

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM34.22	ACTION			Ward: 11
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Protecting Downtown Chinatown's Cultural Heritage - by Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Economic and Community Development Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy, recommends that:

1. City Council request the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to identify policy and program options to protect Chinatown's cultural identity, affordable cultural spaces and local retail through a Cultural District Plan or other mechanisms, and to report back on the initial findings to the Economic and Community Development Committee by the end of 2021.
2. City Council request the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to consult with relevant community groups, including but not limited to, the Chinatown Business Improvement Area, Grange Community Association and Friends of Chinatown Toronto.
3. City Council request the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, in consultation with the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to consider options for identifying Cultural Districts in the Official Plan.

Summary

Toronto's downtown Chinatown - located around Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West - is a neighbourhood with many culturally-specific businesses, services, and community organizations, all of which contribute to Chinatown's vibrancy and unique character. Many of these businesses and organizations, including bakeries, restaurants, grocery stores, and family associations, are important community gathering spaces and a significant part of the fabric of the community.

All across the City of Toronto, the conditions of the real estate market have resulted in rising rents and displacement, as existing buildings are demolished to accommodate new development and small businesses are forced out due to rising commercial rents. Many businesses in Chinatown are at threat of displacement or closure, as we have heard from the community and local business owners. Community calls have highlighted the urgent need to address gentrification, in addition to protecting small businesses and culturally-specific services that provide assistance in languages other than English.

While we anticipate City Planning's Chinatown Study (TE11.74) will address some of these issues within Chinatown in the context of planning for new development, and other City policies exist to preserve and create affordable residential housing, more needs to be done to support existing local businesses and community organizations. Chinatown's many bakeries, shops, and other small businesses are important cultural spaces and play a critical role in fostering social connections and community. This Motion seeks to preserve and strengthen Chinatown's cultural heritage, and builds on work already in progress by City staff to gather information about Cultural District around the world that help communities protect their cultural identity and livelihood within a rapidly changing urban environment.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM34.22