



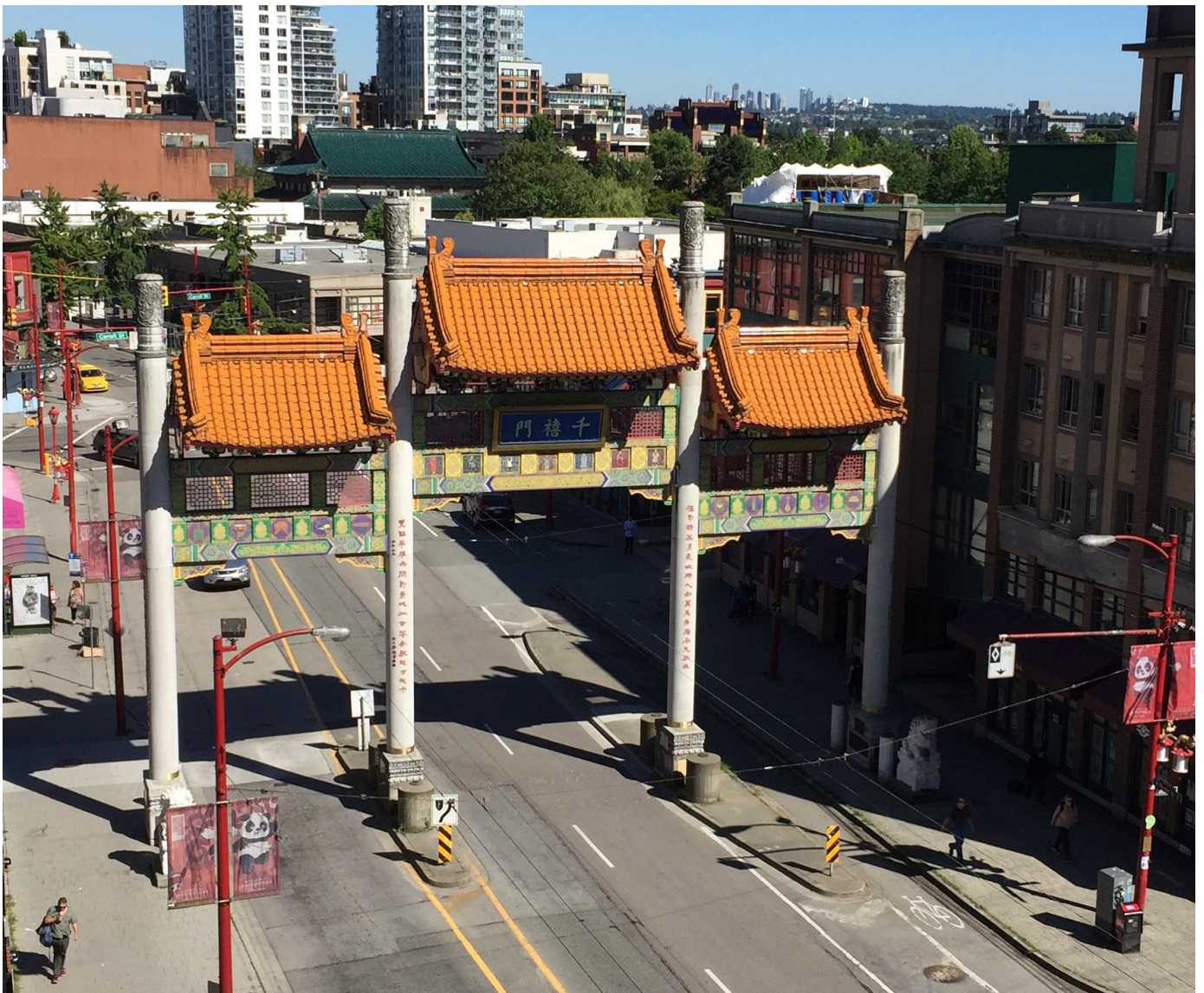
Chinatown Cultural District Framework

June 2024

Establishing a Chinatown Cultural District

Vancouver Chinatown is one of the oldest Chinatowns in Canada and one of the top three in geographic size in North America. Since its establishment in 1885, Chinatown has remained in the same location as a living and thriving neighbourhood.

A National Historic Site marked by its historical heritage buildings and intangible cultural heritage, Chinatown is an important part of Vancouver's history and adds to the rich diversity of the city's cultural fabric.



Objective

The Chinatown Cultural District Framework (“Framework”) proposes a cultural district as a guiding and comprehensive approach to supporting Chinatown’s renewed vibrancy, including both economic and community development. The Framework will guide the City’s work in Chinatown, to help manage development and change, steward intangible cultural heritage, prevent displacement and loss of important cultural uses and culturally significant businesses, and support the local economy.

GOAL 1: Explore and Update Planning Tools to Support a Cultural District Approach

GOAL 2: Improve the Overall Environment in Chinatown

GOAL 3: Support Chinatown’s Cultural Heritage Assets and Businesses

GOAL 4: Optimize Use of City Properties to Co-Deliver Housing, Services, and Amenities

GOAL 5: Work Together to Support Chinatown Vibrancy



Approach

The Chinatown Cultural District approach takes into consideration the many facets of a thriving neighbourhood and community with a rich cultural heritage, including but not limited to land use, economic development, regulatory (permitting and licensing), arts and culture, heritage, social supports, housing, public spaces and infrastructure, and public safety.

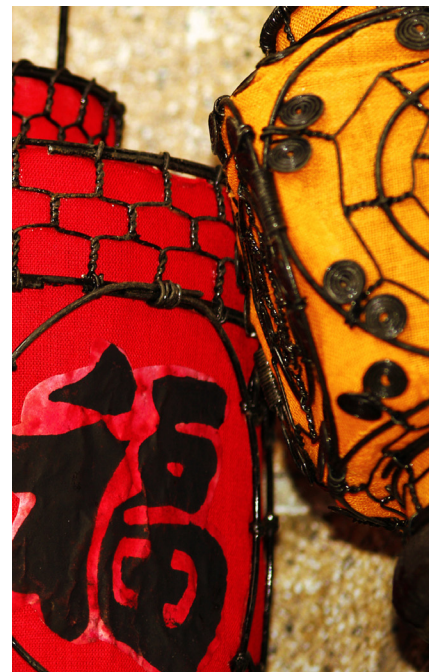
To address this broad range of interconnected issues, the Framework will be implemented through a cross-departmental and collaborative approach, in partnership with community and senior orders of government.



Opportunities Beyond Chinatown

The Framework works alongside other city-wide goals and priorities related to equity, Reconciliation, and supporting diverse communities.

While focused on Chinatown, the Framework will serve as a pilot and impetus to advance city-wide policy and planning work that responds to Vancouver Plan directions related to Ethno-cultural Community and Cultural Redress Areas, as well as directions related to Special Market Areas, small and culturally significant businesses, and cultural districts related to arts, culture, and heritage.



GOAL 1:

Explore and Update Planning Tools to Support a Cultural District Approach

The Chinatown Cultural District Framework will explore current and new policy, land use, planning, heritage, and regulatory tools to manage Chinatown’s unique cultural heritage and character. This will also advance work to support Vancouver Plan’s direction on recognized Ethno-cultural Community and Cultural Redress Areas.

OUTCOMES	KEY ALIGNED WORK
<p>A. Explore a Cultural District approach for Chinatown, with appropriate planning and land use tools.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore new land use options for the creation of a Cultural District approach that spans Chinatown’s current HA-1 and HA-1A areas. 2. Identify how policies related to a Cultural District approach will align with and advance related priorities and directions for Vancouver Plan’s Ethno-cultural Community and Cultural Redress Areas.
<p>B. Identify how current planning and land use tools can be updated in support of a new Cultural District approach.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review uses in the HA-1 and HA-1A district schedules, to enable and protect uses that support cultural activities, events, and culturally significant businesses and/or retail, and align with the Framework’s vision of Chinatown as a cultural district. 2. Explore opportunities and processes to protect, retain, and support cultural assets and intangible heritage, including uses, in the City’s development processes (Development Permits and Rezonings). 3. Explore updating relevant design guidelines and/or bylaws to better express and make visible Chinatown’s cultural heritage within the built environment, such as the Sign By-law. 4. Align Chinatown priorities with current and upcoming city-wide planning and policy work, including but not limited to housing targets, Vancouver Plan, and new provincial legislation (Bills 44, 46, 47).
<p>C. Explore updates to City’s heritage conservation tools, policies, and processes to better support Chinatown’s intangible heritage.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore updates to heritage policies, processes, and programs to support and protect intangible cultural heritage, including cultural food assets. 2. Where appropriate, update heritage statements for Chinatown and its designated heritage buildings to include intangible cultural heritage.
<p>D. Streamline City permitting and regulatory requirements.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and address regulatory barriers facing culturally significant businesses in Chinatown, to support business retention and recruitment. 2. Identify and address regulatory barriers facing Chinese Society and heritage buildings, to better support retention and conservation of heritage buildings, enable adaptive reuse, and encourage new uses and/or businesses.



GOAL 2:

Improve the Overall Environment in Chinatown

The Chinatown Cultural District will be a clean, well-maintained, and vibrant public space where residents and visitors feel safe and make frequent visits to events, activities, and businesses in the neighbourhood.

OUTCOMES	KEY ALIGNED WORK
A. Support ongoing public safety and public realm cleanliness.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue supporting pilot projects started through the Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan: cleaning and sanitation; graffiti abatement strategies; and community supports. 2. Explore ongoing partnership opportunities with VPD to bring additional focus to public safety in Chinatown.
B. Ensure Chinatown's roads and public infrastructure are well-maintained.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify resources required for public infrastructure improvements, such as for streets and sidewalks, alley beautification, and lighting.
C. Enhance Chinatown's public spaces.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve public and park spaces in Chinatown, including increased programming and placemaking opportunities. 2. Explore opportunities for the creation of new gateways to Chinatown, including on Main Street and Quebec Street. 3. Advance Chinatown Memorial Square Redesign through the 2023-2026 Capital Plan. 4. Advance redesign of Andy Livingstone Park to enable more community uses, cultural activities, and events.



GOAL 3:

Support Chinatown’s Cultural Heritage Assets and Businesses

The Chinatown Cultural District will support the neighbourhood’s mix of businesses and intangible cultural heritage activities which highlight Chinatown’s unique character.

OUTCOMES	KEY ALIGNED WORK
<p>A. Invest in and support the long-term conservation and success of Chinese Societies and Benevolent Associations in Chinatown.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine scale of investment needed to pursue full-scale rehabilitation of Society-owned heritage buildings in collaboration with the Societies. 2. Identify resources required and opportunity to continue the Chinese Society Legacy Program in the 2026-2029 Capital Plan. 3. Identify resources required to support Chinese Societies and Benevolent Associations in succession planning to enable stewarding of cultural heritage assets and activities, including exploring wider access to spaces in Society buildings for programming and activities. 4. Continue supporting Chinese Benevolent Societies that own buildings with SRO buildings through the Chinatown Housing Partnership Grant Program, administered by ACCS to support renovations, improve liveability, and maintain affordability.
<p>B. Continue to support intangible heritage assets and activities in Chinatown.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support non-profit organizations and cultural institutions stewarding Chinatown’s cultural heritage through project-based and capital grants. 2. Conduct an update of the Chinatown Cultural Heritage Assets Mapping Inventory every three years to track and monitor Chinatown’s cultural assets and ensure appropriate supports as necessary.
<p>C. Protect and enhance cultural food assets and culturally significant small businesses.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a policy to recognize cultural food assets and culturally significant small businesses, including integration into current planning, land use, and regulatory work. 2. Ensure cultural food assets and culturally significant small businesses are included in the City’s planning and economic development work, including the annual Storefronts Inventory which tracks loss and change of businesses. 3. Support retention and recruitment of cultural businesses, including continuing and/or expanding the Special Enterprise Program. 4. Explore potential policy options to support culturally significant businesses and activities, such as policy options to enable below-market commercial spaces and addressing regulatory barriers to allow multi-tenant and multi-use cultural hubs and retail spaces.
<p>D. Highlight Chinatown as a cultural destination for visitors.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate with local and regional economic development and tourism organizations and Chinatown partners on the development of a Chinatown Cultural Destination Strategy that supports the local economy and attracts visitors and events, such as FIFA World Cup 26™ and film.

GOAL 4:

Optimize Use of City Properties to Co-Deliver Housing, Services, and Amenities

The Chinatown Cultural District will optimize use of City-owned properties to support co-delivery and co-location of housing, services, and amenities, and to support the neighbourhood's needs.

OUTCOMES	KEY ALIGNED WORK
<p>A. Maximize the potential of the City-owned Chinatown Plaza property to support the local economy and draw visitors to the area.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore and implement 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. 2. Develop 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.
<p>B. Support and explore opportunities at other City-owned properties in Chinatown.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support new lease and service level agreement negotiations with the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden. 2. Develop an operations Framework and identify facilities and supports required to increased programming at the City-owned courtyard adjacent to the Chinese Cultural Centre and Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden. 3. Explore options to better manage the City-owned Pender block in support of activities and operations at the Chinese Cultural Centre and the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden. 4. Explore opportunities and partnerships on City-owned lands to support and deliver co-location of amenities, services, facilities, and a range of housing options.
<p>C. Explore partnership opportunities to deliver housing, services, and amenities in Chinatown.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore opportunities to work with senior governments and other partners to deliver amenities and a range of housing options on City-owned land, including considerations for culturally appropriate and integrated services.



GOAL 5:

Work Together to Support Chinatown Vibrancy

The implementation of the Chinatown Cultural District will be a well-coordinated cross-departmental initiative within the City and work collaboratively with external partners and senior levels of government to ensure a concerted and effective effort towards Chinatown vibrancy.

OUTCOMES	KEY ALIGNED WORK
A. Engage with Chinatown communities and partners.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a Council-appointed Chinatown Advisory Committee to provide advice to Mayor and Council and inform city-wide priorities and work related to Chinatown. 2. Continue to engage with the broader community as appropriate on work areas identified in the Framework to support implementation.
B. Advocate to senior levels of government on coordination and alignment needed to support Chinatown vibrancy.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an intergovernmental approach to Chinatown priorities to ensure alignment with senior levels of government. 2. Coordinate with senior governments on priorities related to housing, healthcare, and the SRO investment strategy to support long-term needs in Chinatown.
C. Establish a cross-departmental approach to support delivery of Chinatown priorities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish an internal cross-departmental model led by the City Manager's Office to ensure efficient and effective implementation and integrate Chinatown priorities into City-wide work. 2. Support implementation of the City's work and priorities related to older persons and elders, including the Seniors Housing Strategy. 3. Support implementation of the Accessibility Strategy.





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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the ɣʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.