



“A GRANDMA’S EYE VIEW OF CHINATOWN”

WORKSHOP FINAL REPORT

Report by:

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“A GRANDMA’S EYE VIEW OF VANCOUVER’S CHINATOWN”

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1.0 WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

As a part of the Pro Walk/Pro Bike/Pro Place 2016 conference, an interactive, community-based workshop explored how Chinatown works from a “grandma’s eye view”. It addressed the need to plan spaces for seniors in an accessible, inclusive and culturally appropriate manner - lessons planners can apply to their Chinatowns and communities. Vancouver’s Chinatown is currently facing pressures from development and gentrification that threaten the historical, cultural, and affordable spaces for residents who have been rooted in the community for generations.

Workshop participants came from cities including Victoria, North Vancouver, Winnipeg, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Montreal, and more. They included politicians, engineers, planners and representatives from non-profit organizations.

The workshop was initiated by the Youth Collaborative for Chinatown (YCC) through Kathryn Lennon, with support provided by Doris Chow and June Chow. Additional support was provided to the group by Youth for Chinese Seniors (Beverly Ho and Chanel Ly) and local seniors (Mr. Ng, Mr. Qi, Mrs. Kong, Ms. Ma, Mrs. Li). The workshop was developed and executed by Aaron Lao, Eliana Chi, Ignatius But and Sophie Fung.

2.0 WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

This workshop combined professional expertise with the knowledge of local seniors. Ideas and recommendations that emerged from the workshop are outlined below. This format allowed for input from individuals who have historically had less access to formal planning processes. The agenda for the workshop was:

- Pro Walk Pro Bike Pro Place conference participants were introduced to the context and history of Chinatown by tour leaders.
- The YCC demonstrated a model for culturally appropriate pop-up public space activation. The model, a free community mah-jong event, could be applied to the participants' own communities.
- Participants were introduced to local Chinese seniors who discussed their experiences of living in Chinatown.
- The seniors led a self-planned, 90 minute tour of Chinatown which included stops in many of the spaces important to their daily lives. Participants were invited to make observations on four themes: placemaking, mobility, inclusivity, and cultural appropriateness.
- Participants and seniors came together to reflect on their observations and to brainstorm suggestions to address the issues brought up during the workshop.

3.0 DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The section below summarizes the observations and suggestions made by conference workshop participants. We acknowledge that the four themes are not mutually exclusive, as they are all interrelated.

PLACEMAKING

Observations:

- Participants emphasized that placemaking needs a holistic perspective. It should be integrated with multiple issues and consider intergenerational sustainability.
- The inclusion of youth in Chinatown is a current challenge due to lack of affordability.
- The preservation of the distinct Chinatown spirit should be a priority.
- Local seniors commented that they appreciate the proximity of Chinatown to the waterfront and local parks.

Suggestions:

- Bring other games and activities to public spaces, similar to the current Mah-jong social model. (Eg. In Chicago, chess on the streets has been very popular.)
- Design a parklet around Carnegie Community Centre to enlarge the public space.
- Expand the sidewalk space on the corner surrounding the centre. Currently people are crowded on the steps to the community centre.
- Space in front of former police station has a lack of activity and pedestrians can be intimidated while walking there. Opportunity to reanimate this space.
- Include wayfinding signage for culturally-significant landmarks as a way to preserve community memory.

MOBILITY

Observations:

- Local seniors informed participants that they value living in Chinatown because it is a convenient and compact neighbourhood, with a grid system of roads that are easy to navigate.
- Seniors felt it was beneficial to have a 30 km speed limit, which helps pedestrian safety.
- Participants observed that there were many pedestrians and many traffic lights where seniors could cross the street.
- Neighbourhood had good audible crosswalk signals with a visual countdown. However, crosswalk time is not long enough. Some of the traffic lights turn green for cars first and second for pedestrians, which impacts pedestrian safety.
- Participants noted that the intersections were very wide and busy, particularly Hastings.
- Most of the public space in the neighbourhood is devoted to private automobiles, despite many residents not owning one.

Suggestions:

- Explore ideas for scramble crosswalks to allow for safer pedestrian crossing.
- Traffic lights should turn green for pedestrians prior to turning to green for cars.
- Extend pedestrian crossing time as seniors may require more time
- Build a busway down the centre of Hastings to increase pedestrian safety.
- Provide more benches and shaded areas for seniors to rest.





INCLUSIVITY

Observations:

- Local seniors commented that planning in the neighbourhood should focus on the needs of residents and find a balance between development and community priorities.
- Seniors are interested in engaging with planners, but feel like no one has asked for their input.
- It is effective to structure the work portfolio of city planners to be assigned to a specific neighbourhood rather than planning projects. This allows city planners to form relationships and build trust over time rather than focus on gathering data for a certain project.

Suggestions:

- Include within the zoning regulations a component about retaining the existing tenancy and retail.
- Allow for mechanisms to ensure that culturally appropriate and affordable retail businesses can stay in redevelopments (eg. rent controls).
- Education for municipal decision-makers about the importance of keeping Chinatown tenants in place.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATENESS

Observations:

- Chinese immigrants face barriers in integrating to a new community and need familiar and culturally appropriate neighbourhoods such as Chinatown to help adjust.
- Seniors feel safe on the streets as they recognize friends when they go around the neighbourhood.
- Local seniors choose to live in Chinatown because they are in a Chinese community and have access to culturally relevant businesses such as grocery shops, herbal stores, and medical services.
- Seniors wish to see the original Chinatown preserved as well as recognition that the neighbourhood was built by the Chinese community through a history of discrimination.

Suggestions:

- Encourage the Chinatown BIA to have a role in promoting culturally relevant new businesses to come into Chinatown.
- Additional translation and interpretation services made available by government representatives.
- Planning should be about residents' needs.



4.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A – Graphic recording

Appendix B – Participant agenda

Appendix C – Walking tour guide

Appendix D – Cantonese and Mandarin map

5.0 CONTACT DETAILS

If you wish to learn more details about this workshop, please contact:

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A GRANDMA'S EYE VIEW OF Chinatown



Build relationships between the City and communities



Lots of change

Culturally unique spirit/ generosity!



PLACE-MAKING IN CHINATOWN

Wayfinding (with memories of former building)

A different perspective as a tourist vs local



Intersection with affordability and other issues

Big Roads! Make crossings safer and reclaim road space



Parklets, more sidewalk space for shops



“Grandma’s Eye View of Vancouver’s Chinatown”

The intersection of Culture, Seniors and Place-making

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 14TH
1:30 TO 5:00PM
CHINESE CULTURAL CENTRE, VANCOUVER

WORKSHOP AGENDA

TIME	ACTIVITY
1:30 to 1:45 pm	Welcome Remarks and Participant Introduction
1:45pm to 2:00pm	Intro to Chinatown: History, planning context, key issues <ul style="list-style-type: none">o How does placemaking fit into this unique history of Chinatown today?
2:00 - 2:15 pm	Intro to the YCC Model
2:15 - 2:25 pm	Refreshment Break
2:25 - 2:50 pm	Conversation Groups with Seniors and Planners
2:50 to 4:15pm	Walking Tour (in 2 separate groups)
4:15pm	Reconvene at Chinese Cultural Centre
4:15 to 4:45pm	Debrief Discussion - Photograph Reflections - Generating Ideas
4:45 to 4:55pm	Report Back
4:55 to 5:00pm	Closing Remarks



PLACEMAKING

How can residents connect to each other in public spaces?

Are there welcoming spaces?

MOBILITY

How easy is it to walk around/take public transit?

How safe would it be to walk around alone?

INCLUSIVITY

Are there enough restaurants/shops that low-income residents can access?

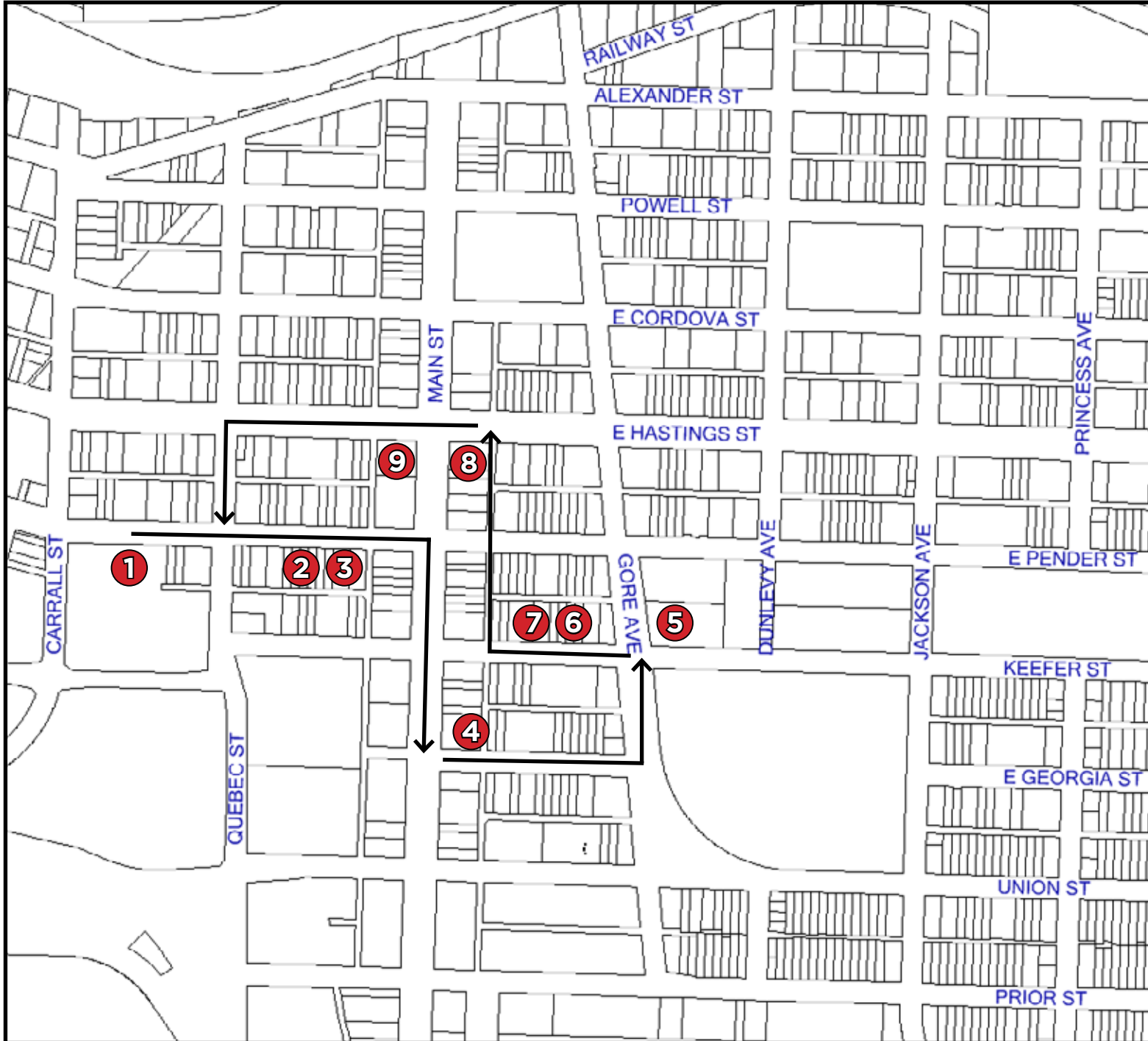
Are there free, safe, quality places for community residents to gather to socialize?

**CULTURAL
APPROPRIATENESS**

Are the
businesses/services
welcoming to the
Chinese community?

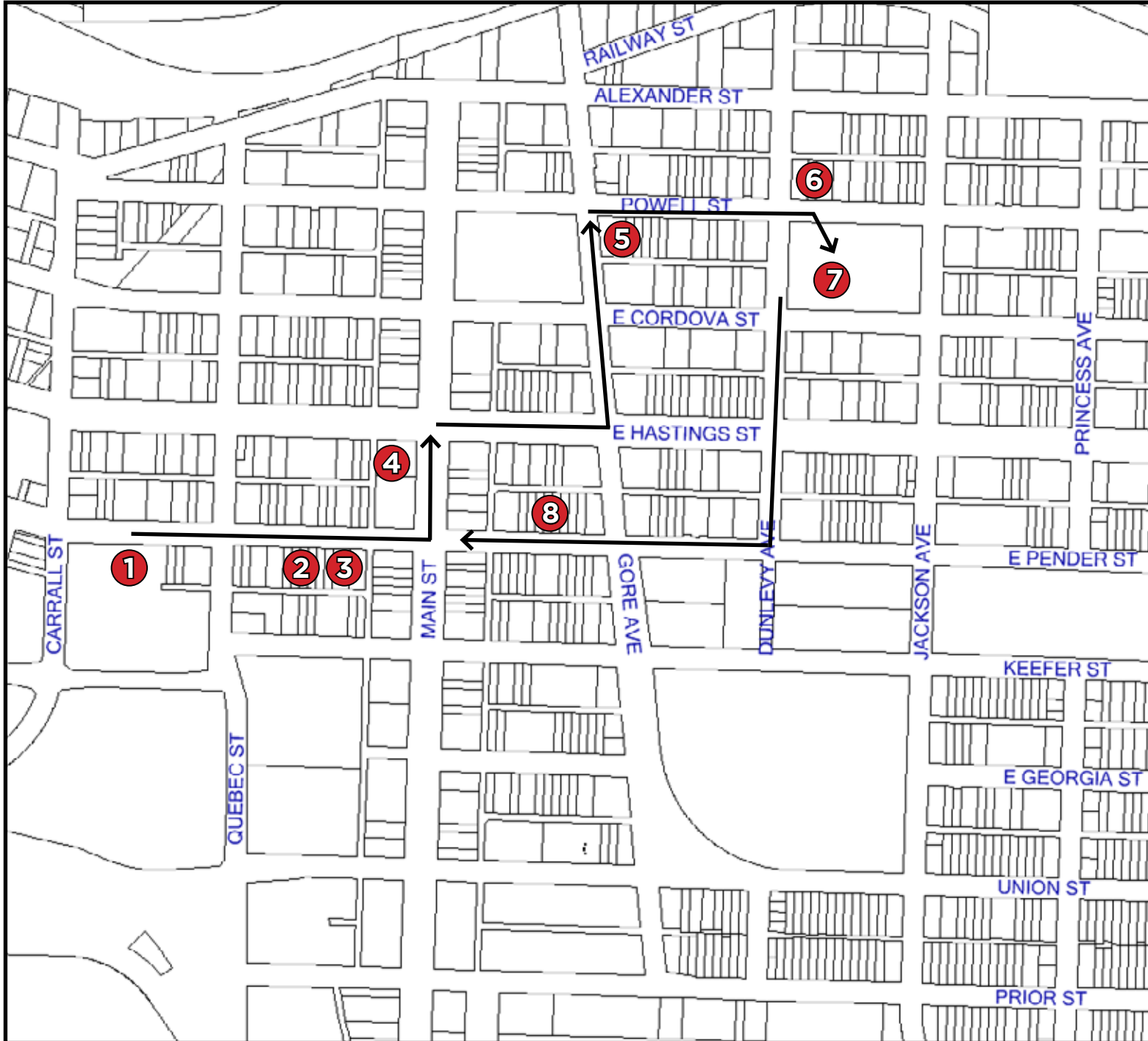
OTHER REFLECTIONS

Cantonese Walking Tour



1. Chinese Cultural Centre
2. Chan Association Building
3. Former Ming's Restaurant
4. Matchstick Coffee Roasters
5. 350 Keefer Residence
6. Sing Chong Food Centre
7. Chinatown Supermarket
8. Main & Hastings intersection
9. Carnegie Community Centre

Mandarin Walking Tour



1. Chinese Cultural Centre
2. Chan Association Building
3. Former Garden Villa and Jade Dynasty restaurants
4. Carnegie Community Centre
5. Sunrise Market
6. Roddan Lodge
7. Oppenheimer Park
8. Kiu Shun Trading herbal store