

From: **"Singh, Sandra"**

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

Date: 2024-07-16 8:25:25 PM

Subject: Memo - Chinatown Plaza Economic Development Pilot Project Update

Attachments: **CMO - Memo (Council) - Chinatown Plaza Pilot Program Update (2024-07-16).pdf**

Good evening Mayor and Council,

This memo provides an update to Council on the Chinatown Plaza economic development pilot project and related next steps.

- In June 2024, Council approved the Chinatown Cultural District Framework, a holistic and comprehensive approach to guide the City's work in renewing the vibrancy of Chinatown.
- Within Goal 4, there are specific actions related to the City-owned Chinatown Plaza property located at 180 Keefer. These include:
 - Exploring and implementing an economic development pilot project for the ground-floor of Chinatown Plaza that supports culturally significant businesses and activities and draws visitors to the area.
 - Developing an interim community use approach to address immediate needs for community space use and programming that aligns with existing Plaza operations and mitigates impact on existing commercial tenants.
- Over the next few months, staff will be engaging with key stakeholders, including the Vancouver Chinatown Business Improvement Association (VCBIA) and the Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association (VCMA) to inform the proposed approach and program for the ground-floor concourse of Chinatown Plaza.
- At this time, staff are anticipating a differentiation between the program advisory body and the operational management and curation of the mall.
- Given the history and importance of community- and cultural heritage-based organizations in the neighbourhood, staff will preference feedback from and working with Chinatown-based organizations.
- Staff will return to Council with the proposed pilot project framework for Council direction in Fall 2024.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me and we will provide a response through the weekly Q&A.

Thank you,

Sandra

Sandra Singh | Deputy City Manager

City of Vancouver

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

MEMORANDUM

July 16, 2024

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Melissa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

FROM: Sandra Singh
Deputy City Manager

SUBJECT: Chinatown Plaza Economic Development Pilot Project Update

PURPOSE

This memo provides an update to Council on the Chinatown Plaza economic development pilot project and related next steps.

BACKGROUND

In June 2024, Council approved the [Chinatown Cultural District Framework](#), a holistic and comprehensive approach to guide the City's work in renewing the vibrancy of Chinatown. Goal 4 of the Framework focuses on optimizing use of City properties to co-deliver housing, services, and amenities in Chinatown. Within Goal 4, there are specific actions related to the City-owned Chinatown Plaza property located at 180 Keefer. These include:

- Exploring and implementing an economic development pilot project for the ground-floor of Chinatown Plaza that supports culturally significant businesses and activities, and draws visitors to the area.
- Developing an interim community use approach to address immediate needs for community space use and programming that aligns with existing Plaza operations and mitigates impact on existing commercial tenants.

Chinatown Plaza is an REFM-managed property within the City's Property Endowment Fund (PEF) portfolio. The scope of the economic development pilot project includes the interior

ground-floor concourse only, and at this time does not include the street level retail spaces facing Keefer Street, or the upper-floor office spaces and restaurant.

DISCUSSION

The Chinatown Plaza economic development pilot project explores new possibilities and approaches that support commercial and community activities in the ground-floor concourse of the mall (“Main Mall”) with the dual goals of supporting the local economy and community and acting as a magnet to attract people to Chinatown.

Over the next few months, staff will be developing a pilot project framework and approaches, including program design. Some examples of activities that may be included in the program design can include:

- Recruitment and retention of culturally significant businesses to fill the vacant units in the Main Mall;
- Operations models that support independent businesses while also enabling cultural heritage and community programming, arts and culture, social enterprises, pop-up and cultural events, and community use; and
- Celebrations and events to activate the Main Mall on an ongoing basis;

Approach

Staff will be engaging with key stakeholders, including the Vancouver Chinatown Business Improvement Association (VCBIA) and the Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association (VCMA), over the next few months to inform the proposed approach and program for the ground-floor concourse of Chinatown Plaza.

Staff anticipate that the approach to the economic development pilot project will include:

- A program advisory body that informs the overall vision;
- An operational partner to manage and “curate” the Main Mall in line with the vision set out by the program advisory body; and
- An internal staff project team to support implementation of the vision and program, with work as identified in City departments.

Given the history and importance of community- and cultural heritage-based organizations in the neighbourhood, staff will preference feedback from and working with Chinatown-based organizations in the exploration of the pilot project framework and identification of an operational partner. At this time, staff are anticipating that there is a differentiation between the program advisory body and the operational management and curation of the mall, due to both capacity issues and the potential for conflict and conflict of interest when it comes to tenant selection and rate setting, as well as for community use of the atrium.

The pilot project framework and proposed approaches will also include high-level costing and potential revenue sources, with a range of options on the implementation approach and the use of any surplus that arises from more frequent and intensive use of the space. The approaches will also consider the Main Mall’s current tenants and existing lease agreements to ensure that

the remaining legacy businesses continue to be supported. Staff will also explore options to remove the Main Mall from the PEF to allow for more flexibility in the use of the space to support a more community-forward approach in Chinatown.

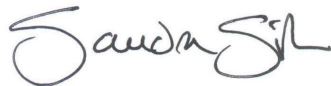
The proposed approaches will be informed by community engagement, a placemaking and remerchandising study completed by Colliers in 2021, as well as analysis of and discussions with other similar “magnet” attractions in other historic areas and neighbourhoods.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will return to Council with the Chinatown Plaza economic development pilot project framework and related proposed approaches and program for Council direction in Fall 2024.

FINAL REMARKS

If members of Council have any questions, please feel free to email me and we will provide a response through the weekly Q&A.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra Singh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sandra" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Singh".

Sandra Singh
Deputy City Manager