

Chinatown

Area Redevelopment Plan

Executive Summary



This executive summary provides an overview of the main sections and themes of the final draft Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan (August 2022). The final draft document should be referred to for greater detail.

Program Background

From their earliest history, North American Chinatowns, including Calgary's Chinatown, have been deeply tied to the social, political and economic context that made these neighbourhoods necessary. Calgary's Chinatown developed out of structural racism, violence, forced displacement, segregation, and discriminatory labour and immigration laws, which made life difficult for early Chinese immigrants. Through perseverance, Chinatown developed from a place where new migrants could access basic services and supports, to a vibrant cultural neighbourhood where Chinese people could feel a sense of belonging and establish a "home village" within an often-hostile society.

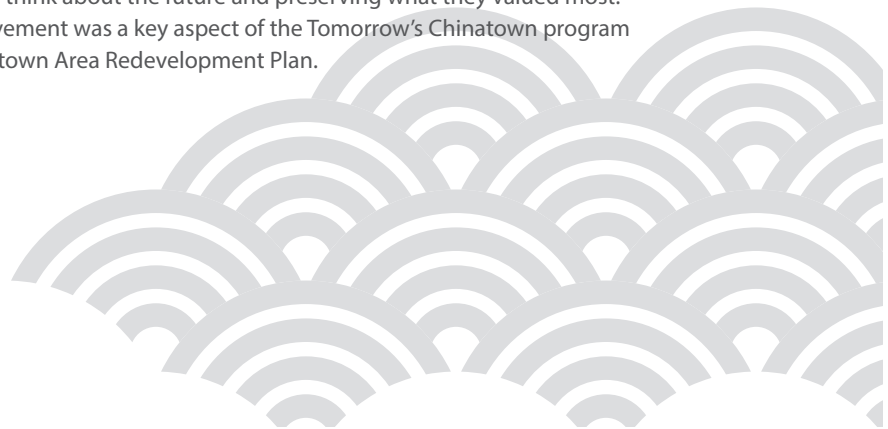
Today, Calgary's Chinatown is a valued cultural resource, important economic hub, and a city-wide destination for tourism and entertainment. At the same time, it increasingly faces challenges in maintaining its historic identity, culture and neighbourhood institutions. Along with changes brought on by redevelopment, the role of Chinatown is always evolving and represents different ideas to different generations.

A new type of planning solution is needed for Chinatown. The City launched the Tomorrow's Chinatown program with a mandate to prepare the first cultural plan in coordination with a new area redevelopment plan, in collaboration with the Chinatown community. The program included three projects:

- Chinatown Cultural Plan
- Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan
- Renaming James Short Park and Parkade

What led to the Tomorrow's Chinatown program?

1. A recent Council-approved (2016) Cultural Plan for Calgary. A key recommendation in the Cultural Plan for Calgary is to integrate cultural planning into the way The City works and plans for neighbourhoods. It also advocates for using cultural resources to strengthen Calgary's local economy and improve the quality of life for residents.
2. An outdated 1986 Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan. The final draft Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan will contain current policy direction that is more reflective of the importance of community character and culture. For the first time in Calgary, a cultural plan has been created in coordination with a new Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan and with the community as part of planning process.
3. A passionate community working hard to preserve Chinatown's unique cultural identity. When considering new development proposals in Chinatown, people in the community understood the importance of coming together to think about the future and preserving what they valued most. This community energy and involvement was a key aspect of the Tomorrow's Chinatown program and informed the final draft Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan.



About the Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan

Chinatown is located in the north central part of Calgary's Greater Downtown and is one of several mixed-use neighbourhoods that surround the Downtown Core neighbourhood. The Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan (the Plan) addresses the unique historical and cultural character of Chinatown. It serves to provide consistency and certainty to the community, developers and decision-makers. The Plan will provide a long-term vision for how land can be used or rezoned in the future. It will give guidance and direction based on unique local conditions or circumstances. The Plan is meant to be updated periodically as development and change occur, but is meant to provide direction for at least the next 30 years. The Plan will also be considered when public improvement projects and programs are planned for the area.

Culture Links

Chinatown's future as a vibrant place to live, visit, work and play, for generations to come is supported jointly by the Chinatown Cultural Plan. Strategic direction for advancing and investing in Chinatown's cultural future is outlined in the Chinatown Cultural Plan — including cultural experiences and programs; spaces, facilities and amenities; and legacy businesses and tourism. Actions from the Chinatown Cultural Plan are highlighted throughout the Plan.

What is an Area Redevelopment Plan?

An area redevelopment plan is a long-range plan that specifies the future vision, objectives and development policies that will help revitalize a community. An area redevelopment plan provides guidance on where and what kind of growth makes sense and includes development instructions that can commonly be referred to as new developments are proposed.



Legend

--- Plan Area Boundary

Program Phases

The Tomorrow's Chinatown program has been actively asking the community for their input since early March 2020. This process has been done in three phases.

At the onset of the program, the Tomorrow's Chinatown Advisory Group was established. This commitment was done to ensure The City was well-informed regarding the lived experience and cultural context of Chinatown, through all aspects of the program. The group consists of 25 members with strong ties to Chinatown and Chinese culture. To-date, we have met with the citizen-led Advisory Group 17 times in official capacity over the life of the overall Tomorrow's Chinatown program. Meetings have covered Area Redevelopment Plan topics in great detail, including:

- Public realm activation
- Mobility – walkability, transit, parking and safety
- Connections – Plus 15 bridges, linkages and wayfinding
- Sense of place
- 3 Avenue S. vibrancy – traffic calming, vibrant street-life through digital signage, string lighting and street mural
- Vision statement and core ideas
- Density and bonusing

We wish to extend our sincere gratitude for all of their time, guidance and contributions.

Sources of information for the plans

There have been many sources of information for the Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan and Chinatown Cultural Plan that offered different perspectives.

- Chinatown Advisory Group contributions
- Landowner and industry sessions
- Community and public input
- Chinatown Lunch and Learn sessions Three Urban Alliance academic research projects (University of Calgary)
- Chinatown Historical Context Paper
- Calgary Chinatown-Artist-In-Residency
- Technical analysis

Discover

- We communicated with the community so we could understand Chinatown's cultural values, the community's vision for future development, and how those two things intersect.
- We asked people who lived in Calgary to discover their hopes for the Chinatown of tomorrow.

Create

- We had deeper community conversations regarding major opportunities and priorities influencing Chinatown.
- The conversations focused on specific topics. We discussed what the Plan should achieve with its policy direction.

We are here

Realize

- We put together all that we learned to develop a vision, main ideas, and planning policies to help guide future development in the neighbourhood. The result is the final draft Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan and the initiation of its implementation.

Who we reached



19,000+ people visited the calgary.ca/Chinatown webpage



1,500+ surveys filled out with **1,300+** individual contributions



Dozens of community events and virtual events

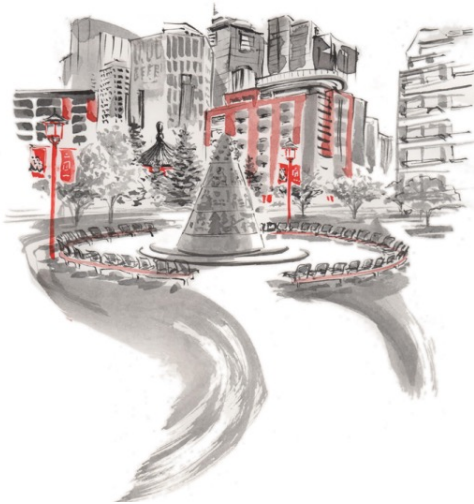
Vision and core ideas

The hopes, fears and desires expressed by the community through engagement sessions helped create the vision and core ideas of the Plan. They inform the policies that provide guidance for future growth and change in Chinatown.

Vision for Chinatown

Chinatown is a distinct and supportive neighbourhood with a long, culturally rich history. It is an adaptable and authentic place that respects and celebrates diversity. Chinatown will continue to be a valued, affordable and attractive residential neighbourhood, accommodating a diverse population with varied housing options. Its unique neighbourhood character and historical significance will continue to be expressed and preserved through its built environment. Chinatown's vibrant streets and eclectic commercial offerings will support a thriving local economy and enhance individual health and harmony.

Core ideas for Chinatown



Chinatown's Projected Growth

In the coming three decades, Chinatown is projected to grow by more than 1,600 units, with the population growing more than 5,000 residents, and it will strive to return to having more than 5,000 jobs. The neighbourhood will provide for important cultural and civic amenities that support the local population and create a unique destination for the wider region (Source: Scenario Series Population and Employment Projections, City of Calgary).

Chinatown is an affordable and attractive residential neighbourhood

Chinatown has housing choices that respond to community needs. They support daily life with easy access to open space, services and amenities, and respond to current and future challenges facing the community:

- Affordability
- Multigenerational living
- Supporting daily life
- Climate resilient

Chinatown's unique neighbourhood character continues to be expressed through its built environment

Streetscapes, building scale, architecture, signage and art reflect Chinatown's culture:

- Strengthen the edges
- Contextual development
- Cultural reference



Chinatown's vibrant streets and eclectic commercial offerings support a thriving local economy

Chinatown's pedestrian corridors are vibrant. Bolstered by a high-density residential base, these corridors are lined with a mix of small-scale retail shops and restaurants. A lively economic spirit is a core characteristic of Chinatown that supports residents and welcomes visitors:

- Neighbourhood connections
- Year-round experiences
- Historic commercial character



Chinatown's historic significance is preserved

Built heritage sites in Chinatown remain meaningful and accessible. Adjacent growth contributes to the importance of these sites:

- Conservation of heritage
- Historic rhythm of streets



Chinatown supports community, family and individual health and harmony

Chinatown has deeply embedded support networks that are critical for individuals, particularly seniors and immigrants, and their families. Cultural, family and social associations play a key role in forming these networks. It is also important to grow a sense of belonging in the community. Arts, festivals and events bring people together to celebrate a shared cultural heritage:

- Purposeful community space
- Spaces for celebration

Framework for future development

These sections of the Chinatown Area Redevelopment Plan provide specific policies and guidance for future development in Chinatown. This framework is a tool that helps the community, landowners and The City work together for a positive development future in Chinatown.

Policy guidance in the plan is broken down into the following sections:

Land Use

The Land Use Concept outlines allowable land uses in the neighbourhood and associated policies that are specific to certain locations. It confirms the area is a residential mixed-use neighbourhood with important connections to the Bow River through parks, open space and natural areas. The Plan envisions Centre Streets S. as a gateway to the neighbourhood.

Density

The Density Concept defines three (3) areas of different density depending on the purpose and character of the area and an area's ability to accommodate higher densities. The aim is to ensure development is viable in Chinatown, while preserving the unique character and cultural integrity of the neighbourhood.

Character Areas

Chinatown's look, feel and function are created by the buildings, streets, parks, plazas and other elements valued by the community. This section is designed to promote high-quality buildings and structures that reflect Chinatown's unique heritage, appearance, and culture.



Land use

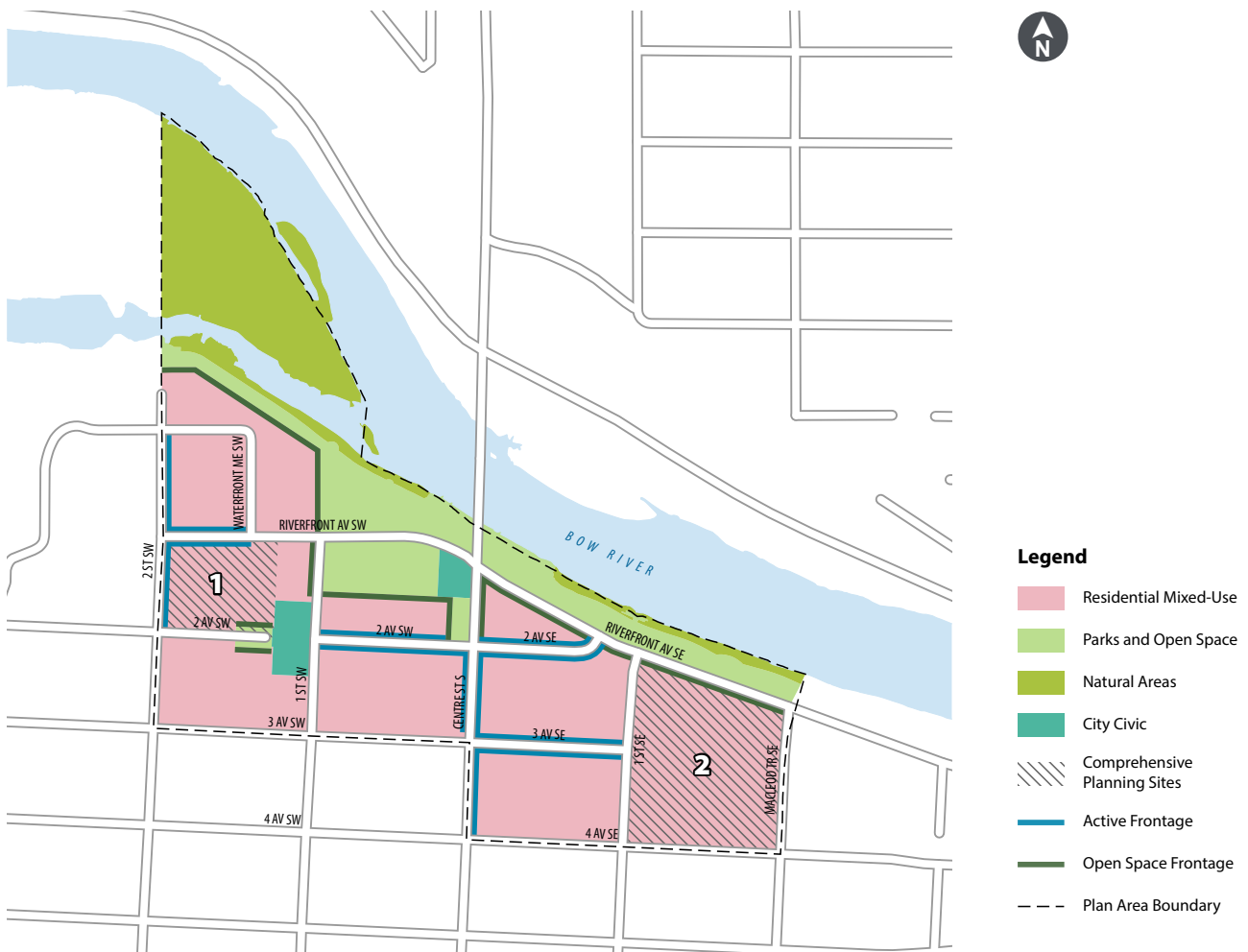
The multiple layers in this map all have polices that apply to their specific area. Together they ensure residential mixed-use development is a priority, while the cultural, economic and social functions of the community are preserved and enhanced.

Spotlights:

- No new standalone office buildings should be allowed
- Active frontage streets are prioritized to preserve and enhance street activity and the importance of local businesses. The ground floor of buildings in these areas must be commercial uses.
- Development should be primarily residential with a focus on housing in the neighbourhood:



- Variety of housing sizes and styles
- Multi-generational living
- Affordability



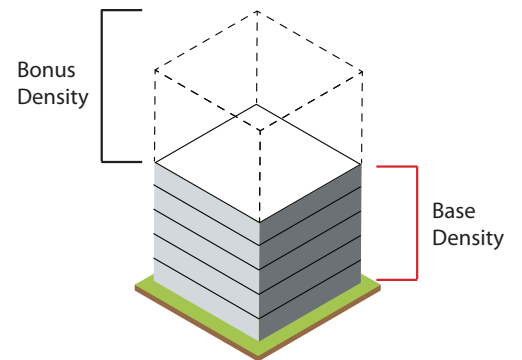
Density

Main considerations influencing the Density Concept:

- ensuring sunlight is not blocked to open spaces and natural areas
- ensuring new building heights are compatible and complimentary to their existing surroundings

The base density outlined in Table 1 (p.13) of the Plan can only be exceeded (up to the indicated maximum) when a development provides a substantial and lasting community benefit. Items that the Plan allows to be used to unlock this “bonus” density are:

- provision of affordable housing units
- cash in lieu contribution for affordable housing units
- provision of indoor amenity space for community groups and support services
- heritage designation
- heritage density transfer
- contribution to the Chinatown Improvement Fund (used for public realm improvements)

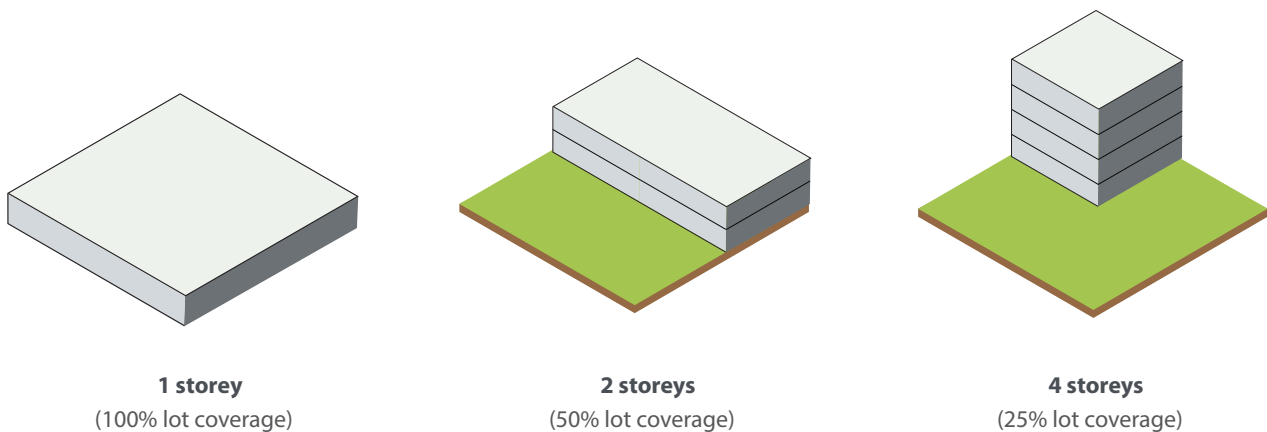


What is Floor Area Ratio (FAR)?

Density in Chinatown is measured by Floor Area Ratio (FAR), which is measured by dividing the building area by the parcel area. For example, if a 700 m² site has an FAR of 1.0, the building could be one floor at 700 m² or two floors at 350 m² each, and so on, as long as the total area of all floors does not exceed 700 m².

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

An example of 1.0 FAR





Legend

- Area A
 - Area B
 - Area C
 - Area C1
 - Area C2
- Sunlight Protection Areas
- 1 The Riverbank
 - 2 Sien Lok Park
- Sunlight Policy Exception Area
 - Panhandle Area
 - 20 Metres from the Top of Bank for Sunlight Protection
 - Plan Area Boundary

Area	Base Density (FAR)	Maximum Allowable Density (FAR)*1
A	3.0	5.5
B	6.5	7.5
C	7.0	9.0
C1	7.0	12.0
C2	3.0	12.0

* Site constraints and or sunlight protection requirements may prevent maximum allowable density from being achieved.

1 the maximum density listed in the Bonus Schedule may be exceeded by up to 10 per cent through a transfer of heritage density rights.

Area A

Consists of lands meant to be comprehensively designed with consideration given to the shadowing of important open areas. Primarily supports residential development with commercial uses at grade, creating activity along Riverfront Avenue S.E.

Area B

Allows for existing developed areas to be re-developed as medium profile, higher density mixed-use development that provides residential and non-residential uses. The street level experience is most important, making sure density and scale both contribute in a positive manner.

Area C (includes C, C1 and C2)

Applies roughly to the “non-river edges” of Chinatown where high profile and high-density development contains residential mixed- use development. Stores and businesses, together with open spaces, will make the pedestrian experience better and connect to landmarks and cultural destinations.

Character Areas

These areas are important to establish a consistent urban identity throughout Chinatown. Policies on building scale, massing, as well as cultural motifs are included here. The defined character areas provide guidance for parts of the neighborhood, which may have specific challenges. The entire Plan carefully examines the look, feel and function of the neighbourhood. This approach ensures all new development in Chinatown fits with the character of Chinatown and not of adjacent neighbourhoods.

Three (3) Character Areas have been identified, based on Chinatown's historic development, urban character, growth opportunities and the location of key neighbourhood attributes.

Heritage Core

The Heritage Core prioritizes conserving and enhancing a small, but important group of heritage resources. Policy focuses on adding, altering and adapting culture based on preserving heritage.



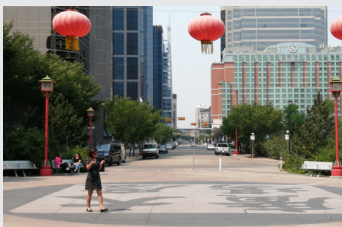
Cultural Core

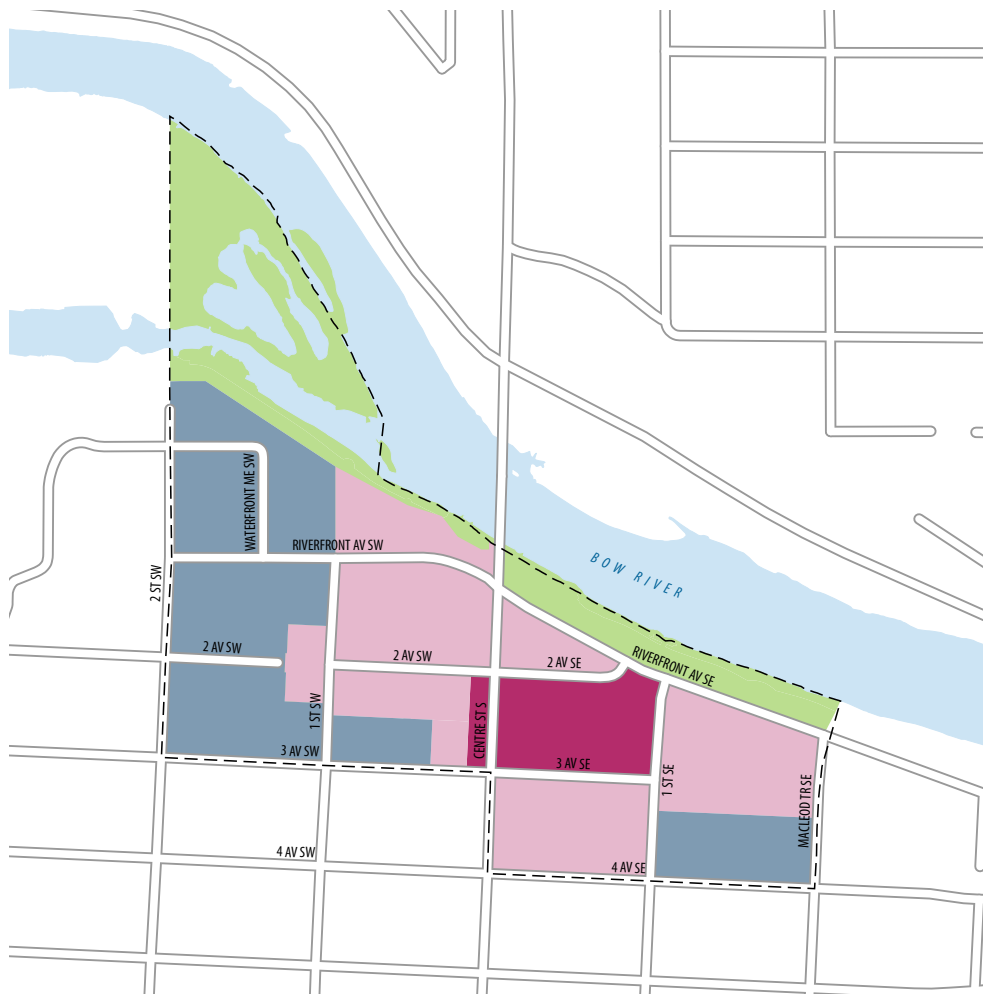
The Cultural Core focuses on places for gathering and expressing culture that help define the Chinatown character. Policy focuses on making sure redevelopment is sensitive to the existing scale and parcel pattern.



Edge area

The Edge area focuses on reinforcing neighbourhood character by applying an understanding of the heritage, character and context of Chinatown through contextual new development.





Legend

- Heritage Core
- Cultural Core
- Edge area
- Plan Area Boundary

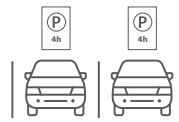
Mobility and utility infrastructure

Moving around Calgary should be safe and convenient for people of all ages, genders, incomes and abilities. Mobility refers to a well-connected network that includes options for walking, bicycling/wheeling, taking transit and using personal vehicles. It also provides people with travel choices that meet a variety of needs and preferences year-round. Recognizing the business needs in Chinatown, the mobility network needs to support local deliveries and a high level of curbside activity. Winter travel should account for a high number of pedestrians and ensure a safe and accessible mobility network. The Plan includes policies for enhanced mobility for all modes.



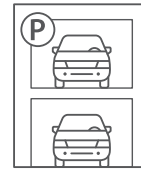
Parking

Parking has been identified through engagement as being of high importance in Chinatown. To support improved parking around the neighbourhood, the Plan proposes, among other policies:



Short stay parking

25% of stalls designated for short stay in all parking structures



New technologies

Encouragement of innovative parking technologies (such as stacked parking or robo-garages)

Climate risk in Chinatown

Chinatown, like all neighbourhoods in Calgary, will experience impacts of climate change. The City has created a climate risk profile for Chinatown to provide a detailed understanding of climate change risks and hazards. This information is a crucial consideration for future mobility and infrastructure planning.



Top climate hazards for Chinatown



River flooding

Floods will become more frequent due to climate change



Extreme heat

Climate change will result in more frequent, longer, and intense heatwaves



High intensity precipitation

Climate change will result in more intense rain and snow events that can cause floods

Public realm strategy

Chinatown will continue to evolve over the coming decades. Investment in the public areas and infrastructure will impact the future success of Chinatown as a place where people want to live, visit and set up businesses. The actions outlined in the public realm strategy provide neighbourhood-wide options to help reach the goals of the Plan. These opportunities were identified by participants in the public engagement carried out as part of the Tomorrow's Chinatown program. To achieve Chinatown's vision and core ideas, there must be sustained action in each of the following areas:

- **Placemaking:** culture, heritage, gateways, special places;
- **Green network:** access to green and open (amenity) spaces and
- **Mobility:** key streets, parking, connections, zero carbon neighbourhoods

Projects – Completed, underway, designed

Park / Plaza Projects

- (A) Eau Claire Promenade

Streetscape Enhancement

- (B) Centre Street from Bridge to 4 Avenue S. conceptual design
- (C) 3 Avenue S. walking and wheeling upgrades

Project and Programs

- (D) North Central BRT and dedicated transit lanes on Centre Street
- (E) Future LRT Station at 2 Avenue S.W.
- (F) Downtown flood barrier and Eau Claire Promenade

Projects – Future

Park / Plaza Projects

- (G) Sien Lok Park upgrades
- (H) Centre Street and 2 Avenue S.W. enhance gateway feature and open space
- (I) 4 Avenue S.E. and Centre Street improve and enhance plaza space and transit stop/station area
- (J) Enhance the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre

Streetscape Enhancement






- (K) Centre Street between 2 and 4 Avenue introduce overhead gateway features
- (L) Centre Street S. and 4 Avenue S. repurpose parking to increase the public realm and potentially BRT station
- (M) Centre Street between 2 and 3 Avenue increase and enhance the pedestrian space
- (N) 1 Street S.W. activation
- (O) Potential green network upgrades

Project and Programs

- (P) Heritage Core Alleyway Activation Program
- Develop a consistent furniture palette that incorporates cultural references with ample seating opportunities (all streets in Chinatown).



Legend

-  Green Network
-  Potential Green Network
-  Existing Parks/Plaza
-  Streetscape Enhancement
-  Future LRT corridor

The illustration is for conceptual purposes only.
Some identified potential projects and investments are highlighted in the image above.