

## CHINATOWN STRATEGY - INITIATIVES AND PROGRESS

### Recommendation

That the March 4, 2026, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02877, be received for information.

<b>Requested Action</b>	Information Only
<b>ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle</b>	<b>ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals</b>
<b>CONNECTED</b> This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	<b>Urban Places</b>
<b>City Plan Values</b>	THRIVE
<b>Corporate Business Plan</b>	Transforming for the Future
<b>Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinatown Infrastructure Improvements</li> <li>• Chinatown Recovery Fund</li> <li>• Chinatown Vibrancy Fund</li> <li>• Community Safety and Well-Being Framework</li> <li>• Downtown Core and Transit System Safety Plan</li> <li>• Chinatown Gate Relocation</li> <li>• Healthy Streets Operation Centre (sunset)</li> <li>• McCauley Neighbourhood Renewal</li> <li>• Centre City Optimization Service</li> </ul>
<b>Related Council Discussions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• August 9, 2014, Sustainable Development report CR_1279, Chinatown Plan</li> <li>• July 6, 2016, Sustainable Development report CR_3509, Chinatown Plan - Economic Development Report Findings</li> <li>• June 20, 2017, Sustainable Development report CR_4290, Chinatown Plan - Chinatown Strategy</li> <li>• April 30, 2018, Regional Economic Development report CR_4983, Chinatown Strategy Implementation and Budget Adjustments</li> <li>• December 6, 2023, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01709, Chinatown Strategy - Initiatives and Progress</li> <li>• October 9, 2024, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02329, Chinatown Strategy - Initiatives and Progress</li> <li>• May 13, 2025, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02813, Downtown Action Plan</li> </ul>

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### Previous Council/Committee Action

At the January 31, 2023, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration work with the Chinatown Transformation Collaborative and report annually highlighting initiatives and progress on the Chinatown Strategy.

### Executive Summary

- The Chinatown Strategy is a long-term, community-driven framework supporting revitalization, safety, economic development and cultural vibrancy in Edmonton's Chinatown.
- In 2025, Administration focused on community-led cultural activation, business support and advancement of key public realm projects, responding to priorities identified through ongoing engagement with Chinatown partners.
- Council renewed the Chinatown Vibrancy Fund, committing \$480,000 annually for 2025 and 2026 to support festivals, events, public art and initiatives.
- Major progress continued on long-term infrastructure investments, including the Chinatown Gate project, McCauley neighbourhood renewal work and construction of the renewed Mary Burlie Park with total investment of \$83.3 million.
- Safety and public order remained key concerns, reinforcing the need for coordinated, long-term approaches.
- Administration advanced work on a Public Space Management Framework, engaging a broad range of community partners to support a proactive, community-led model for year-round activation, cleanliness and maintenance standards, community partnerships and safety interventions.
- Administration continued quarterly meetings with the Chinatown Transformation Collaborative, the Chinatown and Area Business Association and Chinese Benevolent Association, resulting in improved collaboration and progress on the Chinatown Strategy actions.
- Next steps include the implementation of funded initiatives, development of a Chinatown tourism strategy and the refinement of performance measures to track outcomes and report progress to Council.

## REPORT

The Chinatown Strategy<sup>1</sup> is a long-term, community-driven framework adopted by the City of Edmonton and its partners to support the revitalization, safety, economic development and cultural vibrancy of Edmonton's Chinatown. The Strategy brings together municipal investment, community leadership and partnerships to address longstanding challenges while celebrating Chinatown's cultural and historical significance.

The Chinatown Strategy was originally presented to City Council in 2017. A revalidated Strategy was presented to Executive Committee on October 9, 2025 (UPE02329 Chinatown Strategy -

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<sup>1</sup> The Chinatown Strategy is available publicly on [edmonton.ca](https://edmonton.ca).

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Initiatives and Progress), following meetings between the City of Edmonton and key community and business representatives, including the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA), the Chinatown and Area Business Association (Chinatown BIA) and the Chinatown Transformation Collaborative Society (CTC). Executive Committee received the report for information.

### Current State

In 2025, the City of Edmonton focused its efforts in Chinatown on revitalization, community-led cultural programming and advancement of long-term public realm improvements, thereby building on earlier strategy work and responding to ongoing community priorities.

One of the City's major actions in 2025 was renewing and extending the Chinatown Vibrancy Fund. Council committed \$480,000 per year for 2025 and 2026 to support local festivals, events, public art and other initiatives designed to draw visitors, support local businesses and strengthen community cohesion. Projects funded through this program included longstanding events such as Chinatown Dining Week, the Edmonton Dragon Festival and Lunar New Year, which celebrate Chinatown's heritage and increase foot traffic in the area.

It also included several new, community-driven cultural activations such as the Chinatown Chow Down culinary experiences — featuring guided food crawls, community meals and a passport-style “Chow Down Challenge” — that helped encourage Edmontonians to explore and enjoy local businesses while supporting area restaurants. For details on projects funded through the Chinatown Vibrancy Fund, refer to Attachment 1.

The City continued moving forward with the Chinatown Gate project, a major public realm investment intended to create a gateway and cultural landmark on 97 Street. In 2025, detailed design work was completed, additional budget funding was approved by City Council and a local call for artist proposals sought out artwork for the new gate. The total budget for the project is \$8.7 million. The new gate work is expected to start at the end of February 2026 and is anticipated to be completed in 2027.

As part of the McCauley Neighbourhood Renewal project, with an approved budget of \$64.5 million, capacity for decorative street lighting, tree lighting and catenary poles for string lighting were added to the scope of work in Chinatown. Neighbourhood Renewal funding covered base costs for renewal of street lighting infrastructure, with another \$2.55 million covered by a portion of the Chinatown Infrastructure Improvements (\$10.1 million) standalone. An additional \$3.4 million is being used to fund a portion of the Mary Burlie Park project including a new public washroom facility. The City also looked at 97 Street and 107A Avenue streetscape improvement opportunities. Conceptual planning is currently nearing completion. Cost estimates will be developed and refined as the design process advances throughout 2026.

Despite these positive developments, safety and public order remained a concern for businesses and residents in 2025, and the City's work intersected with broader community safety discussions.

Since the revalidation of the Chinatown Strategy, the City and the community have worked together on several action items. Key activities undertaken by Administration in 2025 to support the strategy pillars include:

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- Supporting collaboration among businesses, cultural groups, social agencies and community organizations.
- Continuing quarterly coordination meetings with the CTC, Chinatown BIA and CBA.
- Working with the Chinatown BIA on business retention, attraction and promotion initiatives.
- Administering and supporting the delivery of projects funded through the Chinatown Vibrancy Fund, focused on festivals, cultural programming, placemaking and increased visitation.
- Providing administrative support for events, permitting and navigation of City services.
- Advancing neighbourhood renewal, including front-street improvements to enhance walkability, accessibility and streetscape quality.
- Commenced construction of the renewal of Mary Burlie Park in summer 2025.
- Continuing progress on the Chinatown Gate project by moving through design and early construction phases.
- Continuing oversight of the CTC multi-year funding agreement (2023–2026), including review of annual business plans and budgets.
- Advancing development of a Chinatown Strategy performance report card to track outcomes related to safety, economic activity, vibrancy and collaboration.

### Chinatown Transformation Collaborative (CTC) Society of Edmonton

The CTC is a community organization dedicated to revitalizing Edmonton’s Chinatown, making it a vibrant, inclusive and culturally rich community. The mission of the CTC is to guide and support the implementation of the Chinatown Strategy by nurturing long standing relationships and building new partnerships through programs and activities that support the vibrancy of Chinatown. Its goals include community engagement and cultural preservation, economic development and urban revitalization and sustainability. The goals are achieved through the organization’s participation in cultural programs and events, youth engagement, business support services, investment attraction, public space enhancements and infrastructure projects.

During the 2023-2026 budget deliberations, City Council approved a \$1.224 million multi-year service package of funding for the CTC to continue implementing actions outlined in the Chinatown Strategy. To advance annual funding, an updated funding agreement was prepared that requires the CTC to provide its annual budget, list of undertaken activities and audited financial statements before the annual payments are released. The funding agreement also included a requirement for a business plan with details on how the CTC’s planned spending aligns with the Chinatown Strategy and what partnerships would be leveraged to complete the work. A list of key activities undertaken and provided by the CTC to support the Strategy through 2025 is provided in Attachment 2.

Overall, 2025 was a busy year for CTC with several major community events that had attendance not just from Edmontonians but also international visitors. More details on various activities undertaken can be found in Attachment 3.

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- Between May and August, CTC's youth team delivered 73 guided food tours and 11 cultural workshops, welcoming a total of 1,064 people into Edmonton's Chinatown.
- Through the Live Active Grant, two teams from the community competed in the Edmonton Dragon Boat Races in August, bringing home bronze medals in their respective categories.
- The Community-Campus-Exposition (C2U) brought international delegates into Chinatown.
- The Dragon Festival resulted in Edmonton being selected to host the Pan American Lion Dance Championship.

### Public Space Management Framework

On June 10, 2025, as part of the UPE02813 Report, Council directed that "Administration develop a comprehensive Public Space Management Framework with the Chinatown Business Association, Chinatown Transformation Collaborative, social agencies and other local community partners, that incorporates existing Chinatown Strategy actions and also includes year-round activation, cleanliness and maintenance standards, community partnerships and safety interventions and provide an update with the Chinatown Strategy - Initiatives and Progress report UPE02877".

In late 2025, the City conducted deep-dive discussions with over 20 key community groups and partners to ensure the framework reflects the lived realities of the neighbourhood. Participating groups included the Chinatown BIA, CTC, CBA, social agencies, community leagues, cultural and art groups, young professionals, grassroots organizations and the Edmonton Police Service (EPS). These discussions allowed the City to identify community public space needs and provide guidance on how to address those needs in a collaborative and proactive manner when it comes to service delivery. Community groups indicated that engagement on the mutual framework allowed them to be heard. They expressed greater trust in the City's intention to support local businesses and ensure Chinatown remains a safe, welcoming cultural destination for residents and visitors alike. The input received, along with proposed costs for additional services and initiatives as identified by the community, is provided in Attachment 4. There is no budget allocated in the 2023-2026 approved operating budget for these initiatives. The City also conducted an inventory of services provided to Chinatown through various departments as well as funding allocations, and this information is listed in Attachment 5.

### Next Steps

The Chinatown Strategy requires ongoing implementation support and collaboration between Administration, the CTC and other community and business partners. Administration will focus on distributing the Chinatown Vibrancy Fund, implementing approved projects and continuing to engage with community partners on the actions outlined in the Strategy. Administration will also report on the success of the fund. The CTC is working with the University of Alberta to develop a tourism strategy that will bring more visitors to Chinatown, helping renew investment and attraction opportunities. Administration and Chinatown Strategy partners will continue updating the Chinatown Strategy Report Card as a more robust and measurable system for strategy outcomes, including safety and security.

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Administration continues meeting quarterly with the CTC, Chinatown BIA and CBA to ensure shared accountability and coordination of the Chinatown Strategy action items. There has been a noticeable improvement in the relationships of key community partners, which has resulted in collaboration on multiple projects in 2025.

Administration and the CTC are committed to providing Council with annual updates on initiatives and progress towards the outcomes of the Chinatown Strategy.

Through engagement, Chinatown community groups put forward a range of proposed initiatives for year-round activation, safety interventions, community partnerships and cleanliness and maintenance standards. Administration has reviewed these proposals against municipal authority, operational feasibility, funding capacity and alignment with existing programs. Administration has noted that a significant portion of the initiatives are not solely within the City's direct purview and may require the participation, leadership or enforcement authority of external partners (EPS, provincial health and justice systems, other levels of government, etc.). While these initiatives reflect legitimate community concerns, the City does not have unilateral control over their implementation, timelines or outcomes.

Given these constraints, Administration identified City-led actions that can be implemented in the near term, deliver measurable improvements to year-round activation, safety interventions and community partnership enhancement and consider impact relative to cost. As such, Administration presents one potential action:

1. *Continue Chinatown vibrancy funding.* As directed by Council on October 9, 2024, Administration is preparing an unfunded service package for consideration by Council as part of the 2027-2030 Operating Budget. This funding would continue to provide dedicated vibrancy funding for consistent, year-round activation, including micro-programming that sustains foot traffic, supports local businesses and reinforces positive use of public space. The 2027-2030 unfunded service package would entail an annual investment of \$500,000 per year for four years for vibrancy funding.

### Budget/Financial Implications

As directed by Council on October 9, 2024, Administration will prepare an unfunded service package for consideration as part of the 2027-2030 Operating Budget to provide ongoing funding for the Chinatown Vibrancy Fund.

### Community Insight

Administration continues to meet with three key community partners – the Chinatown BIA, CTC and the CBA – every quarter to monitor the implementation of the actions outlined in the revalidated Chinatown Strategy. Administration continues to communicate with the Chinatown community through meetings, social media, 311 inquiries, a monthly newsletter and community conversation.

In support of Council's direction for broader engagement on the Public Space Management Framework, Administration reached out to both internal partners and the broader community throughout 2025. This includes young professional groups, local grassroots organizations,

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community leagues and social agencies such as Bissell Centre, Hope Mission and Boyle Street Community Services as well as REACH Edmonton and EPS.

During engagement sessions, all community partners had an opportunity to provide input on the Public Space Management Framework and provide insight into how they may contribute to its implementation. Community partners have been continuously engaged on the redevelopment of Mary Burlie Park, the Chinatown Gate project, the Chinatown Vibrancy Fund and the implementation of the Chinatown Infrastructure Improvements composite profile, including streetscape enhancements in Chinatown. All of these projects are meant to facilitate implementation of the revalidated Chinatown Strategy actions.

### GBA+

The Chinatown Strategy focuses on fostering economic development, promoting cultural preservation, enhancing community engagement and ensuring sustainable urban planning. The initiatives of the Strategy are meant to remove barriers to equity and ensure that a marginalized business community is able to enjoy equality of outcomes seen by other Business Improvement Areas. According to the City's business census, 33 per cent of business owners in the Chinatown BIA identify as having Asian origins. Businesses may have one or multiple owners, all of whom may identify with multiple demographic identities. Therefore, this may not translate into one-third of businesses being owned by entrepreneurs with Asian origins.

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified challenges the Chinatown area has been facing since the creation of the Chinatown Strategy in 2017. Pervasive negative perceptions of safety and security remain a major concern in the area, and it has contributed significantly to reduced visitor traffic in Chinatown, though the Chinatown BIA has indicated anecdotally that sentiment is starting to turn. The City will continue to review opportunities to strengthen safety and security in Chinatown, increasing renewed interest and investment for the local economy and celebrating it as a cultural destination. The Chinatown Vibrancy Fund will continue to be an important piece of this work by building community cohesion, empowering residents and bolstering tourism by bringing visitors into the area through festivals, events and cultural projects.

The revalidated Chinatown Strategy aims to address issues in a holistic way by ensuring that initiatives consider the needs of all community members, including marginalized populations. As progress is achieved, the City may consider re-evaluating the strategy in 2029/2030, and the re-evaluation plan will ensure any barriers are mitigated or removed in order to support equality of outcomes.

### Environment and Climate Review

The Environment and Climate Screening form was completed, and no significant environmental or climate interactions were identified to be associated with the project.

### Attachments

1. Chinatown Vibrancy Fund 2025 Recipients
2. Chinatown Transformation Collaborative's 2025 Key Activities
3. Details on Major Initiatives by Chinatown Transformation Collaborative

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4. Public Space Management Framework - What We Heard Report
5. Current Level of Services in Chinatown