

From: **"Singh, Sandra"**

To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**

Date: 2024-04-04 6:21:59 AM

Subject: Memo to Mayor and Council - Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan implementation for 2023

Attachments: CMO - DCM - Memo (Council) - Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan – 2023 Year 1 Implementation Report - RTS 15432 and 15683 (2024-04-03).pdf

Good afternoon Mayor and Councillors,

Please find attached a memo summarizing the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan implementation for 2023. The memo provides:

- an overview of the work undertaken in Chinatown in 2023 in collaboration with community partners;
- a summary of activities and results, including key data/indicators and feedback from local businesses and community partners;
- a brief preview of next steps in support of Chinatown.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email me and I'll respond through the Q&A.

Thank you,

Sandra

Sandra Singh | Deputy City Manager

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges the unceded homelands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Sel̓wíl̓wítul̓k (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

April 3, 2024

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Patrice Impey, Chief Financial Officer and General Manager Finance, Risk and Supply Chain Management
Margaret Wittgens, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services
Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering Services
Doug Smith, Acting General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
Deputy Chief Howard Chow, Vancouver Police Department

FROM: Sandra Singh
Deputy City Manager

SUBJECT: Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan – 2023 Year 1 Implementation Report

RTS #: 15432 & 15683

PURPOSE

This memo reports back to Council on the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan outcomes achieved in Year 1 (2023) as well as objectives and next steps proposed for Year 2 (2024).

BACKGROUND

On January 17, 2023, Council approved in principle the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan ([RTS 15432](#)) including a series of immediate actions and pilot projects tied to cleaning and sanitation, graffiti abatement strategies and placemaking, and community supports in Chinatown.

DISCUSSION

This memo provides information on the early implementation of actions under the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan, which was approved in principle by Council in January 2023, with funding approved in the 2023 Operating Budget.

The Action Plan identified actions under three pillars:

1. Cleaning and Sanitation;
2. Graffiti Abatement Strategies and Placemaking; and
3. Community Supports.

The implementation of these actions was overseen by the Chinatown Working Group, which includes relevant City departments and community partners (membership outlined in Appendix A). The Working Group met regularly to develop and implement pilot projects in the action plan, collaborate on new ideas, and share information on how best to address issues facing Chinatown.

Through collaborative and coordinated efforts, the delivery of pilot projects resulted in tangible improvements in cleanliness, graffiti reduction, and community support across the neighbourhood.

At the end of 2023, a survey was conducted to gather feedback from local businesses and an evaluation session was held with the Working Group to assess Year 1 implementation.

This section discusses achievements, findings, and next steps for each pillar, and provides a snapshot of key data.

Pillar 1: Cleaning and Sanitation

The City of Vancouver's Engineering department implemented several actions to improve the cleanliness and sanitation of the Chinatown area, in collaboration with partners, including:

- 4,671 garbage bags, 4,747 feces and 19,073 needles collected by micro-cleaning services to remove litter from sidewalks and alleys;
- 836 volunteers conducted 1,513 hours of cleaning at Engineering-led clean-up events;
- 15 additional public waste bins were added and are routinely serviced;
- Hours of operation at the comfort stations at Main and Hastings were expanded to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for both genders; and
- Daytime sidewalk sweeping, scrubbing and power washing were increased.

The Working Group reported that the increased efforts around cleanliness were immediately impactful, and surveyed Chinatown merchants concurred. Key findings reported include:

- Micro-cleaning services improved the appearance and safety of the area;
- Clean-up initiatives engaged the community and fostered a sense of pride;
- Support for staff development of Van311 communication process with partners to increase efficiency and response times;
- NPO-hired staff performed proactive clean-ups beyond requirements and reduced calls;

Pillar 2: Graffiti Abatement Strategies and Placemaking

Staff supported placemaking and beautification efforts such as tree trimming and facilitated the community-led addition of lanterns in trees, lighting on the gate, and installation of neon dragon banners along streets.

For graffiti removal, collaboration was key to address the diverse incidents and locations:

- 320 requests for graffiti removal on public property (via Van311) were actioned by the Engineering department;
- 1,790 graffiti incidences on private property were removed by the Chinatown BIA;
- 159 graffiti incidences on private property were removed by 58 volunteers, led by the CPCC's volunteer graffiti removal program.

The Working Group implemented the following additional proactive graffiti abatement strategies:

- Developing a process to obtain waivers and permission from merchants and property owners in advance to allow partners to remove graffiti as soon as it is discovered, which resulted in expedited response times for removal, led by the BIA; and
- Creating a Graffiti Removal and Prevention Booklet to educate and a Graffiti Volunteer Recruitment Pamphlet to attract volunteers, led by and available at the CPCC.

The Working Group and merchants recognized the benefits of the graffiti removal approach and the amount of graffiti removed from Chinatown; however, there is a desire to see more preventative measures implemented.

Pillar 3: Community Supports

Staff supported the establishment of and ongoing operations at the Won Alexander Cumyow Civic Office at Chinatown Plaza (112 Keefer Street).

Noting a recurring need for support by those unable to access traditional social services, especially Chinese seniors, CMO staff established a collaboration with Housing & Homelessness Services. Outreach staff, in addition to CMO staff, are now present to provide support to individuals accessing City and social services in Cantonese and Mandarin.

In collaboration with local partners, the City of Vancouver also implemented several actions to provide community supports and services to the Chinatown area. These actions include:

- Chinatown Stewards who operate seven days per week to patrol the neighbourhood and provided:
 - Assistance to local businesses: more than 300 interactions with merchants to support businesses directly and keep doorways ready for operations, with an average response time of 10 minutes;
 - Businesses indicated a preference for steward assistance due to quick response times and a proactive approach
 - Community assistance: more than 3,700 interactions with community members, including assisting seniors, de-escalation, and referral to health clinics and other supports;

- Stewards also performed wellness checks, calling for paramedics when medical assistant was needed and responded to over 30 overdose situations with naloxone
 - Collection of over 7900 sharp objects.
- 32 community members accessed Safewalk services through the Chinatown BIA;
- 70 individual community members were supported by staff at the Alexander Cumyow Civic Office at Chinatown Plaza (August to December 2023).

The Working Group members agreed that the Stewards' ability to respond in real time was an important improvement to addressing issues specific to Chinatown. Chinese seniors expressed gratitude for help in Chinese at the Civic Office. Some of the key reported findings from the evaluation work and survey are:

- Safewalk services have increased the sense of safety and security for merchants and customers, as well as visibility and awareness of the program;
- The Stewards program is appreciated by merchants, especially for support in engaging campers in front of storefronts, distributing information, and reporting issues; merchants also appreciated having a relationship with the Stewards;
- The Civic Office is now seen by seniors, outreach workers, NPOs and the BIA as an important resource for unilingual Chinese seniors seeking to access support.

Additional Recommendations and Opportunities

Partners and merchants reported satisfaction with efforts made by the City to uplift Chinatown, but also expressed concern about funding. Three new ideas were also expressed, which staff will explore in Year 2:

1. Evolve the Chinatown Plaza: Make the Plaza an anchor and focal point for Chinatown by using the venue for exhibitions, performances, festivals, and markets. This would increase the vibrancy and sense of community and belonging in the area.
2. Host cultural events: Similar to Mount Pleasant's annual Vancouver Mural Festival, create a Chinatown-specific festival to attract locals, tourists, and artists to the area.
3. Uphold safety and beautify: Increase lighting so that residents feel more comfortable engaging in outdoor activities. Increase wayfinding signage in and around Chinatown to support tourism and visitors.

A number of challenges were also raised by Working Group members, such as difficulty obtaining permits and approvals for community-led initiatives or not knowing how to effectively communicate Uplifting Chinatown services. Year 2 will explore these as opportunities.

NEXT STEPS

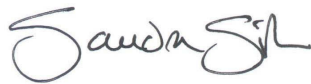
Year 1 of the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan was focused on operationalizing on-the-ground initiatives. Year 2 will continue those initiatives with a focus on identifying strategic opportunities to improve services and operations and continue to measure impact through ongoing metrics and data collection.

CMO will continue to work with partners to identify innovative ways to uplift Chinatown. This will include discussing positive police visibility and accessibility with VPD, working with City departments to address Chinatown in ongoing projects, and providing opportunities for working group members to take leadership on Chinatown efforts.

Staff will be returning to Council in May 2024 with further information on a broader strategic 'whole-City' approach to Chinatown, including recommendations for sustained, ongoing stakeholder engagement.

Staff will also return to Council in Q4 2024 to report back on Year 2 of the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan implementation.

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact Ben Pollard, Director of Business Planning and Project Support at ben.pollard@vancouver.ca.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandra Singh'.

Sandra Singh
Deputy City Manager

604.871-6858 |

**APPENDIX A:
UPLIFTING CHINATOWN ACTION PLAN WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

Uplifting Chinatown Working Group

1. City of Vancouver Departments
 - a. City Manager's Office
 - b. Engineering (Solid Waste and Sanitation)
 - c. Engineering (Public Space and Street Use)
 - d. Finance and Performance Measurement
2. Vancouver Police Department (VPD)
3. Community Partners
 - a. Vancouver Chinatown BIA (VCBIA): the VCBIA's focus is on improving safety and cleanliness, promotions and events, and working with partners to continuously improve Chinatown.
 - b. Chinese Community Policing Centre (CCPC): the CCPC works with VPD, community partners, and volunteers to develop and implement programs that promote safety and foster a positive relationship between the VPD and the Chinese community.
 - c. EMBERS Eastside Works: EMBERS offers a number of employment services inclusive to inner-city residents and the communities they serve. EMBERS helps thousands of people facing barriers to work lead productive and fulfilling lives by offering economic and employment opportunities that also support local community needs.