

CHINATOWN TOMORROW

Community Consultation Final Report

 ThinkFresh Group

 UNDEBA



唐人街计划
唐人街計劃
Chinatown Study

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study could not have been possible without the help of local facilitators, Chinatown champions, and community advisors. We thank everyone who participated in this study, and especially the following individuals and organizations who shared their passion and vision for Chinatown.

Big Thanks To:

Alec Tam;
Alex Chen;
Alia Scanlon;
Alice Huang;
Arlene Chan;
Azure Pham;
Beryl Tsang; Brenda
Joy Lem; Camilla
Hoang; Chanel Chin;
Chiyi Tam;
Corals Zheng;
Hannia Cheung;
Jane Law;
Jennifer Wan;
Leo chan;
Linda Zhang;
Malek Abdel-Shehid;
Matthew Chan;
Morris Lum; Robert
Yuen;
Rick Wong; Shanzay
Khokhar;
Shehzeena Khan;
Shulan Tien;
Thao Nguyen; Venus
Cheng; Yiming Chen;
Zeina Ahmed; Prof.
Zhixi Zhuang;
Zichen Xu;

Asian Community AIDS Services;
Butterfly - Asian and Migrant Sex
Worker Support Network;
Cecil Community Centre;
Chinatown Community Lion
Dance;
Chinatown Fire Department;
Chinatown Land Trust;
Long Time No See Collective;
Lord Lansdowne Junior Public
School;
Ogden Junior Public School;
Yonge Street Mission.

From the Project Team:
Howard Tam;
Ryan Lo;
Sharon Hong;
Patricia Cho;
Ran Chen;
Paul Johnson.

CONTENTS

| | | |
|---|-------------------|----|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION | 8 |
| 2 | HISTORIC OVERVIEW | 12 |
| 3 | METHODOLOGY | 31 |
| 4 | WHAT WE HEARD | 57 |
| 5 | RECOMMENDATIONS | 81 |
| 6 | CONCLUSION | 93 |

PREPARED FOR:

City of Toronto
City Planning Division
100 Queen Street West, 18th Floor E.,
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

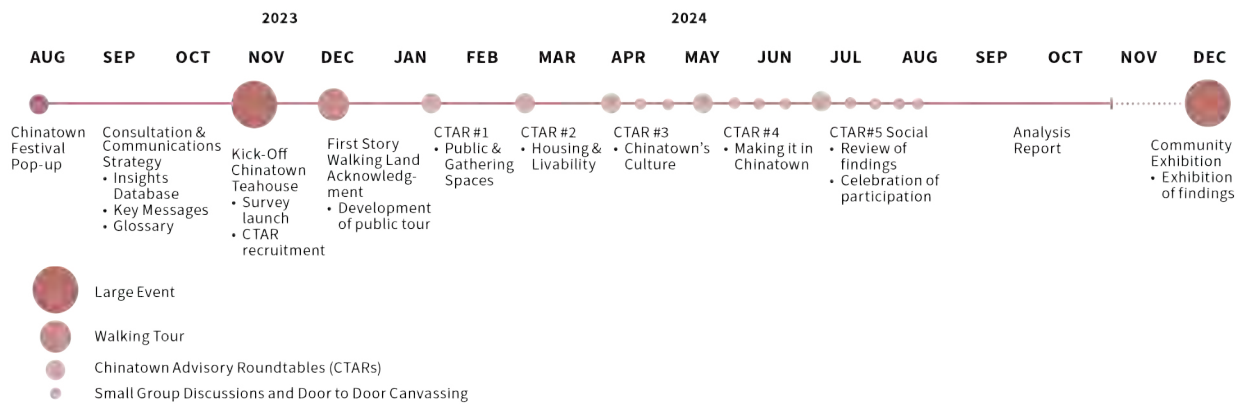
PREPARED BY:

Think Fresh Group
Urban Minds
ERA Architects Inc.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Chinatown Tomorrow Initiative was a year-long community consultation process led by the City of Toronto’s Community Planning group to plan for the future of Chinatown-Spadina - also known as Chinatown West, in downtown Toronto.

CONSULTATION EVENT SCHEDULE



Over the course of the year, the Project Team, including the consultant team (ThinkFresh Group, Urban Minds, and ERA Architects) conducted a series of consultation events in the Chinatown community. The following report provides: a historic overview of Chinatown as the underpinning of the Project Team’s understanding of the community and its historical context, a description of the methodology and the principles guiding our approach to the consultation, a summary of key findings, and recommendations for next steps.

The Project Team sought to understand “What is Chinatown?”, “What are Key Community Values?”, and “What are Community Priorities”, as articulated by the Chinatown community, in order to inform strategic directions for the City’s Community Planning group.

What is Chinatown?

- **Chinatown is a Meeting Place:** centred along Spadina Avenue, derived from Anishinaabe word “Ishpaadina” meaning a “rise in the land”. Chinatown is situated on Anishinabewaki, Haudenasaunee, and Wendake Territory and is a place where many nations have gathered for millennia.
- **Chinatown is a Refuge for All:** it is a place that historically and continues to be a place where people fleeing economic and political hardship can self-determine a future for themselves.
- **Chinatown is a Home for Chinese-Canadian Identity:** Chinatown has local and national significance in Canada’s identity as a multicultural society, and is a place where Chinese-Canadians and the Asian diaspora at large can find a sense of belonging.

What are Chinatown's Key Community Values?

Through the course of this study, the project team witnessed an overwhelming passion for Chinatown - a strong sense of community values that future evolutions and iterations of the neighbourhood should carry forward. Chinatown has significant meaning, not only for local residents, but for the Asian diaspora at-large, and the City as a whole. These values were expressed through the hopes and dreams of Chinatown community members. It is these values that we understand from the community that need to be preserved.



What are Community Priorities for Chinatown?

Based on what we have heard, and in light of the key principles and values of the community, we have synthesized five key strategic directions that we felt that community was driving towards via its feedback. We highlight each strategic direction along with our interpretation and some direct participant commentary sourced from the insights database. These directions acknowledge that the components that make Chinatown vibrant and thrive already exist in the community and that the neighbourhood is a critical asset to the City's cultural heritage and economy. The best way for the City to contribute to Chinatown's future is to partner with the community and investing in its rich amenities.

- **Investment without Displacement**
- **Supporting Small Business**
- **Enhancing the Public Realm**
- **Plan for Additional Community, Social, and Cultural Infrastructure**
- **Focus on Affordable Housing**

What can the City do for Chinatown?

We heard that the community wants to be acknowledged and empowered. Given the legacy of outwardly discriminatory policies at all levels of government that impacted the Chinatown community, including systematic erasure of homes, businesses and neighbourhoods, the community wants to self-determine their future.

Principles for City Action

- **Need for an interdivisional approach**
- **Need to demonstrate quick action and commitment**
- **Need for ongoing community empowerment through relationship and capacity building**

Recommendations for Next Steps

Chinatown Advisory Committee

Based on a community-empowerment approach to address complex, interconnected issues, a Chinatown Advisory Committee is recommended to ensure that the community is able to advise the City on issues that impact the Chinatown community; and that responses are culturally informed.

Accelerating Support Programs for the Community

We recommend that the City accelerate support programs and incentives for independent landowners in Chinatown, and funding from the Economic Development & Culture Division.

Policy Considerations

Components of a policy framework for deep interdivisional collaboration between multiple City divisions to address the complex and interconnected issues in Chinatown and reinforce Key Community Values should include the following elements:

- Economic Strategy that recognizes the diversity of economic activity in Chinatown;
- Strategy to increase and enhance community and cultural space in Chinatown West;
- Revitalization Strategy for community landmarks;
- Housing and Anti-displacement Strategy;
- Public Health Strategy that ensures culturally competent medical services are provided within Chinatown;
- Public Realm Strategy that considers the cultural practices and expressions of identity within the Chinatown community;
- Urban Design Guidelines that encourage and promote intergenerational housing;
- Requirement to consult with the community and the Chinatown Advisory Committee on culturally-competent design and development.

Some Bold Ideas

Many of the underlying issues in Chinatown stem from a history of systemic discrimination and lack of recognition of the integral contribution that the Chinatown and Chinese-Canadian community has made to the City and the building of the nation. A vision for the future of Chinatown to continue to be a meeting place for many nations, a refuge for all, and home for Chinese-Canadian identity could be enabled through the City's support for the following:

Local and International Recognition of Chinatown's Intangible Heritage

Throughout the course of consultation, the community expressed that it is the people and organizations of Chinatown that are the community's heritage, and not necessarily its built form. Given the significance of the intangible cultural heritage in Chinatown, the City should initiate a study and pursue a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage designation to protect and steward it.

Formally Address Historic Wrongs

We recommend that City Council address historic wrongs directed at the Chinatown community through a formal apology, including an annual forum to commemorate and reflect on progress and advancement of Key Community Values.

In conclusion, the Chinatown Tomorrow initiative is hopefully just the beginning of an ongoing process to ensure that Chinatown West remains a vibrant, thriving place for the multigenerational and diverse community that lives there.

1 INTRODUCTION

Chinatown Tomorrow is a City of Toronto, Community Planning study to plan for the future of Chinatown-Spadina - also known as Chinatown West, in downtown Toronto. The City has engaged consultants, ThinkFresh Group, Urban Minds, and ERA Architects, to deliver a community consultation engagement process to identify key issues and priorities in Chinatown from the community's perspective.

The project methodology has been designed as a generative (not extractive) process that seeks to empower the community through co-design, platforming local champions, and a robust and transparent data collection strategy. This has been achieved through culturally competent engagement, targeting key audiences, including those that have been difficult to reach or excluded by traditional public engagement processes.

The consultation program has been formulated through an understanding of: historical and ongoing, anti-Asian hate and resistance in the community; the multi-generational contributions of Chinatown residents and businesses; the diversity of languages and background in the neighbourhood; and of the cultural and historical significance of Chinatown beyond the study area and neighbourhood boundaries.

1.1 Project Background

The *Chinatown Tomorrow* initiative came out of the City's response to community concern and backlash from a 2019 development proposal at 315 Spadina Avenue, where beloved legacy businesses such as Rol San Restaurant, Ding Dong Pastries, and other long-standing services were displaced by redevelopment.

Similar to Chinatowns across North America, Toronto's Chinatown saw a decline due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. While all main streets suffered during the pandemic, impacts to Chinatowns were particularly intensified by anti-Asian hate¹. This has heightened concerns of gentrification and displacement as downtown Chinatowns, which were historically located in the most undesirable fringes of the city, now find themselves situated on highly valued real estate. The City responded to these external pressures by initiating this study to address concerns in the Chinatown community and create opportunities to engage voices that have been historically excluded and ultimately better understand what makes the neighbourhood distinctive, identify how to maintain the elements that contribute to its uniqueness, and plan for new development that will complement its unique character.

1 Cho, Karen, Director, 2022, Big Fight in Little Chinatown. <https://www.bigfightinlittl chinatown.com/>



Rol San Restaurant on Spadina Avenue, a legacy business displaced by a mid-rise purpose-built rental development, *undated (Bruce Christie)*.

The 315 Spadina Avenue development application galvanized local community groups in Chinatown, including: Friends of Chinatown, Toronto Chinatown Land Trust, Long Time No See Collective, among many others. These groups see the current threat of gentrification and displacement caused by a lack of affordable housing and culturally competent development as this generation's campaign for Chinatown, as previous generations resisted and persisted against systemic discrimination and institutional racism before them. The current movement in Chinatown carries the recent memory of the 1960s "Save Chinatown" campaign where the community fought against public urban renewal programs that had already mostly demolished and replaced the historic Chinatown with the City of Toronto's New City Hall. It is inspired by long-standing Family Associations who provided mutual aid during a period of exclusionary policies such as the Chinese Head Tax and Chinese Exclusion Act (1923-1947), and were among the first social service organizations in Canada. Also, it remembers the injustices faced by Chinese labourers who came to build the Canadian transcontinental railway in the 19th century.

As a result, Toronto and East York Community Council requested that the Director of Community Planning to conduct a review of the Chinatown area (Spadina Avenue from College Street to Queen Street West and Dundas Street from Beverly Street to Cameron Street) (see: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2019.TE11.74>).

What is Chinatown?

Through the course of the year-long community consultation program, the Project Team sought to understand "What is Chinatown?", as articulated by the community - what makes Chinatown unique, and what are the elements that are important to maintain as the neighbourhood continues to evolve and mature.

Our goal was to understand what Chinatown is, its history, how it functions, what it means to the people that live, work, and visit there, so that we could better help chart a path for its future. It has framed how we approached the methodology and our analysis. We return to this question in the analysis section of our report.

1.2 Land Acknowledgment

Chinatown is on Anishinabewaki, Haudenosaunee and the Wendake traditional territory. It is within Treaty 13 territory, hosted by the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

A walking land acknowledgment occurred in the format of a walking tour on Saturday, December 16, 2023, 1:00-5:00pm. 15 story holders participated in the walking tour including representatives from First Story Toronto and Chinatown community members to share stories on the land. The tour began at First Nations House, 563 Spadina Ave. The group traveled south to Dundas, stopping to share stories at Silver Dollar; Scott Mission - former Bright Pearl Restaurant, and Labour Lyceum; Wong Family Association building. The group traveled east on Dundas, stopping at the Chinese Bakery and traveled to Dundas and Elizabeth, the historic heart of the original Chinatown.

The group shared stories of resilience and resistance against colonial forces that have sought to erase the presence of both Indigenous and Chinese communities. Shared themes include self-governance and protection, self-determination and the ability to practice ceremony, the right to assembly, and mutual aid. Stories of historic solidarity between both communities speak of a hope for the future for Chinatown, anchored along Spadina Avenue - which derives its name from Anishnaabe word, Ishpaadina, meaning “rise in the land”, which refers to the topographical rise in land from the shores of Lake Ontario to the historic shoreline of ancient Lake Iroquois at Davenport Road. Ishpaadina, where many nations have gathered for millennia prior to colonization, lays the foundation for Chinatown- Ishpaadina, to continue to be a meeting place for many nations in the heart of the City.

2 HISTORIC OVERVIEW



2.1 Historic Context

Toronto's Chinatown West in downtown is relatively young, having been more recently established in the 1970s in comparison to other historic Chinatown districts, such as Vancouver and Montreal, which were established in the 1880s and 1890s respectively. Nevertheless, the history of Toronto's Chinatown West and how it ended up in this location is intertwined with the history of Chinese immigration to Canada and associated with the legacy of racial discrimination that shaped the establishment of Chinatowns across North America.

The earliest recorded Chinese settlers to Canada came in 1788, with the ambition to build a trading post between the Pacific Northwest and Guangzhou, China in Nuu-chah-nuth territory, when Canada was not yet a country² However, early Chinese settlement in Canada is largely associated with the Fraser River gold rushes in the 1850s and 1860s. Canada's earliest Chinatown in Victoria, BC, started to take root in the 1860s and 1870s. As would dictate how Chinatowns would be established across the country, racism and discrimination extended throughout economic, social, and political life, creating impediments to education, land ownership, and business operations. Chinese people were physically segregated and created internal social, economic, and governance networks as they were shut out of mainstream society. Clan, district and political associations, commonly referred to as Family Associations, became the foundation for Chinese communities across Canada. They provided essential employment, housing, banking, and protection services as well as being important social hubs. From these networks, Chinatowns emerged.

For a deeper history of the Chinese community in Canada, and the context of Chinatowns across North America, we have been inspired by the work of: Canadian documentary filmmaker, Karen Cho, and her documentaries *In the Shadow of Gold Mountain*³ and *Big Fight in Little Chinatown*⁴; JIA Foundation in Montreal — see *Chinatown Re-imagined: Montreal Forum Proceedings*, September 28-30-2023;⁵ and the work of Linda Zhang, including *Re-imagining ChinaTOWN: An Anthology of Speculative Fiction*.⁶

For the purposes of this study, this report provides a high-level overview of how Chinese settlement within Toronto's downtown area has evolved over different eras of Toronto's evolution and development to provide historical context of the community feedback and study recommendations.

2 Mannie, K. 2022, May 26. The rise and fall of Chinatown: The hidden history of displacement you were never told. Global News. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/8793341/chinatown-history-toronto-vancouver-montreal-canada/>

3 https://www.nfb.ca/film/in_the_shadow_of_gold_mountain/

4 <https://www.bigfightinlittlechinatown.com/>

5 https://www.jiafoundationmtl.org/wp-content/uploads/ChinatownReimagined_ForumProceedings_FinalReport.pdf

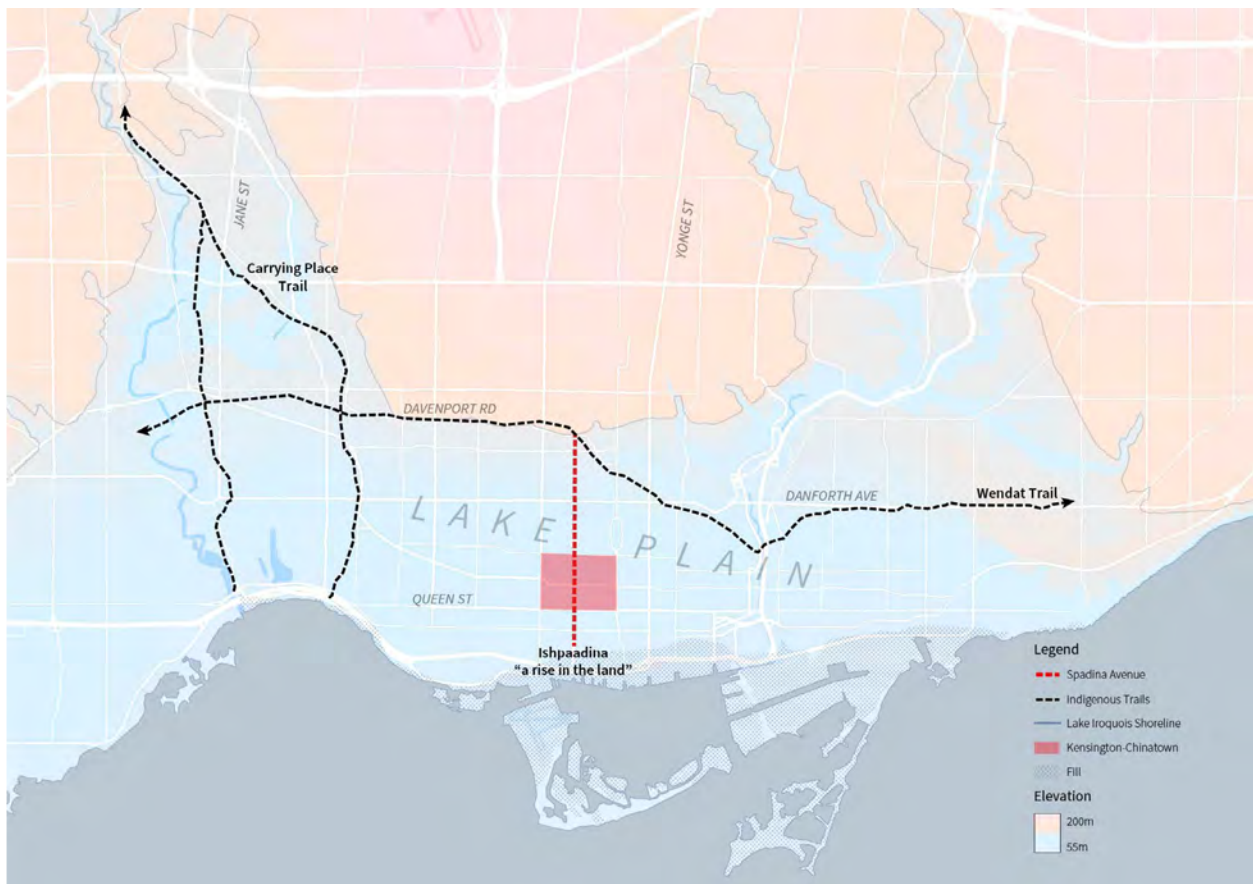
6 Edited by Linda Zhang, Mawenzi House Publishers Ltd. 2023.

2.2 Indigenous Occupation

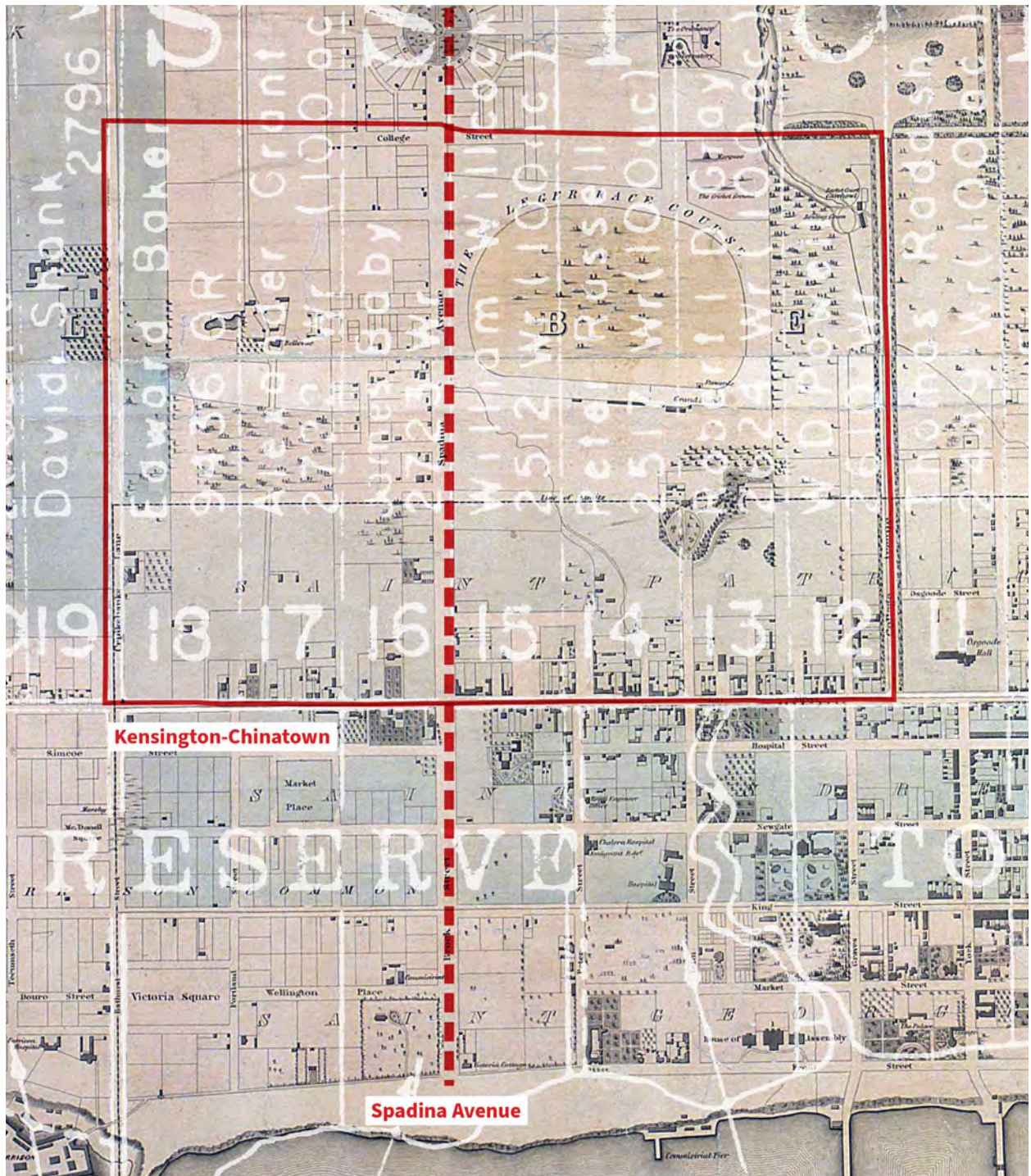
Spadina Avenue, the commercial spine of Chinatown West, derives its name from “Ishpadinaa”, an Anishnaabe word for “rise in the land”. As illuminated by stories shared by Jill Carter and Jon Johnson of First Story during the walking land acknowledgment, the area that is covered by Chinatown neighbourhood today was a place where many nations gathered for millennia.

As the ancient Lake Iroquois receded from its historic shoreline, following the route of today’s Davenport Road to Lake Ontario, it revealed a lake plain, which provided rich and fertile land for Indigenous occupation for millennia. The ancient shoreline is marked into the topography of the City and was used as an Indigenous trail — today, Davenport Road and Danforth Avenue largely follows this ancient trail.

Chinatown continues to be a meeting place for many nations to gather and engage in commerce and culture.



Topographic map showing the ancient shoreline and Indigenous trails and the current location of Kensington-Chinatown. *Gibney & Johnson, TRCA, annotated by ERA.*

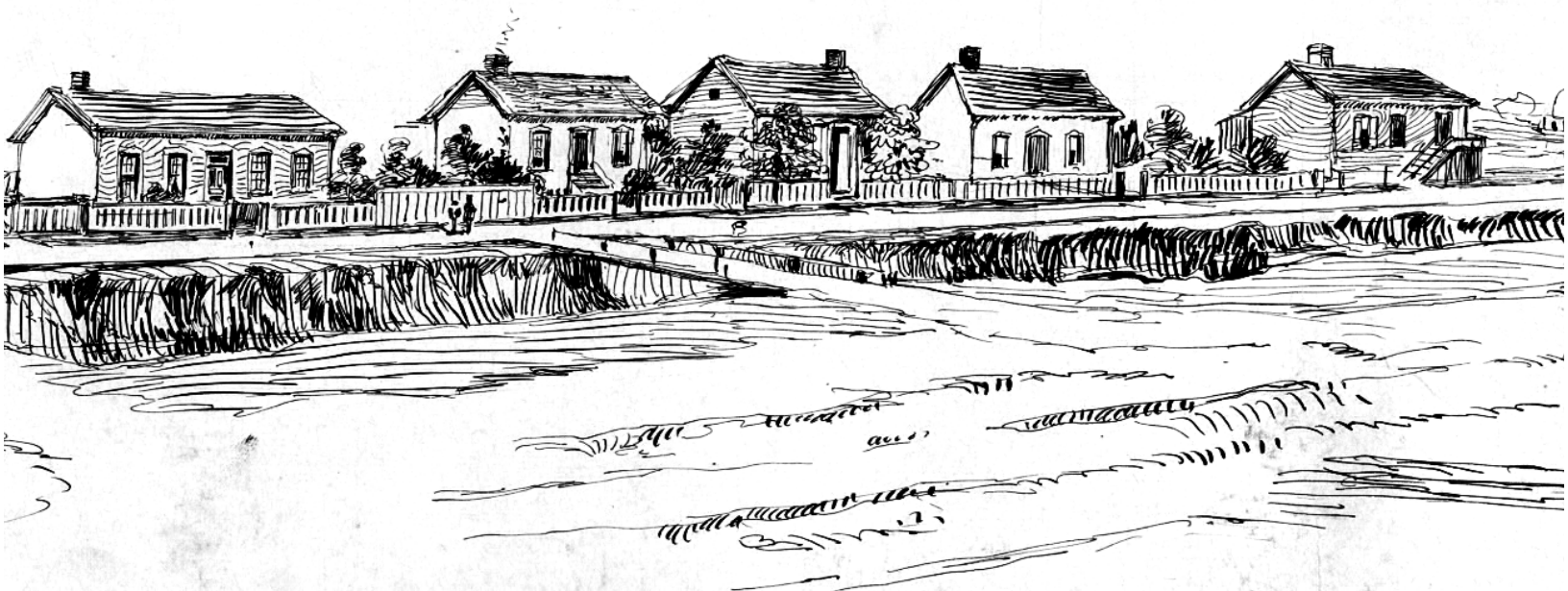


1818 Phillpotts Plan of York showing the current location of Kensington-Chinatown (according to the City of Toronto’s Neighbourhood Map) and Spadina Avenue. *City of Toronto Archives, annotated by ERA.*

2.3 Colonization and the Town of York

Upon his appointment as Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada in 1791, John Graves Simcoe arrived in what was the County of York in Upper Canada and established the Town of York. Land was divided into park lots to the north of the town, for government officials and the landed gentry. These early park lots, beginning at “Lot Street”, now known as Queen Street, with Bloor Street as their northern limits, would lay the foundation for the pattern of development in what would become the City of Toronto, as each individual landowner subdivided their lands. The majority of the land that is known as Kensington-Chinatown today, was inherited by William Warren Baldwin in 1813, an Irish immigrant, medical doctor, lawyer, and architect. Baldwin laid out Spadina Avenue as a grand boulevard with gardens and double rows of chestnuts trees as a procession to his estate house at the edge of the escarpment, where Spadina House stands today.

1864 Illustration showing Spadina Avenue between Nassau and Oxford streets. *Toronto Public Library.*





1884 photo of Chinese workers on Canadian Pacific Railway, who played a significant role in the construction of the railway particularly between 1880-1885 when an estimated 17,000 labourers worked on the railway. *Royal BC Museum.*

2.4 Transcontinental Railway

Chinese Exclusion and Toronto's Early Chinese Settlement

The construction of the transcontinental railway enabled the birth of Canada, with British Columbia joining confederation in 1871 under the condition that a railway had to be built within 10 years to connect it to Eastern Canada. Through political scandal and fierce competition between railway companies, construction of the transcontinental railway was completed with the legendary “last spike” at Craigellachie, British Columbia in 1885.⁷

In addition, the railway's construction significantly altered the lands and ways of life of Indigenous populations in Southern Canada. Indigenous communities were systematically excluded from participating in its construction, a reflection of the broader colonial policies that marginalized them. Chinese workers were seen as a cheaper and more expendable labour force. This decision was driven by economic considerations and racist attitudes, resulting in the exploitation of one marginalized group while excluding another to further displace them from ancestral lands.⁸

⁷ Toronto Railway Historical Association. n.d. Canadian Pacific Railway. Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.trha.ca/trha/history/railways/canadian-pacific-railway/>

⁸ Deconstructing Nation and Race Along the Canadian Pacific Railway: First Nations and Chinese Migrants in the Colonial Project, Emilee Petrie thesis

Chinese workers played a significant role in building the Canadian Pacific Railway. During the stretch of construction between 1881 and 1885, the Canadian Pacific Railway employed 17,000 Chinese workers to build and maintain the Canadian Pacific Railway. Chinese workers worked under harsh conditions, were given the most dangerous jobs, yet were paid significantly less than their white counterparts.

As many workers lost their lives along the railway and were buried in unmarked graves, the number of deaths is unknown with estimates ranging from 700 to over 4,000.⁹

Text from the Memorial to Commemorate the Chinese Railway Workers in Canada:

Dedicated to the Chinese railroad workers who helped construct the Canadian Pacific Railway through the Rocky Mountains of Alberta and British Columbia thus uniting Canada geographically and politically.

From 1880 to 1885 seventeen thousand men from the province of Kwangtung, China came to work on the western section of the railway through the treacherous terrain of the Canadian Rockies. Far from their families, amid hostile sentiments, these men laboured long hours and made the completion of the railway physically and economically possible. More than 4,000 Chinese workers lost their lives during construction. With no means of going back to China when their labour was no longer needed, thousands drifted in near destitution along the completed track. All of them remained nameless in the history of Canada.

We erect this monument to remember them. September, 1989

9 Heritage Toronto. n.d. Chinese Railway Workers Memorial. Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.heritagetoronto.org/explore/toronto-rail-lands-history-tour/chinese-railway-workers-memorial/>



National Historic Event trilingual commemorative bronze plaque of The Exclusion of Chinese Immigrants (1923-1947). The Act was designated as a National Historic Event and the plaque was unveiled in 2023. *Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.*

Many Chinese workers came to Canada under the guise or unmet promises from railway companies that they would assist in their return upon completion. This was further backed by the official narrative offered by Canada's First Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald, who stated during a speech in the House of Commons, on May 4, 1885:

Know that when the Chinamen comes here he intends to return to his own country; he does not bring his family with him: he is a stranger, a sojourner in a strange land, for his own purposes for a while; he has no common interest with us.

—John A. Macdonald¹⁰

The Canadian government enacted the Chinese Head Tax in 1885, making it financially inviable for many Chinese workers to reunite with their families. The Canadian government incrementally increased the Head Tax amount, culminating in an outright ban of Chinese immigration. The Chinese Exclusion Act came into force on July 1, 1923 and was eventually repealed in 1947 as advocated for by Chinese-Canadian veterans that had fought in World War I and II.

As such, the early settlement of the Chinese community in Toronto, and the country at large, was a bachelor society of primarily Taishanese descent - fleeing from economic and political hardship in South China and Hong Kong. Many of the earliest Chinese settlements in Canadian cities are located near the train stations, established by Chinese railway workers seeking to find community and a living amongst a hostile society around them.

In Toronto, the earliest Chinese businesses and establishments were located near King and York, in proximity to the Canadian Pacific Railway headquarters and Union Station.

¹⁰ Cited in Tse, C. 2024. *A Song for the Paper Children*. Plumleaf Press.



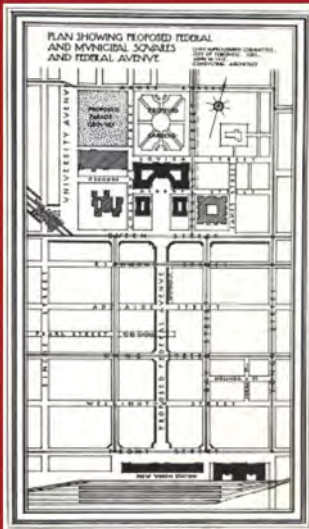
1937 photo of 88-99 Elizabeth Street, near Dundas Street West in the historic Ward neighbourhood and what is considered Toronto's first Chinatown. *City of Toronto Archives*.

2.5 “Keep the Chinese on the Move”

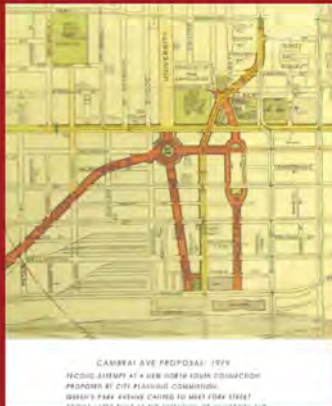
After the Great Fire of 1904, and with plans for a new Beaux-Art Union Station at the terminus of a City Beautiful inspired plan for the City, the Chinese community was displaced north towards what would be known as “The Ward.” This “Keep the Chinese on the Move” was an approach taken by the City of Toronto to prevent the establishment of a Chinese quarter and was a local manifestation of Canadian sentiment as the Chinese as a perpetual foreigner. Local papers included articles supporting the policy, stating that the development of a Chinatown would have “dangerous consequences” for the city.¹¹ Other racially targeted policies included the 1914 provincial law that prohibited Chinese enterprises from hiring “female white” employees in factories, laundries and restaurants, as Canadian politicians maintained that white women needed to be protected from amoral Chinese people.¹² However, these policies proved futile as the Chinese community continued to locate their businesses and residences closer to one another for mutual protection. Chinatown as a refuge against this sentiment of the perpetual foreigner remains relevant in Chinatown today, where many Asian Canadians find a sense of belonging, inclusion and acceptance.

11 In Lai, David Chuenyan. *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada*. Canada: UBC Press, 2011. and Paupst, K. “A Note on Anti-Chinese Sentiment in Toronto Before the First World War”. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*; Calgary Vol. 9, Iss.1, (Jan 1, 1977): 54.

12 Chan, Arlene. (2021, March 17). “Toronto Chinatown”. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/toronto-chinatown>



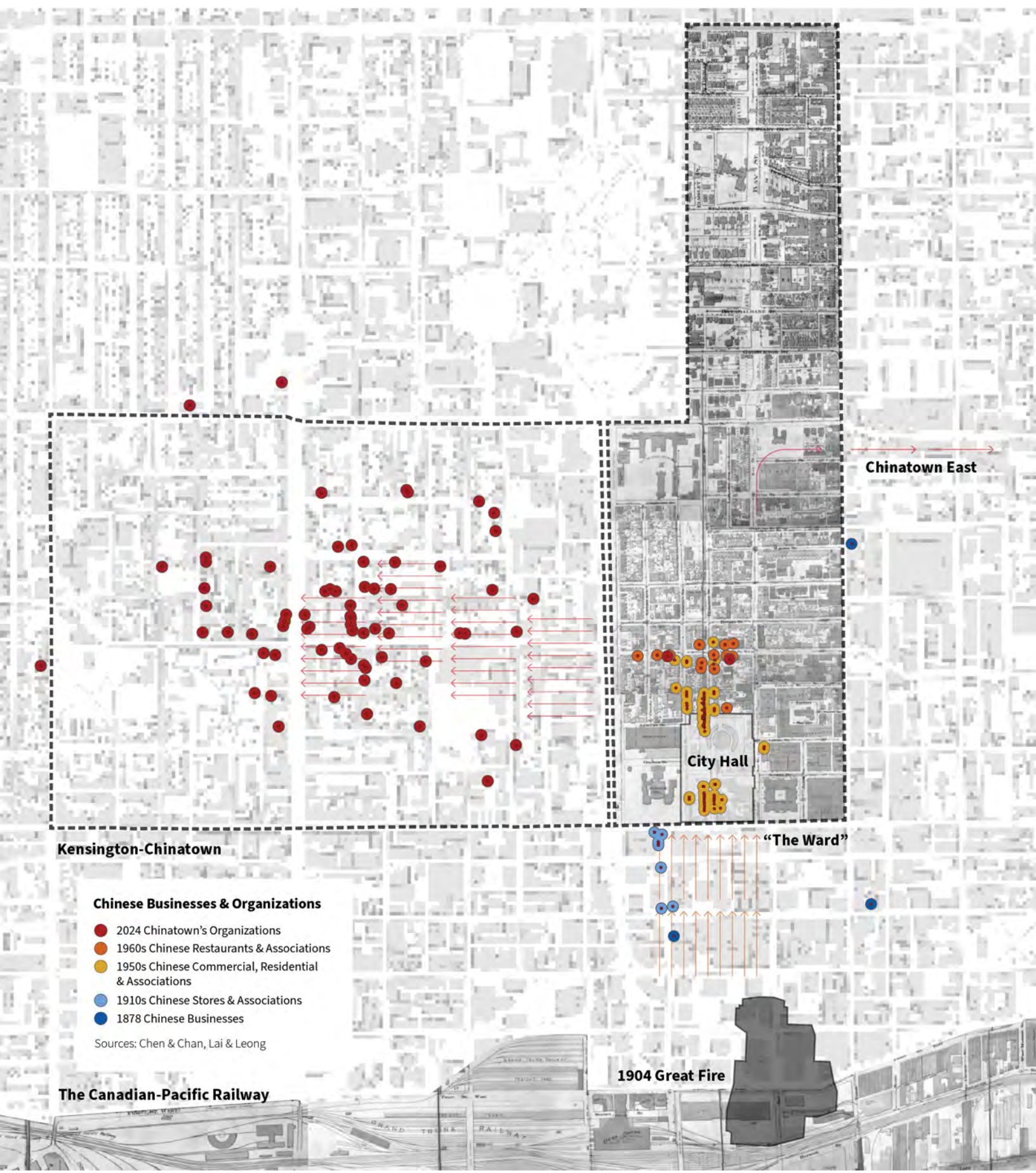
JOHN LYLE PLAN: 1911
 ORIGINAL PLAN FOR UNION STATION
 FEDERAL AVE REVISED AS A NORTH-SOUTH CONNECTION
 TO NEW ADMINISTRATION BUILDINGS ON QUEEN STREET



Various Beaux-arts plans for the City by John Lyle and City Planning Commission displaced early Chinese settlement near Union Station and the CPR headquarters (Image source: Union Station Heritage Conservation District Plan, 2006).

As City Beautiful plans for the City pushed Chinese businesses further north up York Street, clusters of Chinese businesses began to emerge around the intersection of Queen and York streets, on the edges of “The Ward”, which was Toronto’s worst slum and overcrowded by the city’s poorest immigrants. Throughout the 1910s, Toronto’s Chinatown expanded rapidly along Elizabeth Street to Dundas Street. By the 1920s, several Chinese businesses and residents had established along Elizabeth and Dundas streets, laying the foundation for what is widely regarded as Toronto’s original Chinatown.

The Ward was a densely populated place of exclusion and segregation, where the City’s poorest immigrants settled - but it was also a place of solidarity. It was previously home to numerous communities of new immigrants, including the Black community, with many of its community members having established themselves in the Ward after arriving in Canada.



1878-2024 map of Chinese businesses & organizations and the location of Chinatown West a result of local “Keeping the Chinese on the Move” policy (Chen & Chan, Lai and Leong base map, annotated by ERA).

2.6 Urban Renewal and Erasure

As was common in Chinatowns across North America, urban renewal and slum clearance in Toronto targeted Chinatown beginning in the late 1950s. In preparation for a new City Hall, the city expropriated and bulldozed a vast majority of Chinatown as it hosted the design competition for the New City Hall, which opened in 1965. Although some Chinese businesses and institutions remained after the development of new City Hall, many chose to leave amidst City plans to further expand its urban renewal schemes across the downtown.

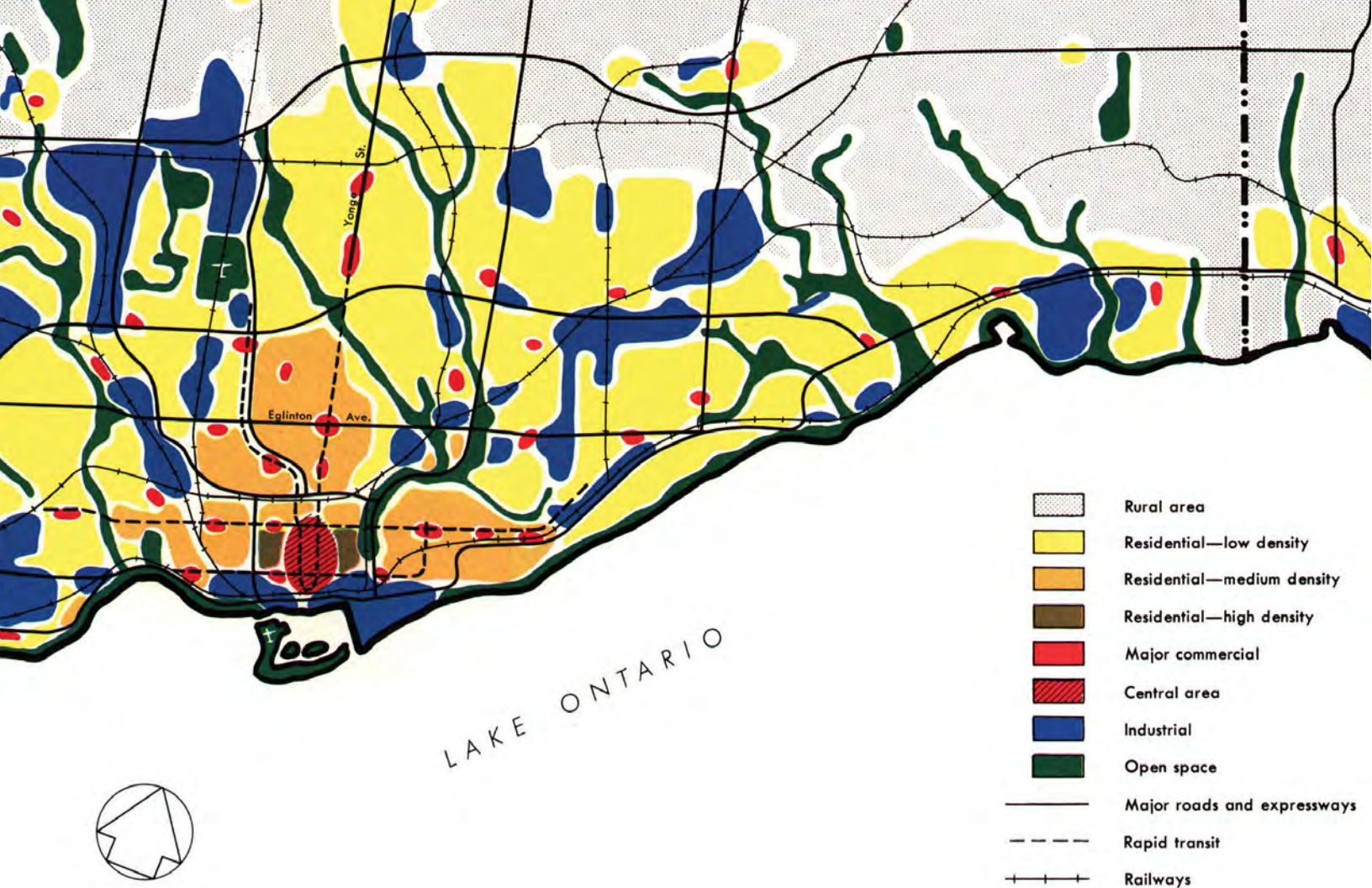
Many in the community have memories of growing up near Dundas and Elizabeth streets and how expropriation disrupted the lives of their families. Stories of solidarity between the Jewish and Chinese communities provide context for how Chinese businesses and associations migrated west towards Dundas Street W and Spadina Avenue, which had historically been a Jewish neighbourhood. The area surrounding Spadina Avenue was also undergoing slum clearance and urban renewal, with the expropriation of land to build the Alexandra Park social housing development and the threat of the planned Spadina Expressway. Community activism, through the likes of Jean Lumb who led the “Save Chinatown Committee” to prevent further demolition of the remaining Chinatown businesses and Dundas and Elizabeth streets; Alderman Ying Hope and others from the Chinatown community fought against the Spadina Expressway alongside Jane Jacobs; and groups like the Chinese Canadian Association and the United Actions of Chinese Canadians who strongly opposed Metro Toronto’s Planning Board plans to further redevelop the surrounding area into a high-density mixed-use area. These collective actions helped to stabilize a burgeoning Chinatown along Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street W.



(Left) 1967 Photo of Jean Lumb, who led the “Save Chinatown Committee”. *Toronto Public Library.*



(Right) 1968 photo of Spadina Ave from the southwest corner of Dundas St W showing Victory Burlesque Theatre at 295 Spadina Avenue, designed by Benjamin Brown, one of the City’s earliest Jewish architects. *City of Toronto Archives.*



1966 Development Plan for the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area, which prescribed the erasure of working-class poor neighbourhoods in the inner-city. *City of Toronto Archives.*

Amidst this context of wide scale urban renewal schemes for the downtown area, many chose to relocate further east to establish East Chinatown along Gerrard Street and Broadview Avenue to distance themselves, and where property was more affordable. The precarity of Chinatown continues to play a part in the psychology of the neighbourhood.



2016 photo of the interior of the Wong Association Hall on Spadina Avenue. *Morris Lum.*

FAMILY ASSOCIATION TYPOLOGY



Historic Family, or Clan Association buildings in Toronto's First Chinatown were expropriated and replaced with New City Hall. These historic association buildings adapted Southern Chinese architectural features, including recessed balconies. *(Image source: 1957 Lung Kong Brother Hood Building, City of Toronto Archives).*



Family Association buildings are often located within adaptively re-used Victorian houses, such as the Chan Association, and demonstrate the intensity of use that typifies Chinatown - retail and office uses at the sub-ground, street, and upper levels, with the top floor reserved for the Association Hall *(Image source: Google).*



The Wong Association of Ontario is located on the top floor of a commercial building on Spadina Avenue. A purpose-built Family Association building built in Chinatown West, reflecting the same pattern of intensity of commercial use in Chinatown *(Image source: Google).*

2.7 Establishment of Chinatown West

Chinatown West blossomed throughout the 1980s and 1990s upon the cancellation of the Spadina Expressway and the introduction of the universal immigration policy of 1967, which brought a new wave of Chinese immigration from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam and Malaysia. As a result of a “Special Identity” designation for the Chinatown area in the Official Plan (see Official Plan Amendment for South-East Spadina, by-law 1980-0099), development had to be compatible in form and character with existing Chinese motifs and details and were permissive of unique forms of intensive retail and services with split entrances to the commercial spaces below and above street level.

China Court was a Chinese-themed shopping centre with a food hall that opened in 1976, on the current site of Chinatown Centre. The site was a community landmark inclusive of a pagoda constructed and decorated by craftsmen from Hong Kong, however, it only operated for a decade until it was closed in 1986. The owner had made plans to redevelop the site to the current Chinatown Centre Mall, which Toronto City planners at the time described as the most ambitious project on Spadina Avenue since Casa Loma.¹³ The redevelopment of the site was indicative of a sentiment of some in the Chinatown community at the time that rejected an archaic and stereotypical vision of Chinese architectural expression that both did not reflect the modernizing of China and reconstructed the sentiment of Chinese-Canadians as the perpetual foreigner.

13 Jamie Bradburn - “Past Pieces of Toronto: China Court” November 26, 2020. <https://jamiebradburnwriting.wordpress.com/tag/chinatown-centre/>



Split-level Plaza in Chinatown along Huron Street. *Undated. David Chuenyan Lai and Jack Leong.*

The 1980s was a period where built form innovation flourished in Chinatown West. Chinese-Canadian property owners and architects, such as Louis Yip and Michael HK Wong introduced some of the earliest mixed-use high-rise development in the city, such as Chinatown Centre and Dragon City Mall.¹⁴ The Chinatown retail character that emerged included a rich layering of signage in Chinese and English languages as well as street vendors. In Toronto's first Chinatown in the Ward at Dundas and Elizabeth streets, signage was a way to reflect ethnic and cultural identity that was not found in the architectural forms of buildings. In Chinatown West, signs are found in Chinese and English, in various forms like horizontal and vertical banner signage to draw customers and to reflect the multi-level uses of commercial buildings throughout Chinatown. The layering of signage in Chinatown includes neon signs, cultural graphics and motifs, and red and yellow signage, reminiscent of the commercial corridors with signage in Hong Kong, to draw residents and visitors alike.¹⁵ Vegetable peddling was met with curiosity and suspicion by the City, and continues to remain a part of the market and streetscape character of Chinatown.

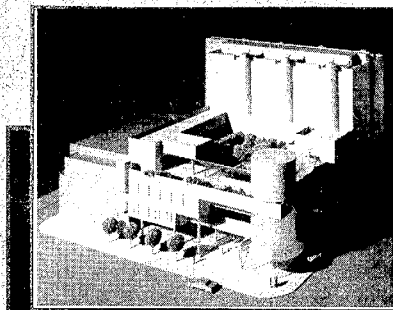
Split-Level Plaza Typology

Dundas Street West contains a concentration of split-level commercial buildings (see image on previous page) that were developed as Chinatown businesses re-established in Chinatown West after being uprooted by New City Hall, and the area was designated as an area of Special Identity in the 1980s. Intensity of commercial retail and services were accommodated and expressed through the built form and commercial signage patterns. The typical commercial frontage of the split-level plaza is two to three-storeys with multiple tenants. This unique commercial typology is differentiated by its entrance configuration: a main level entrance accessed via exterior stairs upwards and a separate below-grade entrance accessed by a set of exterior stairs downwards. The split-level retail plaza was designed to double the commercial space, allowing additional, and also smaller tenants, along the same commercial street. The split-level plaza is characteristic of the intensity of use that distinguishes Chinatown's retail and streetscape character.

¹⁴ Anne Auman, "Planned Chinatown Centre called cultural landmark", April 9, 1985, the Toronto Star, pg D1-D16.

¹⁵ Arlene Chan - "Chinatown's Shifting Identities," The Signs That Define Toronto, edited by Kurt Kraler, Matthew Blackett, Philip Evans. Toronto: Spacing Media, 2022

Planned Chinatown centre called cultural landmark



Architect Michael Wong won out over other designers just as he has in competitions scattered around the globe — and around town

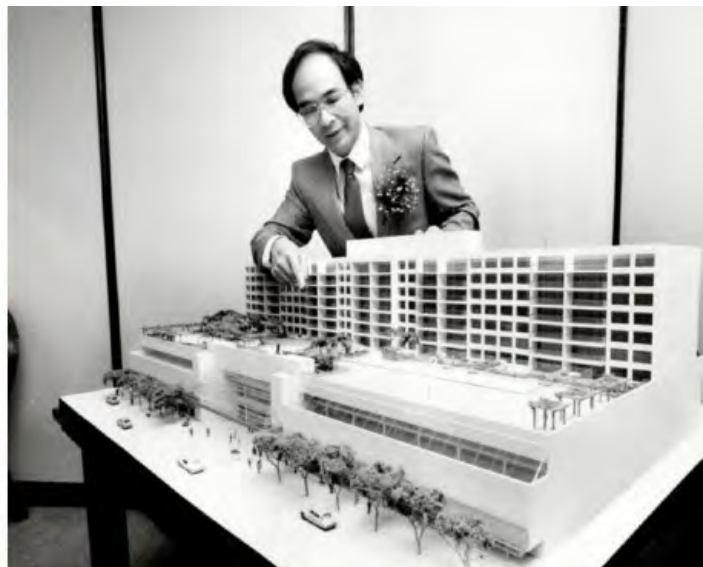


(Left) 1985 Toronto Star article excerpt announcing architect Michael Wong's winning design for Chinatown Centre, a mixed-use 10-storey development. *The Toronto Star*

(Right) 1984-1990 Photo looking west along Dundas West showing the layering of signage in Chinese and English languages. *City of Toronto Archives.*



(Left) 1979 Photo of the pagoda at the China Court shopping centre and food hall. *Traveller's Encyclopedia of Ontario.*



(Right) 1986 photo of developer Tim Man and a model of Chinatown Centre. *Toronto Public Library.*

2.8 Chinatown Diversification

Federal immigration policy shifted from a national citizenship basis to the universal immigration policy that began in the late 1960s and brought new waves of Chinese immigration to the City. While many settled to Chinatown West, new Chinese enclaves began to be established in the surrounding suburban area, including Scarborough and Mississauga. Furthermore, new waves of immigration to Chinatown West have diversified the community, which historically composed of immigrants of Taishanese descent.

Canada's first points-based system was introduced in 1967,¹⁶ creating the basis for today's framework of economic immigration that prioritizes skilled workers aimed at bolstering the Canadian labour market and economy. This shift in immigration policy marked a different kind of ethnic settlement pattern which expanded outside of the inner-city to the surrounding suburban areas, known as "ethnoburbs", coined by Wei Li.

Ethnoburbs are suburban ethnic clusters of residential areas and business districts in large metropolitan areas. They are multiethnic communities, in which one ethnic minority group has a significant concentration, but does not necessarily comprise a majority...They are created by ethnic people - including new immigrants and later generations, under the influences of contemporary socio-economic and political structural changes.¹⁷

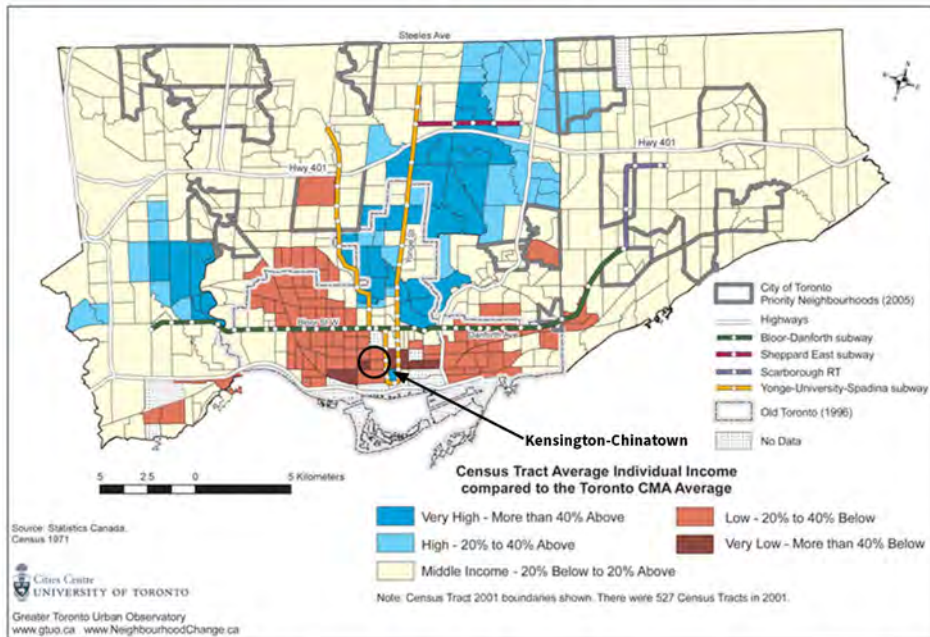
In the Greater Toronto Area, this shift is expressed through the establishment of Chinese communities in Mississauga and Scarborough in the late 1970s and 1980s and more recently, Markham and Richmond Hill. While not immune, these ethnoburbs are less marked by the legacy of historic discrimination and segregating policies that established the downtown Chinatown, and by design of economic immigration policy, tend to be more affluent and middle-class.

Chinatown West, as an historic, working-class immigrant neighbourhood in the heart of downtown has a rich history linked to the original settlement of Toronto as a city and Canada as a nation.

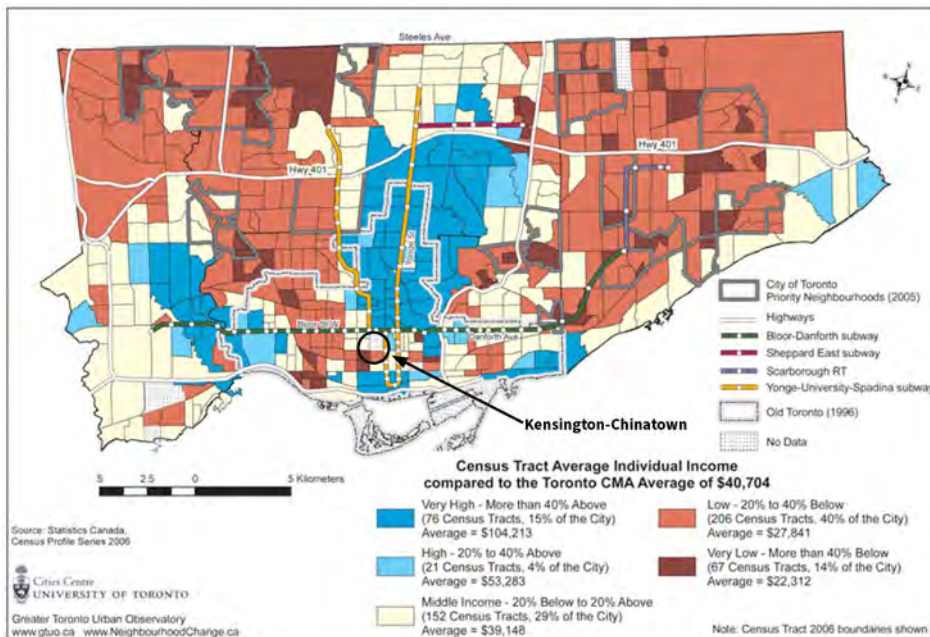
16 Silverman, Stephanie. "Economic Immigration to Canada". The Canadian Encyclopedia, 27 October 2023, Historica Canada. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/immigrant-labour. Accessed 24 September 2024. Last edited October 27, 2023.

17 "Ethnoburb versus Chinatown: Two Types of Urban Ethnic Communities in Los Angeles" Cybergeog: European Journal of Geography. [online], December 10, 1998. Accessed September 24, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.4000/cybergeog.1018>

MAP 2: AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL INCOME, CITY OF TORONTO, Relative to the Toronto CMA, 1970



MAP 3: AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL INCOME, CITY OF TORONTO, Relative to the Toronto CMA, 2005



2010 excerpts from David Hulchanski's book *The Three Cities Within Toronto*. These images show Chinatown as one of the last remaining working-class, low-income (more than 20% below the average individual income) neighbourhoods in the downtown core. Toronto's inner-city was historically low-income in the 1970s, concurrent to the opening of economic immigration, which saw an influx of more affluent, middle-class ethnoburbs establishing in the City of Toronto suburbs, and in the Greater Toronto Area. *David Hulchanski.*

3 METHODOLOGY



3.1 Research Framework

From the onset, the Project Team has sought to answer these two main questions:

1. What makes Chinatown, Chinatown?

2. How does Chinatown work?

While our research and engagement methodology has continuously evolved based on community needs, the underlying objective remained the same: to understand the ecosystem of Chinatown. We want to understand the people and institutions that make up this ecosystem, their relationships with one another, their perspectives on the current state of Chinatown, and their visions for the future of Chinatown.

- **Research Framework:** What are we looking for?
- **Who are our different audiences:** Who are we seeking this information from? What are the demographic groups?
- **Cultural understanding of these audiences:** What is the “vibe” of these groups? What are some frames that help us ask these questions with these groups?
- **Consultation Strategy & Tactics:** What tactics should we employ to obtain this information?

3.2 Audience Groups

The Chinatown community is incredibly complex, heterogeneous, and intersectional. Overlapping identities often influence an individual's perspectives and sentiments on various issues. To be more targeted in our engagement and subsequent analysis, the Project Team has identified the following audience groups with defining characteristics. Note that individual participants may belong to more than one audience group:

- **Resident –Tenant:** Resides in the neighbourhood as a tenant who rents their residence
- **Resident - Homeowner:** Resides in the neighbourhood as a homeowner who owns their residence
- **Newcomer / Immigrant:** Has made Canada their primary country of residence but grew up elsewhere
- **Canadian-born East Asian diaspora:** Has East Asian ancestry and was born and raised in Canada
- **Chinatown Patron:** Visits Chinatown on occasion but does not live or work there. Relatively low engagement with neighbourhood / community
- **Chinatown Champion:** Visits Chinatown frequently but does not live or work there. High engagement with neighbourhood/community
- **Community Leader/Organiser/Activist:** Actively participates in community and political organising in the neighbourhood
- **Native / Indigenous:** Inuit, Metis, or First Nations
- **Landlord:** Owns residential and/or commercial property in the neighbourhood
- **Business Owner:** Owns a business in the neighbourhood
- **Business Worker:** Works at a business in the neighbourhood
- **2SLGBTQIA+:** Identifies as any of the following: Two spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual, or otherwise marginalised sexuality or gender identity
- **Marginalised:** Is unhoused or precariously housed, undocumented, low/no income, or otherwise economically and politically marginalised

3.3 Engagement Strategy and Tactics

As the Project Team gained a better understanding of the various audiences in and of Chinatown, we made adjustments to the engagement strategy and tactics that were previously developed — to meet the community where they are — namely:

- 1-1 Conversations & Interviews
- Door to door canvassing
- Small Group Engagement
- Large Group Events
- Traditional Media (e.g., TV, radio, newspaper)
- New Media (e.g., social media)

Shifting to More Personal Engagement Tactics

Through conversations and inquiry with community leaders and members, we recognized that large group events, traditional media, and new media were not as effective as previously thought in reaching their intended audiences. Many community members preferred a more personal, “quieter” approach over the broad, “louder” and more public styles of engagement due to fraught relationships with authorities and fragmentation between certain groups. As a result, the Project Team leaned more heavily on 1-1 conversations, interviews, and small group engagements as the main avenues of engagement and building trust.

Diversity of Languages and Recruitment of Local Facilitators

Another significant factor the Project Team had to consider was the diversity of languages spoken in the Chinatown community. To address this barrier to participation, the Project Team recruited six Local Facilitators fluent in Cantonese and/or Mandarin, as well as additional staff members who spoke Shanghainese and Vietnamese to support the engagement events. The CTARs and small group discussions had tables reserved for Cantonese and Mandarin speakers. All printed and digital materials that were publicly distributed were translated in Traditional and Simplified Chinese.

3.4 Events and Meetings

Chinatown Festival Pop-up Engagement

On August 19, 2023, the team hosted a pop-up engagement event at Chinatown Festival as a soft launch for the study. Community members were engaged and invited to identify their favourite places in Chinatown, share what they would like and not like to see in the future of Chinatown, and write a “love letter” to Chinatown on a branded postcard. See Appendix X for an event summary report.

Chinatown Teahouse Launch Event (Community Consultation Meeting #1)

On November 25, 2023, the team hosted a drop-in event at the Chinatown Centre where community members were invited to share their perspectives in informal 1:1 and small group facilitated discussions. See Appendix X for an event summary report.

Walking Land Acknowledgment

A walking land acknowledgment occurred in the format of a walking tour on Saturday, December 16, 2023, 1:00-5:00pm. 15 story holders participated in the walking tour including representatives from First Story Toronto, and Chinatown community members – to share stories on the land and place. Stories were captured as historical context to inform the study background and context, rather than insights within the database.

Chinatown Advisory Roundtables

The Chinatown Advisory Roundtables (CTARs) were a series of small group events where community members who either self-nominated or were nominated by their peers were invited to share their perspectives on specific topics in a small group setting of about 20 people. This format enabled deeper conversations about specific issues and helped to surface complexity and nuance. Selection and framing of CTAR topics were based on early insights from the online survey and the Chinatown Teahouse.

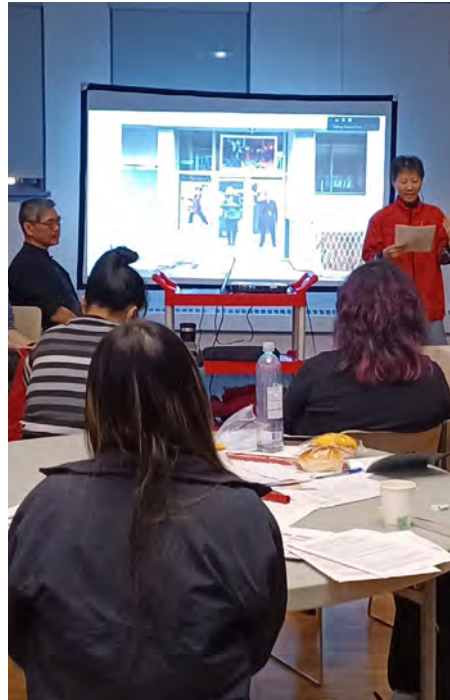
- CTAR #1: Public & Gathering Spaces - January 25, 2024
- CTAR #2: Housing & Livability - March 5, 2024
- CTAR #3: Chinatown’s Culture - April 9, 2024
- CTAR #4: Making it in Chinatown - May 28, 2024

A final CTAR event was held on June 25, 2024 as a celebratory social gathering for all participants of previous CTAR meetings. At this event, the Project Team shared more insights from the online survey and a preliminary set of problem statements for discussion and feedback.

See Appendix III for summaries of each CTAR meeting.

Business Outreach (Door-to-door Canvassing)

With the support of Local Facilitators, the Project Team canvassed businesses door-to-door in May and June 2024 to speak directly with business owners and workers and to share promotional materials with them. Understanding that these audience groups might find it difficult to participate in other meetings or events, this engagement format was often the only accessible way for them to provide input. Their insights were recorded and included in the insights database.



Targeted Small Group Engagements

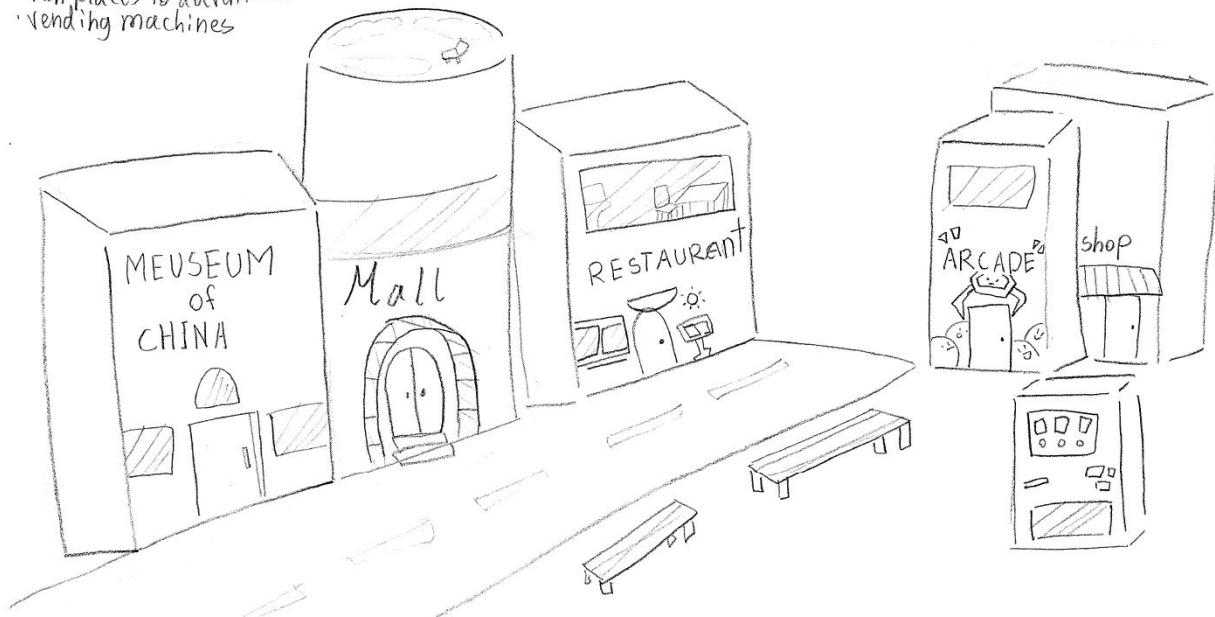
A series of informal small group and 1:1 discussions have also occurred, with insights recorded and included in the insights database. These informal sessions include meetings with local community groups, church groups, family associations, service providers, and community activists and leaders. These have occurred on various dates throughout the study:

- Family associations:
 - Chan Association
 - Lem Association
- Church groups:
 - Chinese Gospel Church and Toronto Chinese Baptist Church
 - Joint focus group meeting
 - Chinese Presbyterian Church
- Youth and school groups
 - University of Toronto, Hart House:
 - ◻ Outreach event
 - Lord Lansdowne Junior Public School
 - ◻ In-class workshop with grade 5 and 6 students
 - Ogden Junior Public School
 - ◻ In-class workshop with grade 5 and 6 students
- Community groups:
 - Chinatown Land Trust
 - Friends of Chinatown
 - Planting Imagination
 - ◻ Focus group meeting
 - Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Worker Support Network
 - Long Time No See Collective
- Service providers:
 - Yonge Street Mission
 - Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS)
 - University Settlement
 - Scadding Court
 - Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (CSALC)

What do you want for the future of Chinatown by students from Lord Lansdowne and Ogden Junior Public Schools. Excerpts from Grade 5 & Grade 6 In-Class Workshops.

Chinatown is already perfect,
it just needs a little funding, that's all

- I want to see more of
- parks
 - the places a bit cleaner
 - no homeless people
 - fun places to adventures
 - vending machines
- I like the part of
- how the buildings look like
 - the atmosphere

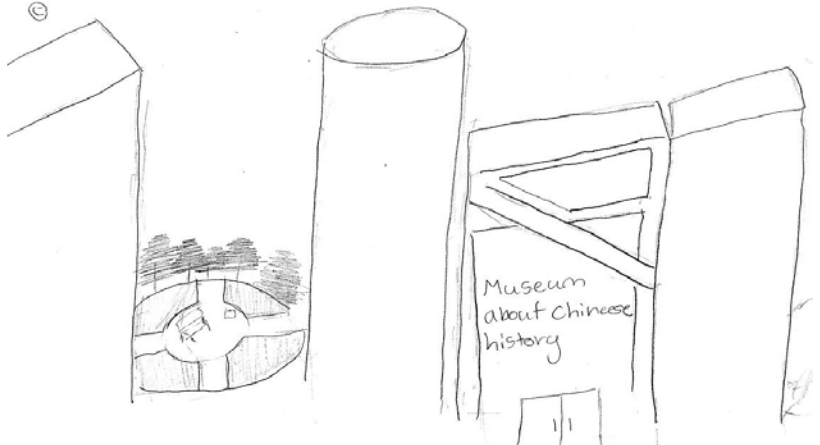


Some things I want to see more of are:

- hamless shelters
- Senior homes
- libraries
- Chinese bakeries
- more shopping centres
- Police stations
- doctor offices
- more traditional festives
- aquairums
- more swimming pools
- Pharmacies
- When I walk on the streets of Chinatown I want to feel safe and smell nature
- more dimsum places
- sunset watching places
- dog parks
- activities like movie theatres

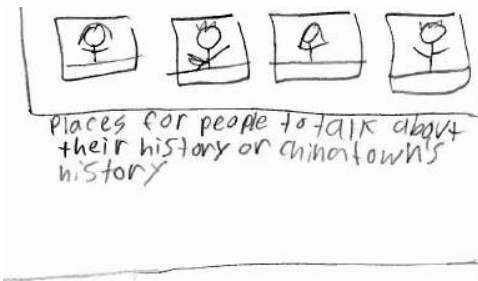
-sunset

I would like to see more parks and more homeless shelters. I would like to see more museums and restaurants





A corner for musicians

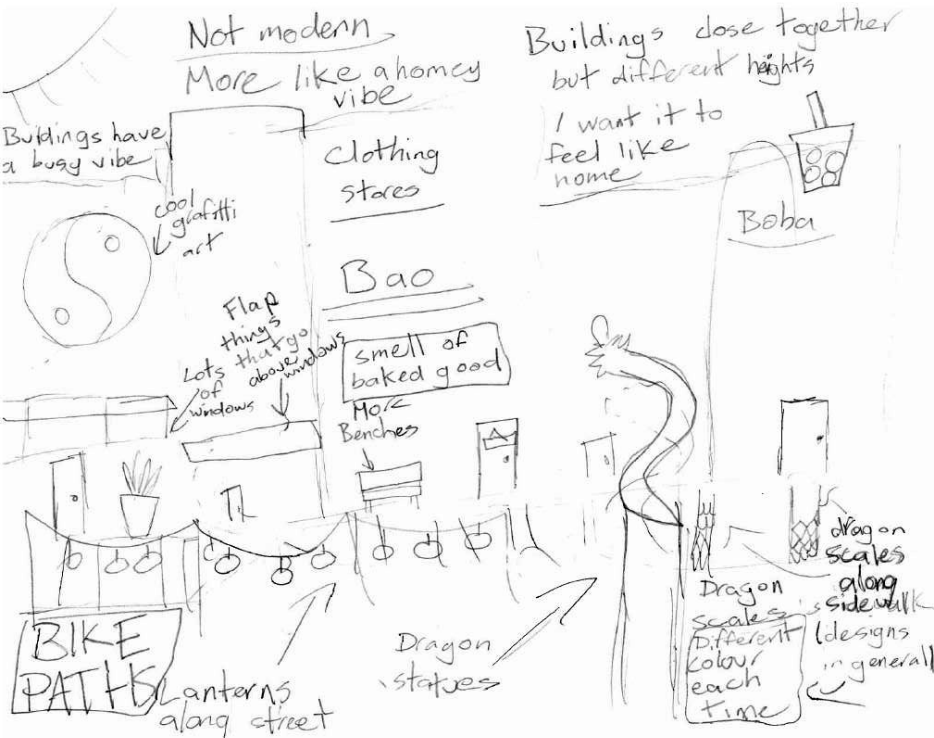
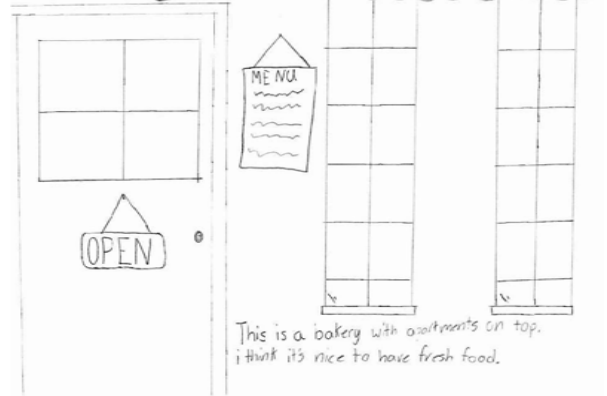


I want to smell food
I want to hear joy

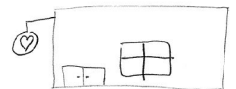


Wanter fearten

Bakery



- Safer and more homeless shelters ↙



- Parks →



- More schools and after schools activities



- Move pools →



- Play grounds →



- Move dog parks →



- Move gym →

- everyone need to feel save! 😊

- movie theatre →

Community Exhibit (Community Consultation Meeting #2)

On December 7th, 2024, the project team hosted the Community Exhibit and Consultation Summary as the culminating event for the planning initiative at the Xing Dance Theatre on Huron Square. The exhibit celebrated the voices of the Chinatown community and showcased the insights gathered through months of engagement. The project team presented an overview of the study in English, Cantonese and Mandarin. Deputy Mayor Ausma Malik also participated and shared remarks.

Community members were invited to explore an exhibit of consultation findings, engage in discussions with the project team, and provide additional feedback. The event featured contributions and art displays from local partners that celebrate Chinatown's heritage and vibrancy. These included photography from Morris Lum; installations by Long Time No See Collective, and Linda Zhang's Planting Imagination, University of Waterloo Architecture Studio Class; and cultural performances by Chinatown Community Lion Dance and the Chinatown Fire Dept (@chinatownfiredept).

Attendees had the opportunity to reflect on the key issues and opportunities identified throughout the consultation process, share their perspectives on the findings, and learn about the next steps for the Chinatown Tomorrow Initiative.



3.5 Community Consultation Meetings Summary

Chinatown Festival Pop-up Engagement

1-1 Conversations & Interviews, August 19, 2023:

- Resident - tenant
- Resident - homeowner
- Newcomer / Immigrant
- Canadian-born East Asian diaspora
- Chinatown patron

Chinatown Teahouse Launch Event (Community Consultation Meeting #1)

Large Group Event, November 25, 2023:

- Resident - tenant
- Resident - homeowner
- Newcomer / Immigrant
- Canadian-born East Asian diaspora
- Chinatown patron
- Chinatown champion
- Community leader / organiser / activist
- Landlord
- Business owner

Walking Land Acknowledgment

Small Group Engagement, December 16, 2023:

- Indigenous
- Community leader / organizer/ activist

Chinatown Advisory Roundtable Meetings

Small Group Engagements, January 25, 2024, March 5, 2024, April 9, 2024, May 28, 2024, June 25, 2024:

- Resident - homeowner
- Newcomer / Immigrant
- Canadian-born East Asian diaspora
- Chinatown champion
- Community leader / organiser / activist
- Landlord
- Business owner

Business Outreach (Door-to-door Canvassing)

1-1 Conversations & Interviews, May-June 2024:

- Business owner
- Business worker

Targeted Small Group Engagement

1-1 Conversations & Interviews, Small Group Engagement, January-July 2024:

- Community leader / organiser / activist (Family Associations)
- Seniors
- Youth
- Community Organizations and Service Agencies
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- Marginalised

Community Exhibition (Community Consultation Meeting #2)

Large Group Event, December 7, 2024:

- Resident - tenant
- Resident - homeowner
- Newcomer / Immigrant
- Canadian-born East Asian diaspora
- Chinatown patron
- Chinatown champion
- Community leader / organiser / activist
- Landlord
- Business owner

3.6 The Insights Database

Online Survey

In parallel to the engagement meetings and events, the Project Team created an online survey to collect input from community members. The online survey was available from November 2023 to July 2024 and was shared with community members at all events and via social media. A promotional postcard was produced and distributed throughout the community. There were 403 survey responses in total.

All insights received through all engagement tactics were systematically coded and collected into an Insights Database. Our approach to recording, storing, and managing the insights the community shared was informed by the following key principles:

Multilingual Fidelity

Insights were collected in several languages, both written and spoken, and translated into English before analysis. For efficiency, first pass translation was done via Google Translate and then refined and validated manually.

Capturing complexity

The Chinatown community is complex and heterogeneous, meaning data management and analysis strategies needed to be able to handle inputs without flattening or oversimplifying insights.

Consent and participant self-identification

We obtained consent from all participants to collect, analyse, and interpret their statements and limited personal information (age group, language(s) spoken, relationship to Chinatown, gender / sexual identity). Participants were informed that they could revoke this consent at any time, in which case their data was permanently removed from the study. Facilitators and interviewers relied on participants to self-identify and refrained from assumption-based categorization.

Structured data

We built a structured insight database to store all insights and support data-informed conclusions and recommendations. All comments gathered from engagement events and meetings over the course of the consultation were broken down into discrete qualitative insights, translated by a native Chinese-speaker, and added to the database. Wherever possible, each insight was recorded with the demographic and stakeholder group categorization of the person who shared the insight. Each insight was analyzed and assigned issue codes to summarize the topic(s) being discussed, as well as a sentiment code, which captures the insight's general sentiment valence. Wherever a specific location or address was mentioned in an insight, that was also recorded.

The database structure allows one to query qualitative insights and answer questions in a way that is sensitive to the complexity of the community.

- **Original insight:** BIA 設計的Huron Square唔好, 唔三唔四。好像沒完成。因為在角落裏也沒有特殊的標志, 看不到, 覺得起個特色在Dundas街比較適合。
- **Translation:** The Huron Square designed by the BIA isn't good. It doesn't make sense. It looks unfinished because there is no special signage and it's tucked in the corner so no one can see it. I thought it would be more suitable to have a distinctive feature on Dundas Street.
- **Source:** Small-group discussion
- **Stakeholder type:** Chinatown champion, community organizer, immigrant
- **Age group:** Senior
- **Gender:** Female
- **Language(s):** Yue, English
- **Issue code 1:** Public space / public realm
- **Issue code 2:** Neighbourhood sense of identity and culture
- **Sentiment code:** Negative
- **Locations:** Huron Square, Dundas Street

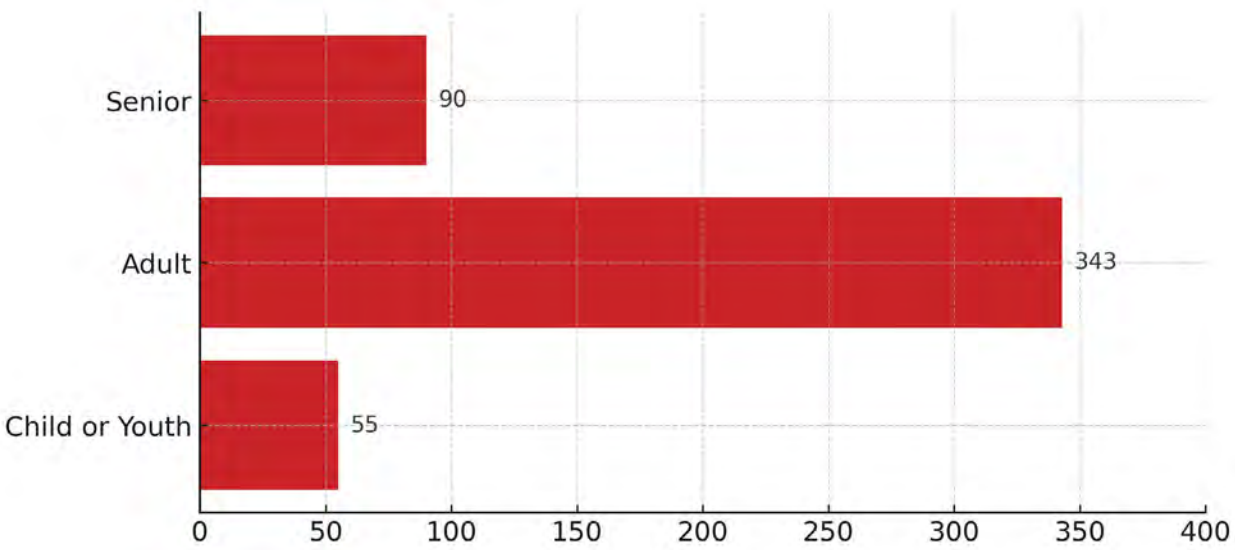
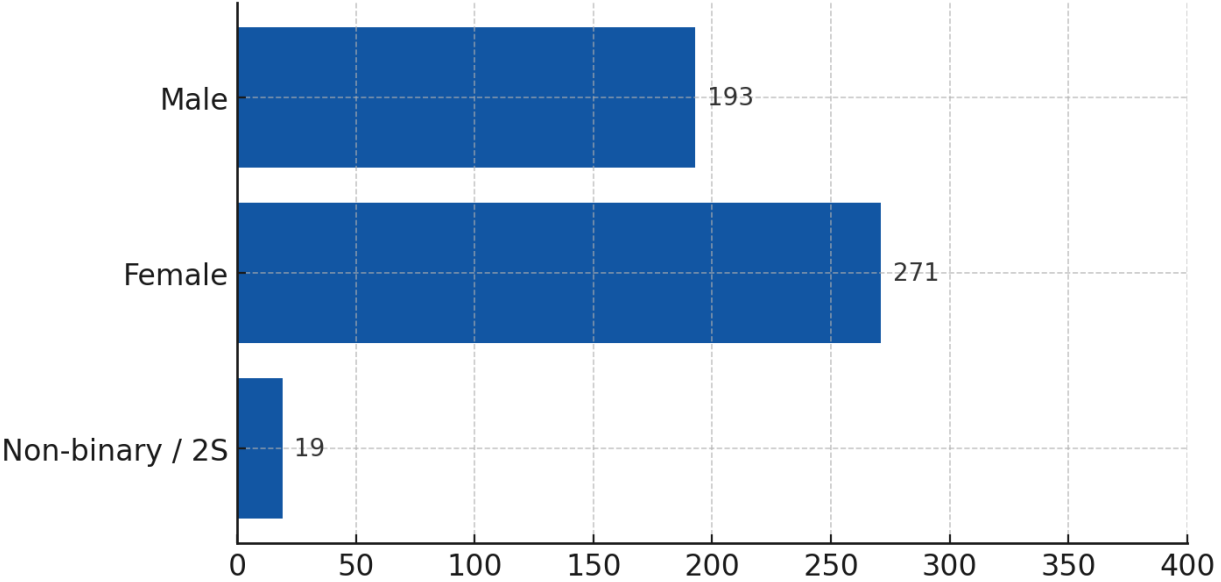
Privacy and anonymity

This study followed the guidelines set out by the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario. All personally identifiable information such as names and organisational affiliation (e.g. place of employment) were anonymized in the database using a unique identifier system.

Database Analysis Approach

As with all large bodies of qualitative data, there are many ways to analyze and interpret the data. The analysis strove to ensure that conclusions are generally consistent with the collected insights and honestly reflect the many, often conflicting views of the community at large. We did not weigh comments based on popularity, but tried to capture each issue as presented.

To analyze the data, we formulated research questions, each of which we answered by synthesizing a different, randomized sample of the insights database. For example, to answer the question “How do we help businesses do better without driving them out?”, we took a random sample of 100 insights with business-related issue codes and *Future hope* sentiment codes, and synthesized the main themes.



Database Issue Codes

Issue codes were created by our team to allow us to categorize the different insights that we were hearing. We created these based on a mapping of responses we were hearing and how often they were coming up, adding in specific sub-categories where needed. The issue codes are broadly captured by the four overarching themes emerging from early feedback received through initial consultation events (i.e. Chinatown Festival Pop-up and Chinatown Teahouse), and structured the four Chinatown Advisory Roundtable topics: Public and Gathering Places; Housing & Livability; Chinatown's Culture; and Making it in Chinatown. Each insight was then hand coded with the issue codes in order to catalogue them

Overarching Issue Code Categories

- **Public & Gathering Spaces**
- **Chinatown's Culture**
 - Identity
 - Safety
 - Cleanliness
- **Making it in Chinatown**
 - Economic Development
 - Legacy Business
 - Intergenerational
- **Housing & Livability**
 - Affordability
 - Displacement

The issue counts are meant to be read as an accounting of the issues that participants were interested in talking about or sharing with us. As our methodology was to ask more open-ended questions about how people saw Chinatown and its future, participants were free to share what they felt what was on their mind and what they considered to be priorities. A lower count does not indicate that there would be no interest or opinion amongst the community about that issue; it only indicates that the issue may not have been of interest at that moment or something that participants wanted to bring up. It is quite possible that if asked more directly about a particular issue, there could be interest.

Insights were coded based on the following definitions:

Business – buildings, built form

Insights related to commercial properties' building formats, architecture, conditions, zoning, etc.

Business – prices and quality of goods and services

Insights about how much things cost in Chinatown (excluding housing) and their quality or value to customers.

Business – survival and succession

Insights about business turnover, comparison of past, present, future types of businesses, and who owns or runs them.

Business – overall environment, work, and market trends

Insights about the overall market for goods and services in Chinatown/Toronto, workforce/labor, policy environment (e.g. licensing, minimum wage laws, government supports/restrictions).

Housing – buildings, built form

Insights related to residential properties' building formats, architecture, conditions, zoning, etc.

Housing – affordability, real estate value, and displacement

Insights about residential real estate in Chinatown, including rent prices, land values, tenant/landlord relationships.

Neighbourhood sense of public safety and policing

Insights related to crime or police presence.

Neighbourhood sense of orderliness, cleanliness

Insights related to cleanliness, order, and hygiene.

Neighbourhood sense of belonging and inclusion

Insights about who feels like they belong and do not belong based on their language, culture, immigration status, class, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, etc.

Neighbourhood expression of identity and culture

Insights related to perceptions of “Chinese-ness” of Chinatown, as well as the ways other cultures are expressed and experienced.

Public space / public realm

Insights related to plazas, public art, street furniture, public assets (e.g. parks), public events/festivals, and look and feel of Chinatown.

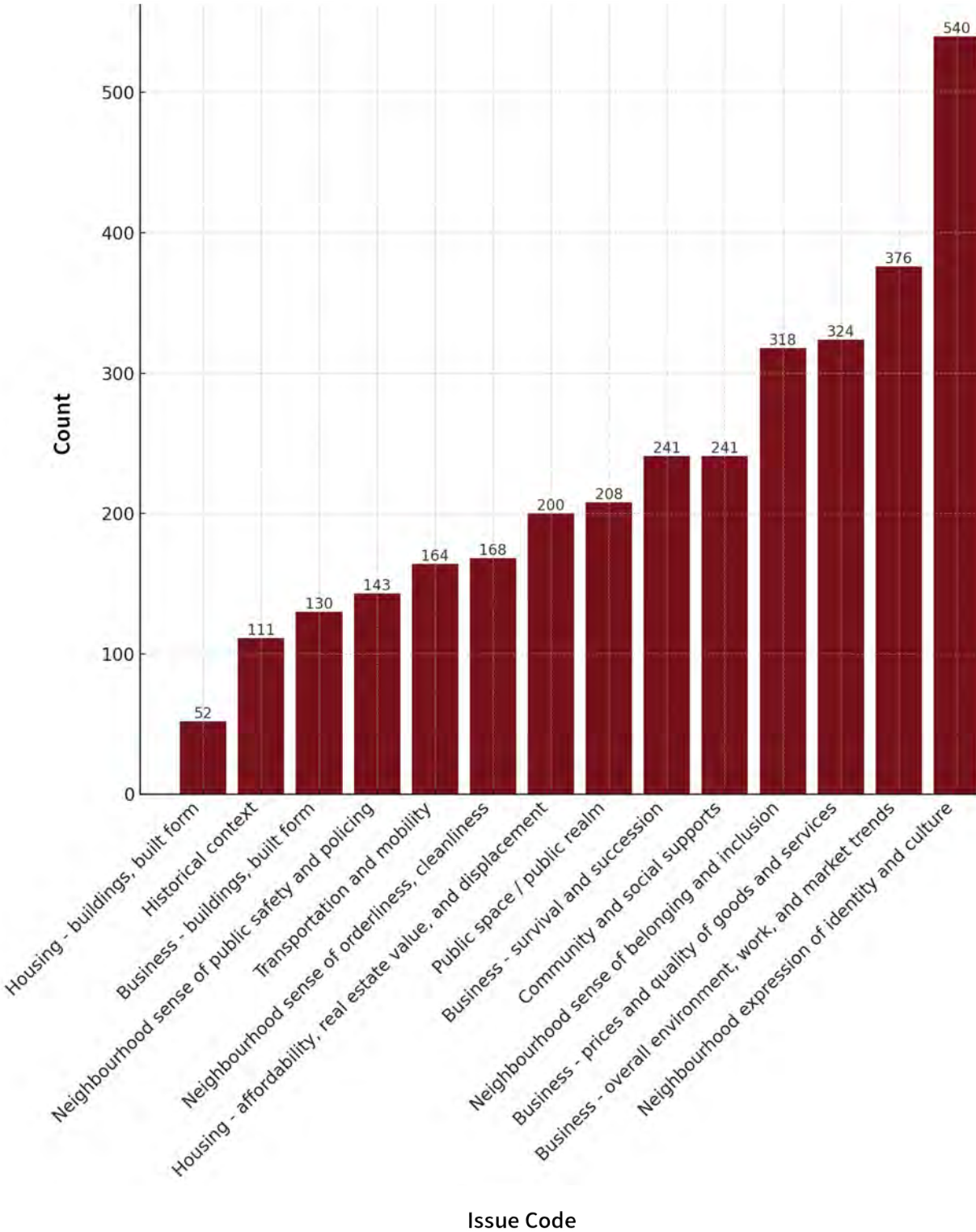
Transportation and mobility

Insights related to traffic, traffic safety, public transit, parking, and overall mobility.

Community and social supports

Insights related to public, non-profit, and community groups that serve the community (religious and family organisations, community centres, shelters, etc.).

ISSUE CODE COUNTS

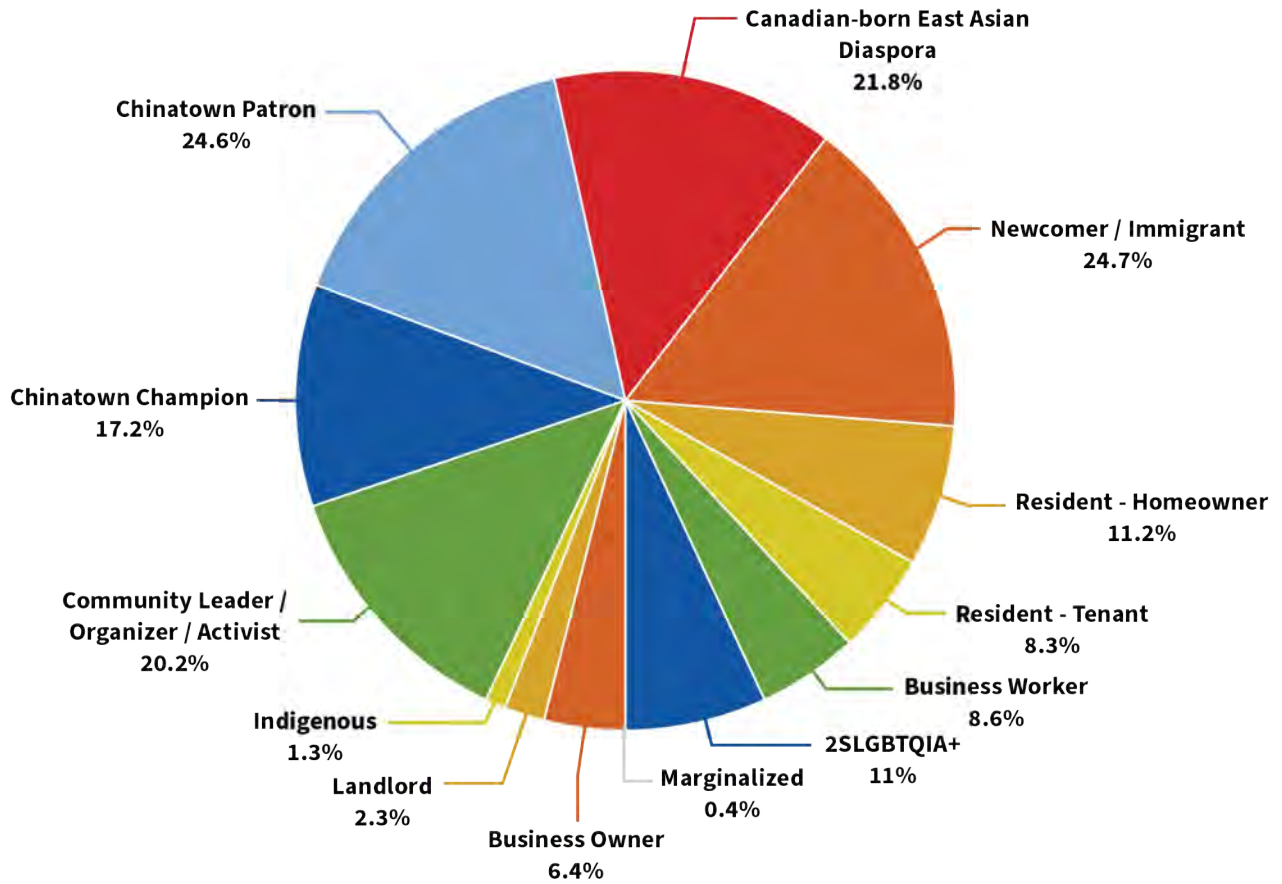


Participant Demographics (Total 545 Participants)

Participants with the following identities took part on the Chinatown Tomorrow Study. We acknowledge that people are intersectional and that a single person may have multiple identities. Intake of insights allowed for multiple identities to be recorded. This is an accounting of all of the different identities that participants shared with us.

- Resident — Tenant: 45 participants, 8.3%
- Resident — Homeowner: 61 participants, 11.2%
- Newcomer / Immigrant: 135 participants, 24.7%
- Canadian-born East Asian diaspora: 119 participants, 21.8%
- Chinatown patron: 134 participants, 24.6%
- Chinatown champion: 94 participants, 17.2%
- Community leader / organiser / activist: 110 participants, 20.2%
- Indigenous: 7 participants, 1.3%
- Landlord: 13 participants, 2.3%
- Business owner: 35 participants, 6.4%
- Business worker: 47 participants, 8.6%
- 2SLGBTQIA+: 60 participants, 11.0%
- Marginalised: 2 participants, 0.4%
- Male: 193 participants, 35.4%
- Female: 271 participants, 49.7%
- Non-binary / 2S: 19 participants, 3.4%
- Child or Youth: 55 participants, 10.0%
- Adult: 343 participants, 62.9%
- Senior: 90 participants, 16.5%
- Chinese-speaking (as primary language or otherwise): 303 participants, 55.5%

Intersectional Identities of Participants

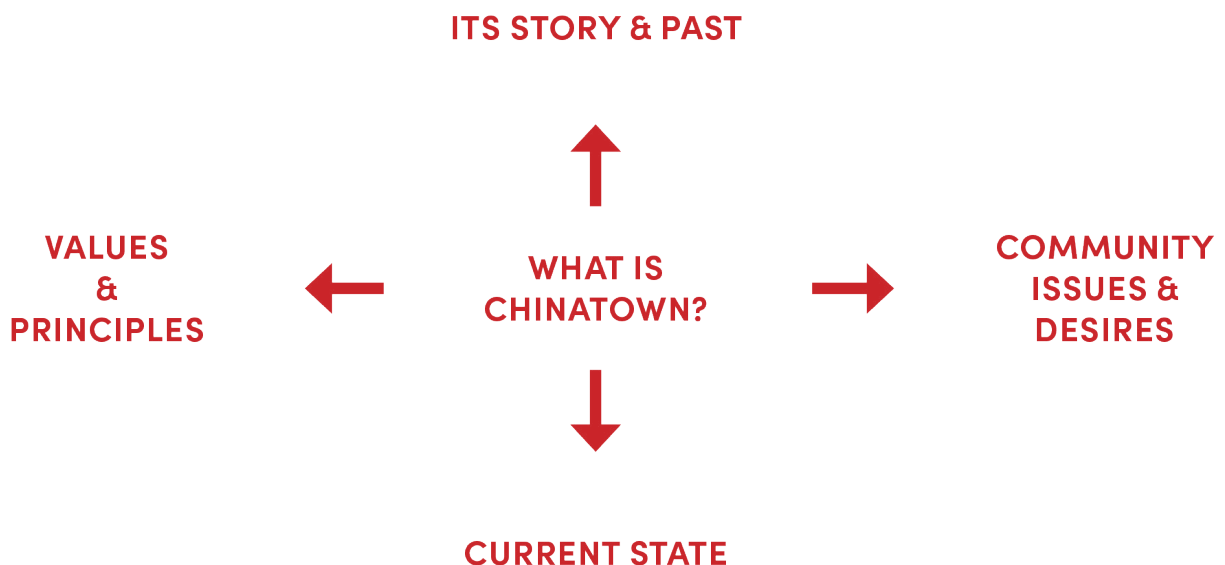


4 WHAT WE HEARD



4.1 WHAT IS CHINATOWN?

Our central question since the beginning of this process is to understand “What is Chinatown?” The answer to this question encompasses multiple integral parts: the story of Chinatown’s past, an understanding of its current state and key issues, and more importantly, the values and principles that the Chinatown community wants to see it embody. Through this engagement process we have come to better understand this last part, which then helps provide strategic direction and guidance for our planning recommendations.



Chinatown is a Meeting Place

Chinatown is situated on traditional Anishinaabe, Haudenasaunee, Wendake territory. It is more than a tourist attraction or marketplace, but a place where many nations have gathered for millennia, to engage in commerce and exchange culture. Chinatown continues to be a place for locals and visitors alike, to engage, and exchange culture, learn, educate and support.

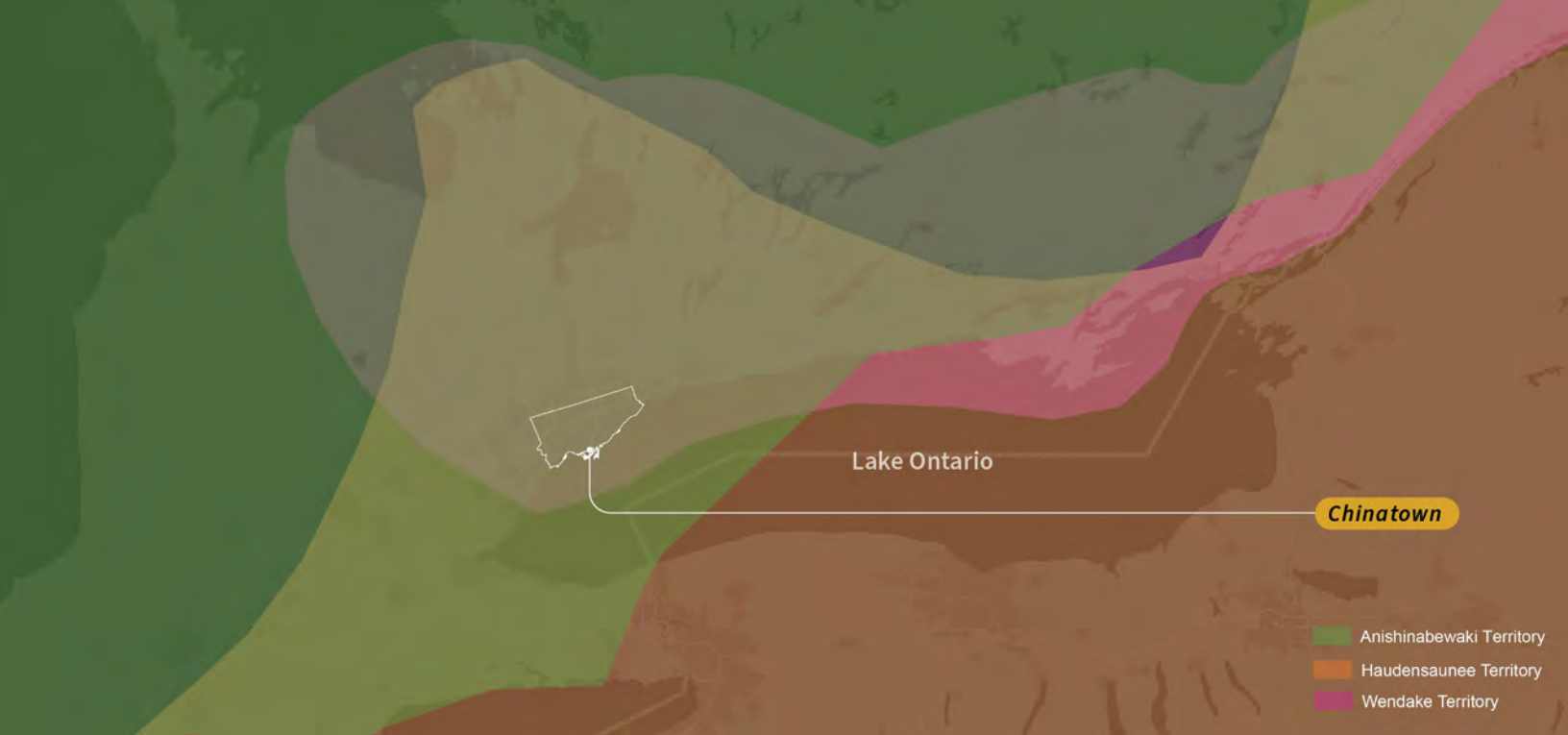
Chinatown is a Refuge

Chinatown is a refuge for everyone. It is a place where those fleeing from economic and political hardship can find the ability to self-determine a future for themselves and their families. Chinatown is a global “Arrival City” and home base for all kinds of racialized and immigrant communities, East Asian and otherwise. Chinatown is a sense of belonging.

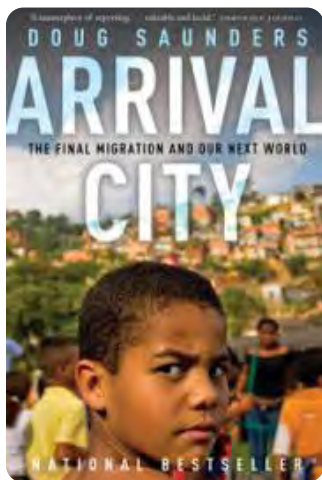
*“It’s a place where many East Asian diasporas, and recently, refugees, migrant workers, artists (and probably others that I’m missing) have been able to establish themselves and settle - not many places in the city can do that. To me, it’s the people that makes Chinatown unique.” -
Survey Respondent*

Chinatown is a Home for Chinese-Canadian Identity

Chinatown is the home base for Chinese-Canadian identity. Chinese-Canadians have made significant contributions to the building of the nation of Canada, and City of Toronto, but have faced long-standing systemic racism - including exploitation of Chinese workers for the construction of the transcontinental railway, progressively punitive Head Taxes and the Chinese Exclusion Act (1923-1947). Chinatown was created out of these segregating policies. Ironically, the specificity of the Chinese-Canadian story — the story of individuals fleeing Southern China, primarily of Taishanese descent, fleeing economic and political oppression, is a universal immigrant story of resistance and persistence. Chinatown has national and local significance in our identity as a multicultural society, and is a place where Chinese-Canadian and the Asian diaspora at large can find a sense of belonging.



Indigenous Territory Chinatown-Ishpadinaa is situated on overlapping Anishinabewaki, Haudensaunee and Wendake Territory — where many nations have gathered for millennia. Whose.Land/en/



What is an “Arrival City”?

“Arrival City” is a concept popularized in the Canadian journalist, Doug Saunders’ book. Saunders has discussed Chinatown as a first generation Arrival City¹⁸ in the City of Toronto.

The term conceptually integrates all places which provide comparably cheap living spaces serving as possible access to the city, to its society and to its functions for rural-urban migrants as well as for the existing urban poor.¹⁹

What is Chinese-Canadian Identity?

Chinese-Canadian identity is deeply rooted in the history of early migration from China to Canada in the 19th century and is an amalgam of Chinese and Canadian values. Chinatown West is part of a lineage of working-class poor immigrant communities in the heart of North American inner-cities, drawing from shared histories of exclusion, patterns of migration and urban development including Chinatowns in San Francisco, New York City, Vancouver and Montreal, etc.. Chinatown is often conflated, or even co-opted, as a representation of China - to periodically nefarious effect, where anti-Asian racism plays out in the North American city, as most recently manifested as “The China Virus” during the COVID 19 pandemic, echoing the segregating “Yellow Peril” rhetoric that formed the genesis of Chinatowns in the first place. As such, Chinatown West is not a “Little China”, as a representation of China and Chinese culture, but a place that spatially represents Chinese-Canadian history. Chinatown is simultaneously connected to other inner-city Chinatowns and suburban Chinese-Canadian communities, as well as contemporary cultural trends in modern China, but is distinctly urban, Chinese, and Canadian.

18 "Examining Toronto's arrival cities" by Dylan C. Robertson <https://thevarsity.ca/2010/11/15/examining-torontos-arrival-cities>

19 From "The morphology of the Arrival City - A global categorization based on literature surveys and remotely sensed data", by H. Taubenböck, N.J. Kraff, M. Wurm, in Applied Geography 92, 2018 pg 150-167.

4.2 WHAT NEEDS TO BE PRESERVED INTO THE FUTURE?

Through the course of this study, the project team witnessed an overwhelming passion for Chinatown - a strong sense of community values that future evolutions and iterations of the neighbourhood should carry forward. Chinatown has significant meaning, not only for local residents, but for the Asian diaspora at-large, and the City as a whole. These values were expressed through the hopes and dreams of Chinatown community members. It is these values that we understand from the community that need to be preserved.



1. Deep Affordability

Deep affordability for commercial and residential rents and property ownership is a critical component for the historic establishment of Chinatown and its ongoing prosperity. Insights from the community repeatedly expressed, as a hope for its future, that Chinatown continues to sustain a visible-minority, immigrant community in the heart of the city that is affordable and accessible. Deep affordability allows newcomers, young entrepreneurs, seniors, and families to engage in the local economy and access community amenities.

Business survival and housing affordability are the top issues of concern for the community, and there is a strong sense from the community that increasing prices are threatening the existence of Chinatown. This points to fear and anxiety about gentrification and displacement of a unique and culturally distinct neighbourhood. Any actions that directly address this concern should be a priority for recommendations to Council and how the City should respond to the findings from this study.

“The low-cost rents and supports needed to have a wide range of diverse and highly affordable businesses, including ones that have been operating for decades, is what makes the area vibrant and special.”

“There has to be spaces in a city where traditionally and currently marginalized people can settle and get a fresh start in a way that’s accessible and affordable.”

“Although I’ve worked in Chinatown for around 20 years, I have to commute from very far to have a place to afford to live. Where I live is very quiet and not as many amenities.”

2. Cultural Specificity and Authenticity

Chinatown is both a local and regional destination for people to access its culturally specific amenities, including food, places of worship, professional services, and other cultural activities. While Chinatown is undeniably a tourist destination in Toronto, the authenticity of Chinatown is based on its function as a living, thriving neighbourhood - where people have resided through multiple generations, find community, and access services in a culturally specific context.

The livability of Chinatown West is identified as its competitive advantage in comparison to other historic Chinatowns in Canada, and is also felt to be at risk. Anecdotes express the sentiment that decreasing affordability (housing and commercial) and other generational trends (such as younger generations not wanting to take over long-standing family businesses) have had an impact on the availability of culturally specific professional services, including medical and health related services, offered in multiple languages – Cantonese and Mandarin being the dominant languages.

Furthermore, the history, and presence of long-standing community institutions like the Family Associations, Hong Luck Kung Fu Club, legacy businesses like Swatow, New Sky, Rol San, and historic landmarks like the former Standard Theatre, provide cultural, nostalgic anchors within the community that continues to draw people back.

“People from all across GTA have a heart connection here and want to be here. It’s a strength and a weakness. Those who live here have a different kind of connection. If you’re not living here anymore your connection is nostalgic, but if you live here its a living breathing thing. You don’t want Chinatown to end up being a museum.”

“...it’s actually a functioning community that serves low-income, non-English-speaking people – this is its most important function, and it’s also the function that will disappear unless we protect it...”

3. Right to Self-Determination

This value speaks to the need for an anti-racist, rights-based approach to Chinatown. There is a sense in the community that current development pressure, gentrification, and condo-fication is equated with sanitization and erasure of character, culture and community. Many community members live with the memory of personal experiences of discriminatory policies of the past including Chinese Exclusion, and local policies to “keep the Chinese on the move”, which relied on the myth of Chinese-Canadians as perpetual foreigners. This led to the erasure of a significant portion of the historic Chinatown, which destabilized its core around Dundas and Elizabeth streets as a result of expropriation and replacement with New City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square. This legacy of physical and cultural erasure matched with direct personal experiences of Anti-Asian hate has generated a sense of mistrust within the community and impacts how the community relates to the City of Toronto as a government entity. There is a sense of unfairness felt by the Chinatown community towards government (municipal and otherwise), as external sources of power that either actively enforce, or passively allow outcomes that are, at worst, discriminatory - as occurred through discriminatory policies of the past, or, at best, irrelevant.

A rights-based approach empowers the existing community, recognizes its autonomy, and celebrates its cultural expression and nuances.

“I hope that it can be preserved through collective power and for development to be planned in accordance with the community’s needs. More investment is needed from the city...”

“If there needs to be development then it MUST anchor principles of justice, equity and affordable access to safe, clean, well maintained homes for low-income folks. This is the historical imperative of Chinatowns. It’s a haven for newcomers and people who have been historically oppressed.”

4. Intergenerationality

Chinatown is a place of deep meaning and cultural significance across multiple generations of Chinese-Canadians. Chinatown and its third spaces - restaurants, groceries, bakeries, sidewalks, cultural spaces, etc., where the community can gather, interact, and socialize, together establish a forum where elders and younger generations can connect - where younger generations can connect to traditional culture. Chinatown is a cultural anchor and place for cultural reclamation. A place of fond memories like big family meals, and reclaimed memories impacted by internalized racism (i.e. in memories of hating the smells and “strange” storefront displays of Chinatown as young children, but now have greater meaning as adults by providing connection to traditional cultural values). As such, it's a place where immigrants, and their children, learn how to be both Chinese and Canadian. It is also a welcoming place of belonging for the Asian diaspora at large.

There is a strong desire for intergenerationality to be accommodated and expressed in the public realm, multigenerational forms of housing, and for the ability to be born, raise a family, and grow old in the community.

“I wasn’t always proud of being Chinese-Canadian and in my younger years had rejected that identity. What I think is missing for me is more access to multi-generational programming and access to language exchange classes. I think there is a lot of potential for youth to help the elders and for the elders to pass on traditions that will be lost if they aren’t taught.”

“I would like to be old here! I want to be a little old lady in the bakery who goes to the park and does dancing. I see so much personality in the seniors I meet here. They have freedom and independence here. Their space is here.”

5. Micro-enterprise

Chinatown's public realm is characterized by its intensity and diversity of activity, micro-enterprise and modest, working-class character - with small, local businesses, and street vendors playing an integral part of the public realm experience.

The low-barrier access for "micro-entrepreneurs" to set up shop, in the form of available affordable space contributes to the vibrancy of Chinatown's character. Young entrepreneurs are starting new businesses and hosting community events within Chinatown Centre, which is setting the groundwork for the revitalization of that place. This value also speaks to the diversity of types of economic activity in Chinatown.

**"What is working well in Chinatown?
Micro businesses and ready access
for micro entrepreneurs"**

**"What makes Chinatown great is the
accessibility [...], you don't need a store, you
just need 5 sq.ft in Chinatown and you have a
business. -It's your street, you can claim it."**

6. Mutual Aid

Chinatown's cultural heritage includes being a welcoming space for newcomers and outsiders - a space of belonging where people who faced discrimination would band together. Under-housed, food-insecure, and people who don't have legal status are a part of the community, and not to be excluded, with Chinatown having a long history as a mutual-aid society where people take care of each other. Family Associations are a quintessential expression of this and played a significant role in fostering mutual-aid societies in the face of discrimination and segregation.

Family Associations (also historically referred to as "Tongs") are social-cultural institutions that are the backbone of Chinatown, supporting the social fabric and economic vitality of the community. As Chinese immigrants were historically excluded from Canadian political and economic systems, Family Associations provided access to financial assistance and loans, and community governance infrastructure. Family Associations have shared that many are facing succession concerns, in order to remain relevant to younger generations, to attract new members and prevent downsizing or closure. More recently, the Toronto Chinatown Land Trust, established in 2023, formed as a contemporary expression of the mutual-aid society embodied by Family Associations.

"In times of scarcity, the community served and fed each other - I see the owners of the Chinese Bakery on Dundas give buns to people for free - this is Chinatown."

"The previous Family Association system provided a 3-benefit credit union. Many Chinese people in Canada couldn't get bank accounts 100 years ago. [...] Each family would [...] add [their] \$10 and use the honour system. This would benefit you, the community, and the association. These funds could then assist with opening businesses, funerals, to send money back home, weddings, etc."

"This is my home. My family lives outside of Chinatown. The people who work in Chinatown at the restaurants, grocery stores, bakery shops, these are my second family and we care for each other."

7. Informality

Informality is valued as a quality of Chinatown's streetscape and market character. It is evocative of a familiar and intimate environment that cannot be grasped in more sanitized versions of urbanism. The "grocery grannies" were often cited as beloved fixtures of the streetscape environment, which includes elderly folks selling vegetables grown in backyard gardens, as well as other street vendors. Part of the informality of Chinatown is also a function of historical segregationist policies that excluded the Chinese community from participating in local political and economic life, and continue to be part of the Chinatown culture.

"There's something disorganized and messy about Chinatown that makes it what it is. It's a living, messy place and it's an illustration that cities can thrive in ways other than being neatly packed away. It's not a threat to safety - it's just a way of living. That is something that is unique and enjoyable about here. I love it here because it reminds me of where I grew up."

"Chinatown needs to protect the "street bazaar" quality of public spaces that are safe, welcoming and unregulated, where the grocery grannies on the street can sell their goods."

"Chinatown was historically and in many cases is still cash-based. You need credit rating to get a loan, so many residents and business owners historically wouldn't have been able to go to banks."

"Chinatown has good buskers around. For example, the guy with the sword and the one with the flute. How can we get more support for these artists?"

8. Working Class

Chinatown West is a working-class community. The issue of class was a consistent theme we heard throughout the course of the study; where sentiments pointed to how the Chinatown West community in many ways has more in common with surrounding working-class, low-income neighbourhoods in Toronto's downtown core (including Kensington, Alexandra Park, and Grange) than with other suburban Chinese enclaves. As universal immigration policy opened up Toronto to economic immigration after 1967, shifting away from a national citizenship to a points-based approach, middle-class communities began to be established in Chinese ethnoburbs in Mississauga, Scarborough, and expanded to Markham and Richmond Hill in later waves. While the upper- and middle-class migrated to the suburbs, the working-class poor and seniors remained in Chinatown West.

“We are not the model minority. The ones that ‘made it’ moved out to Scarborough, Markham, Richmond Hill, etc. Who is left are the working-class poor and less mobile seniors.”

“Generations of working class immigrants building a life for themselves here is the history - developers coming in and making money off of that legacy is not what we want. Manifest a different future.”

“Chinatown is relatable for anyone who has connection with the working class immigrant experience. The city never wanted these communities here and they're still here - that's a powerful, relatable story and makes Chinatown worth protecting and gives all of us hope..”

9. Solidarity

Chinatown is a refuge for everyone and a place of historic community solidarity – It is a landing place and home for all kinds of racialized and immigrant communities, East Asian and otherwise. While Chinatown’s story relates to a specific community, it also a universal story of refuge and solidarity.

Cecil Community Centre is a physical embodiment of this value - it operates out of a building that was purpose-built as a church, adapted into a Jewish synagogue, was an early home base of queer activism in the city, and is currently run by a predominantly Black Board of Directors and leadership. It continues to provide services and programs for the Chinese community, and increasingly new waves of immigrants and refugees.

Many in the community still remember the experience of the City expropriating their properties and being pushed out. Friendships and solidarity with the Jewish community were what allowed displaced Chinese institutions and property owners to settle around Dundas and Spadina after being expropriated for City Hall.

“It is a safe landing ground for immigrants and refugees from all over. You can find community there. There are a diversity of languages and affordable things. It cultivates the ineffable things that make certain cities and urban spaces worldly, cultural, and truly great.”

“Even though gentrification has impacted Chinatown, there has always been a feeling of familiarity, even though I am not East Asian myself.”

One of the earliest Indigenous Friendship Centres, and precursor to the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, located on Spadina Avenue, north of Bloor Street, was located within Chinatown at Beverly and Dundas streets. During the Walking Land Acknowledgment, Jon Johnson from First Story Toronto explained that there is no “Chinatown” for Indigenous people in the City. As Indigenous peoples “reurbanized”, his term for Indigenous people returning to the city from being forced onto remote reserve lands through Indian Act policies, Johnson explains how establishments like the Silver Dollar, El Mocambo, as well as the Friendship Centre at Beverly and Dundas streets, served as landing pads, known widely across Indigenous networks and reserve communities, where they knew they could find a friendly and familiar face.

4.3 What are Community Priorities?

Key Strategic Directions

Based on what we have heard, and in light of the key principles and values of the community, we have synthesized five key strategic directions that we felt that community was driving towards via its feedback. We highlight each strategic direction along with our interpretation and some direct participant commentary sourced from the insights database. These directions have been framed to acknowledge that the components that make Chinatown vibrant and thrive already exist in the community and that the neighbourhood is a critical asset to the City's cultural heritage and economy. The best way for the City to contribute to Chinatown's future is to partner with the community and investing in its rich amenities.

1. Investment Without Displacement

2. Supporting Small Business

3. Enhancing the Public Realm

**4. Plan for Additional Community,
Social and Cultural Infrastructure**

5. Focus on Affordable Housing

1. Investment without displacement

First and foremost, we heard that the community wants the city to invest in solutions that prevent the displacement of residents and businesses.

People are deeply concerned about affordability and economic sustainability - that without interventions aimed at preserving residential and commercial affordability, the people and businesses that shape Chinatown will leave, negatively impacting Chinatown's culture and identity. There is a strong desire for any new development in the community to reflect the Chinatown culture and to be community-oriented, providing accessible services for everyone.

There is an overarching anxiety and fear of the ability for residents to stay. There is also a feeling that many have had to leave already. The existence of Chinatown as a thriving place, where working-class immigrants can work and live, to gain a foothold into Canadian society, and engage in the local economy is a key community priority. Chinatown has a long history of community-based mutual aid models and long-term customers who fiercely love local businesses. Businesses and the community members they serve should be collaborating closely to chart their future.

“Chinatown is home. I grew up in the area but I’ve been forced out because I can’t afford to live there.”

“Chinatown is facing huge changes. It feels like many small businesses are dying. Due to the high price and rent, more and more young people and students are beginning to rent in Chinatown, and many middle-aged and elderly Chinatown residents are beginning to leave Chinatown.”

“It’s become more hostile to live in this neighbourhood when it use to be a neighbourhood built on community strength. The soul is leaving Chinatown and it is harder and harder for people to thrive here.

2. Supporting small business

There is a need to address the sense of decline felt by business owners and recognition that small businesses form a critical part of Chinatown's ecosystem. Chinatown is a vibrant commercial ecosystem anchored by small, independently-run businesses that provide culturally-competant goods, services and amenities that are critical to the social fabric and cultural expression of the neighbourhood.

While people appreciate Chinatown's affordable restaurants, insights that express the future hope for Chinatown articulate a need to ensure that a more diverse range of businesses that serve the needs of residents are able to remain in operation. This includes Chinese-speaking professional, medical, and health-related services. Affordable venues are seen as critical public gathering spaces providing cultural and recreational activity - i.e where seniors can gather at bakeries for a daily tea, Chinese pastries, and local gossip; and where students can hang out late into the night for games nights, arcades, karaoke, and after hours food. There is also a sense that a thriving main street contributes to a feeling of safety and "eyes on the street". For example, there is a sense of a declining night time economy, where there used to be a more vibrant 24/7 availability of businesses.

While there is sentiment within the community that finds opportunity in leveraging Chinatown's culturally distinct identity to attract tourism and generate business, this is met with concern that investment in tourism would either inauthentically represent Chinatown's culture, relying on out-of-date tropes that appeal to an external gaze, or would displace the existing residents and businesses that are foundational to its livability. While the cultural identity of Chinatown is an asset that attracts both regional and international tourism, investment in tourism is to benefit the existing local community, and not come at its expense.

"I still miss the Happy Meat Store on Spadina that sold extra lean lop cheung. The rents are probably way too high for a little business like that. There used to be more grocery stores."

"Not just doctors, but other culturally sensitive stores, markets, restaurants, art galleries, and service agencies are struggling and disappearing. Although we serve everyone but I feel it's important to give Chinese communities a choice, reflect Chinese culture, and options for Chinese-speaking services in Chinatown."

“We’ve been in business for 30 years now. Since the pandemic, business has gone down. The amount of tourist customers did not get impacted as much as local customers. A lot of customers expressed safety concerns and due to their perception of safety they are reluctant to come to Chinatown.”

“Chinatown is facing huge changes. It feels like many small businesses are dying. Due to the high price and rent, more and more young people and students are beginning to rent in Chinatown, and many middle-aged and elderly Chinatown residents are beginning to leave Chinatown.”

“Chinatown is cultural, physical to me. The stores and shops, that have been family-run through generations. There are not as many of those now. House of Gourmet is one of the last. We need to protect these - when an offer comes in for millions to buy the building, families won’t want to keep running the restaurant.”

“Create opportunities for new, culturally-competent businesses to get a foothold in Chinatown via tax breaks, subsidies, and the creation of small, temporary formats like pop-ups and stalls in a market vs. having to rent out an entire storefront.”

3. Enhancing the public realm

Another key community priority is investment in the public realm that expresses Chinatown's culture and community that can demonstrate pride of place and is reflective of the local community. Negative sentiment about Chinatown today generally is related to low levels of comfort in public spaces, a sense that Chinatown is less vibrant than it used to be, as evidenced by empty storefronts, derelict buildings, visible poverty, and rundown spaces. However, this sentiment was usually coupled with the statement that in comparison to newer Chinese enclaves in Markham and Richmond Hill, Chinatown West has greater sentimental, historic and community value, and greater walkability and accessibility.

There is also the sentiment that the gritty aesthetic of Chinatown is part of its character, associated with its working-class, immigrant history. As such, there was a concern that any efforts to sanitize the built environment would do a disservice to this heritage, impact affordability, and accelerate the process of gentrification.

Issues of Representation within the Public Realm

There is a desire for physical markers of Chinatown, however, there are conflicting views on how Chinatown is represented, not wanting to rely on stereotypical representations of Chinese-ness. Nonetheless, the community wants to demarcate a sense of arrival, that one has entered Chinatown.

Issues of cleanliness were cited often and also linked to considerations of representation. There is a dissonance of expectations of newcomers who are used to hyper-modern Asian metropolises - they don't want to "lose face" when family comes to visit. Underneath this is a desire for "pride of place" and a celebration of Chinese-Canadian identity in the public realm.

The community expresses the tensions of internalized racism or reaction against negative anti-Asian stereotypes including old tropes of Chinatown as a place of "opium and vice", crime and unsanitary conditions. Conversely, there is a desire to reclaim these identities and to celebrate Chinatown as an alternative expression of a more sanitized urbanism, which also connects Chinatown to vibrant, informal urban environments in other global cities.

Feelings of public safety were also connected to perceptions of cleanliness and representation in general. While many sentiments stated that Chinatown was too dirty, others stated that this was part of the charm and historic character of the neighbourhood that is at its core, is a working-class neighbourhood. Many of the comments reflected the trajectory of the experience of the following participant:

When I first came to Chinatown 20 years ago, I didn't feel it had any connection to China, that it was too dirty, etc. But as I started working and connecting with the community more, and understanding the history more, I started to love Chinatown and be proud of its culture and hard-working spirit.

Insights point to need for investments in the public realm that fosters community gathering, pride of place, and a built form expression that does not perpetuate harmful stereotypes, or sanitize the public realm.

“Why do we not have a plaque detailing the struggles of Chinese immigrants like the head tax in a community garden where visitors can take pictures and read about their life in Canada.” “Why do we not have a plaque detailing the struggles of Chinese immigrants like the head tax in a community garden where visitors can take pictures and read about their life in Canada.”

“I would really like to see a tea garden. I’m nostalgic and still miss the old pagodas that were there before Dragon Mall was built. The history of the neighbourhood is somehow missing, also the contributions of Chinese Canadians.”

“Grange Park is just down the street but it doesn’t have any Chinatown connection - it could be a spot that commemorates Chinatown.”

“I think what we’re missing is a public space to gather, sit down, socialize, and relax, without necessarily spending money. Chinatown Center plays such a role to a certain degree as it has tables and chairs that you can claim, but I would like to see bigger space where people can just ‘be.’”

Issues of Public Safety

An undercurrent to the experience of the public realm is the issue of public safety. 71% of the insights on this topic express negative or future concern, pointing to a high degree of consensus that the sense of public safety in Chinatown is a significant issue. Issues of safety and security were often raised in the insights, with a complex constellation of root causes that each need to be addressed thoughtfully.

From the perspective of business owners and workers, there's a sense of hopelessness and unfairness due to a perceived lack of attention from the authorities. Increase in petty theft and vandalism after the pandemic has contributed to fear in the community - increased visibility of homelessness and mental health issues across the City. Businesses bear the brunt of damage to property and theft of goods, and a sense of hopelessness either due to the fact that petty crime (often less than \$1000 in damages) is not seen as worth the attention of the police, or more disheartening stories of physical violence against property owners, that were not taken seriously by the police.

On the other hand, there are people within the Chinatown community who feel that Chinatown is unfairly targeted by the police against the “informal” economic activity in Chinatown. Ranging from sex work, to migrants without status, and street peddlers (the “grocery grannies”), there is a fear and mistrust of police and authority stemming from a fear of retribution. Meanwhile, there is a strong sense in the community that the “informality” of Chinatown is vital to the culture of the community, which has historically been a home for those on the fringes of society and should continue to be a welcoming place.

With a sensitivity to the nuance of the issues, the City can address the feeling of decline and “broken window” syndrome by demonstrating investment in public amenities and gathering spaces.

“The other thing I want to note is that the City hasn't been that interested in Chinatown except from an enforcement perspective. We've never had the city consult us on anything before. We just get letters saying move out, your taxes are going up, etc. Toronto is touted as the most diverse city in the world, but we have some work to do here.”

“Lots of petty crimes like theft occurring, bike theft, vandalism, smash and grab – this is driving fear in the community”

4. Plan for additional community, social, cultural infrastructure

While there are physical expressions of Chinatown's cultural identity, including its buildings, signage, and public art, it extends beyond what it looks like. What happens there, in Kung Fu clubs, cultural organizations, restaurants, places of worship, performance spaces, etc. also matters, including the languages spoken there.

Insights on this topic conveyed a desire for both more public spaces and for better use of many spaces that already exist. Chinatown is telling us they need more space for the community to do what the community does best. Free, inclusive, spaces that support both formal and informal gathering would generate dividends in the form of community-building and engagement, both of which are necessary to ensure that Chinatown's future is self-determined.

Insights often articulate skepticism about the City's intentions and capabilities in Chinatown. Organizations that already have deep roots and relationships in the community such as Family Associations, churches, and community centres are engaged in many initiatives, but need sustainable support in the form of stable funding, spaces to operate, and better public awareness of what they do. Cultural institutions, like Family Associations, and the long-standing Hong Luck Kung Fu Club are recognized as the backbone of the community, and need incentives to support their ability to remain in Chinatown.

There is a strong desire for free and accessible spaces for community gatherings. Some express nostalgia for China Court, which offered a culturally-specific open space, and many cite places like Chinatown Centre and Dragon City Mall as missed-opportunities with great potential for revitalization as vibrant marketplaces and cultural destinations in their own right.

Existing community services provided through University Settlement, Cecil Community Centre and Scadding Court are cited as great resources but under resourced - demand is greater than their capacity to provide. Culturally competent medical services are identified as a particular need within the community.

“What happened to Dragon City Centre? It’s a big opportunity space in the central location, but mostly abandoned. Similarly to how people can play chess in parks in NYC, where are communal spaces for elders to hang out, drink tea, play mahjong and similar activities? It’s like they’re relegated to places like Tim Hortons because they have needs for community, but [that] is a makeshift solution. Chinatown overall feels neglected in celebrating our culture - it’s just “there.”

“Chinatown needs an art and cultural centre or gallery - including for Chinatown history and story telling; art and cultural program activities for the public community.

“[We need] more support and services for community members (i.e. homelessness). Some in the community views ‘others’ as coming in to use the shelters, but it is those in the community as well, who are Chinese and queer. Community space hubs need to be created to operate (ACAS) programming in Chinatown.

“Chinese working class elders are at risk of displacement due to increased unaffordability. We need to protect and preserve their right to age in place amongst culturally appropriate services [...] there are no language accessible renter protection, or food banks, or health services specifically catered towards low income Chinese seniors”

“Through my work I know that dementia in the Asian population is going to see a huge increase in the next few years because of an aging immigrant population, but we don’t have medical and social resources that are culturally specific / sensitive.”

“We can do more and offer services... The challenge is not that we don’t recognize the need, it’s just that resources are constrained. In the planning, we need to design spaces that are affordable for grassroots orgs so that people can access things in their community in an affordable way.”

5. Focus on affordable housing

Chinatown has a rich texture and variety of housing types and forms that the community wants to protect, and to ensure that it continues through active investment in affordable housing. People want to stay, but are forced to move further away, while still driving up to two hours to get to Chinatown for work, or to access cultural activities. Seniors want to live in Chinatown, due to its walkability and accessibility to so many services and amenities, but cannot find adequate housing.

Conversely, there's a perception of a high concentration of shelters in the area compared to other areas, which is perceived as an issue of unfairness in some segments of the community. There is a strong current of negativity aimed at unhoused members of the community and towards the City for its lack of investment into the community. However, there is community recognition that the working-class poor, and predominantly elderly, are part of the community fabric; that the community has historically been a culture of 'mutual aid' that supported each other; and that the increasing lack of affordable housing is the root cause that is threatening the Chinatown way of life. While some may express negativity due to the concentration of shelters and visible poverty in Chinatown, community-based solutions express that greater investment in community spaces, support services and affordable housing in Chinatown is required.

Solutions that contribute to the increase of affordable housing will address the root cause of many issues in the community.

“[Chinatown is] a vibrant community that until recently had affordable places to live and stores to rent for small businesses, and has grannies on the corner selling veggies. We now mainly serve people who are in public housing, non-profit supportive housing, co-op housing or senior housing. Some of the rooming houses that still exist are dwindling in numbers. Places that are housing the poor are disappearing. And the poor, they're going to streets, tents, etc.”

“The answer is not to get rid of shelter residents, it's to help them. They need services. We do our best to help. At the school, everybody wears the same uniform as an equalizer. We serve the same lunch to everyone every day. That helps the community to grow together.”

“More affordable, non-market housing is necessary. Chinatown is becoming unaffordable to those who make it great.”

“We need more supports including affordable, safe housing and social services for migrants and seniors. Migrants and workers are the backbone of Chinatown in our restaurants, shops, etc, but are frequently left out of the conversation and consulted last. Too many migrants and workers are being exploited, sometimes by Chinese landlords and bosses, due to their vulnerability. Chinatown was a community built for and by the working class”.

“I would hope that there’s more affordable housing in this area and a great deal of understanding and tolerance. the super 8 that has been converted into community housing and the homeless shelter north of dundas, we’re the closest shopping center to them. there should be an understanding that we’re next door to where the unfortunate of Toronto find themselves and they should find empathy and understanding.”

“Seniors want to live near Chinatown near Chinese communities. Seniors prefer Chinatown because of the sentimental connection to the area, they feel its more accessible, and have village community gatherings. The waitlist is very long, and prevents seniors from joining this community.”

5 RECOMMENDATIONS



Based on what we have heard and the strategic directions that have been outlined, we provide the following recommendations for the City to undertake. They are meant to help the City, as an institution, to continue to address the highly complex issues identified through this study through meaningful dialogue, relationship building, and co-design with the community. We recognize and emphasize that many of the insights that we have received may only scratch the surface of much deeper issues that require further dialogue to determine nuances and root causes. The insights provide an excellent starting point for continuing the right conversations and what questions need to be asked further.

While we direct these recommendations to the City's Community Planning Group, our understanding of these issues is that they span the authority of multiple divisions, levels of government and even larger socio-cultural forces. We recognize the immense and difficult task it is to address these issues in a meaningful way, which is why we encourage continued engagement, fostering of community leadership, and relationship building so that both the City and community can understand what can be done with the resources that are available.

5.1 What can the City do to Support Chinatown?

Overwhelmingly we heard that the community wants to be acknowledged and empowered. Given the legacy of outwardly discriminatory policies at all levels of government that impacted the Chinatown community, including systematic erasure of homes, businesses and neighbourhoods, the community wants to self-determine their future.

Principles for City Action

With living memories of exclusionary policies like the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the expropriation of Toronto's first Chinatown, a passive approach to allow market forces to gradually price out existing Chinatown residents and businesses, is perceived in the same vein, resulting in discriminatory outcomes. Community empowerment and the right to self determination in the face of historic racial discrimination is critical to the community — to feel in control of their destiny, be shown respect and dignity for their culture, and be acknowledged for their positive attributes. Three principles for City action include: a need for an interdivisional approach; need to demonstrate quick action and investment; and need for ongoing community empowerment through relationship and capacity building.

“I feel that Chinatown is a cultural part of the city, but has in some cases been neglected by the city.”

1. Need for an interdivisional approach

Issues facing Chinatown are complex and interconnected. Chinatown is a historically significant neighbourhood that should be celebrated and adequately resourced.

The insight database that was generated through this study should be consulted as a resource across City Divisions - to understand the issues, where conversations have been left off, and to delve in more deeply to address root causes.

2. Need to demonstrate quick action and commitment

Lack of trust, feeling of neglect, and inattention are compounded with the legacy of institutional racism against the Chinese community. The City needs to show action at the end of this year-long consultation program, and build goodwill quickly within a short period of time of implementation.

3. Need for ongoing community empowerment through relationship and capacity building

The community, via local leadership, should be in the driver's seat, providing direction and charting the strategic path forward for Chinatown. The City should act as a capacity builder as well as professional interpreter to translate the nuance and complexity of community sentiment into policy actions.

5.2 Recommendations

At the conclusion of this year-long community consultation program, it is recommended that the City undertake quick actions to address the community's priorities and for building trust, and as such should be implemented swiftly and be highly visible. The City can pursue a series of quick, relevant, and highly visible initiatives; and to set the intention and vision for further and deeper City investment in the Chinatown community. To supplement these quick actions, there should also be immediate action towards medium-to-long term policy initiatives required to establish a mechanism for ongoing collaboration and partnership between the City and the Chinatown community.

Chinatown Advisory Committee

Based on a community-empowerment approach to address complex, interconnected issues, a Chinatown Advisory Committee is recommended. The objective will be to continue to build meaningful relationships and capacity between and within the City and the Chinatown community; create opportunities for collaborative solutions; and to ensure that the community is able to advise the City on issues that impact the Chinatown community; and that responses are culturally informed.

We recommend that City Council establish the Chinatown Advisory Committee as one of the City's Advisory Bodies in accordance to City Council's *Simplified Rules of Procedure for Advisory Bodies*, similar to the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee and Housing Rights Advisory Committee. With members of the public making up more than half of the membership and members of City Council making up the rest, this official advisory body would have the power to make recommendations to City Officials, Council Committees, and City Council. This would provide more assurance to the community that their voices are reflected and heard in an official capacity.

Accelerating Support Programs for the Community

We recommend that the City enable and accelerate incentives and direct fundings programs to the community to support local, independent landowners. A point of contention from the community was how many of the buildings in Chinatown were in poor shape with landowners who are disincentivized to maintain their buildings or who might be entirely absent. Safety is also a concern for poorly maintained buildings as recently demonstrated by the case of 608-614 Dundas Street West that partially collapsed in August 2024.

Models could include providing financing support, such as grants or low-interest loans, for maintenance and upgrades while requiring rents to remain affordable. Similar initiatives have been implemented through *Community Improvement Plans* in Hamilton, Ontario to target areas in need of repair and rehabilitation. The focus should be on local, independent landowners as this would assist those who might need the help the most and would also help to address the community's concern over land assembly that could lead to further re-development displacement.

Policy Considerations

As informed by insights received throughout the consultation process, long-term actions should include a policy approach that is tied to community, social, and cultural organizations, not just businesses or development. Policies should include economic strategies, small business support, creation or expansion of community and cultural spaces, housing and anti-displacement strategies, public health strategies, and revitalization strategies for community landmarks. This will require collaboration with a wide range of City divisions in addition to Planning. It is recommended that a policy approach to Chinatown to extend beyond the boundaries of the Chinatown Study area, and acknowledge the vital intersections, connections, and overlaps with Old Chinatown and adjacent communities, including Alexandra Park, Kensington Market, Baldwin Village, and Grange Park.

Components of a policy framework for deep inter-divisional collaboration between multiple City divisions to address the complex and interconnected issues in Chinatown and reinforce Key Community Values should include the following elements:

- Economic Strategy that recognizes the diversity of economic activity in Chinatown, and to explore how Chinatown can be connected to existing Economic Development & Culture initiatives such as: Cultural Districts Program; Night-time Economic Strategy; and Small Business Support Services;
- Identification of opportunities to increase and enhance community and cultural space in Chinatown West (many expressed a desire for a cultural centre, where Chinatown's history and stories can be told and shared);
- Revitalization Strategy for community landmarks, including Dragon City and Chinatown Centre, and historic landmarks, such as the former Standard Theatre/Victory Burlesque Theatre at 287 Spadina Avenue;
- Housing and Anti-displacement Strategy, including a shelter and vulnerable communities strategy in collaboration with other City divisions including the Housing Secretariat and Social Development & Financial Administration;
- Public Health Strategy that ensures culturally competent medical services are provided within Chinatown - a health care hub, that provides appropriate language services, and affordable care for seniors in particular, and to create coalitions with local service providers and nearby health networks;
- Public Realm Strategy that considers the cultural practices and expressions of identity within the Chinatown community and encourages enhanced public realm connections between Alexandra Park, Kensington Market, Huron Square, Baldwin Village, and Grange Park;
- Design Guidelines that encourage and promote intergenerational housing;
- Requirement to consult with the community and Chinatown Advisory Committee on culturally-competent design and development.

Spotlight on Chinatown Community Initiatives

Chinatown is a vibrant collection of community organizations and initiatives that the City can empower and partner with. *All images are taken from each organization's website or social media accounts.*



Long Time No See Collective

The Long Time No See Collective formed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to counter the Anti-Asian racism the community was facing. They created a public exhibition of local photography, community selfies, family photographs and stories. The collective comprises of artists and educators of diverse backgrounds and with ongoing projects that celebrate the history of Chinatown and Chinese Canadians.

Website: ltnschinatown.com

Instagram: [@ltnschinatown](https://www.instagram.com/ltnschinatown)



Chinatown Land Trust

The Toronto Chinatown Land Trust formed out of the Friends of Chinatown group as a focused initiative to preserve and drive new community-controlled housing and culturally competent services in Chinatown. Inspired by the legacy of Chinatown's mutual aid societies established by the original Family Associations, they acquire, develop and steward land for community needs and benefits. They actively host community events and galvanize broad support for the Chinatown community.

Website: chinatownlandtrust.ca

Instagram: [@chinatownlandtrust](https://www.instagram.com/chinatownlandtrust)



Friends of Chinatown

Friends of Chinatown is a grassroots community of volunteers determined to share and celebrate the vibrant culture and significance of Chinatown. They advocate for community-controlled affordable housing, racial justice and economic justice in Toronto's downtown Chinatown.

Instagram: [@friendsofchinatownto](https://www.instagram.com/friendsofchinatownto)



Chinatown Fire Department

Chinatown Fire Department is a fire spinning and flow arts collective based in Chinatown West. They practice and perform bi-weekly at Huron Square during the summer months, creating a fiery spectacle for community members and visitors in the heart of Chinatown.

Instagram: @chinatownfiredept



Toronto Chinatown Business Improvement Area

The Toronto Chinatown Business Improvement Area (BIA) is a not-for-profit community based City of Toronto agency, representing commercial property owners in Chinatown. It organizes several large community events each year, including the Chinatown Festival, Huron Square Variety Days, and Lunar New Year Celebrations. These events feature food vendors, performances, and art activities, attracting many visitors to Chinatown.

Website: chinatownbia.com

Instagram: @torontochinatown



Tong Yan Gai – An exhibition by Morris Lum

Toronto-based artist Morris Lum has been photographing images of Chinatowns across Canada and the United States for the last several years. In 2024, Lum was invited to participate in the Toronto Biennial where he showcased 4 light boxes of Chinatown images at Union Station and at Pearson Airport. Titled Tong Yan Gai (or Chinatown in Cantonese) (2012-2024), the image series shows the connection between Toronto’s Chinese community and Union Station (image source: Toronto Biennial).

Instagram: @_morris_lum_



Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS)

Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS) is a charitable, non-profit, community-based organization located in Toronto, Canada. The organization provides safer sex education and services to the East and Southeast Asian communities, including support services to persons living with HIV/AIDS and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

Website: acas.org

Instagram: @acastoronto



Butterfly - Asian and Migrant Worker Support Network

Butterfly is an organization founded on the belief that sex workers are entitled to respect and basic human rights. They provide services such as advocacy, legal support, health support, crisis intervention and public education. The organization has also commissioned reports on policy issues such as the impacts of anti-trafficking laws on migrant workers, policing and by-law enforcement and the impacts of COVID 19. These publications include *Beyond Tales of Trafficking: A Needs Assessment of Asian Migrant Sex Workers in Toronto* and others.

Website: Butterflysw.org

Instagram: @butterflysw



Queens of Dim Sum

Queens of Dim Sum is a regular dim sum brunch drag show featuring Asian performers. The run performances several times a year, usually at Sky Dragon restaurant in Dragon City Mall. Often sold out, the performances have been going on since 2022, and also feature Kings of Dim Sum.

Instagram: @queensofdimsum



222 Spadina Market

Located in the basement of Chinatown Centre, 222 Spadina Market is a pop-up market that provides a platform for young, local entrepreneurs to showcase their products, ranging from clothing to artwork to food offerings. Also known as the Underground Market, this venture is bringing the potential of Chinatown Centre into greater focus. It is reigniting foot traffic and vitality to the shopping mall.

Instagram: @222spadinamarket

Reimagining Chinatown in 2050

In August 2023, the Toronto Chinatown Land Trust hosted screenings of *Big Fight in Little Chinatown* and *Chinatown 2050*, including a book launch of *Reimagining Chinatown 2050* at the Hot Docs Cinema. They included panel discussions featuring the film director and the book editor Linda Zhang, Chiyi Tam & Hannia Cheng of the Toronto Chinatown Land Trust, and three of the book’s authors, Helen Ngo, Michael Chong, and Amy Yan.

<https://spacing.ca/toronto/2023/08/17/reimagining-chinatown-in-conversation-with-the-toronto-chinatown-land-trust/>



Chinatown Centre Community Fridge

In March 2021, Friends of Chinatown (FOCT) partnered with Community Fridges Toronto and Send it Courier to set up a fridge and pantry where community members can “take what you need, leave what you can”. FOCT created a multilingual grocery list of culturally specific foods for the Chinatown community. While the official collaboration is now complete, informal iterations of this project continue and can be found at other locations, including the Chinatown Centre Mall.



“I hope the City will invest in working with local community organizations and members to build community resilience — not only preserving affordability and enabling existing family run business and services to survive, but to enable the provision of more affordable and needed services for low-income BIPOC folks in a culturally competent way.”

5.3 Some Bold Ideas

Many of the underlying issues in Chinatown stem from a history of systemic discrimination and lack of recognition of the integral contribution that the Chinatown and Chinese-Canadian community has made to the City and the building of the nation - there is a need for a sense of justice, and for the community to be acknowledged and represented. A vision for the future of Chinatown to continue to be a meeting place for many nations, a refuge for all, and home for Chinese-Canadian identity could be enabled through the City's support for the following:

1. Local and International Recognition of Chinatown's Intangible Heritage

Throughout the course of consultation, the community expressed that it is the people and organizations of Chinatown that are the community's heritage and not necessarily its built form. We heard a lot about the models of mutual aid that formed in Chinatown to support community members in seeking justice or getting ahead, who otherwise faced discrimination and hardships in broader Canadian society. These models of mutual aid — from Family Associations to Kung Fu clubs — are truly unique, particularly given the official levels of legislated discrimination in their time and should be recognized as integral pieces of what helped to build Toronto and Canada.

Given that many of the original buildings that housed mutual aid organizations were demolished for the New City Hall, and their replacements are not heritage properties, the best way to achieve recognition would be through intangible heritage recognition. In particular, recommendations to protect and steward intangible culture was a theme of discussion in CTAR #3: Chinatown's Culture, as raised by local facilitator, Linda Zhang, Associate Professor at the School of Architecture at the University of Waterloo. International forms of recognition such as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage designation could be utilized to achieve this goal. The UNESCO Convention for Intangible Cultural Heritage describes it in terms of five broad categories²⁰:

- **Oral traditions and expressions.** This can mean proverbs, riddles, tales, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, chants, songs, and more.
- **Performing arts.** This can include music, dance and theatre, pantomime, songs and other forms of artistic expression that are passed down from generation to generation.
- **Social practices, rituals and festive events.** These are the activities that structure the lives of communities and are shared by members—for example, initiation rites, burial ceremonies, seasonal carnivals and harvest celebrations.
- **Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe.** These refer to know-how and skills that communities have developed by interacting with their natural environments, and may be expressed through language, memories, spirituality or worldviews. Traditional methods of architecture, agriculture, cattle-breeding, and cuisine are among the related elements.
- **Traditional craftsmanship.** This may sound “tangible,” but it really refers to the skills and knowledge involved in craftsmanship than the products themselves. Examples include pottery, wood work, jewelry and precious stones, embroidery, carpet weaving, musical instrument production, weaving and fabric production, etc.

1 UNESCO Canadian Commission, October 2019. <https://en.ccunesco.ca/blog/2019/10/understanding-intangible-cultural-heritage>.

We feel that this is worthwhile to pursue as it would showcase this very important part of our collective heritage to the world and could open the door to international supports from institutions globally for these organizations - many of whom are at risk of downsizing or closure due to aging memberships. As such, we recommend that the City initiate studies on Chinatown's intangible heritage resources and pursue international recognition of the mutual aid organizations in Chinatown, in further consultation with the community.

2. Formally Address Historic Wrongs

We recommend that City Council address historic wrongs directed at the Chinatown community through a formal apology, including an annual forum to commemorate and reflect on our progress in strengthening the Chinatown community. A key part of reconciling with the community around historic wrongs and charting a path forward would be through acknowledgment and apology and public accountability that progress is being achieved.

We thus recommend that the City consider making a symbolic formal apology for the displacement of Old Chinatown for City Hall. As part of this, the City could also host an annual public forum or round-table that would act as a public commemoration of the history and legacy of Chinatown and promote discussion on what progress has been made towards ensuring a stronger Chinatown community as well as the advancement of the Key Community Values that are documented here.

6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Chinatown Tomorrow initiative is the beginning of an ongoing process to ensure that Chinatown West remains a vibrant, thriving place for the multigenerational and diverse community that lives there. Throughout the course of the study, while the project team conducted various consultation events on behalf of the City of Toronto, we also joined in and participated in various community events; shared meals and stories together; and witnessed elders passing the torch to younger generations of community activists. We shared and partook in the passion for Chinatown that we all feel for this place, and are hopeful for its bright and prosperous future.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I THE DATABASE

APPENDIX II

GLOSSARY

APPENDIX III EVENT SUMMARIES

APPENDIX IV YOUTH & SCHOOL GROUP VISIONING

APPENDIX V

CHINATOWN'S ORGANIZATIONS

Chinatown's Organizations Map

Contributors: Yiming Chen and Leo Chan

Family Organizations

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 1 Chau Luen Kon Sol | 昭倫公所 | 71 D'Arcy St |
| 2 Chee Tak H.O. | 安省至德宗親總會 | 130 D'Arcy St |
| 3 Chew Family Association | 趙氏宗親會 | 192 McCaul St |
| 4 Chin Wing Chun Tong | 陳穎川堂 | 346 Dundas St W |
| 5 Eng Suey Sun Association of Ontario | 安省伍晉山公所 | 14 D'Arcy St |
| 6 Fung Leun Tong | 鳳倫公所 薛司徒宗親會 | 20 Cecil St |
| 7 Gee How Oak Tin Association | 多倫多至孝黃親公所 | 548 Dundas St W |
| 8 Ing Families Association of Ontario | 吳氏宗親總會 | 53 Huron Street |
| 9 Lam K.M. Society | 林九牧公所 | 63 Grange Avenue |
| 10 Lee's Benevolent Association | 李氏總分公所 | 175 Dundas St W |
| 11 Lem Si Ho Tong | 林西河堂 | 121 Dundas St W |
| 12 Low Kong Brotherhood of Ontario | 禮岡會所 | 55 Huron St |
| 13 Lung Kung Tin Yee Association | 龍岡親義公所 | 287-289 Spadina Ave |
| 14 Mah Society of Ontario | 安省馬氏宗親會 | 111 D'Arcy St |
| 15 Quan Family Association | 關氏宗親會 | 72 Huron St |
| 16 Wong's Association Of Ontario | 黃江夏雲山公所 | 301 Spadina Ave |
| 17 World Chee-Tak Cultural Centre | 加拿大世界至德文化中心 | 300 Spadina Ave |
| 18 Yee Fung Toy Society | 安省余鳳彩堂 | 77 Baldwin St |

Regional Organizations

| | | |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|
| 19 Canada Fuzhou Fellowship Association | 加拿大福州同鄉會 | 525 Dundas St W |
| 20 Canada Gangtok Fellowship Association | 加拿大中國港頭联谊会 | 77 Grange Ave |
| 21 Chao Chow Association of Ontario | 安省潮州會館 | 568 Dundas St W |
| 22 Enping Fellowship Society | 恩平同鄉會 | 105 Baldwin St |
| 23 Fui Tong On Society Inc | 惠安會館 | 102 D'Arcy St |
| 24 FuKien Society of (Ontario) Canada | 加東福建同鄉會 | 171 Augusta Ave |
| 25 Fuzhou Society | 福州聯誼會 | 463 Dundas St W |
| 26 Hainan Association of Ontario Canada/ Hainan Community Centre | 加拿大安省海南同鄉會 | 219 Augusta Ave |
| 27 He Shan Friendship Association of Ontario | 鶴山同鄉會 | 310 Spadina Ave |
| 28 Hoang Ha CT Association | | 138 D'Arcy St |
| 29 Hoi Ping Development Society of Ontario | 安省開平同鄉會 | 457 Dundas St W |
| 30 Kiangsu & Cheki Friendship Society | 多倫多蘇浙同鄉會 | 420 Dundas St W |
| 31 Kwong Hoi Association | 廣海聯合會 | 189 Augusta Ave |
| 32 Lao-Chinese Association of Ontario | 安省寮華聯誼會 | 215 Augusta Ave |
| 33 Ontario Cambodian Association | 棉華聯誼會 | 35 Huron St |
| 34 Ontario See Yup Clansman's Association | 四邑同鄉會 | 76 Huron St |
| 35 Poon Yue Society | 番禺同鄉會 | 24 Grange Ave |
| 36 Si Hai Association | 四海聯誼社 | 147 Augusta Ave |
| 37 Sun Woon Woon Yin Villa | 新會同鄉會會館別墅 | 86 D'Arcy St |
| 38 The world Guangdong Regional Association | 世界廣東同鄉總會加拿大安 省分會 | 63 Grange Ave |
| 39 Vietnamese Cambodian Laotian Community Service Association | 安省越僑華人協會 | 863 Dundas St W |
| 40 Tai Shan Association of Ontario Canada | 安省台山同鄉會 | 58 Huron St |

Community Centres

| | | |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|
| 41 Carefirst Senior & Community Services | 香康社 | 479 Dundas St W |
| 42 Cecil Community Centre | | 58 Cecil St |
| 43 Metropolitan Toronto Chinese Golden Age Society | | 56 Cecil St |
| 44 Mon Sheong Community & Volunteer Services Centre | 中區華埠孟晉社區及義工服 務中心 | 222 Spadina Ave |
| 45 St Stephen Community House | | 340 College St |
| 46 The Cross-Cultural Community Services Association (TCCSA) | 多華會 | 310 Spadina Ave |
| 47 Toronto Community & Culture Centre | 多倫多社區與文化中心 | 222 Spadina Ave |
| 48 University Settlement House | | 23 Grange Rd |
| 48A Harrison Pool | | 15 Stephanie St |
| 48B Alex Park Community Centre | | 105 Grange Ct |

Recreational Organizations

| | | |
|--|-------|-----------------|
| 49 Chinese United Dramatic Society | 聯僑劇社 | 350 Dundas St W |
| 50 Chinese Seniors Health & Recreation Association of Ontario | 安省恆健會 | 192 McCaul St |
| 51 Ship Toy Yuen Dramatic Society | 沙趣園 | 108 Beverley St |
| 52 Toronto Hong Luck Kung Fu Association | 康樂武館 | 548 Dundas St W |

Religious Organizations

| | | |
|--|--------------|-------------------|
| 53 Anshei Minsk Synagogue | | 10 St Andrew St |
| 54 Canadian Chinese Buddhist Ming Yuet Temple | 加拿大中華佛學明月居士林 | 22 Cecil St |
| 55 Chinese Catholic Centre | 多倫多天主教華僑中心 | 202 St Patrick St |
| 56 Chinese Gospel Church | 華人福音堂 | 450 Dundas St W |
| 57 Chinese Presbyterian Church | 中華基督教長老會 | 177 Beverley St |
| 58 Ching Kwok Buddhist Temple | 正覺寺 | 300 Bathurst St |
| 59 First Baptist Church | | 101 Huron St |
| 60 Fung Loy Kok Taoist Tai Chi | 道教蓬萊園 | 134 D'Arcy St |
| 61 Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church | | 23 Henry St |
| 62 Kiever / First Russian Congregation | | 25 Bellevue Ave |
| 63 St. Patrick's Catholic Church | | 131 McCaul St |
| 64 The Scott Mission | | 502 Spadina Ave |
| 65 Toronto Chinese Baptist Church | 多倫多華人浸信會 | 72 Beverley St |
| 66 Toronto Holy Word Church | 基督教多倫多聖道堂 | 206 McCaul St |
| 67 Wan Fa Yuen Buddha Society | 萬法緣菩薩祖堂 | 68 Huron St |

Other Organizations

| | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 68 Canada China (C&C) Association | 加中聯誼 | 300 Spadina Ave |
| 69 Chinese Canadian Intercultural Association | 中加文化交流協會 | 112 Huron St |
| 70 Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter | 全加華人協進會(平權會) 多倫多分會 | 302 Spadina Ave |
| 71 Chinese Canadian Women's association of Toronto | 中加婦女聯誼會 | 111 D'Arcy St |
| 72 Chinese Freemasons & Dart Coon Club | 澳門民治黨支部連全支社 | 436 Dundas St W |
| 73 Dr. Sun Yet Sen Chinese School | | 112 Baldwin St |
| 74 Ontario Chinese Restaurant and Food Service Association | 安省華商餐館會 | 138 D'Arcy St |
| 75 Tai Shan Yi Zhong Alumni Assn of Eastern Canada | 台山一中加東校友會 | 78 Huron St |
| 76 The Chinese Garment Workers Association | 都城華人製衣聯誼會 | 50 Grange Ave |
| 77 Toronto Chinatown Business Improvement Area | 華埠商業促進會 | 287 Spadina Ave |
| 78 Overseas Renaissance Association of Chinese Culture | 中華文化海外復興協會 | 138 D'Arcy St |

Shopping Malls

| | | |
|--------------------------|------|-----------------|
| 79 Chinatown Centre | 文華中心 | 222 Spadina Ave |
| 80 Dragon City Mall | 龍城 | 280 Spadina Ave |
| 81 Maindale Mall | | 421 Dundas St W |
| 82 Village by the Grange | | 53 McCaul St |

