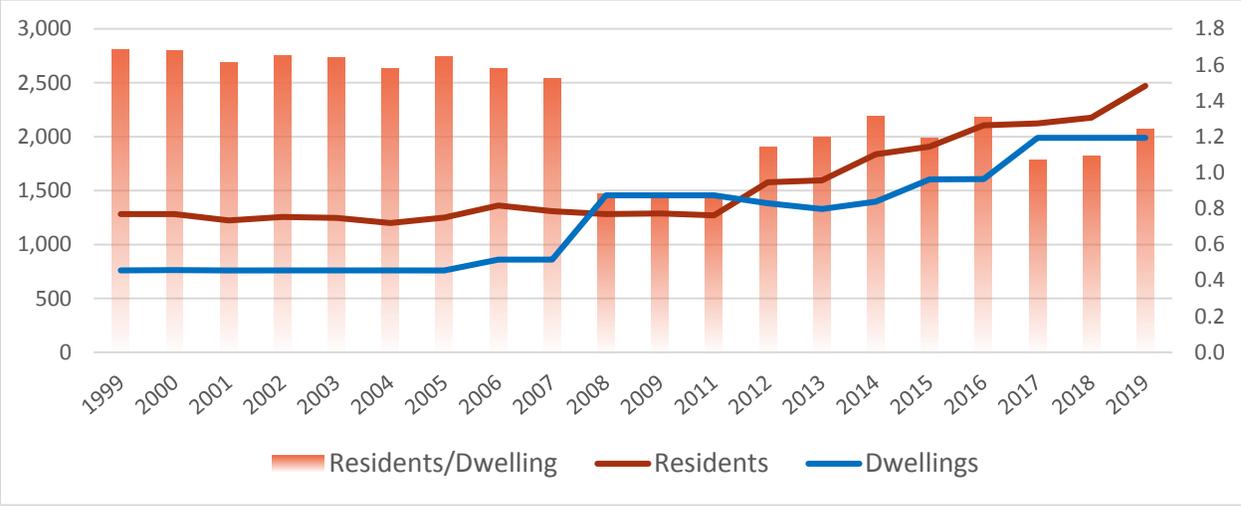


Figure 3.6. Chinatown residents and dwellings (1999-2019).

Data is from the Calgary Civic Census.

What can we say about the demographic characteristics of this group? As we will discuss in the next section, Chinatown is becoming younger – not because elderly people are dying off or moving out, but rather because incoming residents are far more likely to be younger adults. Is Chinatown becoming less Chinese? Unfortunately, due to inconsistencies with how the Canadian census was collected between 2006, 2011, and 2016, we have no solid information on race, ethnicity, or income. Based on the evidence we do have and studies of Chinatowns in other cities (e.g. Acolin and Vitiello 2017), we estimate that the number of Chinese people in Chinatown has been stable over the last few decades. However, incoming residents are less likely to be Chinese.

SENIORS

We do have good data on age, since this is recorded in the Calgary civic census. Seniors have long been a strong presence within the neighbourhood, supported by the various subsidized residential buildings developed in the 1970s and '80s. In 1999, seniors (65 and older) made up 50% of all residents in Chinatown (see Figure 3.7). However, as the population has grown, incoming residents are far more likely to be younger adults. Residents between the ages of 25 and 44 were only 22% of Chinatown's population in 1999. Today this group is 45% of the population, overtaking seniors who have dropped to 30%.

Despite the fact that they are declining proportionally, the population of seniors is still growing slightly in absolute numbers, particularly among those 75 and older. During our research we heard from several

people who work with the subsidized residential buildings that there continue to be waitlists for apartments. Thus, as Chan (1983) found in his study of Montreal, Chinatown continues to appeal to elderly Chinese people even as the Chinese population as a whole is more suburban.

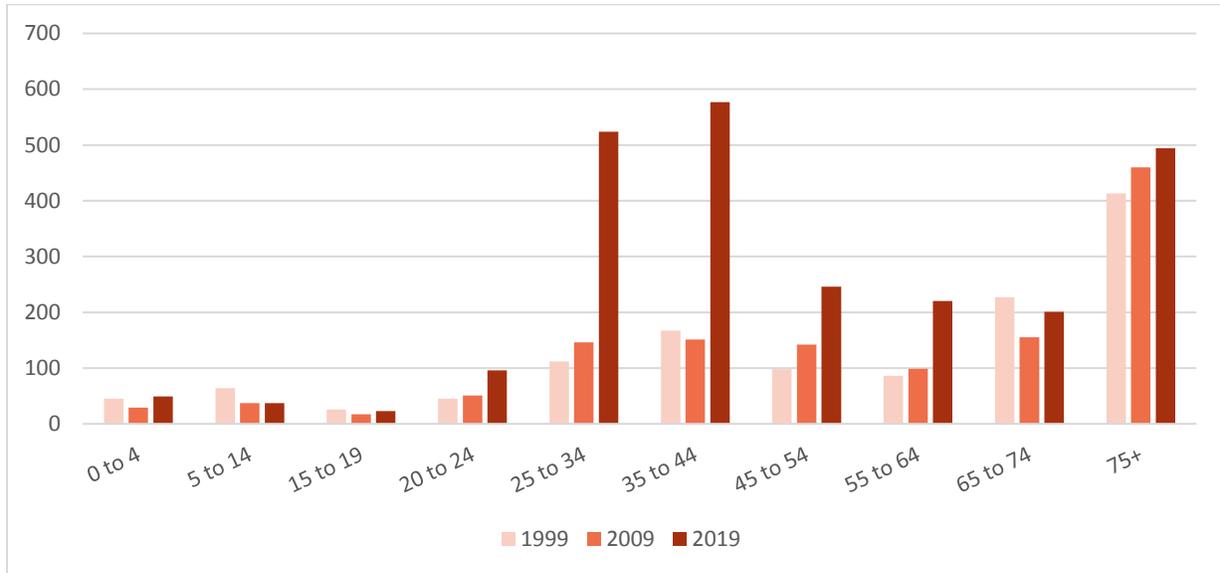


Figure 3.7. Chinatown population by age (1999, 2009, and 2019).

Data from the Calgary civic census.

Furthermore, seniors continue to be a core part of Chinatown’s identity according to many of the participants we interviewed. While outsiders might derisively refer to Chinatown as a “senior’s ghetto” (White 2016), we found that community members had the opposite attitude toward the elderly. All eleven of our interview participants mentioned their concern for maintaining a community that serves seniors with culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Notably, this view was expressed by the young adults we interviewed. One of our young adult respondents, Alice Lam, told us:

Most importantly, Chinatown is a residential community for low-income seniors and Calgarians that live in the neighborhood. There are about 1400 Chinese senior citizens that live here and probably about 2000 people total in the entire area. There are language appropriate social and commercial services for these residents, whether someone is a senior or an immigrant.

The value of these services, she continued, is that they provide a level of independence that seniors cannot find elsewhere in the city:

In Chinatown the seniors are taken care of in a way that lets them be independent so that they can make that decision to live apart from their kids and are still connected by bus to all the facilities they need and they can walk everywhere and this is so much better for them.

This idea that Chinatown has a unique role in providing a space for older, Chinese residents who require Chinese-language services and markets was echoed by Fazeel Elahi of the City of Calgary's planning department:

There's about 2800 residents that live in Chinatown. A good portion of them are seniors... I think they cater to a specific market, a market where the residents are generally happier when they're able to speak their languages, when they're able to do their shopping and find the goods fairly close-by, and it's all walkable.

While no longer a majority, seniors still make up almost a third of the neighbourhood. More importantly, as these quotes illustrate, they play an important role in constituting the identity of Chinatown. "We want our seniors to be safe and cared for in this space," another one of our participants told us – also a young adult who works in Chinatown.

YOUTH

While seniors are important, another major demographic concern of our participants was for a younger generation of specifically Chinese and Asian Canadians to participate in Chinatown in some way. Tony Wong, Vice President of the Chinese Cultural Centre, expressed this view:

I think the biggest challenge is how we can revitalize Chinatown [and] make our Chinatown the Chinatown that was thriving thirty years ago... At that time we had a lot of immigrants coming from Hong Kong or from China and they always made Chinatown their first destination. They lived here, they worked here and, at the time, the population was younger. So, when people are younger and they are looking for something that reminds them of their own country they would naturally come to Chinatown. But, I think our biggest challenge is to get the second generation and third generation Chinese to continue to come down to Chinatown to participate in activities.

With regard to attracting a younger generation, many of our participants pointed to the potential of new businesses that cater to youth. Liza Chan, executive director of the Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens' Association, stated:

The changing faces of Chinatown [mean that] there's a lot of pretty unique kinds of stores that are coming in, like the ice cream store [Sweet Tooth]. Like all of it is just more targeted to youth, and I think that is really smart... I think that is the way to go.



Figure 3.8. Sweet Tooth Ice Cream, Chinatown, Calgary.

Located in the historic Canton Block and below the Sue Yuen Benevolent Association (206 Center St SE). Photo by Chase McKort (2019).

Sweet Tooth Ice Cream (see Figure 3.8), which features “Asian” flavour such as matcha, was referenced by three of our participants as indicative of how Chinatown can attract younger people. Most saw it as a positive contribution to the neighbourhood. However, one of our participants, community historian Fung Ling Feimo, expressed some concern of the emergence of two distinct generational cultures that may not easily coexist:

You have the New Gallery and chocolate and ice cream shops. They are cool businesses but they are not related and that is part of a challenge. It is difficult to somehow connect the two types of cultures that are emerging. You want the people who want traditional food and language and in a lower price range. When you go to high end places... those are the places that the locals are not going to go to. They cannot afford it on a fixed income and it does not support the language they speak. They would find it hard to engage in that environment.

SOCIAL VERSUS PHYSICAL DISPLACEMENT

Fung Ling’s concerns points to a larger issue that can be observed in Chinatowns across North America. Communities in these neighbourhoods tend to be divided over whether new youth-oriented retail like Sweet Tooth Ice Cream will revive or replace the traditional culture and identity of Chinatown (e.g. Pottie-Sherman 2013; Lee 2018). In her study of Vancouver’s Chinatown, for example, Lee (2018) notes “a growing disconnect between patrons of traditional and non-traditional businesses, implying the manifestation of parallel systems in a socio-economic context” (p.8). These concerns relate to the larger issue of “social displacement” discussed in the previous chapter, wherein older communities do not lose

their homes but nonetheless lose power and prestige in the neighbourhood as new residents move in (Brown-Saracino 2004).

It should be noted that the problem of social displacement is not lost on many incoming residents and businesses, and many desire to integrate or at least coexist with existing communities rather than displacing them (*ibid*; Sze 2010). Within Calgary Chinatown, we can see this attitude at the *New Gallery*. While the *New Gallery* has existed in Calgary since 1975, it moved into the historic Canton Block in Chinatown in 2013. Since moving to Chinatown, the gallery has consciously attempted to integrate its own cultural work into the larger culture of the neighbourhood and establish connections with local seniors. This includes everything from Chinese signage, to promoting the work of Asian and minority artists, to leading Cantonese and Mandarin language tours aimed at local seniors groups.

CHINATOWN AS A CULTURAL RESERVOIR

Concerns over how new businesses and amenities integrate with existing ones points to another important way in which the Chinatown community views their neighbourhood: as a cultural reservoir. Historically, Chinatowns have provided a space for ethno-cultural identification, and the safeguarding of Chinese values, beliefs, symbols, and infrastructure (Chan 1986). Interview participants highlighted the importance of maintaining Chinatown in order to give significance to the history of Chinese-Canadians in Calgary. Fung Ling Feimo explained this importance:

I think [Chinatown] acknowledges the cultural past of the early Chinese settlers, because it was built around the time of segregation when people had to live there and they weren't allowed to live anywhere else. It represents that past.

The notion of Chinatown being a space of historical and cultural preservation was a common theme in interviews. For some, this preservation is not only important for Chinese-Canadians themselves, but also for Calgarians and Canadians as a whole. According to Alice Lam:

Chinatowns across North America is at risk of disappearing due to gentrification. We want to share our culture and history with the larger Calgary community and with tourists and policymakers in order to ensure that future development in the neighbourhood is mindful of the historical, cultural and social context of the neighbourhood.

This sentiment was also echoed by Janet Lavoie, who works for the City of Calgary's Arts Culture Division:

I think that understanding the history and importance of Chinatown through storytelling, murals, artists and residents, festivals and events, connection with Canada day, New Year's Eve, just deepens our understanding of our shared history. And it attracts people who will feel really excited to be in Chinatown,

buying from local businesses, understanding the importance of the local economy.

As these quotes demonstrate, we can see how the historical and cultural significance of Chinatown is apparent to both community insiders, and outside stakeholders. Chinatown is seen as a cultural reservoir, where history is preserved and celebrated through institutions, architecture, public art, and cultural celebrations.

TOURISM AND CONSUMERISM

Cultural preservation was also understood as a means to an end, particularly around the issue of tourism. As mentioned in the previous chapter, appealing to outsiders and tourists through consumer experiences has been a core part of Chinatowns since the early 20th century. This view was frequently mentioned by our participants as an important aspect in keeping Chinatown culturally relevant and economically successful. For example, Liza Chan discussed the importance of drawing in locals and tourists:

We hope that Chinatown can be a tourist destination so that it's win-win for everybody, [locals] will be interested to come down and the tourists always want to come down.

Leveraging Chinatown's unique culture into a tourist attraction was not just about preservation, however. Terry Wong, executive director of the Chinatown District Business Improvement Association, discussed the importance of making Chinatown clean, safe, and beautiful:

We want to make sure our community is clean and safe. You want to make sure that a community is a must visit destination... We also want to improve the customer experience, visitor experience... So we got initiatives on cleaning streets, we remove graffiti, changing our streetlights to LED streetlights, replacing all the streetlight banners, putting up lanterns, those are the things we do to make it clean and safe.

In addition to benefiting the neighbourhood economy, Alice Lam pointed out how a tourist-friendly Chinatown could benefit the city of Calgary as a whole, improving its image for visitors:

I think Chinatown gives Calgary something unique, it adds to the character of the city culture-wise and gives tourists an extra attraction to look at because it is different and exciting especially when few cities in North America actually have a Chinatown of their own. Having a vibrant visible cultural community located within the downtown of Calgary is an important cultural asset like the Stampede, music festivals, etc. You'll be like "hey there's a Chinatown" that's pretty cool.

INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS: FINDING BALANCE

Chinatown communities across North America point to tourism as an important part of the economy and identity of their neighbourhoods. However, as sociologist Jan Lin (2010) argues, “the presentation of ethnic culture for tourism and consumption by outsiders also raises fundamental issues of authenticity and cultural ownership” (p.234; also see Klein and Zitcer 2012). Among these issues is how to strike the right balance between catering to outside visitors who are attracted to Chinatown’s culture as a consumer experience and those residents for whom the culture of Chinatown is an everyday lived experience.

Striking this balance was important for many of our participants. In particular, they highlighted the connection between offering appropriate services and housing for residents and the preservation of Chinatown’s culture. According to Tony Wong of the Chinese Cultural Centre:

We need people to recognize that [Chinatown] is a place to live, work, and play. So, we need housing here: affordable housing, housing for seniors, housing for kids, housing for people who are just starting their new careers. And not just housing; we need all the support mechanisms that create a community, and that includes health, education or social services, cultural services, language services.

The point was echoed by Alice Lam who told us that “it’s important to make sure the policies put into place are not just for economic gain but to help contribute to healthy living for the residents of Chinatown.”

According to many interview participants, these challenges can be readily met when community residents and stakeholders have a voice in the process. Community input was an important topic in interviews. For example, Qie told us:

We need to go through a meaningful, inclusive process with the people, and really find out what the interested and impacted community thinks...what the new vision would look like.

The importance of community consultation brings us back to a point raised by Dale Lee Kwong at the beginning of this chapter. Chinatown has a long history of being exploited and disrupted by powerful outside organizations in the public and private sectors, which has bred mistrust among the community. In order to avoid repeating the mistakes and injustices of the past, the Chinatown community must take a lead role in the cultural planning process.

CHAPTER 4. PLANNING FOR CULTURE IN NORTH AMERICA'S CHINATOWNS

The issues raised by our participants and outlined in the previous chapter are not unique to Calgary Chinatown. We can observe similar issues and concerns in Chinatowns across North America. In fact, Calgary's proposed Chinatown Cultural Plan also fits a trend that has been occurring across North America of developing planning guidelines to ensure the preservation and/or revitalization of Chinatowns. In this chapter, we examine 17 Chinatown-focused reports from 12 different cities: Boston, Chicago, Edmonton, Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia, Portland, San Francisco (2 reports), Seattle (3 reports), Toronto, Vancouver (3 reports), and Washington, DC. A full list of the reports, their authors, and their years of publication is provided in Appendix A.

While these reports covered a variety of issues, and only one identified itself specifically as a "cultural plan" (Washington, DC), we focus on how each of the reports relates to the issues of culture and identity within Chinatown. As we will demonstrate, even issues as diverse as economic revitalization, housing, and social services have some relationship to the cultural issues that have been discussed in previous chapters.

This chapter begins by providing a brief overview of the reports, providing details on their authors and their central purposes and motivations. Within this overview we also summarize the lists of recommendations that many of the reports provide. The rest of the chapter looks specifically at how the term "culture" was used within the reports. We identify three major usages. *Formal culture* refers to the explicit production and consumption of the arts and culture. *Culture as people* refers to the way in which the culture and identity of Chinatown are tied to its association with particular groups of people, including the people who live and work in the neighbourhood as well as Chinese-American/Canadians living within the broader metro region. Finally, *intangible culture* refers to the general subjective sense of place that is created within Chinatowns and that cannot be attributed to any single element.

THE REPORTS: AN OVERVIEW

11 of the 17 reports that we examined can be described as neighbourhood or community plans that were written to provide guidelines for the future development of the neighbourhood. Most of these plans were written or sponsored by local governments. Some were written by smaller, independent organizations that received funding either from governments or philanthropic organizations. For example, Philadelphia's *Chinatown Neighbourhood Plan* was developed by the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation with funding from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation. Toronto's *East Chinatown Revitalization Strategy Final Report* was written by students at Ryerson University and funded by the office of a local city councillor.

The motivation behind these reports varied. Some plans were pieces of larger metro- or regional-level plans written to ensure that development within Chinatown fit within broader planning goals and regulations (e.g. Chicago). Other plans were developed to address major perceived problems such as housing affordability (e.g. New York City) or economic stagnation (e.g. Edmonton).

While the main focus of this chapter is on these general neighbourhood or community plans, we also examined more specialized reports on Chinatowns that tend to focus on single issues or projects. These include a street design report written by San Francisco’s Planning Department, a report on gentrification in Vancouver’s Chinatown written by the Carnegie Community Action Project, and “Healthy Community Action Plan” for Seattle’s Chinatown written by a local community development association.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The content of the 11 neighbourhood/community plans was wide-ranging and many were well over 100 pages in length. However, almost all of the neighbourhood plans (10 of 11) provided a clear list of goals or recommendations for development in Chinatown. These goals are useful in allowing us to identify a core set of concerns that are common to Chinatowns across North America. Moreover, we can examine these concerns against those raised by members of Calgary Chinatown community to see how widespread they are across North America.

We identified a total of 23 distinct types of recommendations across the 10 plans that can be grouped into five categories: (1) culture, heritage, and the public realm, (2) housing, social support, and quality of life, (3) economics and business, (4) connectivity and mobility, and (5) community governance. Table 4.1 **Error! Reference source not found.** provides a list of the recommendations that fall within each of these categories.

Table 4.1 Categories of recommendations within Chinatown reports

1. Culture, Heritage, and the Public Realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and Improve Public Spaces • Maintenance and Beautification of Public Realm • Preservation and Rehabilitation of Heritage Buildings • Cultural Programming and Grants
2. Housing, Social Support, and Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrant/Community Services • Affordable Housing and Housing Diversity • Increase Residents • Public Safety/Crime Control • Environmental Sustainability • Public Health, Quality of Life
3. Economics and Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support/Attract Businesses • Job Creation • Attract Development • Tourism, Placemaking, and Marketing
4. Connectivity and Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Connectivity-Local • Increase Connectivity-Regional • General Transportation and Parking Planning • Walkability and Alternative Transportation • Accessibility
5. Community Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage Civic Participation • Establish Local Governing Structures (e.g. BIA) • Establish Ideal Design Principles

Some recommendations were more common than others. Figure 4.1 depicts how many of the reports contained each of the 23 recommendations. Most common were those aimed at supporting existing businesses or offering incentives to attract new businesses. However, the exact content of these recommendations varied from plan to plan. Seattle’s plan, for example, advised offering tax incentives to attract businesses to vacant spaces. Vancouver’s plan, meanwhile, recommended providing “customer service training” for businesses.

Least common was a recommendation related to fostering environmental sustainability in Chinatown (only appearing in Boston’s report). Other less common recommendations include job creation initiatives for local residents, improving accessibility, and increasing mobility connections between Chinatown and other regional destinations.

For a detailed overview of all of the recommendations found in each of the plans, see Appendix B.

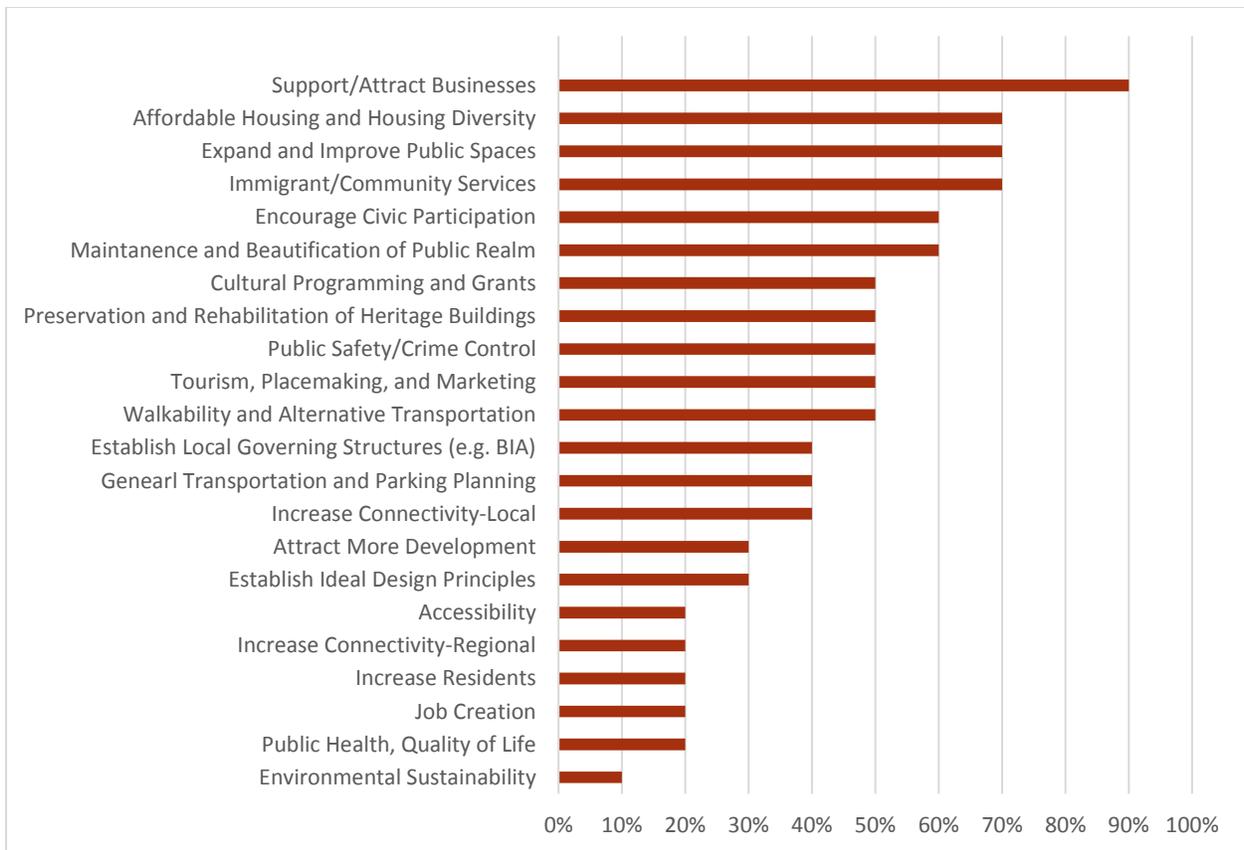


Figure 4.1. Frequency of recommendations within Chinatown reports

THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND IDENTITY

As mentioned, only Washington, DC’s *Chinatown Cultural Development Small Area Plan* explicitly identified itself as a “cultural” plan. However, we found that almost all the plans were explicit in stating goals that related to preserving, honouring, and/or enhancing what they considered to be a valuable

and distinct culture within their respective cities. In fact, the words “culture” and “cultural” appeared an average of 76 times in 15 of the 17 reports that we analyzed.

For example, the first chapter of Vancouver’s *Chinatown Neighbourhood Plan and Economic Revitalization Strategy* begins by stating that...

Vancouver’s Chinatown is a valued cultural and heritage resource. The neighbourhood has an opportunity to become a regional - even global – destination where people can experience Chinatown’s culture and heritage through its architecture, urban life, and festival events. To achieve this, Chinatown needs to respect and protect its cultural assets, and at the same time reach out to the world to make Chinatown relevant not only for Chinese-Canadians, but for everyone. (p.15)

Moreover, 50% of the plans recommended supporting cultural programming and grants. 70% advised improvements for the public realm, which often involved investments in public artwork. As we will discuss, even recommendations seemingly unrelated to culture, such as those concerning economic development or mobility, were often framed in terms of cultural preservation and development.

While almost all the plans used the term “culture”, the meaning of the term varied widely (even within a single report). In attempting to make sense of what “culture” means within the reports, we identified three basic definitions: *formal culture*, *culture as people*, and *intangible culture* (see Table 4.2). We explore each of these definitions in the next three sections.

Table 4.2. Types of culture found in Chinatown reports

Type of Culture	Subtype	Examples
<i>Formal culture</i>	Built form	Heritage buildings; architecture; public art
	Events, programming, and institutions	New Year celebrations; museums, art galleries, and libraries; art and music classes; grants and other support for artists
	Products and services	Cuisine; consumer products; traditional medicine
<i>Culture as people</i>	Demographics and identity markers	Common ethnic and racial identity; age; socio-economic status
	Shared history and experiences	Migration; racial discrimination and violence; political movements
	Geography	References to foreign nations and places such as “Mainland China”, “Taiwan”, and “Hong Kong”
<i>Intangible culture</i>	The subjective experience of place	“Authenticity”; “vibrancy”

FORMAL CULTURE

Formal culture refers to a distinct sphere or sector of social life dedicated to the production and consumption of the arts and culture. Within this definition we include aestheticized aspects of the built environment, such as architecture, heritage buildings, and public art. We also include formal events, institutions, and programs dedicated to the arts and culture, such as museums, festivals, art and music classes, arts grants and other support for artists. Finally, formal culture also refers to commercial products and services that contribute to the unique culture of Chinatown such as cuisine, cultural products, and specialized services such as traditional Chinese medicine.

CULTURE IN THE BUILT FORM

As can be seen in Figure 4.1, recommendations concerning improvements to the public realm were among the most common in the Chinatown plans. These recommendations included expanding and improving public spaces such as parks and squares (70%), maintaining and beautifying the public realm generally (60%), and preserving and rehabilitating heritage buildings (50%).

Discussions of the public realm were typically tied directly to the notion of neighbourhood culture and identity. For example, beautification was often associated with funding public artworks that express the culture of Chinatown, or the revitalization of building facades that were seen as contributing to the cultural distinctiveness of the neighbourhood. The preservation and rehabilitation of buildings were also framed as a way of connecting Chinese-Americans/Canadians to their historical roots in North America. The first page of Washington DC's plan, for example, featured three separate images of the historic *On Leong Merchants Association* building from 1935, 1980, and 2009, emphasizing the sense of continuity that these buildings create even within a rapidly changing city.

Related to the issue of heritage preservation, many of the reports recommended restrictions on heights in order to ensure that new development fit with the existing built form of the neighbourhood. New York's report, for example, endorsed the creation of a special zoning district that restricted building heights and demolition. Toronto and Vancouver's plans recommended increasing heights and density, but doing so in a way that was sensitive to the existing built form. San Francisco's *Urban Displacement Project* report and Philadelphia's plan both suggested limited heights within Chinatown in order to discourage real estate speculation.

It was not only buildings themselves that were identified as contributing to the heritage of the neighbourhoods. Reports from both Los Angeles and Vancouver discussed initiatives to repair and preserve neon lighting, which they claimed were a core part of Chinatown's physical heritage (e.g. see Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2. Neon along Pender Street in Chinatown, Vancouver

City of Vancouver archives COV-5511---: CVA 780-476

Beautification and improvements to the urban built form were also seen as an important strategy for addressing issues of safety and cleanliness. Public safety and crime were frequently mentioned in the reports, and 50% made explicit recommendations on this issue. In Chicago and Philadelphia, residents expressed fear about walking around their neighbourhood. Thus, improving the public realm was seen as a way of bringing more activity to the streets in order to discourage crime and create a sense of safety. Even without fear of crime, some of the reports noted the historic stigmatization of Chinatown as a place associated with filth and pollution. The reports stressed beautification and maintenance of the public realm to push back against this stigma.

CULTURAL EVENTS, PROGRAMMING, AND INSTITUTIONS

In addition to preserving and improving physical heritage and the public realm, 50% of the Chinatown plans recommended supporting various types of cultural events and programs. For some of the plans, like New York's, the role of the arts and artists within Chinatown was extremely important in honouring the culture and connecting Chinese-Americans/Canadians to their heritage:

Participation and engagement in arts and cultural activities and events have been critically important to New York's Chinese community since its earliest days. For a people that have been unwelcome and isolated by the larger

American society, such as the Exclusion-era bachelors, or have recently immigrated, connections to Chinese arts and culture have provided an essential affirmation of identity and self-worth. (p.47)

Several plans recommended supporting both traditional arts programming such as Cantonese Opera, as well as supporting artist-in-residence programs, particularly aimed at creating new public artwork that expresses the identity and heritage of Chinatown.

In addition to the arts and artists, festivals in were seen as important initiatives for strengthening the cultural character of Chinatown. According to Toronto's plan, for example,

Festivals and smaller events represent great methods to promote and celebrate culture. They are excellent tools in education, and exposure to cultural traditions. It is important that East Chinatown implement more festivals and smaller events throughout the years to maintain momentum of exposure. This can help promote the neighbourhood and draw in more visitors of different ethnicities and diversities into the neighbourhood. (p.43)

Among the events most commonly cited were Lunar New Year parades and celebrations, as well as street markets and night markets.

Finally, several of the reports noted the importance of existing Chinese cultural institutions located within or nearby their respective Chinatowns. These included *Chinese-American Museums* in Los Angeles and Chicago, the *Museum of Chinese in America* in New York City, and the *Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience* in Seattle.

Other reports, such as Washington, DC's plan, advocated the creation of a new cultural institution, which it referred to as "an Asia Center" (p.38). The plan envisioned that this center could provide gathering spaces for local organizations, "exhibition and performance space[s] to display Chinese American and Asian arts, history, and culture" (*ibid*), a tourist information center, and retail space for "contemporary Asian merchants, products, and services" (*ibid*). Likewise, New York's plan advocated for the creation of a Chinese-language movie theatre and an arts centre.

CULTURAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Commercial enterprises were also seen as a major source of culture within Chinatown, and small, immigrant-run businesses were frequently mentioned as essential to the traditional character of the neighbourhoods. Additionally, the attraction of these businesses to tourists and Chinese-Americans/Canadians living outside Chinatown was seen as a core part of the local economy. As Philadelphia's plan stated:

Philadelphia is one of the few cities in the country with a historic Chinatown. Its unique and authentic commercial district provides the experience of visiting a "city within a city" that has bloomed over the last 5 years into one of the city's most vibrant dining destinations, making it a strong tourism draw. But

beyond its reputation for dining, Chinatown's authenticity relies on a broad range of goods and services that are not just for tourist consumption. (p.80)

Vancouver's report, meanwhile, discussed the aesthetic aspects of the neighbourhood's small businesses. "The colourful merchandise display that often spills out onto the street, and the sounds and the street-side activities they generate are all important parts of Chinatown's character" (p.43).

Despite their importance, many of the reports stressed that small businesses were facing significant challenges. Among these challenges were increased business costs and rents, as well as the loss of customers to Chinese businesses outside of Chinatown. In response, one of the most frequent recommendations made in these reports was to support existing businesses and provide incentives to new businesses (90%).

Supporting small businesses was not only seen as important to business owners. It was also frequently cited as being important for sustaining the Chinese and Asian population that resides in Chinatown. The issue of food security, which was mentioned in Chapter 2, was addressed in reports from Vancouver and Washington, DC. According to Washington's report:

Asian seniors need access to affordable fresh Asian produce and other groceries which are currently unavailable in DC Chinatown. Currently there are only a few shuttles which provide this service and they often have to turn people away.

CULTURE AS PEOPLE

In addition to discussing culture in the formal sense, all of the reports made connections between the culture of Chinatown and the neighbourhood's association with a particular group or groups of people. However, as we discussed in the first chapter of this report, the connection between "Chinatown" and "Chinese people" is by no means straightforward. Throughout the reports, connections were made between Chinatown and many different distinct groups of people, including people who live and work within the actual neighbourhood, Chinese-Americans/Canadians living within the larger metro areas, newly arrived immigrants from East Asia, the Chinese migrants who originally founded the Chinatowns in the 19th century, East Asian tourists in North America, and others. The connections drawn between culture and people tended to be made on the basis of certain demographic and/or social identity markers, including race/ethnicity and age. It was also made based on certain shared historical experiences typically related to the formation of Chinatowns. Less commonly, connections were made between Chinatowns and geographic locations in East Asia.

CULTURE, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND IDENTITY MARKERS

There were generally two populations that were most frequently mentioned within the reports: residents of Chinatown itself, and Chinese-American/Canadians within the metro region more broadly. With regard to Chinatown residents, the reports provide a familiar profile: predominantly of Chinese or Asian descent, elderly, lower-income, and very few youths. In most of the cities, the population is

growing, but incoming residents are more likely to be non-Chinese, higher-income, and younger. Washington DC was the most dramatic case of demographic change where the number of Chinese-Americans declined from 3000 in 1970 to less than 300 today (p.6). Chicago and Boston's Chinatowns, by contrast, have seen a growth in Chinese residents, driven primarily by new immigrants.

Because Chinatown's culture was seen as tied to the presence of older, Chinese-American residents, many of the reports were concerned about ensuring that this group was able to continue to reside within the neighbourhood. In fact, 70% of the reports recommended expanding access to affordable housing. This concern was the main focus of New York City's plan, *Preserving Affordability & Authenticity*:

Chinatown has a reputation as a bastion of affordability in Manhattan for new immigrants and others. Affordability has historically been bolstered by the presence of abundant multi-family rent-stabilized buildings... built with public subsidies... and tax abatements. As is the case with the rest of Manhattan, Chinatown is experiencing market pressures that, unchecked, erode affordability and threaten the essential character of the neighborhood... This historic Chinese enclave has experienced an overall loss in Chinese population in the last decade. Census tracts that were over 30% Chinese lost as many as 10,000 Chinese residents between 2000 and 2010. While some of this loss this may be attributed to people relocating in the aftermath of 9/11 it is also the result of residents being priced out of the neighborhood and seeking affordable accommodation elsewhere. (p.7)

While New York City may represent an extreme case of affordability, similar concerns were found in most reports. Moreover, we can see in this quotation and the report's title, how the authors make a common connection between the ability of long-time residents to remain in the neighbourhood and the preservation of the neighbourhood's "authentic" cultural character – a term that will be discussed later in this chapter.

In addition to affordable housing, some of the reports stressed the need for more housing devoted specifically to seniors. Reflecting the situation in Calgary, Philadelphia's report noted that, due to years-long wait lists for seniors housing, "many seniors have ended up in housing elsewhere in the city [despite expressing] a strong desire to be located in Chinatown" (p.37). Thus, expanding and improving seniors housing was one of the most common issues raised by those surveyed for the Philadelphia plan (*ibid*).

Interestingly, while many of the reports discussed the need for affordable housing, only two reports (New York City and Philadelphia) discussed the need to provide well-paying job opportunities to local residents as part of the effort to ensure their economic and residential stability. The infrequency with which job creation strategies were discussed is even more puzzling given that economic development was the most common issue discussed in all of the reports. In almost all cases, economic development was framed around issues concerning business owners and consumers – not employees.

In addition to concerns about Chinese-American/Canadians living within the neighbourhood, many of the plans also stressed the importance of Chinatown for the second population: Chinese-Americans/Canadians living in the metro region. For this group, the reports described Chinatown as “the cultural center of the Chinese community”. In playing this role, many of the reports noted the importance that Chinatown played in providing social services specifically aimed at Chinese-American/Canadians and immigrants from East Asia. For example, Boston’s plan noted that...

Chinatown is the regional hub providing jobs, housing, and services to the region's Asian and Chinese American community. In the last decade, at least six social service agencies have invested in Chinatown's future by purchasing permanent facilities and providing services to the community's regional population. (p.17)

Additionally, 70% of the reports made recommendations about providing social services and support for immigrants. The role of Chinatown as a regional “cultural centre” also relates back to discussions of formal culture, as Chinatown plays a role in connecting Chinese-Americans/Canadians with a sense of collective identity and history. Social and cultural services were also seen by some of the reports as an important strategy for attracting Chinese and Asian youth to Chinatown.

It should also be noted that some of the plans pushed back against the idea of associating Chinatown only with Chinese or Asian people. The *Vancouver Chinatown Social Cohesion Report* cautioned not to equate Chinatown’s culture to a single ethnic group, but rather acknowledge that the neighbourhood has traditionally been home to many other minority groups, including First Nations, African, and other non-Chinese Asian diasporas (Lee 2018:27).

CULTURE ROOTED IN SHARED HISTORY AND EXPERIENCES

On top of citing a common demographic profile or ethnic identity, eight of the 17 reports included sections dedicated to the history or the neighbourhoods, rooting Chinatown’s culture in shared historical experiences. These accounts were similar to the one we provide in Chapter 2 of this report, documenting experiences of racism and violence, such as the “Exclusion” Acts that were passed in both Canada and the USA, and legalized racial segregation. They also include stories of Chinese-American/Canadian communities coming together to fight back against discrimination, particularly during the urban renewal era. The accounts also note the many social, cultural, and economic accomplishments of the Chinese communities within their respective cities. As with members of Calgary Chinatown community, the Chinatown reports from other cities depict their respective neighbourhoods as cultural reservoirs that allow Chinese and non-Chinese people alike to learn about and celebrate this heritage.

CULTURE AND GEOGRAPHY

Interestingly, despite the traditional depiction of Chinatown as a piece of East Asia located within the West, there were relatively few references to foreign geographic locations, such as cities like Hong Kong or Singapore, or nations like the PRC or Taiwan. References that were made to these places tended to

be brought up in historical accounts of Chinatown's formation or in citing the potential of attracting East Asian tourists in North America to visit Chinatown.

Nonetheless, there were some exceptions. Philadelphia's plan frequently referred to Chinatown as a "home away from home for immigrants... where they can connect to their culture and history" (p.28), though the plan never specified exactly where this "home" was. Chicago's plan was more specific, noting Chinatown's important role as a "gateway" for newly arrived immigrants specifically from the PRC (p.44).

In a few cases, the neighbourhood plans looked to places in East Asia for cultural development ideas and precedents. For instance, while most of the formal cultural recommendations focused on local arts and culture, New York's neighbourhood plan suggested creating a major entertainment venue that could tap into the massive Chinese music industry:

Instead of focusing primarily on supporting the local arts and cultural organizations (Asian American, modern or folk), consider... developing a venue that caters more to the recent immigrant residents' entertainment sensibilities and interests, such as Chinese popular music (Canto pop and Mando pop) that are extremely popular in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. (p.55)

Philadelphia's plan, meanwhile, cited the Jianguo Flower Market in Taipei as a model for animating street life within its Chinatown (p.88). Alternatively, Washington DC's plan recommended attracting Asian multi-national corporations such as Sanrio (Japan) to set up locations within its Chinatown (p.8).⁸

THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

A final note related to the notion of "culture as people" is the frequency with which the reports encouraged "civic engagement" (60%). The reports themselves frequently made use of community consultation. Many were written or overseen by working groups or steering committees that included residents and business owners from Chinatown. They also made use of interviews, focus groups, surveys, and town halls with community members.

Promoting civic engagement is particularly important given how Chinese-Americans/Canadians have historically been excluded from governance, and even from decisions regarding the fate of Chinatowns. Today, cultural and linguistic barriers continue to exist and must be overcome to successfully include the community in governance. Relatedly, fragmentation among community organizations, or a lack of organizations, were cited by some of the plans as a barrier to civic engagement. 40% of the reports made recommendations related to formalizing local governing bodies to represent community interests.

⁸ The idea of bringing Asian-based multinational chains to Chinatown reflects the broader trend of "transclaves" discussed in Chapter 2. According to Kim (2018) the transclave serves as a location for major corporations to promote their products and differs from the traditional role of the ethnic enclave as a destination for new immigrants to live and find work.

At the heart of civic engagement is the issue of whether the future of Chinatown is seen as something that legitimately reflects the hopes, values, and culture of the Chinatown community, or is something that has been imposed upon the community by outsiders. Studies have shown that the best way to achieve legitimacy and support for major development projects is to ensure that the community becomes a meaningful participant in the development process (Patterson 2019).

INTANGIBLE CULTURE

The final way that culture was discussed in the reports was to describe the subjective feeling that made Chinatown distinct from other areas of the city. This feeling was part of what made Chinatown feel like home to community members and made it an attractive place to visit for outsiders. We might call this subjective sense of culture “intangible culture,” borrowing a term that was used frequently in the *Vancouver Chinatown Social Cohesion Report*. This report quoted the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, arguing that the...

...elements of intangible heritage “[contribute] to social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity and responsibility which helps individuals to feel part of one or different communities and to feel part of society at large.” In addition, these elements must be rooted in the communities themselves... (Lee 2018:27)

While most of the Chinatown reports did not explicitly use the term “intangible culture”, they did discuss similar ideas about the relationship between culture and a subjective sense of place.

“AUTHENTICITY”

One of the terms that most clearly relates to intangible culture is “authenticity”. Words like “authentic” and “authenticity” were used explicitly in eight of the 17 plans, with New York’s plan going so far as to feature authenticity in the title (*Preserving Affordability & Authenticity*). In general, there were two basic usages of the term “authentic”. First, authenticity was used with reference to particular consumer experience that Chinatown provided to outsiders. Edmonton’s report exemplified this usage, arguing that “Edmonton’s Chinatown [is] well positioned to deliver and capitalize on their ability to offer patrons an authentic shopping and cultural experience” (p.103). New York’s plan also made the connection between “authenticity” and the consumer experience:

Chinatown’s authenticity is a unique historic and economic asset to the City. It is what attracts visitors from throughout the United States and the world, including increasing numbers from mainland China, and contributes substantially to New York City’s tourist economy. (p.2)

However, New York’s plan also warned that this authenticity, which appeals to outside consumers, relies on the presence of a thriving community. Thus, their report advocated “pursu[ing] policies and efforts aimed at long-term community preservation and development rather than the creation of a ‘Disneyland Chinatown’” (p.50).

This brings us to the second usage of the term “authentic”, which referred to preserving Chinatown as a place for minorities and working class people to live. According to the Philadelphia plan, therefore...

The importance of housing to an authentic Chinatown cannot be understated and has an economic impact: as residents leave, the businesses that serve them and employ them will eventually leave as well. Without intervention, market pressures will naturally eliminate the working class population in neighborhoods such as Chinatown, therefore equity is a value that must shape all local decisions. Preserving affordability and a sense of belonging are critical to the health and vitality of Chinatown. (p.vii)

In addition to affordability issues, Portland’s plan stressed that an “authentic” neighbourhood plan required input from community stakeholders (p.15), drawing a connection between intangible culture and culture as people.

MARKETING, PLACEMAKING, AND TOURISM

Half of the Chinatown plans made explicit recommendations designed to formalize intangible culture in the form of marketing, placemaking, and tourist strategies (40%). For example, Seattle’s plan pushed for “aggressively market[ing] the community,” including publishing “a community calendar that promotes business, culture, landmarks, [and] events” (p.8). In general, these recommendations were focused on making Chinatown appeal to outsiders who were not otherwise familiar with the neighbourhood, but were nevertheless often seen as essential to maintaining a viable local economy. According to Toronto’s report:

In order for East Chinatown to become a vibrant commercial district, it is important to promote business diversity through cultural festivities advertising, and other activities. Promotion of the area can be achieved through advertising using social media, print media, signage, and festivals and events. (p.40)

MOBILITY ISSUES AND CULTURE

Issues of mobility were closely connected to the intangible culture of Chinatown. The ways in which people move into and through Chinatown affect how they experience the neighbourhood. Historically, Chinatowns have frequently made use of paifangs (gates) placed over streets to mark clear boundaries for those moving in and out of Chinatowns (see Figure 4.3). Paifangs, along with stylized signage and street furniture, give people a strong and distinct sense of place as they enter the neighbourhood from outside.



Figure 4.3. Historic Chinatown Gate, Seattle.

Photo by Joe Mabel, 2008. Accessed Sep 10 2019 at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Seattle_-_Chinatown_gate_02.jpg.

Mobility issues have also threatened the distinct culture of Chinatown. As discussed in previous chapters, Chinatowns across North America were frequently targeted for demolition in the 1950s and '60s due to planned expressways designed to move suburbanites quickly in and out of downtown. While these plans were defeated in cities such as Vancouver, major expressways were built in Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles, either through or right next to Chinatown neighbourhoods. Today these expressways are seen as major impediments to creating a coherent sense of place. In Philadelphia, the Vine Street Expressway is seen as “hemming” Chinatown in from the north and preventing the growth of the Chinatown commercial district. Similarly, Chicago’s plan identified problems associated with two major roadways (Archer Ave and Cermak Road) that bifurcate the neighbourhood into an “Old Chinatown” to the south and a “New Chinatown” to the north, and discourage circulation of pedestrians between the two sides. Both issues relate to the larger set of recommendations we labeled “increase connectivity-local”, which appeared in 40% of the reports.

Expressways and large, car-centric streets demonstrate how city planners have often prioritized the movement of cars *through* Chinatown at the expense of the circulation of pedestrians *within* Chinatown. Consequently, all of the reports advocated improving wayfinding, walkability, and the general pedestrian experience. Walkability, for instance, was often framed not only as a means of transportation, but also a contributor to the intangible sense of vibrancy that the plans were seeking to

enhance. Chicago's plan, for example, states "not only should Chinatown's streets be easy and comfortable for pedestrians (of all ages) to traverse, ideally they should also be pleasant places for them to linger and socialize" (p.19).

CONCLUSION: MAINTAINING THE FABRIC

As a whole, the Chinatown reports demonstrate how many of the issues raised within Calgary Chinatown community are being experienced across North America. While not two Chinatowns are alike, they have all be shaped by similar historical forces and face similar challenges.

Analyzing the reports also illustrate the appropriateness of the "fabric" metaphor that so many people in Calgary Chinatown have used to describe their neighbourhood. The "culture" of Chinatown is not just a set of formal institutions or programs. Rather, this culture woven into almost all of the elements that make up these neighbourhoods, from the available housing stock that influences who is able to live in Chinatown, to the road network that shapes how people experience the neighbourhood.

It is with this multifaceted, fabric metaphor in mind that we turn to the conclusion of the report and a set of recommendations for "culturally" planning Calgary Chinatown.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this report, there has been a tension between the interests and needs of community members within Chinatown, and outsiders for whom Chinatown is a place to visit for leisure and consumption. Clearly a “cultural plan” for Calgary Chinatown must address both insiders and outsiders. To conclude this chapter, we discuss this issue more broadly and making five recommendations that we believe support a balanced approach to cultural development in Chinatown.

CHINATOWN IN THE MULTICULTURAL CITY

In Chapter 3, we reported our participants’ desire for striking the right balance between insiders and outsiders. This idea of balance fits into the notion of a *multicultural city* developed by the urban planner Mohammad Qadeer. According to Qadeer (2016) a city can be described as “multicultural” when it allows “associations, communities, clubs, and other institutions to be formed along cultural, religious, and linguistic lines [and] promote[s] public expressions of community cultures” (p.5). In other words, these cities allow for the flourishing of social and cultural institutions *within* minority communities, while also encouraging a general public sphere in which each community is able to express, promote, and share its identity and culture with the rest of the city. If we look at Chinatowns generally and Calgary Chinatown in particular, we can see how these neighbourhoods have traditionally embodied this balance of internal social and cultural support with external expressions of Chinese identity.

Within Calgary Chinatown this balance has been designed right into the physical architecture of the neighbourhood. In Figure 3.8, for example, provides a clear demonstration of how this interrelationship plays out within the Canton Block. On the ground floor, businesses such as *Sweet Tooth Ice Cream*, provide consumer amenities that are accessible and attractive to Calgarians and tourists of many walks of life, but that also have characteristics that reinforce Chinatown’s character as a Chinese or Asian enclave (e.g. matcha-flavoured ice cream). In this sense, *Sweet Tooth* follows a tradition that can be traced back to the innovations of chop suey and ginger beef (Liu 2009; Hui 2019) of creating new and distinct cultural products that act as public expressions of Chinese culture aimed at the rest of the city and for North American society as a whole.

On the second floor of the Canton Block, one finds community institutions such as the *Sue Yuen Benevolent Association* and the *Calgary Harmony of Art’s Association*. These organizations are not known or accessible to most tourists or non-Chinese Calgarians. Nonetheless, they play an important role in sustaining a sense of community among Chinatown residents as well as Chinese-Canadians who live elsewhere in the city but nonetheless participant in Chinatown-based social networks and cultural practices. More generally, these community spaces and institutions provide the Chinatown community with a sense of common identity, a system of social support and mutual trust, and facilitate the pursuit of collective goals and shared values – what sociologist call “collective efficacy” (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999). Even if traditional kinship-based organizations are shrinking (Sciban and Wong 2013:83), we argue that the provision of community space generally remains an important feature of Chinatown.

The relationship between public-oriented consumer amenities at the ground level and community-oriented amenities on the second floor can be observed on almost every block within Chinatown. Beyond that, Chinatown also provides space for a third realm: private households. Despite general trends of suburbanization among Chinese-Canadians, Chinatown remains a residential neighbourhood for hundreds of lower-income Chinese seniors, and thousands of people more generally. Typically, these private residential units are situated above both the commercial and community spaces in mid- or high-rise residential towers.

PRIVATE, PAROCHIAL, AND PUBLIC LIFE IN CHINATOWN

The sociologist Albert Hunter (1995) argued that social life within the modern city plays out within three realms: the *private realm* of the household, the *parochial realm* of the community, and the *public realm* of the city as a whole. One of the strengths of Calgary Chinatown – and perhaps a key reason for its perseverance in the face of so many challenges – can be attributed to the way it has integrated all three realms within a single neighbourhood. Moreover, in integrating these three realms, it has also provided a safe haven for a population that has traditionally been economically and culturally marginalized from the rest of Canadian society. We argue that preserving Chinatown’s distinct culture for future generations requires us to ensure that new developments build on this tradition of integration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We conclude this report by making five recommendations that are based on the idea that preserving Chinatown and allowing it to thrive in the future requires that it continue to sustain an active private realm where residents can continue to live comfortably, parochial realm that provides space for a thriving community life, and public realm that expresses Chinese identity to the rest of society and serves as an economic lifeline for the neighbourhood. These recommendations also correspond to the three notions of culture identified in the Chinatown reports from other cities: formal culture, culture as people, and intangible culture.

RECOMMENDATION #1: MAKING HOUSING AFFORDABLE

As was noted in Chapter 4, without continuing to serve as a place of residence, particularly for lower-income, elderly, immigrants, Chinatown’s culture will be reduced to a “Disneyland” neighbourhood. This is based on the idea that Chinatown’s culture is tied to particular groups of people who have traditionally been marginalized within North American society. Despite the spread of Chinese-Canadians to the suburbs and other locations within Calgary, we know there is still a demand among Chinese seniors to live within Chinatown. Thus, we follow 70% of the Chinatown plans from other cities in recommending that the City of Calgary examine ways to ensure that Chinatown remains affordable to lower-income and elderly residents. More specifically, we recommend:

- *Ensuring the preservation of existing units of affordable housing.* Relatedly, additional research is needed to understand the current status of the existing subsidized housing within Chinatown. Expired agreements with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, state of repair issues, and other factors may threaten their continued status as affordable housing.

- *Implementing inclusionary zoning rules to ensure that new development includes affordable housing units.* Indeed, there is evidence that inclusionary zoning rules have been instrumental in sustaining the Chinese population within Boston and Philadelphia’s Chinatowns (Acolin and Vitiello 2017).

RECOMMENDATION #2: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY CULTURAL SPACES AND SERVICES

In line with the City of Calgary’s 2016 Cultural Plan (MDB Insight 2016) we recommend support for what we have termed “formal culture” within Chinatown that balances those cultural resources aimed primarily at local community members with those aimed at the larger public and tourists. With regard to the local community, we recommend that the City of Calgary examine ways to support Chinatown’s traditional role as a “cultural hub” for Chinese-Canadians in Calgary. As part of this support, we suggest:

- *Partnering with existing cultural and community organizations within Chinatown.*
- *Ensure that new development projects provide community spaces that continue to support and accommodate the social and cultural needs of a growing neighbourhood.* As mentioned, Chinatown’s existing built form provides a model for these spaces, located on second or third floors, above ground-level commercial spaces, and below upper-floor residential spaces.
- *Conducting research into the status of key businesses that provide important culturally-relevant products and services.* Issues of food security are particularly important to ensuring the preservation of the neighbourhood. Grocery stores and specialty food shops not only contribute to the culture of the neighbourhood. They also allow Chinese residents to remain within the neighbourhood.

RECOMMENDATION #3: CELEBRATING PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF CHINESE IDENTITY

In addition to supporting community-based culture, we also recommend that the City support cultural initiatives aimed at expressing Chinese identity to the broader public by:

- *Supporting festivals and events that raise the profile of Chinatown within Calgary.*
- *Supporting improvements to the public realm to ensure that Chinese-Canadian heritage is celebrated within the built form of the neighbourhood, and that navigating Chinatown is safe, easy, and pleasurable for everyone.*

RECOMMENDATION #4: STRENGTHENING BOUNDARIES

Related to the public expression of Chinese identity is the preservation of the “intangible culture” of Chinatown: the fact that the neighbourhood feels authentic and distinct from other areas of downtown. We argue that this intangible sense of culture can be safeguarded by strengthening the boundaries that separate Chinatown from the rest of downtown. Indeed, based on the responses of our participants,

one of the greatest concerns among members of Calgary Chinatown community was the erosion of their neighbourhood into the surrounding downtown core due to unsympathetic development. Strengthening the boundaries around Chinatown could mean:

- *Developing design guidelines to ensure that new development within Chinatown is oriented toward the existing built form of the neighbourhood and contributes to street life within neighbourhood.*
- *Using public art, architecture, and other elements of the built form to create visible gateways into Chinatown.*
- *Prioritizing movement within (as opposed to through) Chinatown by prioritizing pedestrian safety and traffic calming.* While Chinatown escaped demolition due to the proposed expressway of the 1960s, Centre Street continues to serve as a major thoroughfare connecting downtown to the norther suburbs.

RECOMMENDATION #5: ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

The four previous recommendations are reliant on a fifth recommendation: engaging the Chinatown community. As has been discussed, there is a great deal of mistrust within the Chinatown community that is a product of powerful outsider organizations imposing their own interests upon Chinatown. In order to overcome this history, the responses to the previous four recommendations should be developed in close consultation with people who are involved with Chinatown either as residents, business owners, employees and workers, members of community organizations, and others who have strong knowledge of and connection to the Chinatown neighbourhood.

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APPENDIX A. A LIST OF CHINATOWN PLANS AND REPORTS IN NORTH AMERICA

City	Report Title	Year	Authors
Boston	<i>Chinatown Master Plan 2010: Community Vision for the Future</i>	2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinatown Master Plan 2010 Oversight Committee
Chicago	<i>Chinatown Community Vision Plan</i>	2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alderman Daniel Solis (25th Ward) Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Edmonton	<i>Chinatown Economic Development Plan</i>	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AECOM Canada Ltd. Funded by the City of Edmonton
Los Angeles	<i>Chinatown Redevelopment Project Area: 5-Year Implementation Plan FY 2010 – FY 2014</i>	2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles
New York City	<i>Preserving Affordability & Authenticity: Recommendations to the Chinatown Working Group</i>	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pratt Center for Community Development Collective for Community, Culture and the Environment Funded by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Philadelphia	<i>Chinatown Neighborhood Plan</i>	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation Funded by Wells Fargo Regional Foundation
Portland	<i>Old Town/Chinatown Five-Year Action Plan</i>	2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portland Development Commission
San Francisco	<i>Chinatown-Broadway Street Design Final Report</i>	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> San Francisco Planning Department San Francisco Municipal Transportation Department San Francisco Department of Public Works Chinatown Community Development Center
	<i>Urban Displacement Project: San Francisco's Chinatown</i>	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mitchell Crispell and Nicole Montojo (University of California – Berkeley) Funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Seattle	<i>Chinatown/ International District Strategic Plan</i>	1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Seattle
	<i>Sustainable Neighborhood Assessment: Chinatown-International District</i>	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global Green USA Funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency
	<i>Chinatown-International District 2020 Healthy Community Action Plan</i>	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valerie Tran, Tom Im, and Kay Nelson Funded by the International District Community Development Association
Toronto	<i>East Chinatown Revitalization Strategy Final Report</i>	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ryerson University East Chinatown Planning Consultants Funded by Councillor Paula Fletcher (Ward 30) and Chinese Chamber of Commerce (East Toronto)
Vancouver	<i>Chinatown Neighbourhood Plan & Economic Revitalization Strategy</i>	2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Vancouver
	<i>"We are too poor to afford anything": Retail Gentrification Mapping Report</i>	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carnegie Community Action Project
	<i>Vancouver Chinatown Social Cohesion Report</i>	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christina Lee (Hua Foundation) Funded in part by the City of Vancouver
Washington, DC	<i>Chinatown Cultural Development Small Area Plan</i>	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District of Columbia Office of Planning Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

APPENDIX B. GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF CHINATOWN PLANS

TABLE B.1 CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND THE PUBLIC REALM

	Expand and Improve Public Spaces	Maintenance and Beautification of Public Realm	Preservation and Rehabilitation of Heritage Buildings	Cultural Programming and Grants
Boston	Expand civic spaces and increase the number of open spaces and park			
Chicago	Increase activity in key areas and make Chinatown’s public areas places where people want to be. Improve the safety of parks and public spaces through effective lighting and landscaping strategies. Develop effective signage and advertising to increase awareness of park amenities and activities. Activate parks and public spaces through innovative “placemaking” and enhanced streetscaping. Identify priorities for increasing community green space as part of future redevelopment.	Engage the stakeholders of Chinatown in the maintenance of their community.		
Edmonton		Physical improvements/upkeep	Heritage/Culture	
New York City			Preserve sites of cultural significance to the contemporary community, as well as sites of historic significance.	Preserve and build upon Chinatown’s cultural assets and promote opportunities for artistic and cultural expression.
Philadelphia	Create more public space and programming for community use	Create an inviting and beautiful public realm		
Portland			Facilitate rehabilitation and development of privately-owned properties	Honor and enhance the district’s multiethnic history
Seattle	Activate parks by encouraging more frequent, dynamic use; create new open space	Develop a Facade Improvement Fund; complete maintenance work within public spaces;		
Toronto	Implement more street furniture. Accentuate Zhong Hua Men Archway. Implement strategies to better utilize and improve gathering spaces.	Initiate building façade Improvements	Initiate building façade Improvements	Implement more cultural events and festivals in East Chinatown

TABLE B.1 CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND THE PUBLIC REALM (CONTINUED)

	Expand and Improve Public Spaces	Maintenance and Beautification of Public Realm	Preservation and Rehabilitation of Heritage Buildings	Cultural Programming and Grants
Vancouver	Provide capital improvement to enhance key public places and streets		Preservation of Heritage Buildings	Enhance Cultural Facilities. Encourage Community Programming and Events. Partner with Academic Institutions. Assist local community and cultural organizations in event and festival programming in public spaces.
Washington DC	Transform Chinatown Park into a great neighborhood park	Promote creative signage and storefront design. Create a public realm master plan for Chinatown.		Develop an Asian street market festival. Work with Cultural Tourism DC to develop a year-long calendar of programmed Asian-themed events. Begin development of an Asia Center.

TABLE B.2 HOUSING, SOCIAL SUPPORT, AND QUALITY OF LIFE

	Immigrant/Community Services	Affordable Housing and Housing Diversity	Increase Residents	Public Safety/Crime Control	Environmental Sustainability	Public Health, Quality of Life
Boston	Preserve and strengthen Chinatown as a gateway for new immigrants and as a regional center for Chinese and Asian American culture and services	Ensure the preservation of existing affordable housing and middle-income family housing. Expand the number and range of housing options with a priority on low- and middle-income family housing.		Increase public safety, improve the pedestrian environment, and engage in transportation planning to address community needs	Foster a more sustainable and greener community	Cultivate a healthier and cleaner environment and promote the health and well-being of its residents. Develop policies that improve the quality of life for community members.
Chicago	Expand access to City of Chicago services for Chinatown’s residents with limited English proficiency. Strengthen resources and improve options for students entering high school and their parents. Coordinate English as a Second Language (ESL) training and new occupational programs at the City Colleges of Chicago.	Ensure quality affordable housing by connecting landlords to resources to improve their properties.		Utilize and coordinate all available resources to improve communication to strengthen the community (and reduce crime).		
Edmonton			Increase Residential Population	Policing/security		
New York City		Preserve existing affordable housing. Develop affordable rental housing, based upon local area median income. Promote affordable homeownership development. Any new housing development on public land should be affordable to low-income residents.				

TABLE B.2 HOUSING, SOCIAL SUPPORT, AND QUALITY OF LIFE (CONTINUED)

	Immigrant/Community Services	Affordable Housing and Housing Diversity	Increase Residents	Public Safety/Crime Control	Environmental Sustainability	Public Health, Quality of Life
Philadelphia	Strengthen institutions that provide critical services and serve as a hub of community	Preserve and upgrade existing affordable housing. Develop new affordable housing opportunities.				Promote community wellness and health
Portland	Engage educational institutions in opportunities for partnership, program support and expansion.	Strategically invest affordable housing resources in Portland Housing Bureau portfolio		Identify strategic safety initiatives and/or improvements		
Seattle	Figure out best way to provide needed community recreation space and programs; expand and promote youth sports programs	Housing diversification; preservation of affordable housing; housing rehabilitation		Crime prevention through environmental design; increase outreach and services related to public health and safety; greater police presence; light parking lots		
Toronto	Improve the matching between service provision and needs					
Vancouver		Replace existing Single Room Occupancy hotels (SROs) with better quality housing targeted to low-income and aging residents. Encourage market housing with a focus on affordable market rental and ownership housing.	Develop a residential intensification strategy			
Washington DC	Locate a space for a Chinese charter school or satellite campus in Chinatown					

TABLE B.3 ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

	Support/Attract Businesses	Job Creation	Attract Development	Tourism, Placemaking, and Marketing
Boston	Identity, create and prepare community members and business for economic development opportunities which will serve the needs of local residents, the regional Asian American community, neighboring institutions, and the Downtown and Theater Districts			
Chicago	Leverage partnerships to strengthen training and support for existing local businesses.			Strengthen Chinatown's capacity to build upon its tourism potential.
Edmonton	Economic Development			Create a Destination; Placemaking/Identity
New York City	Promote economic development that benefits the residents and businesses of Chinatown and surrounding areas.	Create well-paying job opportunities for the residents of Chinatown and surrounding areas.		
Philadelphia	Strengthen Chinatown's commercial core. Expand commercial district north of vine street	Support job-providing small businesses and manufacturing		
Portland	Expand and enhance street-level uses within the district through partnerships and investment. Foster a supportive environment for startup businesses. Invest in Cluster Industry supportive initiatives.		Promote development and/or occupancy of PDC-controlled properties	Establish district collateral for use by PDC and community partners
Toronto			Implement a tenancy promotion tax incentive pilot project.	Implement a promotion and marketing strategy for East Chinatown
Seattle	Encourage earlier business hours, sidewalk vendors; tax incentives to attract businesses;			Continue efforts to aggressively market the community.
Vancouver	Develop an economic strategy to build a holistic Chinatown experience		Intensify all uses to better utilize existing building stock	
Washington DC	Creating A Diverse and Successful Asian Business District			

TABLE B.4 CONNECTIVITY AND MOBILITY

	Increase Connectivity-Local	Increase Connectivity-Regional	General Transportation and Parking Planning	Walkability and Alternative Transportation	Accessibility
Boston	Reaffirm Chinatown’s connections with its neighbors		Increase public safety, improve the pedestrian environment, and engage in transportation planning to address community needs		
Chicago	Position the community to work with neighboring communities and benefit from anticipated development in adjacent areas. Strengthen the connection between Old and New Chinatown.		Conduct a comprehensive parking management study.	Improve sidewalk conditions and key pedestrian crossings. Improve the experience of taking transit to, from, and within Chinatown. Improve bicycling infrastructure.	Make Chinatown an “age-friendly” neighborhood.
Edmonton			Access/Connectivity		
New York City		Build upon the existing base of businesses and commercial activity in Chinatown to continue to serve the local and regional Chinese population.			
Philadelphia	Bridge the community across vine street and the expressway		Manage parking in the commercial core to support business and activity	Make it safer and easier to walk and bike. Improve connections with transit.	Improve access to existing and new spaces (accessibility)
Portland			Invest in strategic infrastructure and connectivity improvements, including structured parking to serve the district		
Seattle			Maximize on-street short-term parking; develop community parking facility; expand and promote residential monthly parking program; increase parking enforcement	Improve pedestrian safety and amenities; provide bike amenities to encourage short-term visits; Extend boundaries of ride free zone; maximize transit service to residents	
Toronto				Improve existing pedestrian infrastructure	
Vancouver	Build linkages to surrounding neighbourhoods	Maintain Chinatown as a vibrant hub with commercial, retail, cultural uses both day and night.			

TABLE B.5 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

	Encourage Civic Participation	Establish Local Governing Structure (e.g. BIA)	Establish Ideal Design Principles
Boston	Increase community civic participation		
Chicago	Define community priorities for future development within Chinatown’s core. Create a framework for sustained, inclusive community involvement in planning decisions.		
Edmonton			
New York City			
Philadelphia	Build civic engagement and community stewardship. Grow and amplify community voice		
Portland		Establish District Manager position to support district management and public space programming efforts	Sponsor a “best practices” tour with key property owners and firms to highlight exemplary development models and tenant spaces
Seattle		Develop a neighborhood-based Business Resource Centre	
Toronto	Implement a Community Engagement Strategy	Form a Business Improvement Area. Establish Incubation Administration Board to promote business incubation in East Chinatown.	Encourage appropriate development.
Vancouver	A community development approach to economic and cultural revitalization		Preserve Chinatown's character and fine grain development pattern, including public places. Support small lot and mid-rise development.
Washington DC	Establish a quarterly Chinatown Community Forum to track the progress of the CCDS	Developing a Chinatown business council or Chinatown merchants’ association	