

TOMORROW'S CHINATOWN

CHINATOWN CULTURAL PLAN



SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

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CREATED BY DUNEFIELD FOR THE CITY OF CALGARY

INTRODUCTION

Tomorrow's Chinatown is a project by The City of Calgary to create Calgary's first neighbourhood-specific Cultural Plan, in coordination with a new Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) for Chinatown. Working together with the new ARP, this **Chinatown Cultural Plan** will support Chinatown's future as a vibrant place to live, visit, work, and do business, for generations to come.

Why a Cultural Plan for Chinatown?

Chinatown is one of Calgary's most distinctive cultural communities, with a long and important history to the city, region and nation. The Chinatown community has been outspoken in its desire to see the evolution of the neighbourhood be anchored in its culture, with development approached respectfully and through a cultural lens.

The Chinatown Cultural Plan is a roadmap to take advantage of Chinatown's cultural strengths to sustain and improve the quality of life for its residents, while welcoming visitors and newcomers.

What The Plan Will Do?

The Chinatown Cultural Plan outlines the strategic directions for advancing and investing in Chinatown's cultural future — including cultural experiences and programs; spaces, facilities and amenities; and legacy businesses and tourism. It provides guidance for setting priorities, forming partnerships, assigning roles, and securing resources.

This Cultural Plan also informs and complements the new ARP for Chinatown by introducing cultural considerations for use in the planning process, including for new development and public space improvements. The objective is to ensure that new developments do not come at the expense of Chinatown's culture, but instead contribute to what makes this neighbourhood such a special place.

Key Themes

Five Key Themes and areas of opportunity have emerged from our engagement with the community. These themes provide us different perspectives on the rich culture of Chinatown and how it can best be strengthened. The Key Themes give structure to the Cultural Plan, and help us organize our recommendations for strategies and actions.

- A) **People, Voices & Experiences**
- B) **Culture, Creative & Learning**
- C) **Food, Merchants & Tourism**
- D) **Housing, Health & Social Purpose**
- E) **Places, Spaces & Natural Environment**

About This Document

This is a summary document for public engagement purposes only. The final version of the Chinatown Cultural Plan will be translated in its entirety later in 2022.

You can find the draft Chinatown Cultural Plan here:

calgary.ca/chinatown

Please contact us if you need language support to participate:

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PEOPLE, VOICES & EXPERIENCES

Tomorrow's Chinatown as a community that celebrates its diversity, and offers people harmony and a sense of belonging. Community members have very personal connections to Chinatown. Despite being small, Chinatown generates a lot of activity, with different groups represented. From those who call Chinatown home to those establishing their roots – like the seniors who make Chinatown their living room, and new immigrants and youth looking to (re)connect with their heritage – the diverse voices contribute to a rich, dynamic culture.

STRATEGY A1: BRING CULTURAL GROUPS TOGETHER

Chinatown is a place of cultural significance, where legacies are celebrated, safeguarded and passed on. Sharing culture with others is a way to welcome people in to participate and contribute, and to strengthen understanding between different cultures and identities.

ACTIONS

A1.1:
Honour Chinese / Asian Canadian contributions

A1.2:
Improve language accessibility

A1.3:
Share Chinatown's culture citywide

A1.4:
Improve cross-cultural relationships

STRATEGY A2: BUILD BRIDGES ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

Chinatown's elders and seniors have many things to say and advice to give to the next generation. Youth are looking to reconnect to their heritage, but experience challenges in making the connection. Genuine dialogue and friendship need to be fostered across age groups.

ACTIONS

A2.1:
Have intergenerational conversations

A2.2:
Support hands-on learning

A2.3:
Make space for young leadership

A2.4:
Create multi-generational co-op

STRATEGY A3: IMPROVE THE CITY–COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Chinatown and The City both hope for a strong and fruitful relationship. To advance this, conversations need to be had about what caused damage to the relationship in the past, and about the need and advantages of more diverse representation in The City's processes.

ACTIONS

A3.1:
Agree on principles of engagement

A3.2:
Address cultural bias in The City

A3.3:
Make implementation agreement

A3.4:
Commit to anti-racism

CULTURE, CREATIVE & LEARNING

Tomorrow's Chinatown as a community known for its artistic production, creativity and opportunities for cultural learning. Culture is a strong builder of connection and community within the urban area of Calgary. The Chinese community in Calgary is unanimous in its hope that Chinatown be the centre for Chinese culture. Nurturing the neighbourhood's capacity for artistic production, creativity and cultural learning represents a great opportunity to bring more people to Chinatown and share in its cultural richness.

STRATEGY B1: EXPAND CULTURAL PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

By adding new, and expanding existing cultural programs, there is an opportunity to support Chinatown's cultural practitioners, and attract those who do not identify naturally with the neighbourhood, as well as younger people who want to learn more about their culture.

ACTIONS

B1.1:
Attract new, younger audiences

B1.2:
Invest in cultural education

B1.3:
Celebrate more lunar events

B1.4:
Start Chinatown arts collective

STRATEGY B2: SECURE MORE SPACE FOR CULTURE

Chinatown needs more space to develop, express and celebrate its culture. Better use can be made of existing, underutilized spaces; private and public, indoor and outdoor. Securing new spaces would give additional 'canvas' to cultural activities that have citywide appeal.

ACTIONS

B2.1:
Secure new purposeful spaces

B2.2:
Activate society buildings

B2.3:
Encourage spontaneous spaces

B2.4:
Give more space for public arts and designs

STRATEGY B3: UNLOCK POTENTIAL OF THE CULTURAL CENTRE

The Chinese Cultural Centre's landmark architecture and many cultural experiences make it a gateway for locals and tourists into Chinatown and its culture. It is also clear that there are more possibilities to tap into, making it time to explore how to unlock the Centre's full potential.

ACTIONS

B3.1:
Start artists support program

B3.2:
Upgrade West & East plazas

B3.3:
Start partnership with City of Calgary

B3.4:
Commit to succession planning

FOOD, MERCHANTS & TOURISM

Tomorrow's Chinatown as a community valued for its independent businesses that offer cultural food, shopping and tourism experiences. The memory of Chinatown is deeply rooted in its independent business community and the cultural food, shopping and tourism experiences it offers. Many small businesses in Chinatown were started by immigrants out of their savings and built up despite setbacks. Children of family-operated businesses know very well how hard their parents worked and the sacrifices they made to provide a better life for them.

STRATEGY C1: SUPPORT EXISTING & LEGACY BUSINESSES

Chinatown's small, independent stores and its strong food culture are assets to cherish and build on. Longstanding, family-operated businesses give the area its appeal and personality that cannot be replaced. Efforts should be made to sustain this legacy for future generations.

ACTIONS

C1.1:
Start legacy business program

C1.2:
Offer business succession support

C1.3:
Stimulate storefront improvement

C1.4:
Organize collective storytelling

STRATEGY C2: ATTRACT NEW ENTERPRISES & CONCEPTS

New, exciting additions to the retail mix would make for a more complete experience for today's residents, and bring younger and non-Chinese groups into the community. Grocers, fresh foods, fashion, nighttime businesses, and fusions of modern and traditional, East and West are desired.

ACTIONS

C2.1:
Actively recruit new stores

C2.2:
Deploy new business incentives

C2.3:
Create culinary experience hub

C2.4:
Grow cultural industry

STRATEGY C3: CREATE A YEAR-ROUND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Chinatown is one of Calgary's biggest opportunities to offer a genuine cultural destination. New, daily experiences are needed to attract visitors regularly and year-round. This can be enhanced by integrating with other downtown experiences and attractions into a seamless journey.

ACTIONS

C3.1:
Stimulate street economy

C3.2:
Offer more everyday experiences

C3.3:
Promote Chinatown as cultural destination

C3.4:
Make community welcoming to all

HOUSING, HEALTH & SOCIAL PURPOSE

Tomorrow's Chinatown as a community that provides residents the housing and support services they need, through all life stages. The Chinatown community is unique in that people both in and outside the neighbourhood are passionate about the area, all sharing a desire to be part of something bigger than themselves. In its culture, community responsibility and civil society come before profit and personal gain, and family and community gathering are important. You are here to honour those before you and propel those after you.

STRATEGY D1: INVEST IN AN ALL-GENERATIONS COMMUNITY

Chinatown could become a community where young people, families and seniors live together, find their home and take care of each other. Investments in additional housing, amenities and services are required to make Chinatown a complete community for all generations.

ACTIONS

D1.1:
Build multigenerational housing

D1.2:
Provide more housing options

D1.3:
Make Chinese(-speaking) health care available

D1.4:
Create spaces for play and exercise

STRATEGY D2: CONTRIBUTE TO THE LIVES OF ALL CALGARIANS

Chinatown has always been a welcoming place for Chinese and Asian immigrants; it also has much to contribute to the lives of all Calgarians. Other types of newcomers looking to find their place in society, or those seeking equity and representation, need Chinatown in their lives as well.

ACTIONS

D2.1:
Offer central point for newcomers

D2.2:
Make volunteering more fulfilling

D2.3:
Advocate jointly for anti-racism

D2.4:
Mobilize community support

STRATEGY D3: SUSTAIN THE TRADITIONAL TONGS & SOCIETIES

Chinatown's tongs, benevolent and family associations played a crucial role in the lives of Chinese immigrants, their families and descendants. As time passed, their original purpose no longer aligns with contemporary needs. A re-imagination is needed to sustain their important legacy.

ACTIONS

D3.1:
Create legacy archive & centre

D3.2:
Modernize society programs

D3.3:
Secure reliable rental income

D3.4:
Support Community Association

PLACES, SPACE & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

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

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

STRATEGY E1: DESIGN STREETS FOR CULTURE & PEOPLE

Chinatown can lead the way and show Calgary what it means to reclaim streets for the needs of people, business and culture. A consistent, people-oriented street design will add life and vibrancy, and communicate to people that they have entered a distinct cultural community.

ACTIONS

E1.1:
Design streets age-friendly

E1.2:
Improve connections across Centre St

E1.3:
Create people-oriented streets

E1.4:
Apply more Eastern landscaping

STRATEGY E2: REVIVE HERITAGE TO BENEFIT COMMUNITY

Chinatown's heritage is captured in historic buildings, but also in its streetscapes, languages and culture. As built heritage sites are revitalized, the way buildings are used must be considered at the same time, so that these sites remain meaningful and accessible to the community.

ACTIONS

E2.1:
Ensure balanced heritage revitalization

E2.2:
Revive Chinatown's 'Historic Block'

E2.3:
Reveal hidden histories of Chinatown

E2.4:
Empower community-owned heritage

STRATEGY E3: STRENGTHEN CHINATOWN'S CONTOURS

Many of Chinatown's places with untapped potential are located at its edges. By activating and strengthening these spaces with culture, Chinatown can increase the presence of its community, and make better connections to the riverfront, and East Village and Eau Claire neighbourhoods.

ACTIONS

E3.1:
Add more park amenities

E3.2:
Add visual marker at Chinatown's entrance

E3.3:
Explore possibility of cultural garden

E3.4:
Design multilingual wayfinding & signage

