

### **Chinatown Strategy Revalidation Group Sessions May 11, 12, June 2 and 29, 2023 What We Heard Report**

#### **Background**

The Chinatown Strategy was endorsed by City Council in 2017 with the intent to support a thriving and resilient Edmonton Chinatown. The 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:

1. Improve sense of safety and security
2. Focused economic development
3. Governance and community leadership network
4. Celebrate chinatown as a destination
5. Enhance built form and landmarks

#### **Purpose**

After 5 years of work toward the implementation of the strategy, the City of Edmonton convened key community and business representatives to evaluate and revalidate the Chinatown Strategy. These meetings occurred on May 11, 12, June 2, and 29, 2023, with the following intent:

- Build a shared understanding of the current context for Chinatown
- Review and renew the Strategy's vision, key priorities and actions
- Develop clarity on roles, responsibilities and accountabilities related to the strategy
- Identify who to engage (and how to engage them) for the strategy implementation to be successful

#### **Participants and Stakeholders**

Initial discussions for the revalidation of the Strategy involved several core partners to confirm the current status and expected future direction of the strategy. Those partners included:

- Chinatown Transformation Collaborative Society (CTC) - for broader governance and community leadership in the implementation of the Strategy
- Chinese Benevolent Association - for cultural and heritage knowledge and community connections
- Chinatown Business Improvement Area - business and commerce needs

## Attachment 4

- City of Edmonton staff representatives supporting and working with Chinatown

During the sessions, participants identified other community partners that would have a stake in the work, as follows:

Primary Partners	Other Partners		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edmonton Chinatown Safety Council</li> <li>• Healthy Streets Operations Centre</li> <li>• Downtown Business Association</li> <li>• Downtown Recovery Coalition</li> <li>• City of Edmonton Council</li> <li>• Edmonton Police Service</li> <li>• Alberta Health Services</li> <li>• Government of Alberta</li> </ul>	<p><u>Social Services Agencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bissell Centre</li> <li>• HOPE Mission</li> <li>• Boyle Street Community Services</li> <li>• The Mustard Seed</li> <li>• George Spady</li> <li>• Herb Jamison</li> <li>• Friendship Centre</li> <li>• Ambrose Place</li> <li>• Radium Health</li> <li>• Marion Centre</li> <li>• Bear Clan Patrol</li> <li>• Water Warriors</li> <li>• Prairie Sage Protectors</li> <li>• HELP</li> </ul> <p><u>Nonprofits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• REACH Edmonton</li> <li>• Green Violin</li> <li>• ASSIST Community Services</li> <li>• Edmonton Police Foundation</li> <li>• Oilers Foundation</li> <li>• Homeward Trust</li> <li>• Ociciwan</li> </ul>	<p><u>Other Cultural Organizations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edmonton Chinese Multicultural Center</li> <li>• Edmonton Korean Canadian Association</li> <li>• Ukrainian Federation</li> <li>• Edmonton Viets Association</li> <li>• Croation Church</li> <li>• Fukienese Association</li> <li>• Winspear</li> <li>• Art Gallery of Alberta</li> <li>• Canada Place</li> <li>• Royal Alberta Museum</li> <li>• Sikh Community Foundation</li> <li>• Edmonton Public Library</li> <li>• Edmonton Public School Board</li> <li>• Trans Ed</li> </ul> <p><u>Community</u></p>	<p><u>Businesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta Ave BIA</li> <li>• North Edge BIA</li> <li>• Dub Architecture</li> <li>• Edmonton Economic Development Corporation</li> <li>• Raimond Fung Architecture</li> <li>• Hyatt Hotel</li> <li>• Yorkton Management Group</li> <li>• Property Owners</li> <li>• Lucky 97</li> <li>• Wellming Group</li> <li>• Oilers Group</li> <li>• Canada Post</li> <li>• Viva Italia</li> <li>• Qualico</li> <li>• The Brick</li> <li>• Downtown Farmer's Market</li> <li>• Katz Group</li> </ul> <p><u>Youth</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fukienese Chinese School</li> <li>• CBA Youth Council</li> <li>• AIYA Collective</li> <li>• Chinatown RE: Vita</li> <li>• ECBEA</li> </ul>

## Attachment 4

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YEG Ambassadors</li> </ul> <p><u>Community Leagues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McCauley Community League</li> <li>• Boyle Street Community League</li> <li>• Central McDougall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese Freemason Society</li> <li>• Chinese Garden Society</li> <li>• Edmonton Our Father's House</li> <li>• Homeless Population</li> <li>• Toishan Society</li> <li>• Alberta Kaiping District Association</li> <li>• Mah Association</li> <li>• Wong Association</li> <li>• Native Friendship Association</li> <li>• Seniors Groups</li> <li>• Victoria School</li> <li>• Mainland Chinese Organizations</li> </ul> <p><u>Seniors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edmonton Chinese Seniors' Lodge</li> <li>• Chinese Elders Mansion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinatown Greetings</li> <li>• Chinatown Dining Week</li> </ul> <p><u>Others</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bear Clan Patrol</li> <li>• Water Warriors</li> <li>• Prairie Sage Protectors</li> </ul>
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### Chinatown Context

The group identified a number of contextual influencers (political, economic, environmental, social, technological) that would impact the success of the strategy, and sorted them as opportunities and barriers, as follows:

Opportunities	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politics/influence: different governments' approaches to people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Root causes must be addressed: mental health, opioids, drug addictions,</li> </ul>

## Attachment 4

Opportunities	Barriers
<p>who are homeless and/or mentally ill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased public housing</li> <li>● Decreased red tape with Alberta Health Services</li> <li>● Social media presence</li> <li>● Online business opportunities</li> <li>● Justice system</li> <li>● Political</li> <li>● Relationship building with all stakeholders and communities</li> <li>● Night time economy</li> <li>● Truth and reconciliation</li> <li>● Neighbourhood renewal</li> <li>● Changing markets to experiences</li> <li>● 15 minute communities</li> <li>● Must be tough on crime to show confidence</li> <li>● Celebrate distinct identity and character</li> <li>● Need to bring youth groups/seniors to Chinatown</li> <li>● Federal government problems with Chinatown across Canada</li> <li>● Investment by City in two positions - work together more</li> <li>● Unified government will work with all three levels of government</li> <li>● Economics: Downtown revitalization, New businesses: TNT, Mainland</li> </ul>	<p>homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Five-year plan for City of Edmonton to decentralize</li> <li>● Chinese business are aging out</li> <li>● Funding/police - not solve, need other tools to address this</li> <li>● Lack of policy on business development - south Chinatown not a focal point for DBA</li> <li>● Property tax and business taxes going up</li> <li>● Environmental - climate change winters cold and summers hot - impact on homeless population</li> <li>● Economics: increasing office/retail vacancy rate</li> <li>● Recession Risk - Inflation, interest rates</li> <li>● Political tensions between China and Canada - perceptions</li> <li>● Political will - not just reactionary</li> <li>● Justice System</li> <li>● Number of spaces for homeless is a challenge "barrier free"</li> <li>● Concentration of social services</li> <li>● Crime rates are going up</li> <li>● Immediate action needed in crime numbers and business assistance</li> <li>● Public safety and social disorder</li> <li>● Online commerce taking away from bricks and mortar shopping</li> <li>● Removal of injection sites - must be relocated - increases social disorder</li> <li>● Court cases re: removal of encampments</li> </ul>
<p>Those identified as the potential to be an opportunity and/or a barrier:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Economic Assessment control - stop allowing pharmacies to open everywhere in Chinatown</li> <li>● Relationship with indigenous and social services</li> <li>● Ability to engage the youth - progressive</li> <li>● Media give the wrong message - narrative, story told</li> </ul>	

### Vision

The group shared ideas and refined a Vision for Chinatown, describing the ideal future state to achieve, as follows:

***Chinatown is an active and vibrant local community, with a renowned cultural and commercial district for Edmontonians and visitors.***

### Actions

Detailed review and discussion took place on the Pillars and Actions of the previous strategy, to determine those that are completed, those that are still relevant going forward with a new strategy, and any new actions to add to the work.

At the June 29, 2023 session, the group agreed to remove the previous Pillar on *Governance and Community Leadership* (as a pillar in the strategy), but reinforced that it is critical that the group engage in governance discussions immediately to determine the appropriate governance structure going forward in order to successfully deliver on the updated strategy and its pillars.

### Reflection on the Working Copy of the 2023 Strategy Actions (at June 29 meeting)

- Weave the importance of people and culture throughout the strategy
- Note the distinct character of what makes Chinatown what it is
- Document the heritage
- Think about how to ensure “tourism” is part of the strategy - organizing tours for heritage, art, shopping
- Consider multilingual approach (wayfinding); invest in cultural education
- Include legacy business supports

### Reflection on the Status of 2017 Strategy Actions

- When action items have been categorized as both done and not started, it is a reflection of communication challenges in not talking to each other about what is happening
- Some items that are categorized as done and ongoing is because there is work being done but it is not being shared back
- A lot of items are marked as “not started” which reflects the organizations working in three silos instead of three pillars with a common goal. It notes the importance of working together
- Need more communication i.e. community bulletin board

- Council motion for annual reporting - need to do more reporting to each other
- City is at the table and can be held accountable to provide status/funding etc
- Strategy is too thick - there is too much
- All actions are work being done by volunteers - need resources to lift day to day
- Actions need skills/capabilities i.e. hire “capacity”
- Need to operationalize the strategy into a business plan - resourcing/staging and match what is achievable to this
- Do we all share ownership in the strategy - need to know where we own and where work is done together - division of labour
- Business owners are invested in this - it's their life savings
- Need consensus on actions “input”
- Actions noted as “not started” - couldn't get to them because of changing priorities
- Need to determine how to manage these by the end of the session
- Action items do not address the challenges
- Need to take a unified approach
- Involve all levels of government for the strategy to be successful
- Not clear enough

### **Reflection on City of Edmonton Strategies and Funding Supporting the Chinatown Strategy**

- Programs and funding is reactive - needs to be more proactive
- Window Repair Program is added to the list
- Need to add more programs/resources for security
- Streetscape is important
- Get the bridge down (Qualico)

### **Discussion on Impact/Urgency of Action Items**

#### *Low Impact, Low Urgency rated items*

- Analysis work and reports identified - looking for more actions
- Action nine on Cultural Assets needed for Chinatown - move to high impact
- What does it mean to brand multicultural assets? Includes built assets but also cultural assets. Move this to higher impact as it needs to be marketed more. If it is done right, it will bring more people in i.e. Chinatown has distinct buildings that are nowhere else in Edmonton (consider including in Edmonton Tourism book)
- Anything Business related is urgent
- Branding conversation - marketing and changing the narrative. A lot of items sit under this (overarching). Safety is part of the brand

- Not currently attracting businesses to come in now - not desirable - not signing 10-year leases

### *High Impact/Low Urgency*

- Determining an ongoing entity to champion the work

### *High Impact, High Urgency*

- Marketing first - need to change the narrative. How to improve the reporter stories
- We don't tell our own story is not enough
- Need a cohesive story - can't rely on the media

### *Key priorities discussed for the work*

1. Safety and Security
2. Marketing and Communication Strategy
3. Business Diversification
4. Infrastructure Enhancement

### *What is easiest to do?*

- Putting on events - creating new foot traffic, finding sponsorship
- Developing stories we want to push out - making a plan for telling our story
- Lanterns across 98 Street

## **Working Together**

At the June 2, 2023 meeting, the group discussed "How to do this work going forward." Responses are as follows:

### *How to build trust*

- Shared ownership of the entire strategy
- Trust - need communication and accountability to do what you can to get it done
- Need a decision-making structure
- Discussion on approach to get the work done
- Need process/expectations for communication
- How do we deal with disagreement? Need a dispute resolution mechanism. Make space to discuss disputes
- Communication - share information
- Find out what's happening - deal with problems effectively
- We are all responsible for the outcome
- Need to define and accomplish the outcome and how - find resources
- Accountability to everyone - you will do it and inform if you can't

### *How do we get this work done?*

- Plan the work together - come to table together to discuss/guide the work (city coordinates)
- Ensure ways to report back to community
- Promote to others to bring them to Chinatown
- Determine who else needs to participate in the strategy
- Engage city resources in marketing
- Shared ownership to support each other (i.e. if lead struggles to get work done)
- Agree to disagree - work for the better good of the community
- Talk to each other to solve problems
- Discussion on roles and responsibilities - need more clarity
- Develop a Governance Model on how to come together i.e. group makes decisions, communicates and works together
- Values
- Succession transition - pass the torch/mentor
- Recruitment strategy to bring in younger generation

### **Next Meeting (mid-July)**

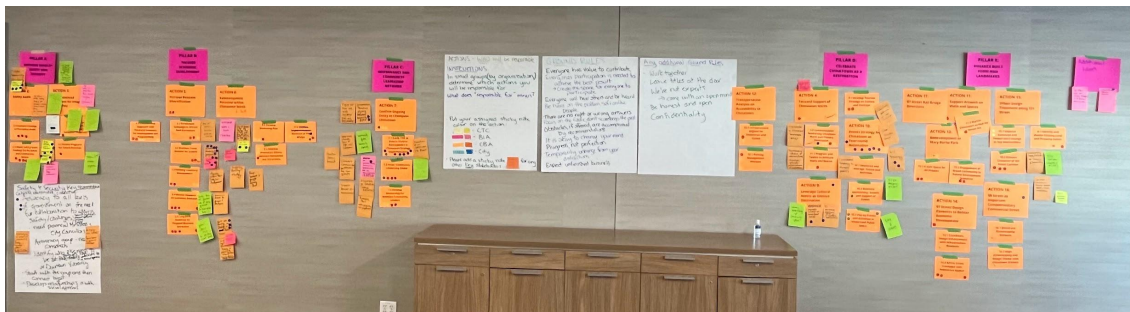
- Developing a Terms of Reference that includes communication and dispute resolution
- Discussion: How we work together/Governance
- Implementation and allocation of responsibilities and resources



### 2017 Strategy Wall



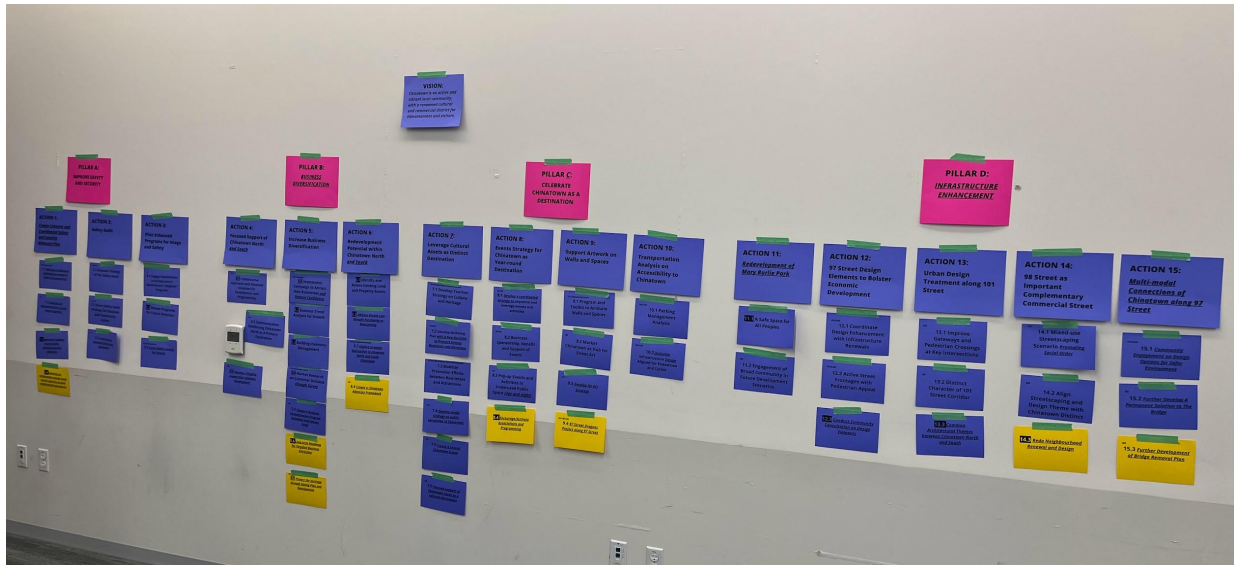
### 2023 Strategy Building



### 2023 Urgency/Impact Mapping



2023 Strategy Revalidation



Appendix 1:

Chinatown Strategy - 2023 Stakeholder Meetings

As part of the commitment to ensure ongoing progress on the actions of the Chinatown Strategy, significant stakeholder engagement was undertaken throughout 2023 starting in February. The estimated time spent on the engagement process includes:

- 16 external stakeholder meetings, which included four, four-hour workshop sessions and totalled more than 30 hours of engagement with externals
- 45 internal meetings with more than 31 hours
- More than 200 staff hours focused on external engagement outside of the Chinatown Recovery team’s workload
- The external meetings were held at four different locations: the Chinese Benevolent Association office, Chinatown ASSIST Community Services, Edmonton Public Library and Edmonton Tower.