

Edmonton

THE CHINATOWN STRATEGY:

ENERGIZING A PROSPEROUS FUTURE

Acknowledgements to the following groups who participated in the work to develop the Chinatown Strategy:

Chinatown Business Improvement Area

Chinese Benevolent Association
Edmonton Chinese Young
Leaders Council
Chinese Elder's Mansion
Edmonton Chinese
Multi-Cultural Center
Chinese Freemason Society
Downtown Business Association
McCauley Community League
Boyle Street Community League
Chinese Garden Society

Edmonton Our Father's House Dub Architecture Edmonton Economic Development Corporation Raimond Fung Architecture Hyatt Hotel Qualico Royal Alberta Museum Yorkton Management Group The ASSIST Community Services Centre

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OVERVIEW



INTRODUCTION

The Chinatown Strategy has been developed through an integrated economic development approach supported by placemaking and with actionable community led programming components. The Strategy is founded in economic development pillars that direct actions, all of which contribute collectively to guide Edmonton's Chinatown into the future. Together the actions capture the expressed needs of the community that embrace multiple and diverse aspects essential for a vibrant, economically sustainable place. Community led programming elements will enhance the effort to strengthen and activate Chinatown to ensure its resiliency for generations. The Chinatown Strategy is community-driven and enabled. While the City of Edmonton has played a role in the development of the strategy, it has been the strong commitment on behalf of cultural organizations, the retail and business sector and community organizations in Chinatown that has made it possible. It will be these collaborative community-based partnerships that will similarly drive the success of the Strategy as its actions are implemented.

INTRODUCTION

EDMONTON'S CHINATOWN: HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Edmonton's original Chinatown emerged more than 100 years ago in the area around Jasper Avenue and 97 Street, where a number of merchants established businesses to cater to a small, but growing Chinese population. It was the construction of Canada Place and surrounding new development in the 1970s that triggered the movement of Chinatown to 102 Avenue, between 95 and 97 Street in the the early 1980s. This area is now commonly referred to as heritage Chinatown South.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Chinatown South established entities to support cultural and social aspects, including several seniors housing projects, the Chinatown Multicultural Centre and the dedication of Harbin Gate in 1987. The build-out of Chinatown South did not fully materialize as planned, since during the same period, businesses organically began to locate a few blocks

further north along 97 Street. This gave way to a second concentration of Chinese commercial establishments known today as Chinatown North. Though the two areas are separated by only a few blocks, the division is accentuated by large institutional uses and the 97 Street Canadian National Rail bridge. This development pattern has resulted in two separate distinct areas identifying as Chinatown Edmonton today.

Over the same years, retail trends have continued to evolve. Daily goods and services that had traditionally only been available in Chinatown, such as grocery, herbal medicines and specialty services like acupuncture, can now easily be found across Edmonton. New opportunities for Chinatown have too emerged. Regional and city-wide consumer demand for unique and exciting shopping, cultural, and culinary destinations have grown. Significant changes are occurring in Edmonton's downtown, reinvigorating optimism for investment and development potential in the area.

The cumulative effect of the development of the two distinct areas, changing consumer base and preferences, and development impacts of a growing city has created challenges and opportunities related to the future of Chinatown. For these reasons, the *Chinatown Strategy* has been developed to coordinate actions that can together ensure opportunities for a prosperous, economically resilient Chinatown are seized in an integrated way.

CHINATOWN STUDY AREA BOUNDARY

The project started with a large study area, taking into account the following three central areas of Chinatown.



Chinatown North Business Improvement Area (BIA)

Cultural Chinatown South Downtown Business Association and The Quarters Redevelopment Plan

Chinese Garden Located in Louise McKinney Park



THE APPROACH



PHASE 1: CHINATOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

To form the basis for this integrated economic approach, The Chinatown Economic Development Plan was developed to evaluate the current state of the Chinatown local economy, examine best practice examples of successful Chinatowns from other cities and recommend a course of action to help revive and boost socio-economic development. The evaluation also included significant consultation from community members to better understand the opportunities and challenges of the area from an economic development perspective. This research and analysis resulted in a series of economic development recommendations to advance the resiliency of Chinatown.

The Economic Development Plan identified five economic goals that form the framework of this Strategy, and is the basis for all subsequent phases of work.

Public and stakeholder consultation undertaken in Phase 1 included public meetings, workshops, economic research, community and multi–stakeholder interviews and ground floor retail surveys.

ROAD MAP

CHINATOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ECONOMIC PROGRAMMING

URBAN INTERFACE PLAN

CHINATOWN STRATEGY

THE APPROACH



PHASE 2: ECONOMIC PROGRAMMING

An Economic Programming exercise was undertaken to expand on recommendations from the *Economic Development Plan* that suggested that a refreshed governance and leadership structure be required to ensure a sustainable and collaborative effort. Enacting a community driven plan requires the focus and dedication of community support and partnerships to help address long standing concerns affecting the advancement and sustainability of Chinatown. The Economic Programming work supported the collaboration between organizations to establish roles, governance and accountability that will effectively lead the implementation of this Strategy.

During this phase, a Chinatown Conference, organized by The Chinese Benevolent Association, in conjunction with Edmonton Chinese community organizations occurred in June 2016. The conference brought representatives from 10 North American Chinatowns together to present on opportunities and challenges from their respective communities. Over 100 delegates participated in sessions on a range of related topics including the current state of Chinatowns, transforming Chinatowns, and Chinatowns of the future. The conference provided an engaging forum for proactive conversation and confirmed local interest of diverse stakeholders.

The Chinatown Community Economic Development (CCED) Task Force was formed during this phase to provide community guidance for the strategy and to ensure that leadership would be broad in representation. Members of this group are from:

- The Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) – Culture and heritage
- The Chinatown Business Improvement Area (BIA) – Business and commerce
- The Edmonton Chinese Young Leaders Council (ECYLC) – Succession

Other business stakeholders and City liaisons

The CCED Task Force has participated in providing input and influence, solicit feedback from their respective organizations and supported a shared understanding with respect to the strategy development process.

THE APPROACH



PHASE 3: URBAN INTERFACE PLAN

Utilizing the economic pillars identified in earlier phases, the Urban Interface Plan was undertaken to provide a detailed analysis of the built form and quality of place in Chinatown today. The Plan identified tools for creating an urban environment that translates the economic pillars into tangible improvements to the built form of Chinatown. Urban design, streetscaping and other hard infrastructure interventions were deliberate in their expected impact to support the realization of the outcomes of the economic development goals. The analysis was informed by developing locational criteria to determine how placemaking tools may be considered in supporting overall economic development in Chinatown. A further evaluation of the tools led to recommended projects that will have significant impact on the future sustainability of Chinatown as a celebrated, thriving destination.

Public and stakeholder consultation undertaken in Phase 3 included ongoing meetings with the CCED Task Force, community and stakeholder meetings.

PHASE 4: CHINATOWN STRATEGY

Synthesizing the work undertaken in the first three phases and ongoing consultation through the CCED Task Force, *The Chinatown Strategy* was developed. The Strategy provides a framework of actions that directly addresses the five key pillars established in the *Chinatown Economic Development Plan*. These actions include programmatic and placemaking recommendations to support a thriving and resilient Edmonton Chinatown.

Actions are intended to interact in a complementary manner to collectively contribute to Chinatown's vibrant future through a variety of ways. The Strategy encapsulates best practices for community economic development that is integrated and inclusive, addressing the expressed needs of the community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PILLARS + ACTIONS

The Chinatown Strategy is a series of actions developed in collaboration with community stakeholders to directly address the five key pillars established in the Chinatown Economic Development Plan. These actions include programmatic and placemaking recommendations to support a thriving and resilient Edmonton Chinatown now and into the future.



PILLAR A IMPROVE SENSE OF SAFETY AND SECURITY

Strengthen safety and security in Chinatown to contribute to a strong sense of a vibrant and inclusive place.



PILLAR B FOCUSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Catalyze an environment for renewed interest and investment in Chinatown.

PILLAR C GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Implement the Chinatown Strategy through leadership, shared responsibility and resourcing.

PILLAR D

CELEBRATE CHINATOWN AS A DESTINATION

Highlight Chinatown as an exciting destination that is treasured by residents and visitors.



PILLAR E ENHANCE BUILT FORM AND LANDMARKS

Leverage the buildings, landmarks and streetscapes of Chinatown.

IMPROVE SENSE OF SAFETY AND SECURITY

Strengthen safety and security in Chinatown to contribute to a strong sense of a vibrant and inclusive place.

A sense of safety and security is essential to any vibrant, flourishing commercial destination. Challenges exist in Chinatown related to safety issues that impact daily business operations, visitor perception, and the ability to promote the area. The coexistence of numerous social agencies in the area which serve vulnerable populations from across the City creates unique sensitivities in Chinatown. While solving these complex challenges is beyond the scope of this Strategy, actions herein must be collaborative. Continued recognition and refinement of the ongoing work with respect to safety and security in Chinatown is required to support livability and a healthy, well maintained place of commerce.

ACTION 1

Develop integrated connections between social agencies, businesses and community to advocate and collaborate to identify issues and opportunities on solutions regarding safety and security.

Action 1.1 Develop a forum for relationship building that can allow stakeholders to share experiences, knowledge and ideas to increase awareness with respect to safety and security and gain a common understanding of opportunities to address impacts on small businesses, residents, and other stakeholders.

Action 1.2 Coordinate a workshop with businesses in the area and provide information on what businesses can do to enhance crime prevention through environmental design within their own buildings.

Action 1.3 Strengthen communication channels to support and advocate for the City, Edmonton Police Service and community social agencies Community Wellness Services proposal in Edmonton.

Lead: CCED Task Force and BIA / Support: City of Edmonton

IMPROVE SENSE OF SAFETY AND SECURITY



ACTION 2

Undertake a safety audit of Chinatown to document community safety factors that inform and prioritize further actions.

Action 2.1 Evaluate findings of the safety audit and determine appropriate actions that could help identify and leverage resources.

Action 2.2 Ensure that safety audit findings are shared with the business community and community stakeholders so that they can take action on specific improvements to their own properties and areas.

Lead: City of Edmonton and BIA/ Support: CCED Task Force

ACTION 3

Pilot enhanced programs to address issues around general cleanliness impacting area image and safety.

Action 3.1 Engage stakeholders of Chinatown to steward maintenance of the area through "adoption" programs that will instill pride by assigning furniture, flower baskets, blocks, or specific forms of public infrastructure to be cared for.

Action 3.2 Reflect on and review past and existing programs to weigh future direction of focused program development to address area specific issues.

Lead: CCED Task Force, BIA and Community / Support: City of Edmonton



FOCUSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Catalyze an environment for renewed interest and investment in Chinatown.

Strong commercial destinations are most often successful when they offer interesting and diverse tenant profiles in a concentrated and recognizable geographic area. The spatial separation and resulting disconnect between Edmonton's Chinatown South and Chinatown North has resulted in a dispersed Chinatown area. The outcome of this development pattern has resulted in two areas that serve different purposes, yet compete for public and private market share for new investments and retail expenditure. Economic development activities should concentrate on a focused area within Chinatown North in the short to medium-term. Stronger focus on a smaller area will strengthen recognition and contribute to a stronger sense of place, increasing Chinatown's ability to market and promote itself as a favourable and competitive destination in the Edmonton region. Successful implementation of this Strategy that focuses efforts on building a strong destination core of activity in Chinatown North will enhance opportunities to bolster Chinatown South and Chinese Garden in Louise McKinney Park. These places are and will continue to be integral assets to the Chinese community and the Edmonton region that serve as links to heritage and significant assets for the area.

General focused economic development area within Chinatown North.



FOCUSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



ACTION 4

Focus investment, development and programming support on a focused area of Chinatown North to ensure that ongoing efforts are strategic and contribute to a concentrated area and resultant sense of place.

Action 4.1 Identify and work with potential investors, businesses and economic development stakeholders to refine a collaborative approach to focus development and programming efforts in Chinatown North.

Action 4.2 Ensure that collective communications and messaging used by all stakeholders regarding Chinatown is consistent and reinforces Chinatown North as a primary destination.

Lead: BIA, Business Community and CCED Task Force / Support: City of Edmonton

ACTION 5

Increase business diversification in Chinatown to ensure a healthy retail and service mix that supports a thriving vibrant daytime, nighttime and all-season economy.

Action 5.1 Develop an investment campaign and recruitment package to support the attraction of new investors and businesses to Chinatown.

Action 5.2 Assess opportunities for growth by undertaking an analysis of retail and commercial trends that can be used for targeted outreach to new businesses and investors.

Action 5.3 Conduct an inventory of vacant and available buildings that can be used in tandem with the actions above to support the attraction of new tenants into the area.

Action 5.4 Undertake a detailed trade area assessment and market research to better understand spending habits and consumer demand in the community, city and region to inform marketing and recruitment strategies.

Action 5.5 Create a long term optimal tenant mix plan for Chinatown to serve as a roadmap for targeted business attraction. Lead: Business Community and BIA / Support: City of Edmonton and CCED Task Force

ACTION 6

Explore opportunities to leverage the City of Edmonton's Community Development Corporation to support redevelopment potential within Chinatown North.

Action 6.1 Identify and assess existing land and property assets with strategic community development potential so that this information is readily available should opportunities for a feasibility assessment emerge for Chinatown.

Lead: Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) and CCED Task Force / Support: City of Edmonton

GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Implement the Chinatown Strategy through capacity building, shared responsibility and resourcing.

Chinatown has persevered as a hub of culture and commerce over the last 100 years because of the guidance of bold community leadership. The area continues to evolve in a changing Edmonton region, bringing new economic opportunities for this vital cultural commercial area. To meet the changes in Chinatown and Edmonton, and with new levels of community interest to see this area reenergized, strategic and organized efforts to drive Chinatown forward will increase prospects for a sustainable future. Economic development will be most effective through a collaborative effort united under a unified community leadership network.

ACTION 7

Confirm the Chinatown Community Economic Development Task Force's role to steward the Chinatown Strategy and to evolve into an ongoing entity to champion Chinatown over the long term.

Action 7.1 Ratify a Chinatown Community Economic Development Task Force Terms of Reference that ensures diverse participation of members, roles and mandate to implement the Chinatown Strategy. **Action 7.2** Foster a community leadership model that is founded in shared responsibility with members that are diverse in representation and opinion, sharing the common goal to revitalize Chinatown.

Action 7.3 Develop a process of mentorship for the new generation of leaders in Chinatown that will facilitate transfer of knowledge.

Lead: CCED Task Force and Community / Support: City of Edmonton

ACTION 8

Review options to resource and support the Chinatown Community Economic Development Task Force and the implementation of the Chinatown Strategy.

Action 8.1 Identify the resources for administrative support that would provide transition between delivery of the Chinatown Strategy and the implementation plan to ensure that the community capacity built for the Strategy development continues moving forward.

Action 8.2 Identify the financial resources to support operational requirements of the CCED Task Force to ensure ongoing ownership to advance the actions of the Strategy.

Lead: City of Edmonton and CCED Task Force / Support: Community



PILLAR D

Highlight Chinatown as an exciting destination that is treasured by residents and visitors.

Iconic Chinatown's around the world are celebrated destinations for local residents and visitors alike. They are destinations in and of themselves, providing daily needs for locals and places of social interaction and support. Being deeply rooted in culture with strong reference to history, Chinatowns also have a distinct identity centred on economy, traditionally strong in trade, markets and commerce. Edmonton's Chinatown has many of the ingredients to support a strong sense of place. From enthusiastic shopkeepers and a range of festivals, to diverse and authentic food offerings and proximity to the downtown core, Edmonton's Chinatown already offers great specialties. Opportunities to harness this uniqueness and to bolster and celebrate Chinatown as a destination with something for everyone can be enhanced. With increased programming and strategic promotion that focuses on Edmonton's Chinatown as a destination, the area is poised to deliver a unique and genuine cultural experience unlike any other in the city.

ACTION 9

Leverage existing arts, culture and heritage assets of Chinatown, highlighting specialty retail and culinary offerings to market the area as a distinct and unique destination for people of all ages and diversities.

Action 9.1 Develop a tourism strategy that capitalizes on Chinatown's heritage and arts attractions and cultural opportunities.

Action 9.2 Develop a marketing plan to promote and capitalize on existing businesses and attractions in Chinatown.

Action 9.3 Mobilize efforts to develop and advertise complementary cross-promotional opportunities between area businesses and attractions.

Action 9.4 Develop tours and maintain an online resource map with historical and cultural information featuring interesting facts about Chinatown.

Lead: CCED Task Force and BIA / Support: City of Edmonton, Tourism and Economic Development partners



ACTION 10

Develop an integrated programming and events strategy for Chinatown that advances multiple reasons to visit Chinatown throughout the year.

Action 10.1 Ensure that existing events and activities are offered in a complementary fashion so that they do not compete for market share and are leveraged to secure the broadest appeal.

Action 10.2 Work with local businesses to ensure that sponsorship and other opportunities are in place so that they can benefit and support events in Chinatown.

Action 10.3 Integrate tactical activation opportunities that could include pop-up commercial and cultural events and activities in underused spaces and parking lots to advance programming in Chinatown in new ways.

Lead: CCED Task Force and BIA / Support: City of Edmonton, Tourism and Economic Development partners

ACTION 11

Support property owners to activate blank walls and spaces with engaging and colourful art and interesting installations that can help animate Chinatown and support destination appeal of the area.

Action 11.1 Develop a program and toolkit to support property owners in seizing opportunities to animate walls and spaces in ways that leverage community partnerships, local artists, and existing programs.

Action 11.2 Explore opportunities to market Chinatown as a hub for murals and street art with potential for a street art map and annual competitions.

Action 11.3 Advocate for an art piece at a prominent outward facing location of the Royal Alberta Museum to acknowledge the junction of Chinatown North and South.

Lead: BIA, Royal Alberta Museum, CCED Task Force / Support: City of Edmonton, EEDC

ACTION 12

Undertake an analysis of transportation requirements in Chinatown to ensure adequate vehicle and bike parking facilities exist and are managed most effectively to meet the needs of visitors.

Action 12.1 Undertake an analysis of City parking management to ensure that adequate enforcement and parking needs for visitors and residents are being met, particularly during peak periods and during events in Chinatown and Edmonton's core.

Action 12.2 Ensure existing and future alignments with pedestrian and cycle infrastructure are considered and initiated so that Chinatown is easily accessible via multiple modes of transportation.

Lead: BIA and City of Edmonton/ Support: Community

ACTION 13

Develop a concept and execute a future redevelopment of Mary Burlie Park that enables an inclusive and programmable public space for the community.

Action 13.1 Ensure that future development scenarios address perception of safety, and focus on creating a space that is programmable and flexible for all peoples, events and activities.

Action 13.2 Ensure that future development scenarios involve stakeholder consultation and broad community input to create new opportunities to support local businesses and programming that enhances destination appeal.

Lead: BIA and CCED Task Force / Support: Community and City of Edmonton







Action 14.2 Encourage new uses that contribute to active street frontages to support a mainstreet pedestrian appeal to advance the sense of place in Chinatown.

Action 14.3 Develop a maintenance plan for the Happy Gate of Arrival to ensure that the prominent entry feature and major landmark into Chinatown at the intersection of 97 Street and 107 Avenue is maintained through regularly scheduled maintenance.

Action 14.4 Coordinate the storage, refurbishment and future re-use installation of existing lantern lights in future public art.

Lead: City of Edmonton and BIA/Support: Community and CCED Task Force



One of the hallmarks of vibrant commercial destinations is interesting and symbolic built form. Physical attributes in Chinatown lend to the distinct character and sense of place that projects a special impression. Unique buildings, colourful decorative streetscaping along its main core and compact storefronts with tightly placed signage, all contribute to a district identity that is essential to capitalizing on Chinatown's cultural mainstreet expression. These attributes can be celebrated, leveraged and built upon as distinct elements in positioning Chinatown as a vibrant commercial destination.

ACTION 14

Ensure the vitality of Chinatown's mainstreet, 97 Street, is enhanced with strong elements of design that will secure commercial destination appeal, enhance placemaking, and bolster economic development of the area.







ACTION 15

Develop defining urban design treatments that will strengthen the profile of gateways into Chinatown along 101 Street.

Action 15.1 Improve gateways and pedestrian crossings at key intersections to enhance pedestrian experience, encourage traffic to the area and indicate entry to Chinatown.

Action 15.2 Enhance the profile of the 101 Street corridor that is a distinct mainstreet character that emphasizes improved pedestrian connections for mobility to surrounding area destinations.

Lead: City of Edmonton and BIA / Support: Community

ACTION 16

Augment the profile of 98 Street to function as an important complementary commercial street that can incite new investment and programming diversity.

Action 16.1 Develop a mixed-use streetscaping scenario that is supportive of future growth potential in Chinatown.

Action 16.2 Ensure that future streetscaping and urban design themes align and support an enhanced character of the overall Chinatown district.

ACTION 17

Work with the owner of the 97th Street Rail Bridge to determine a direction for the structure that includes multi-modal connections and interim tactical solutions for improvements that addresses community concerns while long term development plans are confirmed.

Action 17.1 Develop solutions for the bridge structure that could include lighting or murals and community engagement for different design options that reduce negative perceptions to provide a safer environment for the adjoining communities.

Action 17.2 Further develop longer-term scenarios that could see either improvements to the bridge or its removal.

Lead: City of Edmonton and Qualico / Support: BIA and CCED Task Force and Community

ACTION 18

Steward the future of Harbin Gate elements to ensure they are integrated into Chinatown in the future.

Action 18.1 Complete the community led feasibility study (currently underway) for relocation criteria to provide input into the future of the Harbin Gate.

Action 18.2 Utilize the outcome of the feasibility study to determine next steps in Harbin Gate elements relocation.

Lead: CBA and City of Edmonton/ Support: Community





ECH ACCOU





BRIDGE - CONCEPT1





BRIDGE - CONCEPT 3

Remove bridge and develop a pedestrian friendly streestscape. (See Action 17)



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PILLARS + ACTIONS



GOING FORWARD

The actions in this Strategy are a combination of programming and placemaking elements that will collectively drive the resiliency and economic sustainability of Chinatown now and into the future. Successful implementation will require a unified community and strong partnerships with the City, developers, businesses, organizations, and government to revitalize and cultivate a celebrated Chinatown.

The CCED Task Force was formed to guide the development of the strategy and its members are representative of broad interests. The diversity of perspectives in this group is centered by a shared conviction in the value of Chinatown and a commitment to ensuring its place for future generations. Efforts to energize and sustain a vibrant Chinatown will require refreshed leadership through recruitment, shared responsibility and continued collaboration that will need to be re-evaluated for successful implementation.



ALIGNMENT WITH CITY STRATEGIC PLANS:

The Chinatown Strategy supports the directions in *The Way Ahead*, Edmonton's Strategic Plan, which establishes a vision of a more compact, sustainable, liveable city. *The Way We Grow*, Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan, directs that the City will "ensure development in the Downtown, The Quarters Downtown and the surrounding central core neighbourhoods feature unique, context sensitive and enduring designs and promotes safety and security". To achieve this direction, the City will "recognize and plan for the unique characteristics, development expectations and design challenges facing the neighbourhoods that connect to the Downtown in a consistent and integrated manner. *The Way We Prosper*, Edmonton's Economic Development Plan acknowledges the changing nature of economies that impact attractiveness and competitiveness and provides direction to "create urban environments that provide a high quality-of-place experience".

Edmonton

The Chinatown Strategy: Energizing a Prosperous Future