



CONSULATE GENERAL OF
THE UNITED STATES
Vancouver, Canada



WELCOME
CHINATOWN

HR&A

WELCOME TO CHINATOWN
SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION HUB
小型商業中心

115

115

115-119

113

North American Chinatown Solidarity Conference 2024



Introduction



Lunar New Year 2022 | Manhattan Chinatown

Chinatowns hold immense significance in North American history and culture. They represent some of the oldest remaining immigrant enclave communities and are still home to hundreds of thousands of residents, workers, mom-and-pop businesses, and legacy institutions. **Together, they symbolize the resiliency, adaptability, and strength of the Asian community and serve as cultural beacons that connect us to our past.** They also continue to serve as safe havens for generations of new immigrants looking for belonging and new economic opportunities.

But many Chinatowns are at risk of disappearing today. A multitude of **threats** – rising rents, displacement, inequitable planning processes, large-scale mega projects, anti-Asian hate, and others – endanger the future of these neighborhoods as vibrant hubs of Asian Canadian and Asian American culture and life. In 2023, two of America’s Chinatowns were listed on the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s 2023 list of “America’s 11 Most Endangered Places.” The challenges and struggles facing Chinatown, particularly post-COVID, are more pressing than ever.

U.S. – Canada Chinatown Solidarity Conference

In May 2023, the first US-Canada Chinatown Solidarity Summit took place in Vancouver, convening leaders from across North America to **create a powerful platform for sharing experiences, workshopping strategies, and building greater solidarity to ensure the long-term prosperity and sustainability of Chinatown communities.** The discussions at that first gathering of Chinatowns highlighted common challenges and the need for greater collaboration and partnership across Chinatowns.

In October 2024, the second US-Canada Chinatown Solidarity Summit was held in New York, hosted by nonprofit Welcome to Chinatown at its newly opened Small Business Innovation Hub. ***The Summit brought together over 40 leaders representing 21 Chinatowns over the course of two days,*** including: Alberta, Atlanta, Calgary, Chicago, Denver, Edmonton, Honolulu, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Montreal, New York City, Oakland, Ottawa, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, Washington D.C., and Winnipeg.



Chinatown Storytelling Centre | Vancouver, British Columbia

Photo by Abin John Photography



Chinatown Solidarity Conference | New York, NY

Photo by Kevin Yan

Introduction

Pillar 1:
Preservation

Pillar 2:
Safety

Pillar 3:
Revitalization

Strategies &
Ideas

Next Steps &
Actions

Conclusion

Appendix

The summit built upon the three key pillars established at the last convening:

- 1. Historic and Cultural Preservation:** How can Chinatowns remain authentic to their historic and cultural heritage while remaining competitive in the 21st century?
- 2. Public Safety:** How can Chinatowns address public safety challenges without exacerbating problems like over-policing and police brutality?
- 3. Economic Revitalization:** How can Chinatowns become more economically competitive in the face of challenges like declining foot traffic and rising costs?

Each pillar featured brief “lightning” presentations from subject matter experts on each topic, as well as breakout discussions for attendees to dive deep and share ideas.



Chinatown Solidarity Conference | New York, NY

The Summit had four goals:

1. Implement actionable strategies based on the pillars of Historic & Cultural Preservation, Economic Revitalization, and Public Safety.
2. Strengthen ties and formalize partnerships that drive continuous collaboration and resource-sharing across Chinatowns in the U.S. and Canada.
3. Elevate and integrate the contributions of Chinese American and Chinese Canadian communities in national and local initiatives.
4. Equip community leaders with tools and resources to enhance capacity and drive action.



Photo by Kevin Yan

Pillar 1: Historic and Cultural Preservation



LA Chinatown Central Plaza | Los Angeles, CA

Photo by Anonymous

Chinatowns have served as safe havens and cultural hubs for Chinese immigrants and Chinese American and Canadian communities for almost two centuries. Safeguarding Chinatowns' role and heritage in the 21st century will require active historic and cultural preservation efforts in the face of economic and political threats. Conference lightning presentations and breakout discussions yielded a nuanced discussion of the historic and cultural preservation problems facing Chinatowns across Canada and the United States and yielded potential actions for attendees to take.

Lightning Presentations



Di Gao

National Trust for Historic Preservation

shared her role in nominating Philadelphia's and Seattle's Chinatowns as two of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places, as well as cultural preservation tools and strategies that could be employed by the grassroots, industry, and governments, such as Backing Historic Small Restaurants Grants provided by the National Trust (and sponsored by American Express).



Carol Lee

Vancouver Chinatown Foundation

shared her people-centered approach to revitalization, grounded in three key pillars and strong partnerships with government, business, and the community. She highlighted Bob & Michael's Place, a social housing project with 231 homes and a 50,000-square-foot health centre, and offered insights on how such transformative projects are brought to life.



Justin Ng

Spaced Agency

presented his architectural projects – New York City Chinatown restaurant Wo Hop and Welcome to Chinatown’s Small Business Innovation Hub. His inspiration was to look past the orientalist image of Chinatown, with pagodas and upturned roofs (a style that originates after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake to attract tourists – a deal made to preserve that Chinatown’s existence with the White supremacist city government). Instead, he focused on the everyday elements of Chinatowns as inspiration – like wooden shelves and frames – allowing Chinatown to evolve while remaining authentic to its past.



Potential Solutions Shared

Participants shared a variety of potential actions and policy solutions that could enhance historic and cultural preservation in Chinatowns, ranging from **encouraging foot traffic through self-guided tours and night markets, to building coalitions in support of investments like affordable housing in Chinatowns.** These and other potential solutions are profiled in greater detail in the section “Strategies and Ideas for Chinatowns.”

Note that the strategies listed may overlap with the other pillars of the conference – Public Safety and Economic Revitalization. Just as the problems Chinatowns face are interconnected, so are the potential solutions to those problems.





- Facilitate greater engagement between Chinatown organizations and family associations.
- Invest in the next generation by creating more opportunities for youth leadership and involvement in Chinatown.
- Engage universities to include Chinatowns in relevant curricula, such as history, urban planning, architecture, and more.
- Promote or establish guided or self-guided tours of local Chinatowns.
- Explore the potential of grassroots historic and cultural preservation strategies for Chinatowns, such as the preservation-driven revitalization framework pioneered by Main Street America, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



Chinatown Solidarity Conference | New York, NY

Summary of Breakout Discussions

Chinatown across the United States and Canada are facing similar historic and cultural preservation challenges.

Real estate is often at the core of Chinatowns' historic and cultural preservation challenges. Residential and commercial rents are rising in many Chinatowns, threatening to displace legacy residents and businesses, and with them people, businesses, and institutions that make their neighborhoods unique. Participants from Philadelphia shared that rising rents have routinely forced two or three working class immigrant families to share a two-bedroom apartment in Chinatown. Chinatown family associations, which own varying proportions of real estate across Chinatowns, can be difficult to reach or hesitant to partner with other organizations to bring their buildings up to code. The New York Times recently profiled Manhattan Chinatown's family associations and their real estate portfolios, characterizing them as "one of the last bulwarks against gentrification" but also facing "rising taxes, unpaid rent and mounting maintenance costs that could force [them] to sell." Participants shared that family association buildings in Victoria, British Columbia are in disrepair and have not invested in fixing them.



Photo by Cindy Trinh

Megaprojects in certain Chinatowns also threaten the continued vitality of those neighborhoods. The 76ers Arena project in Philadelphia, undergoing city council review and with the mayor's support as of this writing, threatens Chinatown businesses with displacement. In New York, the construction of the tallest jail in the world threatens reductions in foot traffic and displacement of small businesses.

The cultural character and fabric of Chinatowns is also under threat. In many Chinatowns, chain retail, like overseas bubble tea stores and souvenir shops, are occupying storefronts formerly occupied by small businesses, many of which provided community-serving retail and services. **While new chain retail is reflective of demand for their goods, as well as the low overhead business model of these establishments, it also degrades the unique character of each Chinatown and reduces opportunities to build wealth through small business ownership.** Landmark district designation, while an architectural preservation tool, can make building repairs and maintenance more burdensome without any additional public financial support (depending on the jurisdiction). Many Chinatown properties are already financially distressed and cannot take on the costs associated with additional red tape, a limited selection of approved vendors, and more.

Pillar 2: Public Safety



Chinatown Volunteer Cleanup | Vancouver, British Columbia

Photo by Chinese Community Policing Centre (CCPC)

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated rise in anti-Asian hate and violence has yielded many gut-wrenching, tragic stories of Chinatown community members harassed, injured, killed, or otherwise harmed. In general, **many conference participants reported that Chinatowns feel less safe than they did pre-pandemic.** It is a heavy issue – and there was some disagreement among conference participants on how to address it. The lightning presentations highlighted alternative models to emergency response, and the importance of journalism in raising awareness of public safety issues. Despite disagreement, breakout discussions yielded several potential actions to enhance public safety in Chinatowns.

Lightning Presentations



Neha Raval

The Just Trust

presented examples of alternative first responders. Noting that police are not well equipped to address every problem they are tasked with (such as mental health crises), she introduced examples from the Just Trusts' Safer Communities Accelerator, which supports a cohort of organizations advancing innovative models for preventing crime, repairing harm, increasing accountability, and building stronger, safer communities that include deflection and diversion, violence prevention programs, and restorative justice work.





Chinatown Solidarity Conference | New York, NY

Photo by Cindy Trinh



CeFaan Kim

ABC7 New York

discussed his experience reporting on anti-Asian hate and violence. He explained journalism concepts that conference attendees could employ to shift the narratives about their own Chinatowns. These included the importance of “brokers” (trusted sources in the communities that journalists work in), and framing stories about Chinatowns about their strengths and resilience, rather than victimhood.



Chinatown Lanterns | New York, NY

Photo by Paulo Evangelista

Summary of Breakout Discussions

While anti-Asian violence has always plagued Chinatowns, the COVID-19 pandemic and rise in anti-Asian hate exacerbated that and other public safety problems.

Public safety in Chinatowns is a complex, multifaceted issue. Improving public safety in Chinatowns holistically will likely not come from any one action or initiative. Most if not all participants shared that their Chinatowns do not feel as safe as they did pre-pandemic, especially with the uptick of anti-Asian violence in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were many reasons shared for this. For example, participants from Vancouver shared that their Chinatown is next to the Downtown Eastside neighborhood, with a concentration of social service sites like shelters, supportive housing, and safe injection sites. While they provide necessary services, they may also contribute to public safety concerns because the communities served are people in crisis. Participants from San Francisco and New York shared that a lack of broadband internet infrastructure has precluded some businesses from installing security cameras and other digital security measures. Internet connection speeds in those neighborhoods may not be enough to run a digital point-of-sale system and security system simultaneously. A participant from Philadelphia argued that public disinvestment in libraries, schools, community centers, and other youth-focused spaces have left many young people without places where they feel safe and at home, pushing some further towards crime and violence.

Public safety concerns in Chinatowns have also created economic challenges. Small businesses in many Chinatowns have reduced their hours, relative to pre-pandemic. This is in response to reduced foot traffic as well as difficulty finding staff willing to work late hours, fearful of potential dangers on late night commutes home. Disinvestment in the public realm in Chinatowns (street lighting, trash pickup, building exterior cleaning and maintenance, etc.) also makes Chinatowns feel less safe, pushing away foot traffic and removing eyes on the street that would otherwise make the neighborhood safer.

The police are not well equipped to deal with every kind of crisis. Alternative responses to emergencies like mental health crises could be promising, but also face obstacles. Police departments serve a public safety function. Sometimes, there is no option but to respond to emergencies with violence, and police are trained for that. Yet police departments are not equipped to handle every kind of emergency. These include mental health crises, such as the killing of Chinese American Christian Hall in December 2020 by Pennsylvania State Police – highlighted by conference participants from Philadelphia – demonstrates. Alternative responses to these crises are getting a start in the United States and Canada, but face resource as well as political impediments. For example, while the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is available throughout both Canada and the United States, funding for on-the-ground mobile crisis teams and other non-police response varies by local jurisdiction. Some participants shared their skepticism of alternatives to police as an effective public safety solution, and their sentiment that advocates for alternatives to police and imprisonment dismiss anti-Asian hate and violence as real problems. Participants from San Francisco shared their successful effort to recall District Attorney Chesa Boudin, who in their view refused to effectively prosecute anti-Asian hate crimes.



Introduction

Pillar 1:
Preservation

Pillar 2:
Safety

Pillar 3:
Revitalization

Strategies &
Ideas

Next Steps &
Actions

Conclusion

Appendix

Saturday in Chinatown | New York, NY

Photo by Sandy Ching

Potential Solutions Shared

There was disagreement among conference attendees on the proper response to Chinatowns' public safety challenges, especially on the proper role and scale of police departments in addressing those problems. At the same time, the conversations held yielded several potential actions that attendees may move forward with to improve public safety in their Chinatowns, profiled in more detail in the section "Strategies and Ideas for Chinatowns." These ideas are also cross-cutting with other conference pillars. For example, if public safety conditions improve, additional foot traffic may also come to Chinatowns, supporting economic revitalization.



San Francisco Chinatown | San Francisco, California



- Advocate for the inclusion of trained mental health professionals as part of a police response team, where the circumstances of the emergency make it appropriate.
- Advocate for local police departments to recruit and hire officers with Mandarin, Cantonese, and other language or cultural proficiency to patrol Chinatown.
- Identify grant and funding sources for public realm improvements, such as lighting and security cameras.

Pillar 3: Economic Revitalization



Volunteers Painting at Local Merchant Store | Vancouver, British Columbia

Photo by Vancouver Chinatown Foundation

Chinatowns have long served as the economic backbone for Chinese immigrants and their descendants. Chinatown small businesses provide employment opportunities, as well as culturally appropriate goods and services to Chinese American and Chinese Canadian communities. At the same time, Chinatowns face economic threats like rising costs and difficulties digitizing their business (e.g., creating a website). Lightning presentations and breakout discussions highlighted several potential strategies to revitalize Chinatowns and make Chinatown small businesses more competitive.

Lightning Presentations



Priscilla Kwak

**New York City Department of
Small Business Services**

discussed her agency's services for small businesses in New York City, as well as its partnerships with organizations like Welcome to Chinatown to supplement direct assistance to entrepreneurs and legacy businesses.





Chinatown Solidarity Conference | New York, NY

Photo by Cindy Trinh



Jayson Dagher

**Clark County, Nevada Board
of Commissioners District F**

introduced Las Vegas Chinatown – a relatively new Chinatown, comprised mostly of Asian American businesses rather than a residential population. He also shared the County’s ongoing efforts to revitalize the neighborhood in partnership with Millenium Commercial Properties, a Las Vegas-based commercial real estate firm.

Introduction

Pillar 1:
Preservation

Pillar 2:
Safety

Pillar 3:
Revitalization

Strategies &
Ideas

Next Steps &
Actions

Conclusion

Appendix

Summary of Breakout Discussions

Economic conditions vary across American and Canadian Chinatowns, but they also face some common economic challenges.

Chinatown small businesses face rising costs, threatening their continued viability. The rising cost of doing business is contributing to a rising storefront vacancy rate in many Chinatowns – including rent, labor, materials, and more. For example, Participants from Chicago and New York both shared that the burden of rising property taxes often falls on retail tenants. Moreover, like many businesses across the economies of the United States and Canada, Chinatown small businesses are having difficulties finding staff. These difficulties are compounded in Chinatowns by specialized labor needs (e.g., an ongoing shortage of dim sum chefs).

Chinatown small businesses face disadvantages competing for business and securing financing. Chinatowns' business owners tend to skew older and are less equipped to digitize and otherwise modernize their businesses (e.g., creating a website or social media, adopting a digital point-of-sale system, accepting credit card payments). Participants from Chicago and New York shared that part of the difficulty is a language barrier, as digital point-of-sale systems like Square, or digital applications like Too Good to Go (which allows restaurants to sell excess food at discounted prices, preventing food waste) do not have Chinese language support. Participants from many Chinatowns – such as New York and Montreal – also shared that, because their Chinatowns are located next to central business districts, businesses are suffering from a downturn in foot traffic due to remote work trends. Chinatown small businesses also face difficulties accessing financing, due to language barriers, a broad lack of trust in financial institutions, and being viewed by financial institutions as risky investments.

Many small businesses owners are aging out without a succession plan in place. These include not only business owners in Chinatowns themselves, but also the businesses that support Chinatowns such as farmers that grow Chinese produce, as a participant from New York's Hudson Valley shared. Having a succession plan in place is rare. A participant from Victoria, British Columbia pointed out the need to act on an often-stated desire by members of the older generation for the younger generation to “take over” leadership in Chinatown institutions – businesses, civic and family associations, and more – but a hesitancy to have tough conversations that work through intergenerational differences.



Introduction

Pillar 1:
Preservation

Pillar 2:
Safety

**Pillar 3:
Revitalization**

Strategies &
Ideas

Next Steps &
Actions

Conclusion

Appendix

Potential Solutions Shared

Conference attendees shared a variety of potential actions to support the economic revitalization of Chinatowns. The ideas below cut across conference pillars. For example, should candidates for local office who are responsive to Chinatown and reliant on Chinatown for political support be elected to office, Chinatowns will have greater influence in all areas that government touches, not just economic revitalization.



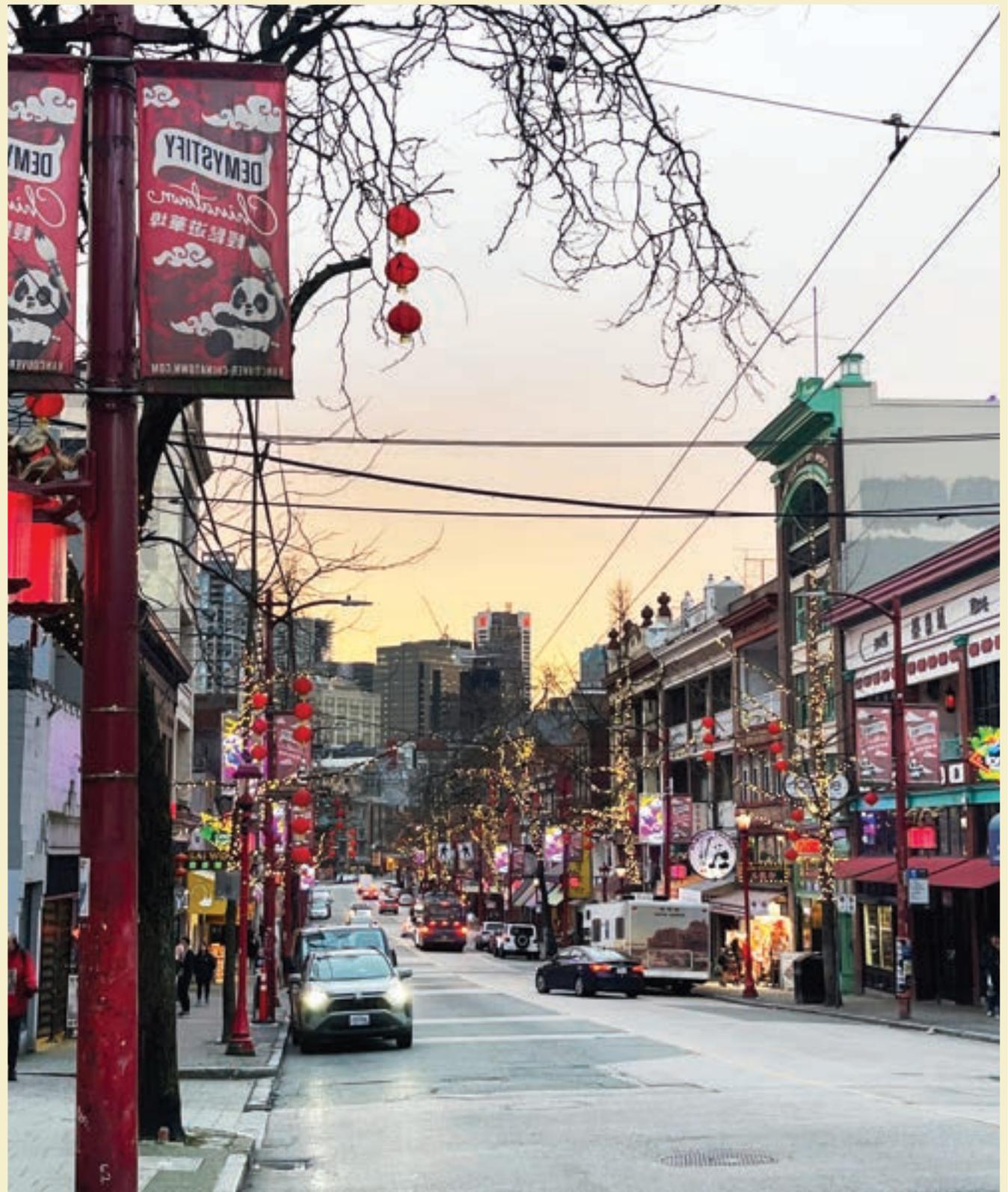


- Identify other local organizations with mutual political and other interests to build greater solidarity.
- Identify and support candidates for local office whose politics are aligned with supporting Chinatown and mobilize Chinatown and broader Asian communities and allies to vote for them.
- Identify and recruit local leaders and influencers as “Chinatown Champions” to raise awareness and shape the narrative around Chinatown’s successes and struggles.
- Leverage social media to cross-promote Chinatown stories between Chinatowns.
- Activate public space in Chinatowns with street fairs, night markets, events, and more.
- Solicit interested entrepreneurs and partner with landlords of vacant storefronts in Chinatowns to support pop-up retail and art installations.
- Establish small business incubators and support centers, to assist Chinatown legacy businesses and new entrepreneurs with navigating red tape, marketing, digitization, and more.
- Establish succession planning programs for small businesses to promote intergenerational leadership.





Strategies & Ideas for Chinatowns



Vancouver Chinatown Dusk | Vancouver, British Columbia

Photo by Jamie Loh

Conference attendees shared a wide range of ideas and potential actions to support Chinatowns across the United States and Canada. Some of these ideas were inspired by previous successes in their own Chinatowns, whereas others were new ideas generated at the conference.

Included is a summary of strategies Chinatownscan use to support historic and cultural preservation, public safety, and economic revitalization. The specific details of whether, when, and how to carry out these actions, and how to prioritize among them, will depend on the context of each Chinatown. As a result, this list is intended not as a step-by-step manual, but rather as inspiration to start that specific planning.

Generating Broad-Based Partnerships & Support

Actions to build coalitions locally, so Chinatowns can enhance their political power and stand up for their interests.

- **Identify other local organizations with mutual political and other interests to build greater solidarity**, including adjacent communities and other small business or industry organizations. This is especially critical given Asian Americans and Asian Canadians are often minority communities, and seen as politically disengaged, so Chinatowns need the political support of others to have a greater voice.
- **Identify and support candidates for local office whose politics are aligned with supporting Chinatown and mobilize Chinatown, Asian American and Asian Canadian communities and allies to vote for them.** Note that United States 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and Canadian charities are prohibited from campaigning candidates for elected office, though individuals involved with nonprofits are free to engage politically on their own time and with their own resources. In the U.S., a 501c4 could also be formed to advocate politically.
- **Engage universities to include Chinatowns in relevant curricula (e.g. history, urban planning, architecture, etc.).** This will build a pipeline of professionals who understand Chinatowns' history and what Chinatowns require to thrive, some of whom will end up in positions of power in government and the private sector.



Alternative Plan for Chinatown Megajail

Photo by Welcome to Chinatown | Kat St. Martin



Example of Chinatown Champion: Grace Young and #SupportChinatown

Since the start of the pandemic, Grace has been an advocate for Chinatown. Her video series *Coronavirus: Chinatown Stories*—produced in collaboration with videographer Dan Ahn and Poster House—documents the toll of the pandemic on Manhattan’s Chinese community. She is also partnering with the James Beard Foundation on an Instagram campaign to #savechineserestaurants and #supportchinatowns across the United States.

Branding, Marketing, & Activating Chinatown

Actions to boost Chinatowns’ visibility, attract foot traffic, and promote Chinatowns as resilient and vibrant communities.

- Identify and recruit local leaders and influencers as “Chinatown Champions” to raise awareness and shape the narrative around Chinatown’s successes and struggles. ex: Grace Young and the #SupportChinatown Instagram campaign.
- Leverage social media to cross-promote Chinatown stories, to raise awareness of shared struggles and highlight each other’s successes.
- Promote or establish guided or self-guided tours of local Chinatowns to support authentic storytelling of each Chinatown. Tours will also help drive foot traffic to Chinatowns, introducing new customers to businesses and potentially creating repeat customers.



- **Activate public space in Chinatowns with street fairs, night markets, events, and more.** Special events will attract foot traffic to Chinatowns and Chinatown small businesses. See the example of Philadelphia's Mid-Autumn Festival Street Fair below.
- Solicit interested entrepreneurs and partner with landlords of vacant storefronts in Chinatowns to support pop-up retail and art installations. Occupying vacant storefronts even temporarily can promote foot traffic, support Chinatowns' vibrancy, and change the narrative that Chinatowns are "struggling" neighborhoods. It also gives entrepreneurs the chance to test out concepts without committing significant amounts of capital to establishing a permanent storefront.
- Explore the potential of grassroots historic and cultural preservation strategies for Chinatowns, such as the preservation-driven revitalization framework pioneered by Main Street America, described below.





Philadelphia's Chinatown Mid-Autumn Festival Street Fair 2024

Photos by Christine Zhao

Example of Public Space Activation and Youth Engagement: Philadelphia Chinatown’s Mid-Autumn Festival Street Fair

Every year, Philadelphia’s Chinatown holds a street fair for Mid-Autumn Festival, attracting thousands of attendees. Conference participants from Philadelphia shared the intentional design decisions behind the event:

- No outside food vendors are invited, driving foot traffic to local businesses instead.
- The event includes family-oriented activities, and the front row of seats by the event stage are reserved for the elderly.
- The festival is a vehicle for youth engagement, with over 350 high school student volunteers, creating memories of a “Chinatown worth fighting for.”



Photos by Main Street America ©

Example of Grassroots Historic and Cultural Preservation: Main Street America

Main Street America is a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. To reverse the effects of harmful revitalization projects in the 1950s-1970s, in 1977 the organization launched demonstration projects in three communities over three years. Over time, Main Street America has created a replicable framework centering on four key areas: economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization. Since 1980, the Main Street Approach™ framework has been used by over 2,000 communities to create preservation-driven revitalization strategies that have, in total, generated:

- \$115.27 billion in local investment
- 345,801 building rehabilitations
- 815,894 new jobs
- 181,167 new businesses

To learn more, visit mainstreet.org.

Supporting Small Businesses

Actions to set new and legacy Chinatown small businesses up for success.

- Establish small business incubators and support centers, to support Chinatown legacy businesses and new entrepreneurs with navigating red tape, marketing, digitization, and more. These incubators and support centers should be tailored to Chinatown small businesses' specific needs, such as language access. See the example of Welcome to Chinatown's Small Business Innovation Hub below.
- **Establish succession planning programs for small businesses to promote intergenerational leadership.** Succession planning seeks to facilitate a transition between older legacy business owners who wish to retire, and younger community members who wish to take over those businesses. The goal is to prevent legacy businesses from closing, and preserve goods and services provided in Chinatowns that community members want or depend on, and the neighborhood's overall character.



Welcome to Chinatown Artist Alley Space

Photo by Zack Chan



Welcome to Chinatown Co-Working Space

Photo by Welcome to Chinatown | Kat St. Martin

Example of Small Business Support Center: Welcome to Chinatown's Small Business Innovation Hub (New York, NY)

In 2023, Welcome to Chinatown opened its Small Business Innovation Hub. The Hub is a ground-floor space that supports a wide range of programming, aided by flexible and modular furniture. Programming includes one-on-one business counseling and support, vendor fairs and other public events, and more. It also contains a test kitchen for food and beverage entrepreneurs to test out new ideas, and the space can be arranged to support a formal seated dinner or casual grab-and-go vending.

Improving Public Safety

Actions to enhance emergency response and safety in Chinatowns.

- Advocate for the inclusion of trained mental health professionals as part of a police response team where the circumstances of the emergency make it appropriate. While police officers are trained to use force, they are not trained to calm a person experiencing a mental health crisis. Where possible, mental health professionals can attempt just that – and avoid violence and deaths if successful.
- Advocate for local police departments to **recruit and hire officers with Mandarin, Cantonese, and other language or cultural proficiency to patrol Chinatown**. The objective would be to improve trust between Chinatowns and police departments by eroding language barriers.
- Identify grant and funding sources for public realm improvements, such as lighting and security cameras. Improvements like these can deter crimes passively – security cameras threaten to identify would-be criminals, and street lighting reduces cover and concealment of potential crimes during the evening.



San Francisco Chinatown

Photo by Aishwarya Gunde

Growing Intergenerational Collaboration

Actions to encourage cooperation between generations in Chinatown, and transition leadership roles to a new generation.

- Facilitate greater engagement between Chinatown organizations and family associations. Family associations are significant stakeholders in many Chinatowns due to their historic ties to their communities and significant real estate holdings. The objective would be to establish working relationships with family associations as a platform for greater collaboration.
- Invest in the next generation by **creating more opportunities for youth leadership and involvement in Chinatown**. As a generation of Chinatowns' leadership ages out, the next generation of Chinatown leadership likely cannot assume leadership seamlessly – they will require some guidance from the older generation. This process may require difficult conversations, ceding powers and responsibilities over time, and a willingness to work through intergenerational differences.

Moonlight Books and Gifts | Calgary, Alberta

Photo by Moonlight Books and Gifts



Example of Pop-up Retail and Youth Engagement: Moonlight Books and Gifts (Calgary, Alberta)

Started as a pop-up in a vacant storefront, Moonlight Books and Gifts allows young people to “moonlight” as their dream job. The storefront rents out individual shelves to sell goods, allowing entrepreneurs to test out concepts without the large amounts of capital needed for an entire storefront. The storefront is successful, having stayed open for more than four years and generating approximately CAD\$40,000 revenue a month.

Introduction

Pillar 1:
Preservation

Pillar 2:
Safety

Pillar 3:
Revitalization

Strategies &
Ideas

Next Steps &
Actions

Conclusion

Appendix

Recommended Actions & Next Steps to Advance Chinatown Solidarity



Chinatown Solidarity Celebratory Dinner at Jing Fong | New York, NY

Photo by Zack Chan

One of the goals of the Second Chinatown Solidarity Conference was: **“Strengthening ties and formalizing partnerships that drive continuous collaboration and resource-sharing across Chinatowns in the U.S. and Canada.”** Conference attendees generated a multitude of ideas to accomplish this. Achieving continuous collaboration across Chinatowns will require setting up infrastructure for communication and resource-sharing. Conference participants also acknowledged that some initiatives and projects could be more powerful and impactful if multiple Chinatowns worked collectively on them. These ideas are summarized below, with approximate timeframes to accomplish each goal.

Build Infrastructure for Cross-Chinatown Collaboration & Communication (0-6 months)

Actions to encourage cooperation between generations in Chinatown, and transition leadership roles to a new generation.

- Set up working group committee structure and governance (coalition building, historic and cultural preservation, economic revitalization, and public safety)
- Hold quarterly Zoom webinars to share expertise on rotating topics
- Establish a Chinatown Solidarity Slack workspace, WhatsApp Community, or other moderated digital forum to facilitate regular communication among organizations
- Host regional, in-person Chinatown meetups to facilitate more ongoing conversations and collaborations across Chinatowns beyond quarterly zoom calls and the annual conference





Create a Living Digital Database (0-6 months)

The Living Digital Database would include:

- Contact information of Chinatown Solidarity participants
- Directory of trusted and recommended experts and volunteers that are sensitive to the unique context in Chinatown that can provide professional services, technical assistance, or other supports.
- Case studies and other resources, such as how-to-guides, reports, data, grant opportunities and funding sources, and more.

Created Shared Materials & Templates (0-12 months)

Shared materials and templates would allow Chinatowns to benefit from each other's work, and could include:

- Create a comprehensive “Chinatown urban planning guide” that demonstrates the impacts that planning policies have on Chinatowns and the types of urban planning tools that Chinatowns can leverage to support economic revitalization and preservation
- Create an advocacy campaign playbook that can serve as a how-to guide to support Chinatown organizations looking to build a coalition, leverage media, and explore various tools (such as templates for letters of support) to advance their advocacy goals (e.g. in solidarity with Chinatowns fighting projects like the 76ers arena and Manhattan borough jail)





Fuzhou Sisters Winter Qinghong Tasting at Welcome to Chinatown

Photos by Derick Marquez

Invest in a Cross-Chinatown Impact Study (0-3 years)

- Fund and procure a study to measure and demonstrate the economic, social, cultural, and other impacts that North American Chinatowns have on their cities, states, and countries, which can be used to advocate for funding and other resources in each respective Chinatown

Leverage Collective Power for Fundraising (0-3 years)

- Identify a list of demonstration projects that Chinatowns can use to create a collective fundraising campaign



Welcome to Chinatown Gala 2024

Photos by Cindy Trinh

Conclusion





Chinatown Solidarity Conference | New York, NY

Photos by Cindy Trinh

The US-Canada Chinatown Solidarity Conference has demonstrated, once again, **the power of coming together to foster a dynamic exchange of ideas and tangible solutions.** The insights, examples, and recommendations shared in this report serve as a powerful roadmap, not only for Chinatown communities but also for other ethnic enclaves across North America. In addition to the next steps outlined here, the planning committee is having ongoing conversations about how to sustain momentum until conference.

Appendix

Additional Next Steps:

- Plan For Host Cities Each Year
- Secure Reliable YoY Funding
- Establish Core Committee

Form Additional Committees

- Overall Governance
- Public Safety
- Economic Revitalization
- Cultural Preservation
- Future Host Cities

Illustration Designer for Logo: Kefan Shi

Drag Queens: Emi Grate and Felicia Oh
(+ documentary “Love Letter to Asian Women”)

Chinatown Food Vendors: Double Crispy Bakery, Jing Fong, Phoenix Palace, and Sen Saigon

Photography Credits:

- **Vancouver Photos** by Mavreen David, Abjin Jon Photography, Chinese Community Policing Centre (CCPC), Vancouver Chinatown Foundation, Jamie Loh, Aishika Jannela, and Christine Zhao
- **Chinatown Solidarity Conference Photos** by Kevin Yan and Cindy Trinh
- **Welcome to Chinatown Photos** by Kat St. Martin, Zack Chan, Derick Marquez, and Desmond Chan
- **Los Angeles Photo** by Anonymous
- **Additional Photos** by Grace Young, Main Street America, Moonlight Books and Gifts, Light Up Chinatown!, Paulo Evangelista, Sandy Ching, Kendall Scott, Aishwarya Gunde, and Ankit Chawla



North American Chinatown Solidarity Conference 2024