

# TOMORROW'S CHINATOWN

**ENGAGEMENT INSIGHTS**

CULTURAL PLAN PROCESS | MARCH 2020 – MARCH 2021

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

### **Acknowledgment of Traditional Territory**

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

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# ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

**Tomorrow's Chinatown is a project by The City of Calgary to support Chinatown's future as a vibrant, culturally-rich place to live, visit, work, and do business. For the first time, a Cultural Plan will be created together with a new Local Area Plan. In this document, we summarize the community engagement insights related to the Calgary Chinatown Cultural Plan. We encourage you to explore for yourself the richness of what the community has shared with us.**

## Goals for Engagement

We wanted the community engagement process to be transparent, have value, and result in tangible actions and outcomes. Our aim was to reach both deeply-involved residents and those with less of a relationship with Chinatown, and make time for personal, in-depth conversations. We made a range of engagement methods available to people to align with their availability, interests and personal preferences.

## Discover Phase – How We Engaged

Between March – September 2020, we engaged with the community to discover Chinatown's cultural values, strengths and challenges. We reached out to Calgarians as broadly as possible to learn what people hope for the Chinatown of tomorrow. Our engagement activities were:

- **Chinatown Advisory Group:** a diverse group of 24 committed community members formed an advisory group. The group provided guidance to the planning process through their monthly meetings.
- **Individual and Group Interviews:** we interviewed nearly 90 people via online video or telephone in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.
- **Virtual Talks:** four 'lunch & learn' talks were held to share knowledge and broaden the dialogue about Chinatown's future. Topics included identity, youth, film and food. On average 50 people attended per talk.
- **Discover Survey:** an online survey was held in English and Chinese to discover people's experiences, aspirations and worries related to Chinatown. We received over 1,200 responses from across Calgary.

## Create Phase – How We Engaged

After completing the Discover Phase, we started the Create Phase of the Cultural Plan. Between October 2020 and February 2021, the Tomorrow's Chinatown project team had deeper conversations with stakeholders about 15 major topics. We engaged with the community in these ways:

- **Create Conversations:** 15 roundtable sessions were held. Around 200 people participated in these smaller, in-depth conversations.
- **Create Survey:** another 100 responses were received through online surveys, for those who could not attend the roundtable sessions.
- **Chinatown Advisory Group:** we continued our periodic meetings with the advisory group to discuss progress and validate our findings.
- **Individual and Group Interviews:** we interviewed an additional 40 people via online video or telephone.
- **Cultural Resource Map:** a Cultural Resource Map was set up to share back what our process has uncovered, and to ask the community to contribute additional cultural resources that we are not yet aware of.

## Our Gratitude

No one could have anticipated engaging citizens during a global pandemic. The COVID-19 context forced us to pivot from one engagement plan to a completely new, virtual approach. Despite the limitations, we were able to engage with an estimated 1,500-1,750 individuals. We are thankful for everyone's flexibility, and willingness to be thoughtful and insightful under these unusual circumstances.

## Publication Details

This report was prepared by Dunefield – Wilco van Bommel, June Chow, Albert Lam, Carmut Me and Chris Wilcott – at the request and with the support of City of Calgary and the Tomorrow's Chinatown project team.

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# DISCOVER PHASE ENGAGEMENT



# Interviews

**Over 90 participants were engaged in one-on-one or small group meetings by online video or phone, between March – October 2020. Another 40 were interviewed on the months after. The resulting insights are organized here by Key Theme. Our approach aimed to summarize what people said – as individuals and as a community – and to try to interpret an underlying meaning. Interview comments are people’s opinions that were not corrected for factual accuracy.**

## Theme 1: People, Voices and Experiences

### CHINATOWN’S PLACE IN CALGARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

### REPRESENTATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### NEWER CHINESE IMMIGRANTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Theme 2: Food, Merchants and Tourism

### TOURISM

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

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

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

### MOM-AND-POP

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

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

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

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

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

### FOOD BUSINESSES

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

The retail experience in Chinatown is not strong, with limited shops outside of food businesses. This has resulted in an eat-and-leave model of visiting Chinatown, with no one really walking around and browsing, and generally not much to do.

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

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

### RETAIL MIX

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

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

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

### ECONOMIC POLICY

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

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

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

## Theme 3: Culture, Creative and Learning

### ARTS & CULTURE IN CALGARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### EVENTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### LEARNING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### CULTURAL FACILITIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

##### THE GREATER GOOD

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

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

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

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

##### VOLUNTEERISM / CIVIC ENGAGEMENT / PLANNING

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

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

Chinatown organizations have been around for the long haul. They have a reputation of being insular and not collaborating, but this is because they have established support systems and are not so reliant on outside help. Relationships in Chinatown are based on trust and often span decades and generations. As a result, it is about who you know (i.e. who knows and can vouch for you) and not so much your skills or abilities, which can be frustrating for those with ambition.

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

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

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

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

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

##### SENIORS CARE (AND HOUSING)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### LOCATION

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

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

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

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

## SENSE OF PLACE

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

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

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

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

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

## ISOLATION / CONNECTION

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

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

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

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

# Virtual Talks



## Date and Time

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

## Attendance

53 attendees

## Resources

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

## Video Chapters

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

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

## Episode #1: Culture and Identity

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

## Speakers

Matt Patterson – Assistant professor of Sociology, University of Calgary

Felicia Guan – Graduate student in Sociology, University of Calgary

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

## Key Outcomes and Insights

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



### Date and Time

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

### Attendance

47 attendees

### Resources

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

### Video Chapters

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

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

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

### Speakers

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

### Key Outcomes and Insights

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



### Date and Time

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

### Attendance

59 attendees

### Resources

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

### Video Chapters

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

### Episode #3: New Blood

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

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

### Speakers

FOONYAP – Critically-acclaimed violinist and vocalist

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

Mike Lee – I Love YYC Chinatown

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

Desmond Lee – Jing Wo Cultural Association, Chinese Cultural Centre

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

### Key Outcomes and Observations

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



### Date and Time

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

### Attendance

37 attendees

### Resources

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

### Video Chapters

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

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

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

### Speakers

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

### Key Outcomes and Observations

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

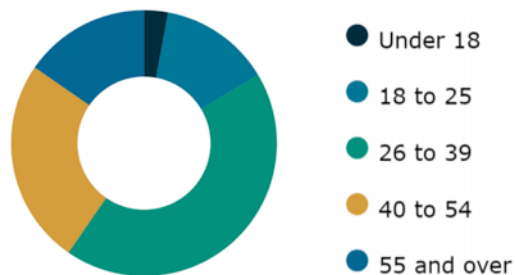
## Discover Survey

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

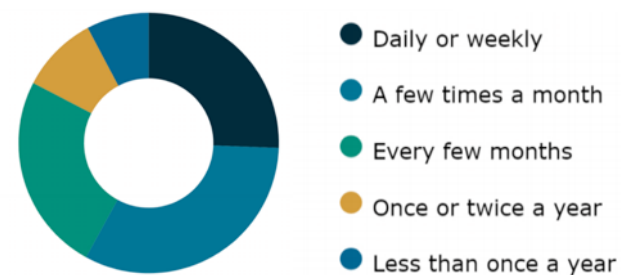
Number of survey responses:

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

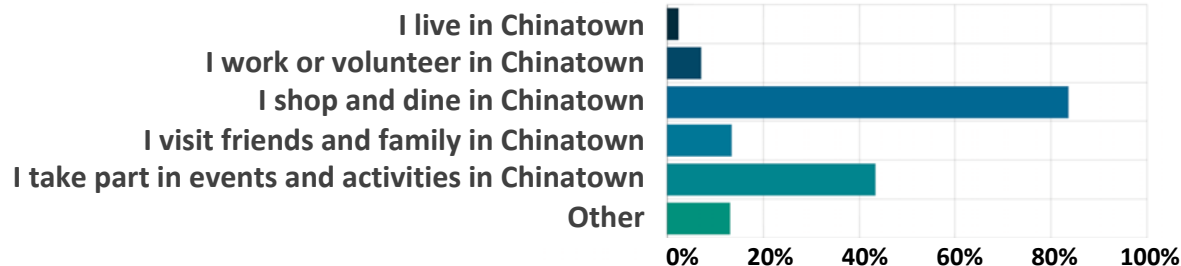
**Q1** What is your age?



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



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



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

Top key words, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

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

Top key words, by age:

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

Sample responses:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Top key words, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

Top key words, common descriptors:

under 18	32	Food	Culture	Restaurants	Shop	People
18 – 25	154	chinese	food	shop	food/restaurants	culture
26 – 39	511	asian	people	culture	culture	food
40 – 54	279	good/great	chinese	bakery	shopping	“place”
55 and over	181	bubble tea	“place”	bubble tea	unique shop	restaurants
		variety, food	history	grocery	variety, shop	chinese

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

Sample responses:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Top responses, all respondents:



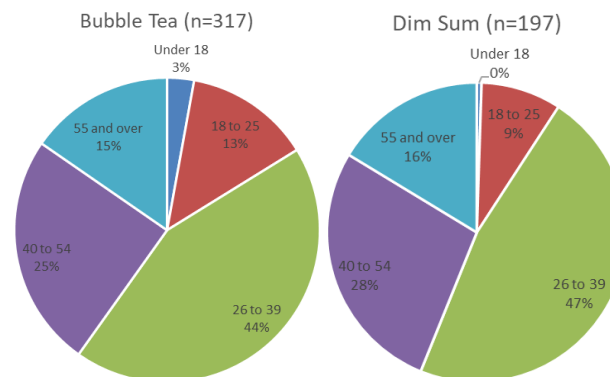
Total responses by age:

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

Top 10:

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

Age gap? new vs. old



Sample responses:

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

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

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

Good food, atmosphere and experience needs attention.

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

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

Top responses, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

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

Top 10:

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

Event examples:

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

Sample responses:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Top word descriptors, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

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

Top challenges to explore, with example descriptors:

**Parking**  
**24%**  
expensive/affordable  
hard to find  
accessible

**Building**  
**11%**  
old/new, historical  
expensive (rent)  
seniors' living

**People**  
**10%**  
attracting/more  
aging/young  
racism

**Others:**  
gentrification  
younger generation  
centre street  
"place"  
small business

Sample responses:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Top hopes, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

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

Top 3 hopes with example descriptors for exploration:

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

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

Sample responses:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Top fears, all respondents:



Total responses by age:

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

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

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

Sample responses:

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

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

我担心会有种族歧视的问题。 / Racism issues

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Please help us preserve Calgary's Chinatown!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

...and many, many more...

# CREATE PHASE ENGAGEMENT



# Create Conversations

**In the Create Phase, we had deeper conversations with the community about the major opportunities and challenges for Chinatown. These conversations were organized around 15 major topics that the community had brought to our attention as defining for the future of Chinatown. In focused, intimate roundtable groups, we discussed priorities, actions and partnerships. The conversation outcomes are summarized in the next pages.**

## THEME 1: PEOPLE, VOICES & EXPERIENCES

BUILDING BRIDGES: HOW TO BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN CITY & COMMUNITY?  
BUILDING BRIDGES: HOW TO BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS?  
BUILDING BRIDGES: HOW TO BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN CULTURAL GROUPS?

## THEME 2: FOOD, MERCHANTS & TOURISM

NEW BUSINESSES: WHAT KINDS SHOULD WE ATTRACT, AND HOW?  
VISITOR EXPERIENCE: WHAT COULD A YEAR-ROUND EXPERIENCE LOOK LIKE?  
MARKET TRENDS: WHAT ARE BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS LOOKING FOR?

## THEME 3: CULTURE, CREATIVE & LEARNING

NEW ASSETS: WHAT NEW CULTURAL PROGRAMS AND ASSETS DO WE NEED?  
ACTIVATE SPACES: HOW TO SECURE MORE CREATIVE AND CULTURAL CANVAS?  
CHINESE CULTURAL CENTRE: HOW DO WE UNLOCK ITS FULL POTENTIAL?

## THEME 4: HOUSING, HEALTH & SOCIAL PURPOSE

YOUNG ADULTS AND FAMILIES: WHAT INVESTMENTS ARE NEEDED FOR THEM?  
SOCIAL PURPOSE: WHO DEPENDS ON CHINATOWN, AND FOR WHAT?  
TONGS AND CHINESE SOCIETIES: WHAT IS THEIR FUTURE ROLE?

## THEME 5: PLACES, SPACES & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

SENSE OF PLACE: HOW CAN IT BE STRENGTHENED THROUGH URBAN DESIGN?  
CONNECTIONS: HOW DO WE BEST CONNECT TO OTHER NEIGHBOURHOODS?  
MOBILITY: HOW CAN WE FIND OPPORTUNITY IN BETTER TRANSPORTATION?

(THEME 5 CONVERSATIONS ARE INCLUDED IN THE LOCAL AREA PLAN REPORTING)



## Part of Theme

1. People, Voices and Experiences

## Session Details

Roundtable / January 7 & 14, 2021

11 participants

## Why This Conversation?

Tomorrow's Chinatown is an opportunity to strengthen or rebuild important relationships. There is an uncomfortable history of racism, discrimination and cultural bias between Calgary as a city and Chinatown as a community. This has caused damage to the relationship that could cast a permanent shadow if unaddressed. Conversations need to be had about what basic principles would advance future communication, collaboration and engagement.

## BUILDING BRIDGES: HOW TO BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN CITY & COMMUNITY?

### Conversation Topics

Our past – what past wrongs need addressing first, before we can build and move forward?

Building trust – how to build trust between The City and Chinatown community?

Voices – who are to be included in this conversation, both from the community and City?

### Key Insights

- **Recognition** – the past must be recognized to move forward from a new starting point. Histories of racism have left deep wounds, which are unresolved because of a power disparity between the community and the institutions. There is now an opportunity to address past wrongs and recognize the contributions of Chinese Canadians to Calgary and its culture.
- **Cycle of trust** – the community experiences an ongoing cycle of trust building, and then damaging it again. An example is the Downtown Penetrator destroying trust, then The City rebuilding this with the 1986 ARP and supporting the Cultural Centre. Then trust was damaged again in the 2016 ARP amendment process, and now rebuilt through Tomorrow's Chinatown.
- **City Administration** – although City staff generally puts a lot of effort into sincere engagement with the community, the recommendations and findings are often not upheld in the decision making. There have been notable instances in the past whereby staff does not seem to have the willingness or capability to defend the community's voice in front of senior management and (in particular) City Council.
- **City Council** – it seems to the community that Council tends to side with developers, even when their plans are misaligned with the City's own plans and policies. Chinatown's elders are not anti-development, but worried to see threatened what they have built up. When will the community be heard? The feeling is that things are getting better, but the concern is that residents are fatigued, and having to recall traumatic experiences over and over again.
- **Building trust** – a good start would be to agree on rules of engagement between The City and Chinatown community. Once there are such principles, it is important to have both parties follow through. The community aspires to be seen as true partners in the City-Community relationship. It also sees an opportunity to raise awareness among City leadership and Council for the need and advantages of diversity in their processes.
- **Accountability** – a multiyear agreement is needed between a representational group of community and City stakeholders to overlook the implementation of Tomorrow's Chinatown. This would give stability and sustainability, despite changing personnel and political priorities.



## Part of Theme

1. People, Voices and Experiences

## Session Details

Roundtable / February 17, 2021

9 participants

## Why This Conversation

Intergenerational dialogue is very important to the Chinatown community. However, something has been lost between the generations. Older Chinese people have many things to say and advice to give to the next generation, and yet most people might never hear it. Youth are looking to reconnect to their heritage, but it is not easy for them to break into the Chinatown community. Efforts need to be made to encourage genuine dialogue and friendship across age groups.

## BUILDING BRIDGES: HOW TO BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS?

### Conversation Topics

Barriers – what challenges do the generations experience in connecting with each other?

Small beginnings – what can be enjoyed by young and old as first steps in breaking down barriers?

Big ideas – what are more ambitious ways to bring generations together and pass on heritage?

### Key Insights

- **Challenges** – youth and seniors experience language and communication barriers, for which language training and encouraging bilingualism would be helpful. The generations have different values as well. Youth may see Chinatown's existing structures as undemocratic, chauvinistic, and with expectations of youth to follow directions of seniors.
- **Racism issues** – youth is looking for ways to discuss racism issues with seniors, and how its effects and trauma persist through different generations. There is momentum with BLM, the broader diversity dialogue, and people wanting to preserve Chinatown. Now is a good time to bring out the whole record of Chinatown and for the community to be visible Calgary-wide.
- **Events** – young and old can be brought together by organizing events like flea markets, street festivals, music performances and movie nights. This is relatively easy to implement.
- **1-on-1** – it is a race against the clock to capture the stories of Chinatown's seniors. Let's start having 1-on-1 conversations between youth and seniors soon, about migration experiences, work, culture and more. If opportunities are created, these conversations will naturally come to fruition, and develop into lasting connections and mentorship.
- **Hands-on learning** – skill sharing is a fun and powerful way to build intergenerational friendships and to pass on cultural heritage. For example, the Chinese Cultural Centre is renovating their kitchen, making it a great place for collaborative cooking and apprenticeships on making certain types of food. Hands-on learning can circumvent language barriers.
- **Society boards** – youth today would tend to decline joining a board of a Chinatown society because of the expectation of a 'lifelong' commitment, lack of other young members (critical mass), and the internal politics. Chinatown's organizations must urgently make more efforts to create space for youth to lead and pursue their own ambitions.
- **Multigenerational co-op** – a building could be converted into a live/work place where 6-8 people of mixed ages, backgrounds and skill sets (cooks, planners, artists etc.) live and work together. Residents get 1 year room & board in exchange for their contributions to Chinatown.



## Part of Theme

1. People, Voices and Experiences

## Session Details

Roundtable / February 24, 2021

11 participants

## Why This Conversation?

Chinatown is a diverse community, inclusive of different groups of Asian heritage. This diversity is Chinatown's strength, but also a challenge. Newer Chinese immigrants do not always identify with Chinese Canadian history, or find it difficult to participate. Other minority groups (including Indigenous peoples) resonate with the migration histories of Chinese Canadians, but may experience barriers to connect with the Chinatown community.

## BUILDING BRIDGES: HOW TO BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN CULTURAL GROUPS?

### Conversation Topics

Barriers – what would enable groups of Chinese or Asian heritage connect with each other?

Welcoming – what would help people of different ethnicities feel welcome in Chinatown?

Other groups – what other cultural groups could the Chinatown community connect with?

### Key Insights

- **Culture by people** – whoever participates and comes into Chinatown in the present day will contribute to the creation of its culture. We all carry a particular part of culture, for example our knowledge of dim sum or martial arts, and can use this as a tool to reach across cultures. Chinatown will flourish as it welcomes all to be a part of its culture.
- **Breaking the solitude** – efforts should be made to share Chinese Canadian culture with the broader community. People are not sure if they can go to each other's events. Chinatown can bring its culture to people using opportunities like Multiculturalism Day and Indigenous Day.
- **Collective marketing** – it would help to have a complete event calendar for Chinatown and to do collective marketing to raise awareness. Chinatown's restaurants are developing a multicultural profile, which could be highlighted more. Cultural ambassadors from all backgrounds (including non-Asian) can support outreach on social media.
- **Scarcity of space** – there is limited space available for cultural use, and existing spaces are experienced as exclusive. Calgary has no multicultural centres and community centres are not friendly to cultural communities. There is not enough space to accommodate everyone and everything in Chinatown. The Chinatown BIA is looking to secure a larger, multipurpose space and there are opportunities to make better use of James Short Park for public gatherings.
- **Bilingualism** – bilingualism should be encouraged among Chinatown's community groups. If everyone has a language in common, it would make Chinatown more welcoming.
- **Supporting artists** – is there a better way for Chinatown to uplift people who wish to connect with their cultural roots through their own art projects? It can be intimidating to approach Chinatown's cultural organizations, or unclear where to start. The Chinese Cultural Centre could play a bigger role in being welcoming and supportive to such initiatives.
- **Newcomers** – Chinatown could be a place where newcomers feel at home. When Diversecity (CCCSA) moved away from Chinatown, it became harder for people to find out where to go. Maybe the Chinese Cultural Centre could become their alternative?



## Part of Theme

2. Food, Merchants and Tourism

## Session Details

Roundtable / November 19, 2020

18 participants + online survey

## Why This Conversation?

Chinatown's advantage is the density and diversity of Chinese and Asian cuisines that can be found within a city block. However, the retail experience in the area is not necessarily strong, with limited shops outside of food businesses and certain types of stores completely missing. While retaining and protecting existing businesses is very important to the community, new shops and their audiences are welcome additions to the neighbourhood as well.

## NEW BUSINESSES: WHAT KINDS SHOULD WE ATTRACT, AND HOW?

### Conversation Topics

Retail mix – what shops are missing and would have synergies with existing retail options?

Existing businesses – how can Chinatown's business community be strengthened?

Sticky streets – what would encourage people to spend more time and money in Chinatown?

### Key Insights

- **Existing strengths** – Chinatown's small, independent stores and its strong food culture are strengths to build on; these cannot be replaced by big box or online stores
- **New businesses** – retail to attract are grocers, fresh food (e.g. seafood, tofu, noodles), food from different Chinese regions, traditional stores (e.g. music scores, instruments, calligraphy), health services, nighttime business, and fusions of modern and traditional, East and West
- **New audiences** – Chinatown should aim to bring more 'outsiders' into the community, such as millennials, non-Chinese groups and residents of the Beltline / East Village neighbourhoods
- **Attractive storefronts** – the curbside appeal of Chinatown needs to be built, and its activities and offerings made visible from the street. The challenge is to understand how businesses, BIA and landlords can work together to achieve this.
- **Entrepreneurship** – many stores are only open 2-3 days a week; conversations need to be had to activate these spaces and stimulate shops to be open more hours and more regularly. Affordable indoor or outdoor kiosks are needed where entrepreneurs can test the market.
- **Succession** – young entrepreneurship and succession would be positive for Chinatown and need to be encouraged; it would bring new ideas, new audiences and more activity
- **Street activity** – Chinatown would benefit greatly from more business activity on the streets, including block parties or (permanent) night markets, vendors selling from their car trunks, and (after-hours) food and retail stalls. This can be complemented with attractive street furniture and sheltered spaces so people can sit, linger, chat and relax.
- **Holding attention** – Chinatown's shops are sparse apart, not connected in the way of strolling within a short distance to keep people interested; future development needs to improve this connectivity and introduce elements in the public space to interest visitors to stay longer
- **Parking and mobility** – parking rates, availability and convenience are a continuous concern; there is opportunity to pilot with reduced rates, 2-hr free parking for patrons, more drop-off zones and rideshare, and access to underused office parking during weekends and evenings



### Part of Theme

2. Food, Merchants and Tourism

### Session Details

Focus group / January 21, 2021

12 participants + online survey

### Why This Conversation?

Chinatown has a calendar of annual flagship events celebrating Chinese New Year, Canada Day, and the summertime through the Chinatown Street Festival. These celebrations are big draws to the area of visitors from across Calgary. For many, it represents their single annual visit of the area while they wait for the next event to return. Smaller, monthly experiences are needed in complement, to hold people's attention and create a habit of visiting regularly and year-round.

## VISITOR EXPERIENCE: WHAT COULD A YEAR-ROUND EXPERIENCE LOOK LIKE?

### Conversation Topics

Full calendar – what everyday, all-season experiences and activities can Chinatown uniquely offer?

Nearby attractions – how can Chinatown be linked to other famous Calgary attractions?

Promotion – how to best promote what is happening in Chinatown and build a strong brand?

### Key Insights

- **Chinatown 365-days** – it should be avoided to turn Chinatown into a 'oddy' or 'theme park'. The real opportunity is to offer a journey of discovery, in which visitors experience Chinatown for what it already is. Visitors can build a personal connection with what is present and happening in Chinatown today through less-defined, honest experiences of everyday life.
- **Lunar calendar** – there is one celebration a month in the lunar calendar, including Lunar New Year, Lantern Festival, Shangsi Festival (Women's Day), Qingming Festival, Duanwu (Dragon Boat) Festival and Moon Festival. All these celebrations have deep cultural meaning and feature customs, activities and foods that can be enjoyed by Chinese and non-Chinese alike.
- **A place to feel safe** – COVID-19 and the BLM movement have exposed existing racism that still exists in Calgary. As Chinatown appeals to new visitors, it must be respected that its regulars need it as a place to feel safe while speaking, eating and just being themselves.
- **(Un)welcoming** – there is anecdotal evidence of both unwelcoming and welcoming attitudes in Chinatown. Some Canadian-born Chinese visitors experience a language or cultural barrier, or that Chinatown incumbents may have preferential treatment for non-Chinese.
- **Cleanliness and safety** – general cleanliness (trash, graffiti etc.) and good maintenance of shops would impact the visitor's experience, and encourage them to stop and visit. There are concerns over safety and security, such as at night or in isolated areas of Chinatown.
- **Local support base** – investment in Chinatown's residential base would make regular, small-scale events easier to sustain, as they wouldn't have to compete for outside visitors
- **Promotion** – Chinatown would benefit from social media-based promotion and storytelling that is crowd-sourced by visitors and locals. It would showcase Chinatown's regularity of events and happenings, with always something interesting to discover.
- **Nearby attractions** – there is an opportunity to build a complete network of experiences. How does Chinatown integrate with its neighbours into a unique but seamless journey? This includes making links with Glenbow Museum, Heritage Park and Fort Calgary as well.



## Part of Theme

2. Food, Merchants and Tourism

## Session Details

Roundtable / January 13 & 27, 2021

15 participants

## Why This Conversation?

Chinatown's mix of businesses and wide range of housing options for seniors are appreciated by many. While retaining these strengths is very important, it is also a priority to attract new commercial and residential development that supplements what already exists. What is the current state of Chinatown's real estate marketplace, and what would motivate retailers, businesses and residents to choose Chinatown as their future location or home?

## MARKET TRENDS: WHAT ARE BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS LOOKING FOR?

### Conversation Topics

Trends – what is the general state of Chinatown's real estate market and what trends do you see?

Demand – what are future businesses and residents looking for in a space or location?

Activation – what would encourage the redevelopment of underused properties?

### Key Insights

- **Market trends** – the economic downturn and low occupancy in Downtown offices, as well as declining visitors, have significantly hurt rents, affecting the value of Chinatown properties. This creates an undesirable scenario where property owners have difficulty renting or selling their units, and limited capacity to invest.
- **Target demographics** – who might be looking to live in Chinatown? Both Chinese seniors looking to be near culturally appropriate and familiar services and retail, and young professionals with family links in Chinatown or work in Downtown, are commonly considered.
- **Community life** – housing is a top priority for Chinatown's evolution. It is important to have a constituent base of people living, working and entertaining in Chinatown – and to have it support a lively community, and existing services, businesses and assets key to Chinatown.
- **Narrative** – barriers such as language, knowledge and cultural understanding can make articulating Chinatown's value propositions to a broad spectrum of Calgarians difficult. Chinatown needs to develop a narrative to market its unique offering.
- **Retail dispersion** – the decades-long dispersion of Chinese-serving services and businesses to other areas is a challenge. It affects both traditional Chinese patrons as well as all Calgarians who enjoy Chinatown's traditional offerings. Everyday activities and services are more important than special events when it comes to attracting residence, building a desirable community and strengthening the business ecosystem.
- **Density** – it is generally understood that Chinatown needs to evolve from an eclectic mix of low to mid-rise projects, to denser mixed-use developments. However, new developments need to respect the character and heritage of Chinatown, which can affect feasibility.
- **Parking and mobility** – parking for residents, businesses and visitors is a top priority. However, without a strong (and relatable) value proposition, parking would be a moot point as it is not an attractor, but a convenience. Street parking is scarce, but parking lots are often empty, or primarily populated by monthly pass holders who work in Downtown.



### Part of Theme

3. Culture, Creative and Learning

### Session Details

Focus group / January 19, 2021  
12 participants + online survey

### Why This Conversation?

Chinatown is one of Calgary's most distinctive cultural communities. There is incredible depth to be found in the community's history and culture, if one takes the time to explore and get to know it. By adding new cultural assets to what already exists and modifying traditional ones for greater appeal, there is an opportunity to attract to Chinatown those who do not identify naturally with the area, as well as younger people who want to learn more about their culture.

## NEW ASSETS: WHAT NEW CULTURAL PROGRAMS AND ASSETS DO WE NEED?

### Conversation Topics

Programs – what cultural programs and activities are a good opportunity for Chinatown?

Assets – what additional cultural assets does Chinatown need and where could they be located?

Innovation – what are opportunities for fostering innovation and a creative economy?

### Key Insights

- **Young audiences** – young people are big consumers of social and cultural activities. Chinatown can offer them opportunities to socialize in person outside of social media with activities like martial arts, mahjong, karaoke, Chinese school.
- **Arts council** – an arts council could unite, support and promote traditional and contemporary arts groups within Chinatown. Instead of pursuing a singular vision, the council could be a platform supportive of Chinatown's diverse, grassroots initiatives.
- **Tongs** – the stories and history of the tongs need to be captured, and people should be allowed to visit their spaces and experience the cultural offering. It would also help these organizations to recruit young leadership; if we wait much longer, this heritage will be lost forever. The Chinatown BIA is pursuing a new initiative to help start this record keeping.
- **Archives** – a curator/archivist is needed who has the cultural background to uncover, interpret and showcase the histories, documents, images and videos that tell the story of Chinatown
- **Volunteering** – youth have an investment in the future of Chinatown and are looking for ways to participate. Current volunteering opportunities are plentiful but need to provide volunteers more meaningful ways to contribute, instead of just 'filling bodies'.
- **Storefront space** – it would be beneficial to have a centrally-located storefront where people can walk in, learn about Chinatown, and ask what is culturally happening that day or week
- **Cultural space** – a new (or renovated) cultural space is needed that is designed for the needs of Chinatown. It should accommodate programming like mahjong, calligraphy, cooking, Asian film festival, music, dance, conversations, theatre, art exhibits and podcast recordings.
- **Locations** – historic sites such the Canton Bock and Nationalist League building would be excellent locations to repurpose for cultural uses. It is worth exploring what the municipal and provincial government can do to make this happen.
- **Innovation** – there are opportunities to create cultural events that incorporate virtual/augmented reality, videogames and screenings of overseas, high-caliber performances



### Part of Theme

3. Culture, Creative and Learning

### Session Details

Roundtable / November 30 & December 1, 2020  
20 participants + online survey

### Why This Conversation?

Developing and nurturing Chinatown's capacity for artistic production, creativity and cultural learning represents a great opportunity to bring people to the area with a regularity and purpose beyond shopping and eating. How could we make better use of existing spaces, private or public, indoor and outdoor, and give more 'canvas' to cultural expressions and activities? What ideal locations in Chinatown can be used to celebrate its culture and history?

## ACTIVATE SPACES: HOW TO SECURE MORE CREATIVE AND CULTURAL CANVAS?

### Conversation Topics

Public realm – how to reimagine and bring programming to parks, open spaces and alleys?  
Pop-ups – what spaces can be secured for small-scale events and cultural pop-ups?  
Edges – how can Chinatown's edges be strengthened with cultural and artistic expressions?

### Key Insights

- **Light art** – there are opportunities to apply light installations, (animated) projections and sculptures to beautify Chinatown, create a unique visitor experience and express Chinese culture. Projections could be made onto buildings, including those on the edges of Chinatown to mark the area. The rooftop of the Canton Block could have a light art installation to provide an alternative gateway at Centre Street Bridge. Efforts could also be made to encourage neon signs on the facades of shops, restaurants and malls.
- **East vs West** – many cultural and business festivities currently take place East of Centre Street. Although it makes sense to concentrate such activities here, it is important to activate the West Side as well and connect 2 and 3 Ave SW with the historic core of Chinatown.
- **Programming** – small-scale and spontaneous music and art performances should be encouraged across Chinatown. 3 Ave, between Harry Hays and Daqing Square, should become a bustling promenade with street programming and a vibrant hawker culture.
- **Design motifs** – there are numerous ways to add Chinese or Asian design elements to Chinatown's urban realm. Streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, bus stops, sign posts, awnings, shutters and utility boxes; when thinking out-of-the-box, virtually anything can become canvas for creative minds. A budget is needed to support such public art.
- **Festivals** – more space should be allocated for festivities around cultural celebrations, and any logistical and permitting barriers lowered. 2nd Ave between 1 SW and Centre Street should be designated for long-term festivals, and The City can support by issuing permanent permits for street festivals and closures.
- **Cultural landscaping** – despite Calgary's climate, opportunities exist to apply Chinese garden philosophies in Chinatown's landscaping. Examples include Chinese garden designs in Sien Lok Park or Prince's Island Park, Chinese vegetable gardens and (indoor) edible landscapes.



### Part of Theme

3. Culture, Creative and Learning

### Session Details

Roundtable / November 17, 2020

9 participants

### Why This Conversation?

The opening of the Chinese Cultural Centre was a huge validation of the Chinese community in Calgary. The Centre's landmark architecture and cultural experiences make it a gateway for locals and tourists alike into Chinatown and Chinese culture. It is also clear that there is much potential that has not been tapped into yet. With the Chinese Cultural Centre close to its 30th anniversary, it is time to look forward and explore how to unlock its full potential.

## CHINESE CULTURAL CENTRE: HOW DO WE UNLOCK ITS FULL POTENTIAL?

### Conversation Topics

Programs – what are future opportunities and needs for new (cross-)cultural programming?

Partnerships – what local and (inter)national partnerships would be exciting to pursue?

Capacity – how could the Centre build its capacity to better serve the community

### Key Insights

- **Accomplishment** – the realization of the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre (CCCC) is a recognition of the Chinese-Canadian community in Calgary. What it continues to offer today is a reflection of the ideas, hard work and intentions of 35 years ago.
- **Changing society** – when society changed, the CCCC recognized the ongoing need to review, reassess, and adapt as necessary, and has made changes to its corporate structure, programs, and corporate culture to better reflect its original spirit and commitment to meet the evolving needs of the community, and to offer a broader range of meaningful services and programs.
- **Work in progress** – the CCCC has many new programs and facility upgrades in the works. This includes programs for intergenerational learning, putting the “Our Chosen Land” exhibition online, upgrades to the kitchen to host workshops, main stage improvements and more.
- **Openness** – the Centre is very open to new initiatives coming from the community and to start unexpected collaborations. They wish to encourage young people to take over. If everyone does a little bit, but together, amazing things can be achieved.
- **Succession** – there is an opportunity to support a process of succession and inclusion of a next generation of cultural leadership that can build on existing accomplishments. Calgary's Chinese community has many talented young members with a passion for its culture.
- **Focus** – before pursuing new programmatic ideas and partnerships, it would benefit the CCCC to take a step back and develop a clear vision on its focus, priorities and desired impact. The Centre can still be welcoming to everyone, but it doesn't have to be everything to everyone.
- **New programs** – many ideas were shared for new or expanded programming, traditional and contemporary, that can help make the CCCC more relatable and relevant to people's daily lives, and bring in new audiences such as new Chinese immigrants and non-Chinese people
- **Partnerships and capacity** – with a clear vision in place, it will be obvious which partnerships to pursue and how to build CCCC's capacity. Opportunities are to have a much closer relationship with the City of Calgary, and to work with partners on promotion and programming.



### Part of Theme

4. Housing, Health and Social Purpose

### Session Details

Focus group / December 10, 2020  
20 participants + online survey

### Why This Conversation?

People have expressed the desire to diversify Chinatown's demographics, specifically to attract young professionals and their families to live in and make Chinatown their home. If this is indeed a priority, investments into comprehensive housing, amenities and services are required to meet the needs of this group. How do we fill the gaps in the housing mix and make Chinatown a complete community for all generations?

## YOUNG ADULTS AND FAMILIES: WHAT INVESTMENTS ARE NEEDED FOR THEM?

### Conversation Topics

Housing – what housing options would young professionals and families need?

Amenities and services – what currently missing amenities and services are desired?

Other – what other cultural or lifestyle needs are specific to this young(er) demographic?

### Key Insights

- **Housing gaps** – the existing housing selection in Chinatown is not inclusive of all income levels or demographics. Existing options are either older and lack quality, or too premium for establishing young professionals and families. Multigenerational housing options are desired, especially for younger families who want to be close to grandparents.
- **Affordability** – Downtown and Chinatown cost more to develop, underground parking is expensive to build, density is required and units are smaller. This may drive young families to the suburbs where they are able to get more space.
- **Marketing** – Chinatown needs more cohesive marketing as an attractive place to live. It is in the vicinity of many facilities and amenities, but it is not being promoted this way and people are unaware of its strengths. Certain lifestyle choices can be marketed, for example 'downtown living', prioritizing shared amenities over larger spaces, and no need for cars.
- **Rental stock** – rental housing would add vitality to the neighbourhood. Rentals are suitable for students and artists who may not have the financial ability to own, but prefer living closer to downtown with options for walking, biking and taking transit.
- **Amenities** – grocery stores are desirable, including ones with more product variety and options. Family doctors and dentists are also important. Nightlife and fitness studios may draw a younger demographic. Health and wellness facilities for all ages, both public and private are desired, including sports (soccer, tennis, badminton, tai chi). Proximity to schools is one of the most important factors for families when deciding where to live.
- **Outdoor spaces** – there are outdoor spaces in Chinatown but they can benefit from better programming, for example, bike parking/rentals, food trucks, outdoor seating, dog parks, playgrounds, community gardens, and better connection to and from the riverwalk.
- **Social spaces** – spaces are needed for people to socialize and linger. This includes outdoor areas and streets that are more pedestrian friendly, and private spaces like cafes.



## Part of Theme

4. Housing, Health and Social Purpose

## Session Details

Roundtable / January 12, 2021

13 participants + online survey

## Why This Conversation?

Culturally, Chinese people will make personal sacrifices in consideration of the well-being of community. Community and civil society come before profit and personal gain. There are many groups who depend on Chinatown for the quality of their lives, including seniors, immigrants and other types of newcomers. With society and demographics changing, what will be the groups who need Chinatown in the future and can we provide them proper support?

## SOCIAL PURPOSE: WHO DEPENDS ON CHINATOWN, AND FOR WHAT?

### Conversation Topics

Senior groups – what do seniors (in and outside the area) depend on Chinatown for?

Newcomers – what do recent newcomers to Calgary or Canada need Chinatown for?

Other groups – what other vulnerable groups need Chinatown in their lives?

### Key Insights

- **Existing support** – Chinatown has a lot of organizations that support seniors, including supported housing and social service organizations that provide activities, programs and access to information. Access to the park is also a major health benefit.
- **Language** – language is the critical feature that makes Chinatown accessible for those of Chinese heritage. It is the main reason why seniors want to live there or why they come everyday. It is also why newcomers are able to enterprise and make a living. It is important for Chinese to have culturally specific businesses, but also that they are offered in their language.
- **Mobility** – physical mobility of seniors needs to be carefully considered. Traffic safety is a major concern with speeding cars making it dangerous for seniors crossing the street. Parking is expensive and this is a deterrent for seniors and their relatives visiting. Some older buildings only have stairs and no elevators, including dentist offices as well as restaurants.
- **Complete community** – services are important, but so are arts and cultural experiences, more diverse businesses (e.g. affordable hot food and grocery stores) and entertainment options. This is not only good for seniors but would help attract more people in general.
- **Housing** – more affordable and seniors housing continues to be desired, and the community is committed to playing an active role in the realization of this with the City's support. Especially supported housing like Clover Living that provide meal options and recreation, as well as attainable housing options for multigenerational families.
- **Medical and health** – desired facilities that are currently missing in Chinatown include a Chinese-speaking family physician, walk-in clinics, and a health lab for testing services
- **Opportunities** – newcomers and youth are not necessarily vulnerable groups, yet they need Chinatown in their lives as they seek career development, language and cultural learning, volunteering opportunities, and social or business connections. As they get more involved in Chinatown and develop their careers, they continue to contribute to the community.



## Part of Theme

4. Housing, Health and Social Purpose

## Session Details

Stakeholder interviews / Nov 2020 – Jan 2021  
12 participants

## Why This Conversation?

Chinatown's tongs, benevolent and family associations have been around for the long haul and played a crucial role in the lives of Chinese immigrants, their families and descendants. As time passed, the original purpose of these organizations no longer aligns with contemporary needs. With the traditional organizations and their boards ageing, involving the younger generations – and making space for them to participate – is a priority moving forward.

## TONGS AND CHINESE SOCIETIES: WHAT IS THEIR FUTURE ROLE?

### Conversation Topics

Today's challenges – what worries and concerns do the tongs and Chinese societies have today?  
Future role – what future contributions do traditional organizations want to make to Chinatown?  
Succession – how can they involve younger generations and make space for them?

### Key Insights

- **Ageing membership** – the boards and members of the tong and family associations are ageing quickly and new members are not moving in. Many organizations are not actively pursuing succession planning and may have to fear for their future survival.
- **Youth involvement** – the tongs and societies voice a strong desire to involve more youth. A first step toward this can be for (board) members to engage their own children and grandchildren. Although limited in number, some organizations have recognized the need to support younger people into leadership positions, and not just as volunteers.
- **Financial sustainability** – the traditional organizations are financially at risk. Many are dependent on casino funding, and to a lesser extent on fundraising events and memberships; all of which are in decline due to COVID-19. Those who own a building with a good restaurant as a tenant are in a better position, although COVID-19 put this at risk as well.
- **Changing demographics** – immigration has changed dramatically, with most immigrants today not being from Hong Kong or Cantonese speaking. The different immigrant groups of Chinatown do not necessarily connect and mingle much. There are opportunities for existing associations to pivot towards helping all recent newcomers find their place in society.
- **Future roles** – traditional organizations have a key role to play in sustaining Chinatown's heritage. They can increase their relevance by more openly sharing their stories, images, archives, programs and spaces. Societies can cater a much broader demographic by changing their focus from family name or region-oriented, to affiliation on interests and topics.
- **Buildings and spaces** – the Canton Block is home to many tongs and cultural organizations. While there are challenges, it is a big opportunity to renovate this historic building with and for the traditional organizations; this would revive both Chinatown's intangible and tangible heritage. Another opportunity is that societies have underused social rooms, gymnasiums and kitchens that could be much better used for community-minded and cultural activities.

# Create Survey

An online survey was open to the public for the duration of the Create Phase. The questions were aligned with the themes and topics of the community conversations. Theme 1 was not open for online responses due to the personal nature, and the results of theme 5 are included in the Local Area Plan reporting. Between 25-35 responses were received per theme, of which these are the key insights:

## THEME 2: FOOD, MERCHANTS AND TOURISM

### What unique and all-season activities can Chinatown offer to visitors?

- Night markets and year-round block parties
- Historic (walking) tours
- Classical Chinese garden
- Seasonal and travelling exhibits at the Chinese Cultural Centre
- Full calendar of Chinese events / lunar calendar
- Outdoor activities and all-season public spaces

### How can Chinatown better market itself as a destination with other famous Calgary attractions?

- Campaigns with Glenbow Museum, Heritage Park and Fort Calgary
- Social media presence like East Village; work with social influencers
- Offer multi-cultural attractions with other minority cultural centres
- Coupons and joint deals with surrounding main attractions
- Leverage proximity to riverwalk system
- Create hook / motto and unified marketing plan

### How can we best promote what is happening in Chinatown?

- Social media, websites, YouTube and radio
- Regular newsletter about Chinatown, electronic and hardcopy
- By enabling community leaders to do the promotion
- Reach people in suburbs
- In public transit
- Via Calgary Tourism

### How do we build a strong brand for the community?

- Consistent presence and flow of content
- Discount and loyalty programs among Chinatown's shops
- Strong branding and logo design
- Draw attention to Chinatown's traditions and heritage
- Storytelling and interviews with seniors and young visitors
- Visually appealing streets
- 'Discover Chinatown' events

### What retail shops are missing that would encourage people to spend more time and money in Chinatown?

- Chinese decorations, fashion and book stores
- Chinese herbs and dry goods
- Grocery stores (Western and Asian)
- Tea house and coffee shops
- Newer trendy Asian cuisines
- Foods from different Chinese regions
- Outdoor / street vendors
- Larger (international) Asian brands and stores

## THEME 3: CULTURE, CREATIVE AND LEARNING

### What spaces can we secure for small scale events and cultural pop-ups in Chinatown?

- Seniors Centre walkway to Centre Street
- Daqing Square
- Sien Lok Park
- Sidewalk outside Bowside Manor
- Parking space north of U&Me restaurant,
- Former Indigenous Friendship Centre site
- 2 and 3 Ave
- Prince's Island park
- Dragon City Mall

*(continued)*

- Along bow river, in a new Chinese (music) pavilion
- Parking lots
- In front of the Chinese Cultural Centre
- Alleyways

**Are there buildings in Chinatown that are good candidates for cultural and creative uses?**

- Chinese Cultural Centre
- Private club houses
- Seniors Centre
- Silver Dragon building
- Canton Block
- Dragon City Mall
- Opulence Centre
- Ho Lem Bock,
- United Church Chapel
- Hong Kong Plaza

**What cultural programs, activities, and events (new and old) are a good opportunity for Chinatown to highlight its culture?**

- Celebrations on lunar calendar
- Sports events, martial arts, games like mahjong or Chinese chess
- Canada day
- Cultural shows
- Music performances
- Asian movies and Chinese opera
- Chinese gardening
- Language education
- Food fairs
- Bringing famous Chinese artists for exhibitions
- Museum that the chronicles lives of Chinese Canadians
- Singing competitions and karaoke
- Painting and calligraphy lesson and exhibitions

**THEME 4: HOUSING, HEALTH AND SOCIAL PURPOSE**

**What other cultural or lifestyle needs (specific to the younger demographic) are needed in Chinatown?**

- Western bakeries and grocery stores
- Coffee shops, bubble tea, snack shops
- Bookstores
- Services in walking distance
- Nightclubs, (Chinese-styled) bars and arcade
- Movie theatre
- Gyms
- Park and playgrounds
- Places to just hang out
- Schools and childcare
- Contemporary Chinese fast food

**What do seniors (in and outside the area) depend on Chinatown for?**

- Chinese groceries and traditional supplies
- Chinese speaking doctors and dentists
- Pharmacy and herbal medicine
- People like themselves, meeting friends and companionship
- Walkable streets and green spaces
- Language access
- Sense of community
- Daily services like post office, banks and barber shops

# TOMORROW'S CHINATOWN

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**ENGAGEMENT INSIGHTS**

CULTURAL PLAN PROCESS | MARCH 2020 – MARCH 2021

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