

Social Planning Toronto

2 Carlton Street, Suite 1720
Toronto, ON M5B 1J3

March 31, 2026

Re: TE31.20: Chinatown Tomorrow Planning Initiative – Proposals Report

Dear members of the Toronto and East York Community Council,

My name is Mercedes Sharpe Zayas, and I am the Project Manager of Community Wealth Building at Social Planning Toronto (SPT). SPT is a nonprofit community organization that leads community research and advocacy to improve equity, social justice and quality of life in Toronto. As part of my role, I have helped inform the City of Toronto's Inclusive Economic Development Framework with the goal of advancing community wealth building initiatives, such as community land trusts. To advance this work, I have supported the Toronto Chinatown Land Trust as an advisor on its community planning efforts in response to the City of Toronto's Chinatown Planning Study, which is currently under review as Agenda Item [TE31.20: Chinatown Tomorrow Planning Initiative – Proposals Report](#).

The Toronto Chinatown Land Trust is a core member of the [Chinatown Advocacy Network \(CAN\)](#), a coalition of people who live, work, and care about Chinatown. CAN has been engaging with the City of Toronto's Chinatown Planning Study for the past two years and has raised concerns that the current draft report lacks the legal tools and public investment needed to keep Chinatown affordable, prevent displacement, and establish greater community control.

Social Planning Toronto supports the Chinatown Advocacy Network's ongoing advocacy for the following demands:

- **Designate West Chinatown as a Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA) immediately, with dedicated, long-term public funding for legacy businesses, tenants, community infrastructure, and collectively-stewarded space.** Symbolic recognition without real investment is not enough.
- **Launch a Heritage Conservation District (HCD) study that protects Chinatown's full cultural fabric, including clan associations, community institutions, locally-serving businesses, and built and intangible heritage.** Preserving buildings cannot come at the cost of displacing the communities that give them meaning.
- **Adopt a Secondary Plan with strong, enforceable anti-displacement measures.** Planning policy must have real legal force to protect the community.

- **Deliver meaningful cultural redress, alongside permanent public investment in housing and community infrastructure that reflects Chinatown's needs.** Recognition must be paired with repair.

Without these concrete measures, the planning framework will fail the very community it claims to support. Social Planning Toronto urges Council to meaningfully engage the Chinatown Advocacy Network in this process, and act with the urgency this moment requires.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mercedes Sharpe Zayas
Project Manager, Social Planning Toronto