

Basic FAQs

Montreal's Chinatown is at risk! Why?

Unabated development and real estate speculation in the area has put an already small Chinatown at risk of disappearing. Some examples of current development and real estate speculation include:

- A large real estate developer bought numerous buildings on Montreal Chinatown's most historic block, including 106 and 118 de la Gauchetière Ouest and the buildings in which Wings Noodle House operates.
- The 12-story Hampton Inn and Serenity condo development by the South Gate of Chinatown on Blvd. St. Laurent.
- OneViger, an upcoming luxury condo at Avenue Viger and boulevard Saint-Laurent.
- 1050 St. Laurent, a 5-story commercial building backing on to Sun Yat Sen Park is being proposed.
- A planned public light rail network REM de L'EST visually cutting off Chinatown along Blvd. René Lévesque.
- An unknown project at Avenue Hôtel-de-Ville and boulevard René-Lévesque.

This is a pattern. In the 70s and 80s, development projects effectively boxed in Chinatown. This includes Complexe Desjardins to the north, the Ville-Marie highway to the south, the CHUM development to the east, and Complexe Guy-Favreau and Palais des Congrès to the west.

Why does this matter?

“Neighbourhood revitalization” that ignores the living community risks the erasure of Chinatown’s cultural identity, threatens the displacement of Chinatown’s vulnerable populations, threatens the eviction of tenants and jeopardises the survival of small minority-owned businesses due to rising rents and large corporate chains moving in. Property owners who want to maintain legacy businesses and community organisations will find it harder to compete with the rising costs in the neighbourhood.

More than a tourist destination, Chinatown is a living community with senior residents, legacy and family-run businesses and restaurants, Chinese family associations and community organizations, who have collectively made a vibrant place with deep cultural, social and heritage significance.

What can be done?

Most urgently, the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) is asking the City of Montreal and the Province of Quebec to take immediate safeguard measures to protect what little remains of Montreal's Historic Chinatown. We are calling for heritage designation and a vision and implementation plan co-created with the community.

Heritage designation is just one step to ensuring a healthy and resilient ecosystem in Chinatown. CWG envisions a revitalised Chinatown that invests in the existing living community, values and celebrates the unique businesses and cultural production of the neighbourhood, and helps Chinatown to grow in a way that enhances rather than erases its unique character.

How will this directly impact me and other stakeholders?

Our vision calls for concrete actions that will support both businesses and landowners, as well as Chinatown's residents.

Direct impact for business and landowners:	Direct impacts for residents of Chinatown and Greater Montreal:
Support programs to retain legacy businesses	More affordable housing and services for seniors to age in place
Opportunities to bring new entrepreneurship and cultural enterprise into the neighbourhood	Support for cultural programming and celebration of heritage
Subsidies for building owners and small landlords to renovate and maintain their buildings	Generating interest and investment in authentic cultural experiences and cultural tourism
	Creating community green spaces and gathering places
A seat at the table for both industry and residents: Having the local community as the driving force behind decisions through a formal	

multi-stakeholder advisory group with the City of Montreal.

Has this cultural heritage approach worked anywhere else?

Vancouver's Chinatown has had heritage designation since the 1970s. Faced with a similar type of land speculation and redevelopment pressure as Montreal is now facing, Vancouver's Chinatown community organized itself toward a collective vision that respects the existing social and cultural fabric of their Chinatown. They even successfully had their Chinatown recognized as a National Historic Site in 2011. Currently Vancouver has a strong cultural heritage approach that focuses not only on Chinatown's heritage buildings, but also around the community's values, its cultural heritage, and general way of life.

"We believe that adding more senior housing and intergenerational programming could be a cultural anchor for Chinatown's future. This is especially important when new developments are taking place – with new residents and businesses that often don't have a connection to Chinatown." - Fred Mah,

Founder and Chair of Chinatown Society Heritage Buildings (Vancouver)

About CWG: Formed in 2019, we are a community group working to protect, promote, and preserve the history and evergreen culture of Montreal's historical Chinatown and its diverse communities.