

Attachment 7: Draft West Chinatown Planning Framework



WEST CHINATOWN PLANNING FRAMEWORK

2026

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West Chinatown Planning Framework

West Chinatown is a vibrant, inclusive, and culturally rich community rooted in a proud history of immigrant resilience, family-owned businesses, and active street life. West Chinatown was established in the mid-20th century after the original Chinatown near Elizabeth Street was demolished to make way for Toronto City Hall, prompting many Chinese Canadian residents and businesses to relocate mostly westward. By the 1970s, the area had become a vibrant cultural and economic hub for Chinese immigrants, supported by family associations, small and culturally relevant businesses, and community organizations. Over the decades, it has also become a place of arrival and belonging for other Asian diasporic communities and other visible minorities. Today, West Chinatown continues to evolve while remaining deeply rooted in its history and cultural identity.

This Planning Framework envisions a future where West Chinatown continues to thrive as a distinct and welcoming neighbourhood, celebrated for its cultural heritage, supported by diverse residents and businesses, and shaped through the voices of the community. This Framework guides growth and change in West Chinatown to ensure that new development is compatible with the area's unique character, fosters social and economic vitality, and strengthens the neighbourhood's role as a cultural destination. It prioritizes the protection and expansion of affordable housing and small-scale commercial spaces, the celebration of Chinese culture within the urban fabric of the area, and the creation of a safe, accessible, and vibrant public realm network.

By aligning city-building objectives with community aspirations, the Planning Framework lays the foundation for a Chinatown that continues to evolve while honouring its past, ensuring future generations continue to experience the richness of this culturally significant part of Toronto. This Framework builds upon current policies of the Official Plan and other relevant policy documents and responds to the unique character and physical attributes of the area. The Planning Framework will incorporate measures that contribute to cultural acknowledgement, including the protection and enhancement of existing cultural assets, support for culturally significant uses and businesses, and the facilitation of opportunities for Chinese Canadian cultural expression and community presence within West Chinatown. These guidelines are meant to be flexible to recognize the diversity of the area and its continued evolution.

The West Chinatown Planning Framework area is shown in Map 1. Community connections to West Chinatown are shown in Map 2, recognizing that West Chinatown influences, and is connected to, its surrounding neighbourhoods such as Kensington Market, Alexandra Park, Baldwin Village, Grange Park and University of Toronto.



Community Priorities

Through the study of the area, including extensive community engagement, (refer to the [Chinatown Tomorrow Community Consultation Final Report](#)), five key community priorities have been developed.

Investment Without Displacement

More interventions aimed at preserving residential and commercial affordability. West Chinatown is a thriving place where all income levels, including the working-class can work and live, and has a long history of community-based mutual aid.

Supporting Small Businesses

More diverse range of businesses and services that serve the needs of residents. Affordable venues are critical gathering and third spaces providing cultural and recreational activity.

Enhancing the Public Realm

More expressions of West Chinatown's culture and community, and enhanced comfort and safety in public spaces through inclusive design.

Plan for Additional Community, Social and Cultural Infrastructure

More public spaces that are free and inclusive, and that support both formal and informal gathering. Recognition, support and expanded use of existing and future spaces such as family associations, places of worship, community centres and schools.

Focus on Affordable Housing

More investment in a range of affordable housing. There is community recognition that low-income residents, and seniors in particular, are part of the community fabric.

The logo for the West Chinatown Planning Framework is located in the top left corner. It features a red vertical bar with a decorative tassel-like top. The text "WEST CHINATOWN PLANNING FRAMEWORK" is written vertically in white capital letters along the bar.

Key Themes and Recommendations

The following key themes and guiding directions are intended to be used in the planning, review, and implementation of public and private development, capital investment, and maintenance projects.

1. Enhancing the Public Realm

Cultural Plazas

- Cultural Plazas are public spaces that promote cultural engagement and community gathering that may feature art, history, and local culture. The Cultural Plazas would be publicly owned public space, managed by the community.
- The locations of potential Cultural Plazas are identified on Map 3.
- Cultural Plazas will be located and designed to strengthen community identity and draw residents and visitors to key sites that provide space for community building, informal and programmed community gatherings, markets, public art installations, wayfinding measures, information displays and cultural and community events.
- Cultural Plazas should include seating, lighting, trees and other planting, public art, bike parking and waste receptacles to support cultural and community events that help sustain the community's vibrancy and identity.
- The Cultural Plaza shown on Huron Street on Map 3, consists of Huron Square, an existing outdoor public square with seating, lighting, pavers and a bronze Qilin statue. A cultural plaza could potentially be achieved in part through a pilot or seasonal pedestrianization of portions of the street on the north side of Dundas Street West, with vehicle access eliminated or restricted to emergency and limited servicing access, subject to feasibility analysis, public consultation, funding, and Council approval. The vision is for Huron Square to be fully pedestrianized in the future.
- The Cultural Plaza shown on Alexandra Park on Map 3 will be implemented through the Alexandra Park Revitalization Masterplan and will provide a lively entryway into the future Central Green and Community Recreation Hub and Local Social Enterprise Centre from Dundas Street West.

Laneway Improvements

- Public laneways are an extension of the public realm network of West Chinatown and should be designed to encourage pedestrian and cycling use in a manner that is safe and accessible.
- Loading and waste storage should be internalized in new development to allow room for laneway improvements.
- As opportunities for road work or private development arise, improvements to public laneways will be encouraged. Potential improvements could include: landscape treatments, pedestrian lighting, green infrastructure, trees and other plantings, seating, public art and paving treatments, and speed reduction measures.
- Publicly and privately owned art installations and murals can play a key role in laneway activation and strengthen the identity and character of West Chinatown by telling its story. Public art initiatives should be developed in collaboration with local artists and organizations.
- Development along laneways should include active ground floor uses, clear glazing and accessible pedestrian entrances, where appropriate.
- When public laneways are named, they should have cultural and/or historical relevance to West Chinatown and its community.

Parks and Open Spaces

- Parks and open spaces will support a range of community uses such as festival and event spaces, community gardens, group recreational exercises and a range of all-season programming.
- Parks and open spaces should be designed to accommodate all-season use through incorporating a diversity of amenities such as covered outdoor areas, misting stations or other cooling areas, water fountains and fire pits. Culturally-relevant amenities and facilities should also be explored in the design of these spaces.
- Parkland dedication will be prioritized on sites that are adjacent to existing parks and sites identified as Opportunities for New Parks in Map 4: Public Realm.

- Opportunities for new parkland or expansion of existing parks should be explored through off-site parkland dedication where feasible and appropriate.
- Additional opportunities to expand, enhance and connect the public realm network through the provision of parks and open spaces beyond those shown on Maps 3 and 4, will be pursued over time as development and reinvestment occur.
- Public use of existing open spaces and school yards is encouraged to provide additional community space and opportunities for activation and programming, including pop-up events.

Pedestrian Connections

- Map 3 identifies some of the potential locations for mid-block connections in the area. Mid-block connections will provide continuous, legible, accessible, and direct public access through blocks, providing an alternative route between public spaces. The exact location, alignment, and design of each new mid-block connection will be determined through the development review process.
- Mid-block connections will: have a minimum width of 4 metres; be located at grade; incorporate high-quality materials and design, with clear sightlines and pedestrian lighting; and be secured with easements to ensure public safety and accessibility.
- Mid-block connections should be lined with active uses, such as retail storefronts, restaurants, and residential lobbies, to help animate the space. Public and private art installations and murals are also encouraged to further animate the space and reinforce the community identity.

Active Transportation

- Through planned road work in the area, opportunities to repurpose and reallocate space within the rights-of-way will be explored, using a complete streets approach in order to improve safety and mobility for all road users, with an emphasis on pedestrians, people cycling, and transit users, incorporate green infrastructure standards; and enhance the overall public realm. Any street redesign would be subject to feasibility analysis, funding, and Council approval.

- The design of privately-owned lands adjacent to the rights-of-way will be considered in conjunction with the design of the rights-of-way to maximize the impact of improvements to the public realm network.
- Where appropriate, development and capital works will remove existing lay-bys, widen sidewalks, and extend and enhance cycling infrastructure to promote active transportation and increase the space for walking, cycling and landscaping.
- As opportunities for road work arise, the implementation of Vision Zero safety measures will be explored subject to feasibility analysis, funding, and Council approval. Potential measures could include:
 - Intersection safety improvements (e.g. curb extensions, pavement marking changes, signal improvements, etc.) at key intersections including the intersection of Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West;
 - Potential new pedestrian crossings along Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West;
 - Enhanced signage to improve safety for all pedestrians; and,
 - Enhanced cycling infrastructure, as per the Cycling Network Plan.
- Potential Pedestrian Crossings shown on Map 4 will be evaluated for new mid-block pedestrian crossings to improve pedestrian safety and connectivity and evaluated for the potential for installation of traffic lights and painted zebra lines.
- Servicing needs of residences and businesses will be managed to meet required standards while minimizing impacts on the public realm and the safety of all road users.
- Intergenerational Walk: Huron Street will evolve as part of the Intergenerational Walk, as noted on Map 3, and is envisioned as a distinctive street which will prioritize pedestrians and provide space for passive activities and storytelling, as well as pedestrian amenities such as enhanced landscaping, lighting, seating, special pavement treatments, public art, and green infrastructure. As opportunities for road work arise, possibilities for street redesign would be considered to reduce vehicular speeds and improve pedestrian safety. Examples of potential new street features include new street trees and other plantings, seating, lighting, special sidewalk pavement and enhanced pedestrian crossings.

- The Intergenerational Walk will connect to the planned Huron Street Shared Street to the north that extends through the University of Toronto St. George Campus, as outlined in the University of Toronto Secondary Plan and Guidelines, and to the south through the planned Phoebe Street “Stub,” as outlined in the Grange Green Plan, expanding the impact of the enhancements to the public realm and improving connections to surrounding communities.

Sidewalk Zones

- Development will provide a minimum of 6 metres from the curb to the building face along Major Retail Streets and streets identified as part of the Intergenerational Walk, as noted on Map 3, to provide enhanced streetscaping and pedestrian amenities, except where in situ conservation of heritage properties prevents sidewalk widening.
- Development will provide sidewalks with a minimum pedestrian clearway of 2.1 metres or in alignment with current City standards, whichever is wider.
- Priority areas for expanded sidewalks shown on Map 4, include Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West, Huron Street and Phoebe Street. Expanded sidewalks offer increased space for pedestrians, social interaction, community art, accessibility, retail spillover, streetscape opportunities, bicycle racks and pop-up vendors where feasible.
- The design of sidewalks setback areas along the Major Retail Streets and the Neighbourhood Commercial Streets should include street trees and other planting, pedestrian scale lighting, public art, cultural celebration features, street furniture, and spill-out uses such as patios, local market areas and the display of goods where feasible and appropriate.
- Where utility conflicts prohibit the planting of street trees, other forms of planting should be provided in lieu of street trees.
- Other streets in the area should provide space for tree planting and prioritize soft landscaping over hardscapes.
- Future redevelopment of Chinatown Centre (222 Spadina Avenue) will be expected to demonstrate how the proposal contributes to an expanded and enhanced public realm along its Spadina Avenue frontage and beyond, including the provision of a privately owned public space and mid-block connections to link the site to the larger parks and open space network within West Chinatown and Alexandra Park.



- New development is encouraged to provide frequent entrances and windows that maximize views to and from the street.
- New development with frontage along two streets is encouraged to articulate the corner space by locating entrances on corners and/or wrapping active uses around the building.

2. Supporting Small Businesses and Services

- Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West are Priority Retail Streets and should continue to function as the commercial core of the area.
- To reinforce the existing fine-grain and small-scale commercial character of Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West, development should provide storefronts of generally 3 to 5 metres in width.
- Larger commercial frontages may be permitted for restaurants and grocery stores provided the frontage is designed to maintain the rhythm of narrow frontages through vertical articulation.
- Buildings should be designed to enhance activity and visual interest along the street frontage by incorporating additional pedestrian amenities, such as seating, lighting and interactive public art.
- Map 3 identifies New Neighbourhood Commercial Corridors in the area.
 - Baldwin Street: Small-scale retail and restaurant uses are encouraged to concentrate along this street. These should be compatible with the area and not adversely impact adjacent residences. There are currently retail and restaurant uses along portions of Baldwin Street. The intent is to reinforce and extend the existing character of Baldwin Street from McCaul Street in the east to Kensington Market in the west.
 - Beverley Street: Small-scale retail, commercial and institutional uses are encouraged within existing buildings and new development.
- Small-scale non-residential uses that support the local population are encouraged throughout the remainder of the area. These should be compatible with the area and be complementary to adjacent residential uses that will continue.

- Existing buildings and new development are strongly encouraged to include affordable small-scale commercial and/or cultural spaces.
- Property owners are encouraged to provide existing businesses the first right of refusal to return to new commercial space in new development in space that is of a similar rent, size and functionality as the previous space to support anti-displacement objectives.
- Existing buildings and new development are encouraged to provide space for culturally competent and responsive service commercial uses and existing culturally significant businesses.
- Property owners are encouraged to lease to local independent businesses, rather than chain stores, to meet the community's needs. Chain stores are defined as one of numerous retail stores having the same ownership and selling the same lines of goods.
- To help support the viability of small, independent businesses, development should incorporate features such as shared back-of-house facilities and servicing areas and incorporate environmental standards that exceed minimum requirements.
- New development is encouraged to include additional building setbacks along street frontages to accommodate generous sidewalk zones that create space for the extension of use outside of the building such as patios, local markets, and display areas. The open-air display and sale of goods is encouraged in order to contribute to the area's vitality and economic activity.
- Existing buildings and new development are encouraged to maximize opportunities for community space through programs and policies such as the City's Cultural Districts Program and Community Space Tenancy Policy.

3. Housing and Livability

- The provision of affordable housing units should be prioritized in new development through opportunities including partnerships, community benefits, and inclusionary zoning.
- The City should prioritize the use of policies and programs to encourage new affordable housing on publicly owned lands.



- Developers are encouraged to partner with public, private and social housing such as the City's Housing Secretariat and Housing Development Office, Chinatown Community Land Trust, Kensington Market Community Land Trust, Toronto Community Housing, and Ontario Health at Home to provide a range of housing opportunities in terms of affordability, tenure, size and typology.
- Developers are encouraged to provide age-friendly housing and support multigenerational living through innovative housing design such as multi-tenant housing units, accessibility features (wider doorways, step-free entrance, accessible bathrooms), shared common spaces such as kitchens and living rooms and shared outdoor spaces such as patios and gardens.
- New development shall support the intensification and retention of existing affordable housing development to ensure no net loss of the number of units and adhere to the City's rental replacement policies.
- Development applications will be required to demonstrate, through a planning rationale or site plan application, how the proposed development responds to the existing community through an anti-displacement lens, including adhering to rental replacement and tenant relocation policies.
- Resources to the City's affordable housing financial support programs and random draws for affordable rental homes should be readily available and translated in simplified and traditional Chinese.

4. Preserving West Chinatown's Identity and Culture

- As the area continues to evolve, the historic and ongoing presence of Indigenous peoples and multicultural immigrant communities will be acknowledged and honoured, including through reconciliation, placekeeping and placemaking initiatives and in the use and design of community spaces.
- A Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA) will be conducted to build upon the West Chinatown Planning Framework by identifying properties with cultural heritage value that merit inclusion on the Heritage Register. Properties on the Heritage Register will be conserved to support and enhance an understanding of the history of the area and to enhance its sense of place and distinct character.

- Ongoing growth and development will respect the history of the area and will support and enhance its sense of place and distinct character.
- New development is encouraged to conserve, restore and adaptively reuse buildings owned by family associations to reflect their cultural, historical and architectural significance. Promote the visibility of family associations through interpretive signage, public art or cultural markers that share their histories and contributions. Involve family associations in planning decisions that affect their properties and the surrounding public realm.
- New development is encouraged to recognize, support and expand community infrastructure spaces such as community recreation centres, schools and libraries, as important anchors of community identity and cultural practices.
- New developments are encouraged to contribute to community space through the Community Benefits Charge.
- Opportunities to increase community use of existing spaces, such as Dragon City Mall and Chinatown Centre, are encouraged.
- Explore the feasibility of additional plaques in key locations in West Chinatown in collaboration with Heritage Toronto, reflecting the findings from the Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment.
- Signage should be recognized as a key character-defining element of West Chinatown and supported as part of the area's cultural identity and streetscape vibrancy. New and replacement signage are encouraged to reflect the established visual character of West Chinatown; such as colours and the use of multiple languages — while being consistent with the provisions of the Chinatown Special Signage District under Municipal Code Chapter 694.

5. Built Form

- Development on or adjacent to properties on the Heritage Register may require a site-specific approach, with additional consideration and design solutions, including the siting of buildings, and setbacks, stepbacks, and stepping down of building heights, and landscape design, as informed by a Heritage Impact Assessment.
- Gateways, shown on Maps 3 and 4, will be designed to create a sense of arrival and reinforce the area's distinct identity through additional building

setbacks, planting and landscape features, public art, gateway markers, signage and wayfinding measures, information displays, and landmark architectural and landscape design.

- Gateway markers to be integrated into the building design of new developments at gateway intersections (identified in Map 3). For instance, Transit Oriented Communities along Ontario Line Stations, such as Chinatown Station, located at the intersection of Spadina Avenue and Queen Street West.
- The Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West intersection is identified in Map 3 as the West Chinatown Core, the main north-south and east-west corridor, where the highest densities are anticipated.
- Development is encouraged to demonstrate leadership in climate change resilience and adaptation, and is encouraged to exceed minimum environmental standards.
- The design, color, and materiality of new buildings should be culturally appropriate.
- Owners are encouraged to work with local artists to design construction hoarding for developments.

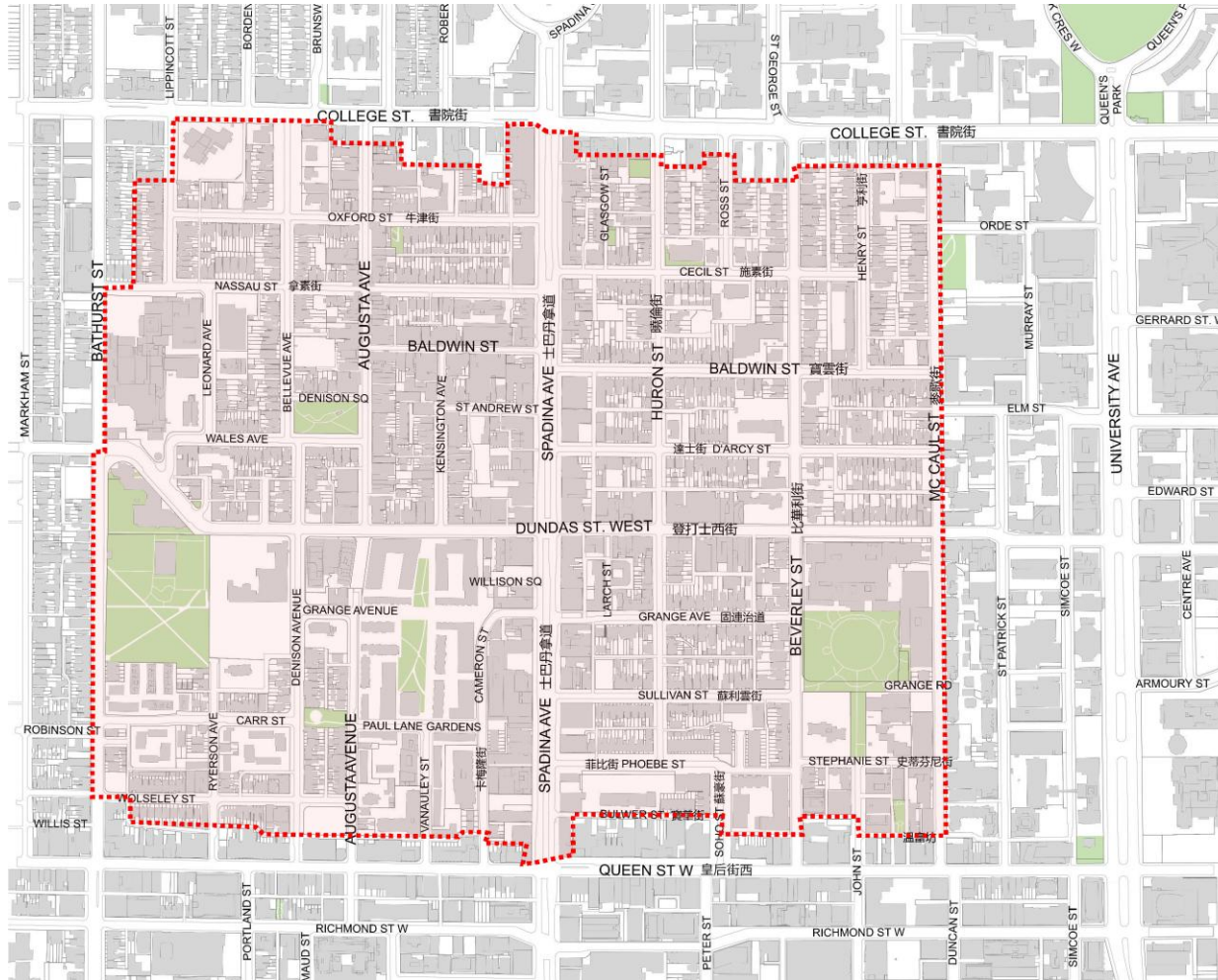
6. Public Engagement

- Development application signs and consultation meeting materials should be translated in Chinese (Simplified and/or Traditional), and when requested, interpreters will be available at consultation meetings and additional translation services will be provided.
- Developers are encouraged to meet with community groups and stakeholders early in the design process, to discuss their development proposals and the community's priorities.

7. Implementation

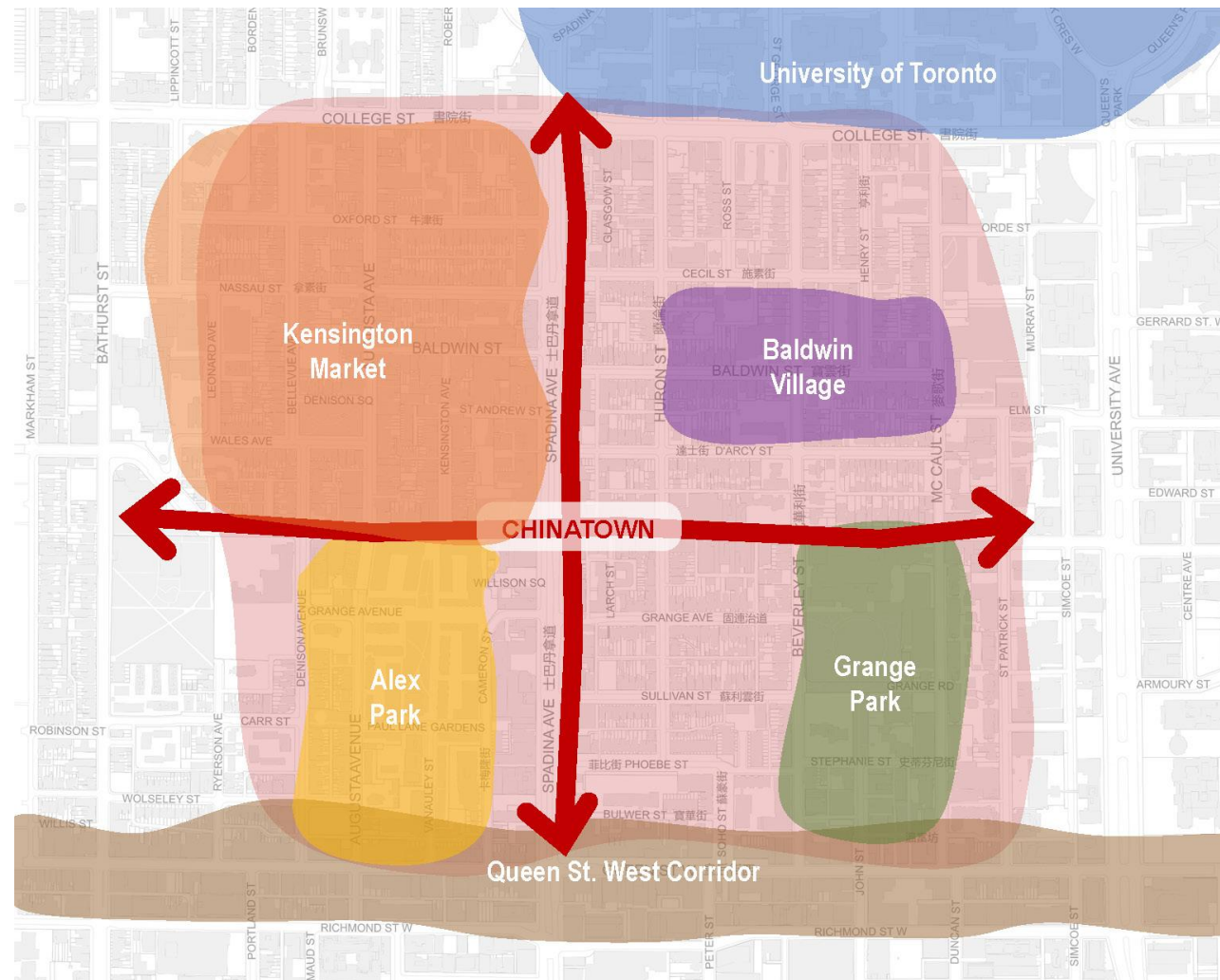
- The planning framework will be read as a whole and implemented comprehensively, together with the Official Plan and any relevant policies, regulations, and guidelines.
- The planning framework will be used to inform the review all current and future planning applications in the Framework Area.
- The planning framework will inform any future studies, policies, regulations, or guidelines that seek to supplement or replace this Framework.
- The planning framework will inform future planning policy creation and set out priorities for future economic development, community services, parks and recreational initiatives.

Map 1: West Chinatown Planning Framework Area Boundary



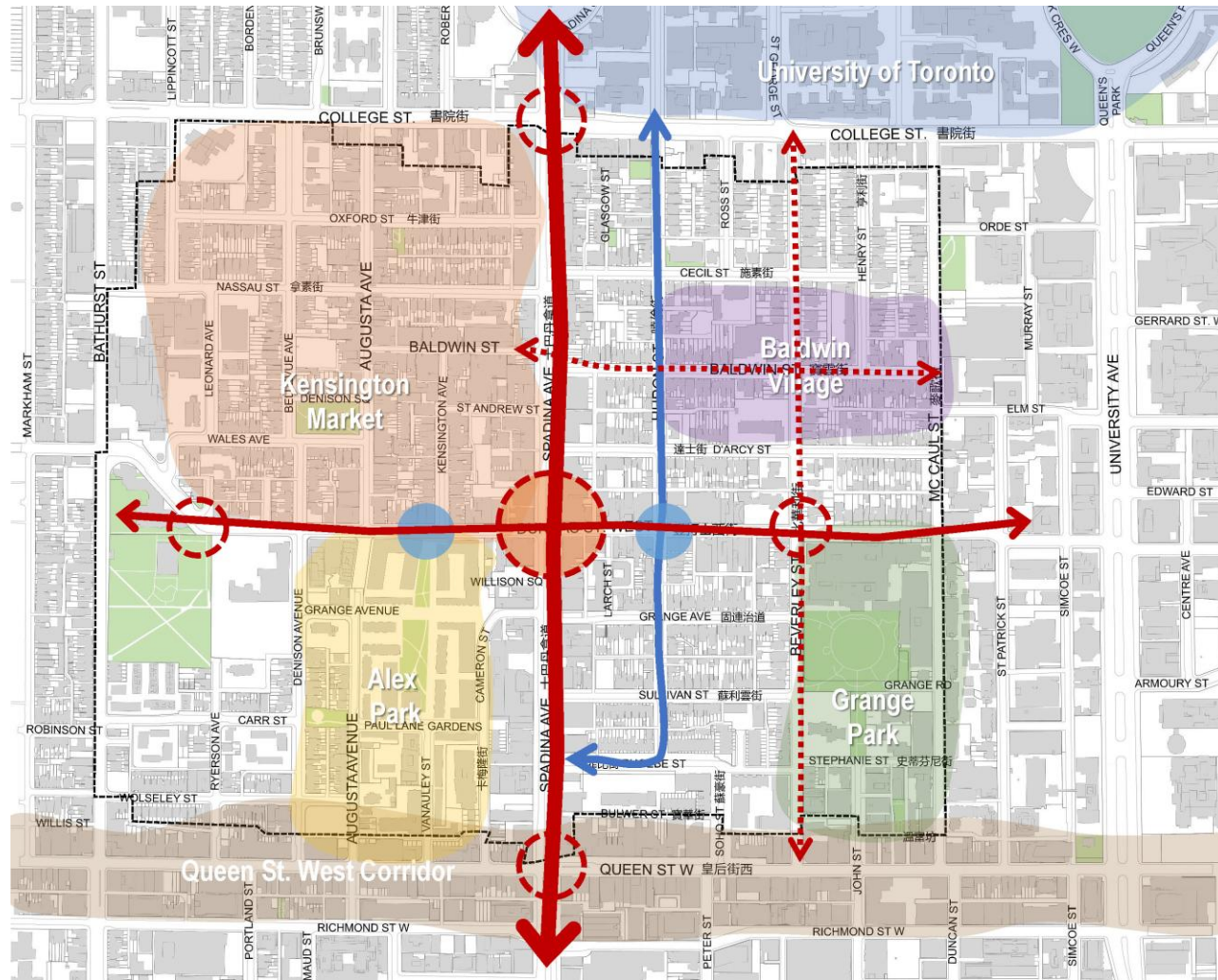
West Chinatown Planning Framework Boundary

Map 2: Community Connections



Community Connections

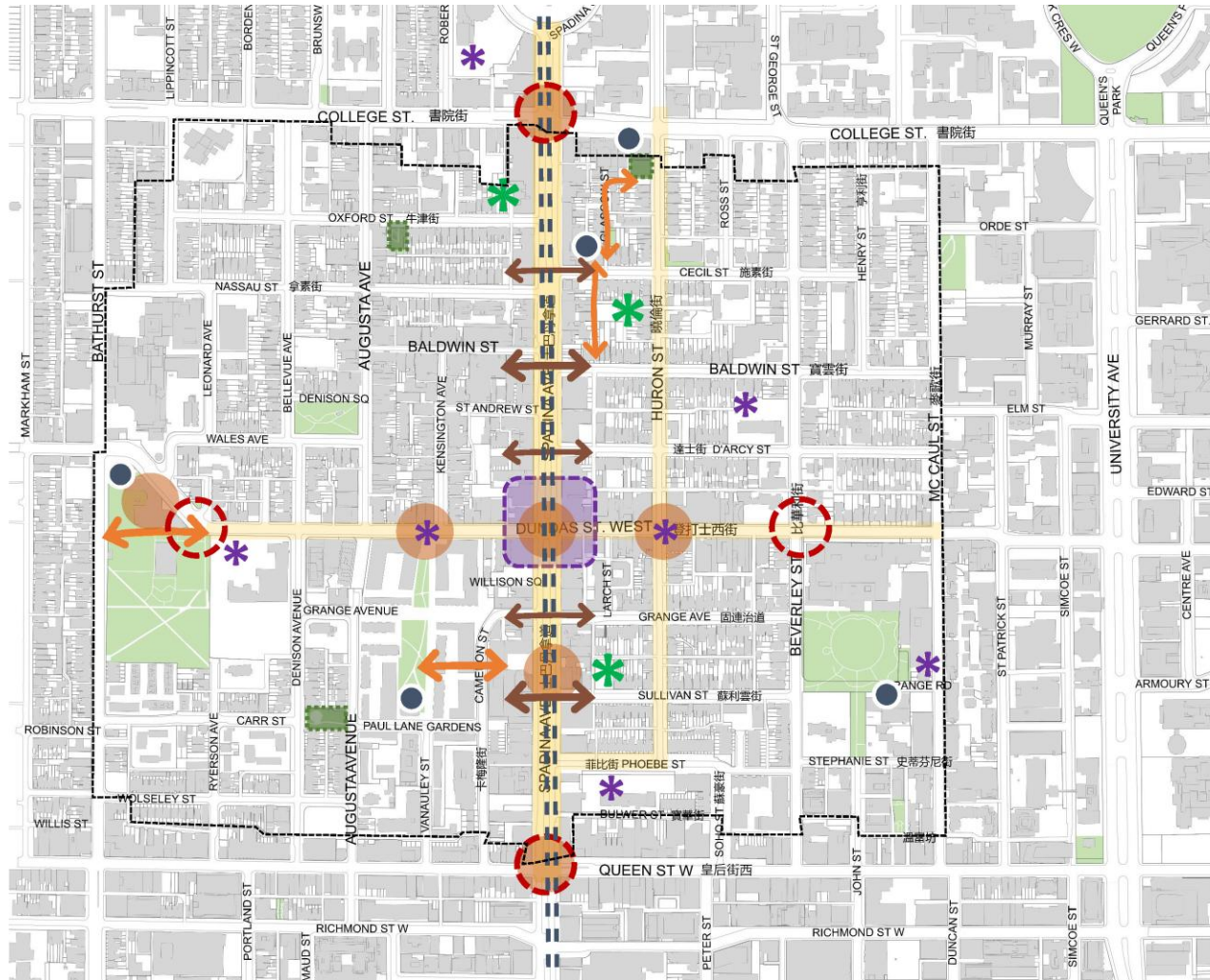
Map 3: Urban Structure



Urban Structure Map

- Chinatown Core
- Gateways
- Cultural Plazas
- Major Retail Streets
- New Neighbourhood Commercial Corridors
- Intergenerational Walk

Map 4: Public Realm



Public Realm Map

- Community Centres and Libraries
- ↔ Potential New Mid-block connections
- Priority Area for Expanded Sidewalks
- Opportunities for Improvement of Existing Parks
- * Pop-up Activation Opportunities
- * Opportunities for New Parks
- Opportunities for New Public Spaces
- Opportunities for Gateway Designs
- ↔ Potential Pedestrian Crossings
- Potential Intersection Safety Improvement
- Potential Cycling Improvement

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