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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.

Edmonton's Chinatown: Past and Present

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 early 1980s. This area is now commonly referred to as 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

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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 also 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.

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified challenges the area had been facing, and brought additional difficulties to the area. At the beginning of the pandemic, residents and business owners were targeted with anti-Asian sentiments, stay-at-home orders reduced the amount of visitors to the area, and a growing number of people sought social services that are concentrated in the area. The revalidated strategy aims to address these challenges in a holistic way, by creating a renowned cultural and commercial district for Edmontonians and visitors.

**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



[Note: the below graphic will be updated with an addition that reads "5 Strategy Revalidation 2023"]



Vision

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

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.

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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, solicited feedback from their respective organizations and supported a shared understanding with respect to the strategy development process.

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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.

Phase 5: Chinatown Strategy Revalidation

After five years of work toward the implementation of the strategy, and given the additional challenges brought on in part by the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Edmonton convened key

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community and business representatives to evaluate and revalidate the Chinatown Strategy. Actions were evaluated for their effectiveness and examined to determine if they still fit given the new context around Chinatown. Revalidation sessions occurred between February - June 2023.

Stakeholders in this work included:

The Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA)

The Chinatown Business Improvement Area (BIA)

The Chinatown Transformation Collaborative (CTC)

It was noted in strategy sessions that while governance supports the implementation of the strategy and specific action items, it is not necessarily a pillar of the strategy.

The revalidated strategy has a reporting mechanism based on a jointly created logic model. Ongoing stakeholder meetings will occur quarterly to discuss challenges, share progress towards action items, and report on outcomes.

Strategy Pillars

Pillar A: Safety and Security

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

Pillar B: Business Diversification

Catalyze an environment for renewed investment and a diverse business mix in Chinatown.

Pillar C: Celebrate Chinatown as a Cultural Destination

Highlight Chinatown as a cultural destination that is treasured by residents and visitors.

Pillar D: Chinatown Infrastructure Capital Plan

Leverage the buildings, landmarks, and streetscapes of Chinatown to celebrate the culture of the area and inspire locals and tourists to visit.

Pillar A: Improve Safety and Security

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

Safety and security are 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 cohabitation of numerous social agencies in the area which serve vulnerable populations from across the City creates unique sensitivities in Chinatown, such as a concentration of encampments, increased social disorder, and a reluctance to visit the area for commerce purposes. These challenges have been exacerbated by a substantial increase in the number of vulnerable people seeking services post-pandemic.

While solving these complex challenges is beyond the scope of this Strategy, actions herein must be collaborative and keep these challenges in mind. 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: Create a cohesive and coordinated Safety and Security Advocacy plan; which includes messaging for safety and security, education of desired behaviours, and clear enforcement.

Lead: BIA, with support from the Safety Council

Action 1.1 Conduct cohesive, coordinated, collective advocacy to all levels of government on the need for collaboration to address safety/challenges; specifically in regards to encampments, crime, and racial issues.

Action 1.2 Advocate for deconcentration of social services agencies and a more comprehensive encampments strategy.

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Action 1.3 Advocate that any solutions and actions focus on the root causes of homelessness, mental health, drug and opioid addictions.

Action 2 : Undertake a safety audit of Chinatown to document community safety factors that inform and prioritize further actions

Lead: City of Edmonton, BIA

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 stakeholders so that they can take action on specific improvements to their own properties and areas.

Action 2.3 Work with the Chinatown Safety Council to include a list of social service providers and the services they provide.

Action 3: Pilot enhanced programs to address issues around general cleanliness impacting area image and safety.

Lead: City of Edmonton

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.

Action 3.3 Secure stable funding for security

Lead: BIA

Pillar B: Business Diversification

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.

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.

Action 4

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

Lead: None Identified

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.

Lead: CBA

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

Lead: BIA

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Action 4.3 Develop a flagship project that catalyzes development.

Lead: CBA

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.

Lead: BIA

Action 5.1 Develop an investment campaign and recruitment package to support the attraction of new investors and local businesses to Chinatown, and to restore confidence in investors.

Lead: BIA, in partnership with City of Edmonton

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.

Lead: BIA

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. This inventory should include landlords, vacancies, suitability, and incentives.

Lead: CTC

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. Survey those at greatest risk of being gentrified, and those who have already been.

Lead: BIA

Action 5.5 Create a business incentivization program targeted at local entrepreneurs.

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Lead: BIA, CTC, City of Edmonton

Action 5.6 Create a long term roadmap for targeted business and development attraction that will boost economic tourism.

Action 5.7 Protect the heritage of the area through advocacy to different levels of government regarding zoning plans and development.

Lead: None Specified

Action 6 Explore opportunities to support redevelopment potential within Chinatown North and South.

Lead: None Specified

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: CTC

Action 6.2 Address vacant lots through purchasing or repurposing.

Lead: BIA

Action 6.3 Integrate North and South Chinatown.

Lead: CTC

Action 6.4 Create a Chinatown Economic Advocacy Framework.

Lead: BIA

Pillar C: Celebrate Chinatown as a Cultural Destination

Highlight Chinatown as a cultural destination that is treasured by residents and visitors.

Iconic Chinatowns 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 7

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.

Lead: BIA

Action 7.1 Develop a tourism strategy that capitalizes on Chinatown's heritage and arts attractions and cultural opportunities.

Lead: CBA

Action 7.2 Collaboratively develop a marketing and communications plan to promote and capitalize on existing businesses and attractions in Chinatown.

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Lead: BIA

Action 7.3 Mobilize efforts to develop and advertise complementary cross-promotional opportunities between area businesses and attractions.

Lead: All

Action 7.4 Develop a media strategy/narrative to improve the public perception of Chinatown, including the topics of homelessness, and Indigenous perspectives.

Lead: BIA

Action 7.5 Create a shared Chinatown brand with a new narrative.

Lead: CBA

Action 7.6 Focused support of Chinatown South to reinforce it as a cultural destination.

Lead: CBA

Action 8

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

Lead: BIA

Action 8.1 Develop a coordinated strategy to manage events and activities so that they are offered in a complementary fashion, do not compete for market share, and are leveraged to secure the broadest appeal.

Lead: BIA, CBA, CTC

Action 8.2 Work with local businesses to ensure that sponsorship and other opportunities are in place so that they can benefit and support events in Chinatown.

Lead: BIA, CBA

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Action 8.3 Integrate tactical activation opportunities that could include pop-up commercial and cultural events (daytime and nighttime) and activities in underused spaces and parking lots to advance programming in Chinatown in new ways.

Lead: BIA

Action 8.4 Provide supports for sustainability of associations.

Lead: None Specified

Action 9

Position Chinatown as a hub for arts and culture

Lead: CTC

Action 9.1 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.

Lead: CTC

Action 9.2 Support property owners to activate blank walls and spaces with engaging and colourful art and interesting installations that can help animate Chinatown and support the destination appeal of the area.

Lead: CTC

Action 9.3 Develop an arts strategy for the Chinatown area with resources for artists and communities

Lead: CTC

Action 10

Support and celebrate a diverse Chinatown community

Lead: CTC

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Action 10.1 Create resources for documenting heritage

Lead: CTC

Action 10.2 Provide opportunities for intercultural and intergenerational relationship building

Lead: CTC

Pillar D: Chinatown Infrastructure Capital Plan

Leverage the buildings, landmarks, and streetscapes of Chinatown.

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 11

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.

Lead: BIA

Action 11.1 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.

Lead: BIA

Action 11.2 Ensure existing and future alignments with pedestrian and cycle infrastructure are considered and initiated so that Chinatown is easily accessible for people of all ages and abilities via

multiple modes of transportation.

Lead: BIA

Action 12

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

Lead: City of Edmonton

Action 12.1 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.

Lead: City of Edmonton

Action 12.2 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: City of Edmonton

Action 13

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.

Lead: City of Edmonton

13.1 Coordinate opportunities to integrate ancillary design enhancements with scheduled infrastructure renewals that could include the addition of secondary power to street poles and use of colour or prints in pavement and asphalt.

Lead: City of Edmonton, BIA

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

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Lead: City of Edmonton, BIA

13.3 Conduct community Consultation on design elements

Lead: City of Edmonton

Action 14

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

Lead: City of Edmonton

Action 14.1 Improve gateways and pedestrian crossings at key intersections to enhance pedestrian experience, encourage traffic to the area and indicate entry to Chinatown.

Action 14.2 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.

14.3 Align Streetscaping and Design Theme with Chinatown District. Determine and enforce common architectural, landscaping, and streetscaping themes between North and South Chinatown. This may take the form of voluntary design guidelines.

Lead: City of Edmonton

Action 15

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

Lead: City of Edmonton

Action 15.1 Develop a mixed-use streetscaping scenario that is supportive of future growth potential in Chinatown and resistant to social disorder.

Lead: City of Edmonton

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Action 15.2 Ensure that future streetscaping and urban design themes align and support an enhanced character of the overall Chinatown district.

Lead: City of Edmonton

Action 16

Develop a network plan for Chinatown that includes multi-modal connections and interim tactical solutions for improvements that addresses community concerns while long term development plans are confirmed.

Lead: City of Edmonton

Action 16.1 Create a tactical plan that addresses community concerns while long term development plans are confirmed.

Lead: BIA

Action 16.2 Further develop a permanent solution to the 97 Street bridge.

Lead: None specified

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Completed Actions

Pillar	Action	Result
A: Improve Sense of Safety & Security	Integrated connections to advocate and collaborate	Replaced with a similar action
	Forum for relationship building	Chinatown Safety Council created
C: Governance and Community Leadership Network	Communication channels on community wellness services proposal	Community Well-Being and Safety Task Force created
	8: Review options to resource strategy implementation	Chinatown Recovery Fund Designated
	Identify resources for administrative support	Director, Manager, and Project Coordinator roles created
	Identify financial resources for ongoing commitment	Healthy Streets Operations Centre developed
D: Celebrate Chinatown as a Destination	Develop Online Resource Map Featuring Fun Facts	Determined this is no longer needed
	Chinatown Art Piece at Prominent Location of Royal Alberta Museum	Determined this is no longer needed
E: Enhance Built Form and Landmarks	Lantern Lights Refurbishment and Re-use	This work is well underway, supported through a Federal grant and the City's Parks and Roads Services.
	Bridge Structured as A Safe Environment	This has been re-shaped into a new action; Action 16.1
	Community Led Feasibility Study on Harbin Gate 18.2	As part of the 2023-2026 Capital Budget, City Council approved \$6 million in funding for the installation of a new Harbin Gate. The footings are in place and a timeline for completion will soon follow.
	Determine Next Steps for Relocation of Harbin Gate	

Going Forward

The actions in this Strategy are a combination of programming, placemaking, infrastructure, and business diversification 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, non-profit organizations, and government to revitalize and cultivate a celebrated Chinatown.

Efforts to energize and sustain a vibrant Chinatown will require refreshed leadership through recruitment, shared responsibility and continued collaboration that will need continuous monitoring and adjustments to ensure successful implementation. The City of Edmonton is committed to providing support and resources, acting as the convener and conduit between organizations doing work in Chinatown, and providing financial assistance wherever possible in order to make the vision become a reality.

APPENDIX 1: Alignment With City Plan

The Chinatown Strategy supports the directions in Edmonton’s City Plan which strives for a sense of place by celebrating our unique attributes, diversity and opportunities within the region. Chinatown is known and celebrated for its’ unique design elements, business offerings, and cultural organizations and the Strategy aims to harness these elements to attract more economic activity.

The Chinatown Strategy is a framework of actions for future community economic development that is integrated and inclusive, addressing the expressed needs of the community. The revalidated strategy’s initiatives focus on four pillars that were identified by the participating stakeholders, including safety and security, business diversification, celebration of the region as a cultural destination and infrastructure capital plan. These pillars and their actions align with four of the guiding values of the Edmonton City Plan, outlined in Appendix 1.

Strategy Pillar	Pillar Description	City Plan Guiding Value	Outcomes of Policy Statements
Safety and security	Strengthening safety and security in Chinatown to contribute to a strong sense of a vibrant and inclusive place	“I want to live in a place that feels like home”	Edmontonians feel safe and secure in their communities and benefit from public spaces and infrastructure that support health and wellbeing
Business diversification	Catalyzing an environment for renewed investment and a diverse business mix in Chinatown	“I want opportunities to Thrive”	The City continues to foster a vibrant economy in Chinatown by supporting business and attracting skills, talent and investments
Celebrating Chinatown as a cultural destination	Highlighting Chinatown as a cultural destination that is treasured by	“I want to belong and contribute”	Edmontonians can connect, be active in their community and celebrate Edmonton’s

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	residents and visitors		heritage, diversity and unique identity
Chinatown infrastructure capital plan	Leveraging the buildings, landmarks and streetscapes of Chinatown to celebrate the culture of the area and inspire locals and tourists to visit	"I want to preserve"	Edmonton protects and enhances its image and identity through heritage