MEMORY + RENEWAL

Equitable development through the reuse of historic buildings in Montreal's Chinatown

by

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ABSTRACT

Like many Chinatowns in Canada, Montreal’s Chinatown has been negatively impacted by suburbanization, urban renewal and speculation. While many buildings now sit vacant and in disrepair, new and out-of-character developments encroach upon Chinatown’s boundaries. The process of gentrification threatens not only the displacement of long-term residents and businesses, but the loss of valuable social networks and cultural representation as well.

While recognizing the need for development, this thesis questions whether focusing efforts on the adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized historic buildings as opposed to demolition and new construction can offer a more socially, environmentally and economically sustainable outcome in culturally-sensitive contexts.

As a case study, this thesis looks at how a conservation-based approach to the reuse of the “Wing’s Block” can contribute to equitable development, promoting the revival, evolution and safe-keeping of Montreal’s Chinatown as a living community and as an important part of Chinese-Canadian history.

KEYWORDS

- Adaptive Reuse
- Chinatown
- Cultural Displacement
- Environmental Sustainability
- Equitable Development
- Ethnic Enclaves
- Gentrification
- Heritage Conservation
- Inclusivity
- Intangible Heritage
- Neighbourhood Revitalization
- Social Sustainability
- Vacant Buildings
Fig. 1: Large-scale development in and around Chinatown, once occupied by small-scale historic buildings part of the Chinatown community, with the Wing Noodles building and the former S. Davis & Sons cigar manufacturer still standing along the right (Lengies, 2023).
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Last but not least, a special thank you to my grandparents, whose story inspired me to explore this community. Thank you Gong Gong for patiently answering all my questions, and for sharing your own life stories and memories with the Montreal Chinatown community. I treasure these personal moments the most.
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How can adaptive reuse, through a conservation-based development approach, contribute to a more inclusive, equitable, culturally and economically vibrant Chinatown while avoiding displacement?
This thesis research is the product of a curiosity regarding the relationship between culture, climate, and social equity. With a growing wealth of research becoming available in recent years on how building reuse and retrofit contribute to a greener, more circular economy, I wanted to explore how this could synergize with arguments for building reuse in social or cultural contexts. Furthermore, I wanted to learn what stood in the way of building reuse becoming more commonplace and available to less visible and affluent communities, as often “heritage” and “sustainable” are perceived as costly and exclusive.

I began my research by looking at why many historic buildings are left vacant and considered undesirable compared to the prospect of new construction. Despite their setbacks, these buildings seemed to be brimming with potential. Left vacant or in disrepair, however, they only became more costly to maintain and ridden with risks, making them more likely to be demolished and/or replaced. This would result in the extensive loss of carbon, history, and the visual character which formed its respective community’s sense of identity.

While exploring cases of vacancy on historic mainstreets, I came across the ongoing battle with vacancy and gentrification in Montreal’s Chinatown, whose declining historic centre was gradually being bought up by private developers for luxury developments. A number of historic buildings in the neighbourhood had been flagged for this reason by locals Jean-Philippe Riopel and Elyse Lévesque on Memento, Héritage Montréal’s online platform for citizens to
share at-risk heritage sites in the Montreal area. Further prompted by Karen Cho’s presentation on her recent documentary, *Big Fight in Little Chinatown* (2022), at the National Trust Conference in October 2022, I discovered that these issues were in fact experienced by many Chinatowns across North America and were accompanied by a growing movement advocating for the protection of these unique neighbourhoods. With family roots in Montreal’s Chinatown, I was particularly eager to learn more about the historic and cultural significance of these buildings.

This thesis was thus also driven by my personal calling to explore my own roots, a part of which meant to learn about my grandparents’ story, their involvement with Montreal’s Chinatown community and, in turn, the impact it had on their own adjustment to life in Canada. I discovered that my grandfather had arrived in Montreal in 1956 from Guangdong province when he was 25 years old, with little money or education. It was through the support and network provided by family friends and the Chinese Catholic Church that he learned English, found community, and was introduced to various work opportunities, eventually allowing him to bring over my grandmother and uncle. Despite eventually moving out of Chinatown, my grandfather remained very involved in the community as part of numerous committees including for the Chinese Catholic Church, the Chinese Restaurant Association, the Chinese Hospital, and the Chinese Seniors Association. As a child, I always remember walking down Rue de la Gauchetière in Chinatown with my grandparents, getting stopped every few minutes to be greeted by people they knew.

Although not fully included in this thesis, and although there is still a
lot to learn, this more personal exploration helped me to somewhat
better understand the relationship the Chinese community has with
this neighbourhood, the social connections embedded within it, and
the values it continues to hold for the many who always come back
to visit.

This thesis topic is also inspired by my parallel research on “Adaptive
Reuse for a Sustainable Future” as part of the Carleton research
cluster in the SSHRC Partnership Grant on Quality in Canada’s Built
Environment. Our cluster’s research looks at drivers, barriers and
benefits of adaptive reuse in the Canadian context. By looking at
adaptive reuse in Chinatown, I hope to build on these concepts in
a neighbourhood with unique needs and cultural values, and where
social, cultural and environmental equity are especially needed.

As a whole, this thesis looks to showcase how the benefits of
a conservation-based mindset go beyond those of heritage
conservation. It serves to prompt more consideration for the sensitive
adaptive reuse of all existing and historic buildings to achieve more
holistic efforts towards sustainable and equitable development,
with particular consideration to historic neighbourhoods with
culture-specific needs.

As such, this thesis encapsulates many layers: to better understand
the potential impacts and drivers of gentrification; to explore
strategies for equitable development; to highlight the synergies
between building reuse and the creation of more environmentally,
socially and culturally sustainable neighbourhoods; and to explore
the stories told by the buildings and their inhabitants which
make Chinatown so important to protect for current and future
generations.
INTRODUCTION

Historic Chinatowns across Canada have endured similar histories of displacement and building loss, resulting in the gradual erasure of visible histories, representation, and sense of belonging for many within the Asian-Canadian diaspora. As the Montreal Chinatown community continues to fight for the protection of their historic buildings, this thesis addresses the need for development from a more holistic and conservation-based mindset.

This thesis further explores what ‘equitable development’ means within the specific context of Montreal’s Chinatown and the unique capacity of adaptive reuse to address ongoing challenges of vacancy, decline and gentrification in a way that promotes social inclusion, heritage conservation, environmental sustainability, and economic viability.

By better understanding the opportunity within a conservation-based approach to development, the intent is to encourage greater efforts and incentives to support the maintenance, retention, and reuse of historic buildings in neighbourhoods like Chinatown.
Fig. 2: Thesis journey from September 2022 to September 2023.
METHODOLOGY

The Conservation Decision-Making Process

Following a conservation decision-making process based on the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (Parks Canada, 2010), this thesis was an iterative process where continued research and discussions with the community informed new areas of research and new planning strategies for the selected site. Due in part to the extensive amount of historic, social, cultural, planning and political background of Chinatown, and in part due to the unavailability of site documentation which could support adequate planning and intervention, as described below, a large portion of this thesis focuses on the Understanding and Planning phases of preparing for an intervention, and is limited to a preliminary conceptual planning proposal for the site. It is

Fig. 3: Conservation Decision-Making Framework Based on Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2010)
hoped that this thesis will provide adequate background for anyone who decides to approach or advocate for conservation-based development in Chinatown, and to inspire discussion around what may constitute an appropriate intervention considering heritage, equity and sustainability.

**Defining Equitable Development**

An understanding of what constitutes “equitable development” in a historic and cultural neighbourhood was fundamental to this thesis. A literature review of gentrification, equitable development, and anti-displacement strategies formed the base understanding of this concept. This was then analyzed alongside historic research on Montreal’s Chinatown, community discussions, and reports on previous Chinatown community consultations held by the Office de consultation publique de Montréal (OCPM). This informed a more refined vision of what equitable development would look like in Montreal’s Chinatown, and how heritage conservation/adaptive reuse could contribute.

**Understanding Chinatown**

Based on conservation best practice, developing a thorough understanding of the site, its community and its current and historical context was the first step, and would form the foundation of the research and design work which followed. As I began this project, I quickly realized the particular importance of this approach to working in Chinatown, where the historic, cultural, and political landscapes were deeply intertwined with the specific needs, challenges, and opportunities of the present day community.

As an outsider to the community, I reached out to the local non-
profit organization, JIA Foundation, to gain insight and perspectives on current discourse in Chinatown as well as ongoing challenges, efforts, and stakeholders in the community. This relationship has been fundamental to the development of the research and a growing awareness of the many interrelated topics and planning tools mentioned throughout the report.

Discussions with various members of the JIA Foundation, local resident and tour guide Jean-Philippe Riopel, and my own grandfather have been invaluable to gaining a better understanding of the narrative of Montreal’s Chinatown, both in the past and at present. This was accompanied by a literature review on the history of Chinatowns in Canada, and particularly a review of existing documentation on Montreal’s Chinatown. This review included a series of reports commissioned by the Arrondissement Ville-Marie between 2019 and 2022, including but not limited to: Plan d’action 2021-2026 pour le développement du quartier chinois (Ville-Marie, 2021); Research on Best Practices for Revitalization (Centre d’écologie urbain de Montréal (CEUM), 2021); Rapport de consultation publique: Quartier chinois (OCPM, 2022); Étude de l’évolution historique et caractérisation du Quartier Chinois - Montréal (Luce Lafontaine Architectes, 2021); and Quel modèle de développement pour le Quartier Chinois de Montréal? (IRIS, 2023).

For newcomers to the discourse on Montreal’s Chinatown, these resources provide a strong beginning to exploring development with a social purpose within such a unique and layered community.

Visiting Chinatown

Between December 2022 and August 2023, I visited Montreal’s...
Chinatown on numerous occasions to get a better sense of the neighbourhood and the life within it from different perspectives, with the majority of my visits in the Winter. During my initial visit, I experienced the area as a tourist, exploring the streets and shops and taking photos from the outside. On subsequent trips, I visited community and religious spaces and interacted with members of the community. I was fortunate enough to have been welcomed into more private spaces in Chinatown by the JIA Foundation and associates, including Jean-Philippe Riopel, a resident of the area. I was also graciously invited to participate in a visioning exercise for Chinatown House MTL, a concept for a community-operated space and co-working hub within underutilized space in Chinatown.¹ These experiences provided additional layers of insight into the needs, workings and spirit of the community itself.

I also had the opportunity to visit the Chinatowns of Calgary and Vancouver in May 2023. Exploring these other Chinatowns made me realize that while each Chinatown is unique, each is undergoing similar urban challenges to different degrees, including vacancy, gentrification, and homelessness. This reinforced the idea that this research is not just for Montreal but also part of a larger effort to advocate for the protection of Chinatowns, a sentiment which is currently inspiring conservation efforts across Canada and the US.

Site Selection

Based on site visits, research, and consultation with the JIA Foundation, seven sites were initially identified as areas of interest – that is, buildings within Chinatown with current or expected vacancy and/or buildings which were perceived to be at risk of uncharacteristic development. These sites were evaluated based

¹ This is based on an initial description provided by the JIA Foundation on the pilot concept for Chinatown House MTL, which is in development at the time of writing.
on various criteria, as detailed in Chapter 4, to determine which building(s) best fit with the desired direction of the thesis research, the JIA Foundation’s current efforts, and community needs. The final site was also selected based on its potential to provide the most impactful case study in terms of heritage conservation, community support and neighbourhood revitalization.

The Wing Noodles building (a.k.a. Maison Wing or Wing’s) (1009 Rue Côté) was ultimately selected as a result of this evaluation; however, as a result of continued discussions with the JIA Foundation, it was determined that it was important to consider the adaptation of the building not in isolation, but in tandem with the adjacent historic buildings which contributed to the context of the site and which had been purchased by the same developers as Wing’s. This expanded the focus of the study to the scale of three buildings within the historic block, including the former Chinese Masonic Temple (116-118A Rue de la Gauchetière Ouest) and the former S. Davis & Sons cigar manufacturer (987-991 Rue Côté), from here on referred to as the “Wing’s Block.” This would allow for a more holistic and impactful approach to each of the buildings, as considering the buildings as a collective would enable more flexibility in strategies to adapt, modernize and program the buildings.

It is intended that the results of this case study will act as a preliminary model for approaching conservation-based development involving different building typologies in Chinatown.

Understanding Barriers and Benefits to Reuse

This thesis was supported by parallel research on barriers and benefits to adaptive reuse as part of my role in the SSHRC Partnership Grant on Quality in Canada’s Built Environment:
Roadmaps to Equity, Social Value and Sustainability. Carleton University is one of 14 universities in Canada participating in the partnership grant, and focuses on the topic of ‘Adaptive Reuse for a Sustainable Future.’ Participation in multiple roundtable discussions with other university representatives and partner organizations - including architects, developers, government representatives and community groups - at three conventions provided contextual background relating to varied definitions, barriers and strategies to quality in the built environment, bridging theory and practice. Knowledge of barriers to reuse was supported by expert interviews and extensive literature review, including documents such as the National Trust for Canada’s Making Reuse the New Normal (2020). Additional barriers specific to Montreal’s Chinatown were informed by ongoing conversations with JIA Foundation and a brief phone discussion early in the project with the Wing’s Block developer.

**Drawings, Photography and Site Access**

Archival research was conducted to search for architectural drawings and historic photographs of the buildings in the Wing’s Block, with a focus on the Wing Noodles building. This included various online sources for historic records including the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BanQ), the Archives de la Ville de Montréal, and the McCord Stewart Museum. Additional information relating to the block was also obtained from city officials from the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (MCC). Unfortunately, no building plans (recent or historic) were publicly available, and no interior historic photographs were found. Historic exterior photos, aerial photos, and maps were located and have informed exterior heritage assessments.
Although permission was requested of the developer to document the interior and exterior through laser scanning, access was not approved. This was likely due to the sensitive nature of the site as a result of recent media coverage and opposition to the development. Only one building was made accessible by a current tenant, providing access only to their own unit and the courtyard space which abuts the adjacent Wing Noodles building and Chinese Association of Montreal’s building. This provided a better understanding of the physical and social relationship between the buildings in this block and their tenants over the years.

Some footage of the interiors of the Wing Noodles building and the adjacent S. Davis and Sons building was also shared by Elyse Lévesque to inform my understanding of the interior relationship of these buildings and their heritage value. However, seeing the complexity of the spaces, it became clear that without floor plans or physical access, it would be very difficult to sufficiently comprehend the space to inform an interior heritage assessment or thorough design analysis.

Following a conservation-based framework, understanding a building’s current conditions and the intricacies of its tangible and intangible values in situ are extremely valuable to the sensitive adaptation of an existing or historic building. It was felt that without an in-person visit and documentation, this could not be achieved, and would thus be inappropriate to approach designing the space based on assumptions. Thus, this thesis provides a preliminary concept for redeveloping the site with general programming and site design, but does not account for the layout or conditions of the interior spaces.
PART I

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND
Fig. 4: Photos of Montreal's Chinatown in the Winter (Lengies, 2023)
Chapter Learning Objectives: to understand the historical, social, cultural and political underpinnings of Montreal’s Chinatown which inform the community’s needs and values, along with its relationship to urban renewal; to understand how Montreal’s Chinatown fits within the greater context of Chinatowns in Canada.

1.1 Applying a Conservation-Based Approach

Following a conservation-based approach, as per the framework of the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2010), understanding is the first step when approaching a project involving an existing site. This phase assesses the current and historic context of the site, its heritage values, its conditions and its significance to the community prior to and throughout the planning and intervening phases. This process is critical to achieving a sensitive and complementary intervention for heritage sites, but is similarly applicable to any site with an existing community or with historic or cultural layers. When approaching development within Chinatown, it is thus important to fully understand the historical context of Chinatowns and their relationship with urban displacement and development as part of the understanding phase. This will form a basis to determining whether and how adaptive reuse can be an appropriate strategy for more equitable development in Chinatown.

Although the understanding phase is integrated throughout this document, Chapter 1 focuses on understanding Chinatown, while Chapters 2 and 3 will look more at the planning phase, which
addresses the needs of the community, the potential impacts of building reuse, and input from community stakeholders to determine an appropriate vision for the future of the site.

1.2 Ethnic Enclaves

Across Canada, our cities reflect the evolution of peoples, their livelihoods, needs and cultures. In addition to the broad influence of these groups on our cities, we also find concentrated pockets of different cultural expression, languages, and social structures, a product of a multi-cultural past and present. These pockets, sometimes referred to as ethnic enclaves, are the Chinatowns, the Little Italy’s and the Little Jamaicas of our cities, imprints of diverse ethnic groups and their histories at the urban scale.

In academic literature, ethnic enclaves can have varying definitions, referring to “the geographic concentration of migrants and coethnics in a neighborhood; [places] with social and economic structures that diverge from those in the surrounding area; and/or a concentration of economic activity, particularly businesses owned and staffed by members of a single ethnic group.” These defining characteristics emerge in the form of deeply embedded social networks, specialty businesses, culture-specific religious and cultural institutions, and organizations which are formed to support the shared interests of the community, making the neighbourhood culturally and economically distinct. It is these expressions of social capital that differentiate an ethnic enclave from any geographic concentration of a single ethnic group.

As each ethnic community has its own unique history, culture and social structures embedded within them, the findings of this thesis...
do not necessarily apply to all ethnic enclaves; however, the process used aims to serve as an example of how to apply a conservation-based approach to development and how to determine what constitutes equitable change for that community with consideration to its complex historic and cultural layers.

1.3 Chinatowns in Canada

1.3.1 Overview of Chinatowns in Canada

Chinatowns are just one type of ethnic enclave present in Canada, and have been present as far back as the 1850s. Over the past century and a half, these vibrant neighbourhoods have provided a sense of community, support and belonging to the Chinese and Asian communities within an unfamiliar and often discriminatory environment. Although more often recognized for their touristic value since the mid-20th century, Chinatowns continue to fight for their right to remain as a living community, as a safe space for the Asian diaspora, and as an important part of Canadian history.

Chinatowns are typically located near the downtown core of their respective cities and are often visually characterized by urban elements such as red lamp posts, Chinese signage, and small-scale buildings, with large, decorative gates known as paifang. Most people are familiar with their vibrant commercial identity, boasting Asian restaurants, grocery stores, herbal shops and souvenir shops.

Historically formed in response to exclusionary sentiments and as a means of banding together in unfamiliar – and often unwelcome – territory, Chinatowns developed as a safe space and hub for commercial, social and residential activities. Chinese-run businesses,

Paifang (牌坊) are the iconic decorative arches which demarcate the beginning of Chinatown. Montreal is unique in having four paifang at the north, south, east and west ends - the most of any Chinatown in Canada.
institutions and organizations grew out of the need for support networks, services, and community spaces adapted to the culture, many of which continue to this day. In present day Chinatown, we can still find these community centres, language schools, religious spaces, family association buildings, seniors housing complexes, and other programs designated for the Chinese community.

Although many Chinatowns have been in decline since the mid-20th century, they continue to be occupied by the Asian community, particularly an aging Chinese community, who benefits greatly from the walkable amenities, social activities, and culturally-adapted services. The decline can be credited in part due to the effects of exclusionary immigration policies, the increasing wealth and assimilation of early Chinese families, and the wave of urban renewal efforts. These issues have affected Chinatowns across Canada to varying degrees, some of which have disappeared completely as a result. This includes the Chinatowns in Quebec City,

![Fig. 6: From left to right - Chinatown in Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal (Lengies, 2023)](image)
Fig. 7: Visual comparison of largest remaining historic Chinatowns in Canada in 2023 (Google maps). (Note: While both Edmonton and Toronto have large Chinatowns, these date back to the mid- to late-20th century after their first Chinatowns were lost)
Toronto, Edmonton and Ottawa, the last three of which formed new Chinatowns in the mid- to late-20th century. Some of the oldest remaining Chinatowns are those in Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, and Montreal, though their boundaries have evolved over time.

While each Chinatown is unique, it is important to consider the overarching narratives of how Chinatowns evolved, the diverse groups which hold historical connections to the neighbourhood, and who the current Chinatowns are and should be for.

It is also important to note that Chinatowns have always been - and are especially today - a diverse community, including people from various ethnic backgrounds, ages and incomes. Even among those with Chinese roots, there is diversity in the regions, dialects and traditions represented. In this document, reference will be made to the “Chinatown community” in an effort to be inclusive of all groups and individuals who reside in, conduct business in, or have any association with Chinatown, regardless of ethnic background.

### 1.3.2 Early Beginnings of Chinatowns

The first significant waves of Chinese arrived in Canada in the mid-19th century, primarily drawn to the west coast by work opportunities created by the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) (1881-1885), coal mining, and the Fraser River gold rush (1858-1860s). They originated from the rural areas of Southern China, primarily the Pearl River Delta region of the Guangdong province where, at the time, many were suffering from poverty, overpopulation, and the effects of political upheaval. As foreign companies began to look for cheap labour – and exploitable workers – to do various types of construction and agricultural
work, a vast number of Chinese men from these regions began to emigrate to all parts of Europe, the Americas, and other parts of the world.⁴ Despite the poor treatment and poor wages they would collect, it allowed many to send back money to their families and villages. Over time, many of the Chinese communities which formed became more established, eventually developing into what we now know as “Chinatowns.”

While many Chinese initially resided in small settlements and work camps for migrant workers in the west of Canada, the completion of the railway in 1885 marked the end of a major source of employment and the beginning of their independent integration into Canadian society. At the time, the Chinese were not allowed to take on professions such as that of a doctor or lawyer, nor were they...
welcome in many mines by white workers fearing the loss of their jobs to Chinese workers accepting lower wages. Chinese workers would often earn less than 50% of what a white worker would earn for the same job. The hostility of white society and cultural barriers further pushed the Chinese population – mainly single men with little knowledge of the English language and little education – to stick together and rely on each other for support, both social and economic.

The Chinese would thus establish themselves by living in and providing for working class communities through laundries and cafés, a role which required little English, had little competition with the white working population, and for which they could ensure more equitable treatment as entrepreneurs or as employees of other Chinese. Gradually, grocery stores, restaurants and other cultural services would pop up as well, catering to the growing Chinese population.

Thus, the historic Chinatowns we see today were born of this hardship, perseverance, and strong sense of kinship of early Chinese immigrants. They are both a link to early Chinese-Canadian experiences and witness to the evolution of the community within Canadian society. As a major contributor to the Canadian economy and Canadian history, including but not limited to the construction of the CPR, Chinese-Canadian heritage is a valuable part of our history to be shared with future generations and which is embedded in the built fabric of Chinatowns across the nation.

1.3.3 Immigration Waves

The periods of development of Chinatowns over the past century
have been considerably influenced by the ebb and flow of Asian immigration in Canada. After welcoming thousands of Chinese workers to the country to work on the CPR, mass dissent regarding Chinese immigration surged following the end of the project. This led the Canadian government to implement the first iteration of the Chinese Immigration Law, also known as the “head tax”, a fee similarly implemented in the US a few years prior. This meant each new Chinese immigrant must pay $50 in order to enter the country, intended to discourage the number of new Chinese immigrants.7 The Chinese were the only ethnic group that were ever subjected to a head tax based on their origins.8 Having such poor conditions back home, however, many still paid the head tax, and immigration continued to rise. In 1900, the head tax was raised to $100, and in 1903, to $500. On July 1, 1923, the government passed the Chinese Immigration Act (a.k.a. the Chinese Exclusion Act), which would halt Chinese immigration completely for the next 24 years until 1947, with few exceptions. This day would become recognized as “Humiliation Day” for many Chinese-Canadians. As a result, many were separated from their families, unable to bring their loved ones to Canada. It was only after 1947 that Chinese immigration commenced again, though still with restrictions until 1967.9

Canada later received other major waves of Asian immigration which impacted the evolution of Chinatowns, with the majority settling in larger Canadian cities including Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto. Between 1979 and 1982, approximately 73,000 refugees were accepted from former Indochina.10 This included people from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, who would establish their own businesses and institutions in the established “Chinatowns.” From
then on, Chinatown would become an evolving enclave of various ethnic minorities and recent immigrants who found comfort and opportunity in the footsteps of their predecessors.

In the late 1980s, Canada would also see an influx of wealthier and well-educated immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China, drawn by the Canadian government’s call for “Investors” and a desire to leave before the Chinese take-over of Hong Kong in 1997. These immigrants would invest in the development and beautification of Chinatowns, increasing its touristic appeal, but would reside in newer, wealthier neighbourhoods, often building newer “Chinatowns” in other parts of the city. These new Chinese neighbourhoods, however, hold a very different character and may not experience the same set of challenges as the historic Chinatowns discussed in this paper.

Despite new waves of immigration, the historic Chinatowns that remain continue to be symbolic of the Asian-Canadian diaspora, notably of the early Chinese from Southern China, while being a place to thrive for recent immigrants of various ethnic backgrounds.

1.4 Montreal’s Chinatown

1.4.1 The Beginnings of Montreal’s Chinatown

While Montreal’s Chinatown shares this history with other Chinatowns in Canada, it also holds its own unique history and development within its local context. Montreal’s Chinatown is one of the few Chinatowns which has remained in its original location around rue de la Gauchetière Ouest and rue St-Urbain east of downtown, although its outer boundaries have fluctuated over time.
Fig. 9: Map of current boundaries of Montreal’s Chinatown.
Fig. 10: Brief history of Montreal’s historic Chinatown.
Beginnings of Chinatown in Montreal

1877
Palais des Arts/Favreau

1881-1885
Chinese Catholic Church receives heritage designation

1885
Parliament Quebecois passes Bill 101

1886
Construction of Sun Yat-Sen Park

1886
Construction of Pagoda Park

Influx of wealthy immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China

1892
Construccon of Expo 67

1893
Chinese Immigracon Law ($50 head tax)

1900
Head tax raised to $100

1902
Head tax raised to $500

Influx of wealthy immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China

1947
Chinese Exclusion Act ends

1950s-1970s
Large scale demolition of Chinatown for urban renewal

1967
Construction of Sun Yat-Sen Park

1970s
Influen of wealthy immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China

1977
Chinese Catholic Church receives heritage designation with Bill 101

1979-1982
Refugees from Indochina

1980-1984
Construction of the Palais des Congres and Complexe Guy-Favreau

1986
Construction of the Hampton Inn at Blvd St-Laurent / Viger Ave.

1986
Construction of Sun Yat-Sen Park

1986
Construction of One Viger at Blvd St-Laurent / Viger Ave.

1998
First Chinatown development plan installation of two arches at either end of Blvd St-Laurent

1980s
Influen of wealthy immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China

1983-1984
Construction of Sun Yat-Sen Park

1983-1984
Construction of the Hampton Inn at Blvd St-Laurent / Viger Ave.

2019
Chinatown Working Group (CWG) formed by the Progressive Chinese of Quebec (PCQ)

2019
Construction of ONE Viger at Blvd St-Laurent / Viger Ave.

2021
Construction of the Wing’s Block is purchased by a private developer

2021
CWG evolves into the JIA Foundation and Chinatown Roundtable

2022
A portion of Chinatown is designated as the Noyau Institutionnel du Quartier Chinois

2022
Height limitations are approved in Chinatown.
However, the Chinese were not the first to settle in this area.

Prior to European settlement in the early 17th century, the region around the St-Laurent River was occupied by the Iroquois. Although there is little archaeological evidence that they resided within the boundaries of what is now Chinatown, it is considered likely and few archaeological studies have been completed to date. It is unknown why the Iroquois may have left the area at the beginning of the 17th century, but by the second half of the century the western part of what is now Chinatown would become agricultural land known as Près-de-Ville owned by French Canadians. This land would be passed between various prominent French Canadian land owners, some of whose names adorn the streets which pass through the neighbourhood today. By the 1800s, the area would also be occupied by people of British, Scottish, Irish and German origins. In the mid-19th century, many Jewish would settle in the area, establishing their synagogue on rue Chenneville, just north of rue de la Gauchetière, in 1838 (see Fig. 12).

The area saw a major shift in its inhabitants, however, following a major fire in 1852 which led to major reconstruction in much of the Faubourg St-Laurent. This prompted much of the middle class at the time to leave the area for more suitable parts of the city. As a result, it allowed for more of the working class to move in. As the area began to industrialize, houses were divided into affordable rental units to accommodate the influx of workers, many of which were immigrants from Ireland and Scotland, and the area between rue St-Urbain and rue de Bleury became known as “Petit Dublin.”

The first Chinese immigrants would arrive to the area in the 1870s, followed by the first major wave in the 1880s.
The area around rue de la Gauchetière Ouest, largely occupied by the Jewish community at the time, provided a welcoming and opportunistic area for the Chinese to settle where they could cater to workers with laundry and food services. After the first Chinese laundry was opened by Jos Song Long on rue Craig (now rue Saint-Antoine) in 1877, many more would pop up between rue St-Urbain and rue Clark, followed by cafés and shops which sold foreign goods. Existing buildings in the area were adapted to suit the needs of these new occupants, transforming into kitchens, dorms

Fig. 12: Montreal’s Chinatown in 1921 (Source: David Chuenyan Lai and Timothy Chiu Man Chan, 2014)
and recreational gathering spaces for the community. This stretch between rue St-Urbain and Rue Clark became the commercial hub of what would eventually be referred to as the “Quartier chinois” — or “Chinatown” — for the first time in the press in 1902. By 1915, the Chinese population in Montreal would be well over 1,300, with the majority of residents and nearly 50 businesses located in what was now Chinatown. Today, there is estimated to be just over 1,100 residents identifying as Chinese within the Chinatown Area alone, with nearly 57,000 across the island of Montreal as per the 2021 Census. Montreal's Chinatown has now been around for over 130 years, is one of the largest remaining historic Chinatowns in Canada, and the only remaining Chinatown in Quebec.

1.4.2 Development in the Later Half of the 20th Century

Similar to other Chinatowns in Canada, Montreal's Chinatown would experience a period of growth through the early 20th century with the establishment of new businesses, associations and institutions, including the Chinese Benevolent Association and the Chinese Hospital.

It would also be followed by a gradual decline in population around the middle of the century due to effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the accumulation of wealth, assimilation and suburbanization of the Chinese, accompanied by speculation and urban renewal.

In 1977, many Chinese also began to leave Montreal's Chinatown in reaction to the implications of Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language adopted by the Government of Quebec. In the effort to make French the official and everyday language of Quebec, this bill would require all commercial signage, official documentation and
schooling to be in French. Reluctant to learn yet another language and convert all Chinese signage to French, many Chinese left the province.

Montreal’s Chinatown would continue to evolve following the influx of Asian immigration in the early 1980s, when many Vietnamese families entered the commercial scene of the neighbourhood. Wealthier immigrants from Hong Kong also invested in the beautification of Chinatown, but would settle in more affluent areas, making their own commercial and residential clusters in other parts of the Montreal region, such as in Brossard, south of the island.

Despite strong social, political and religious differences in Chinatown, the community formed a more united front in the second half of the 20th century in an effort to preserve and revitalize the neighbourhood and to better address the needs of the collective community. In 1967, concurrent with Expo 67 and the centenary of the Canadian Confederation, Pagoda Park (Fig. 13) was established at the corner of rue St-Urbain and rue de la Gauchetière Ouest, dedicated to peace and harmony amongst Canadians. The 1980s would then see a number of other community-oriented projects, such as the urban revitalization efforts under the direction of Mayor Jean Drapeau in 1982. This included the installation of characterizing street signs, lamp posts, and other urban elements. Around the same time came the construction of buildings such as the Chinese Catholic Community Centre (Fig. 14), the Bo Ai Lou seniors residence, and the Montreal Chinese Community and United Centre (MCCUC), a low-income residence for seniors and families in the community. Furthermore, the establishment of the Chinatown Development Association (MCDA) in 1983 foresaw the pedestrianization of rue
de la Gauchetière Ouest between boulevard St-Laurent and rue Jeanne-Mance. It also saw to the installation of two arches at the east and west entrances to Chinatown.

In 1986, Sun Yat-sen Park (Fig. 15) was developed at the corner of rue de la Gauchetière and rue Clark, becoming the new community gathering space and symbol of the identity of Chinatown following the removal of Pagoda Park in 1981 for the expansion of rue St-Urbain.

In 1998, then mayor Pierre Bourque introduced the first development plan for Chinatown, which included the installation of two more arches at either end of boulevard St-Laurent, among other improvements.

1.4.3 Urban Renewal in Chinatown

While ‘urban renewal’ indicates publicly-funded city improvements in disinvested neighbourhoods, its connotation differs from that of the revitalization plans described above. In the case of historic neighbourhoods, it can be perceived negatively as it is often associated with unfair impacts on the low-income and marginalized communities commonly the subject thereof. Although urban renewal comes with the intention to improve neighbourhood conditions and attract more people through higher quantity and quality of residential and business spaces, the process can include expropriation, demolition, raised property taxes, and increased unaffordability. This can result in the displacement of existing residents and businesses for wealthier classes, the loss of heritage, and the subsequent replacement of culture and sense of place for a generic urban landscape. In many cases, members of the
community do not see their own needs and values reflected in these revitalization plans. So why are historic Chinatowns so often subjected to the destruction which comes with urban renewal?

Historic Chinatowns across Canada have had a long history with urban renewal, including in Montreal. Never a wealthy neighbourhood, but with close proximity to the downtown business district and Old Montreal and in decline through the 20th century, Chinatown was susceptible to mass speculation, leading investors to buy up land hoping to sell higher. Buildings were torn down across the neighbourhood and replaced with parking lots since open land held higher value. For years, many open sites would remain as blight. As a result, many Chinese businesses and institutions were forced to locate elsewhere due to the lack of and high costs of space in Chinatown. This included the Chinese Hospital which, after losing their building on rue de la Gauchetière in 1962 to disrepair, was forced to relocate outside of the neighbourhood, finding its new home in the distant borough of Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension.27

![Fig. 16: Parking lots at boulevard St-Laurent and Viger avenue (Source: Philippe Dumais / Archives de la Ville de Montréal, 1981)](image)

![Fig. 17: Construction of the Ville-Marie Expressway, looking north towards Chinatown (Source: Philippe Dumais / Archives de la Ville de Montréal, 1981)](image)
Fig. 18: Large-scale developments within Chinatown.
Fig. 19: Impact of the Palais des congrès and Complexe Guy-Favreau on Chinatown (Image Source: Philippe Dumais / Archives de Montréal and Google Earth).
Around the same time, urban renewal efforts began to take place, as the federal government saw opportunities to expand Boulevard René-Lévesque along the north of Chinatown in the 1950s. This was followed by the construction of the Ville-Marie Expressway along the south in the 1970s and the Complexe Guy-Favreau, Palais des congrès de Montréal and Complexe Desjardins in the 1980s (see Fig. 18). These developments resulted in the demolition of a third of Chinatown’s historic fabric, including food manufacturer Wong Wing, a school, the Chinese Presbyterian and Pentecostal Churches, the United Chinese Church, and multiple grocery stores. They also disconnected Chinatown from surrounding neighbourhoods and limited opportunity for Chinatown’s expansion.

According to John Zucchi, a professor at McGill University and author of the book, *The History of Ethnic Enclaves in Canada*, Chinatowns were often viewed as “expendable slum areas” by city planners and citizens, leading to urban renewal plans which paid little mind to the historic fabric or the deeply embedded social and cultural layers of these communities.

These developments resulted in mass expropriation, causing many families and local businesses to be displaced from Chinatown. Furthermore, these large developments did not acknowledge, enhance or greatly benefit the existing community or its culture.

As was the case in Montreal in the second half of the 20th century, other Chinatowns like Vancouver and Toronto were also subjected to similar treatment. In Toronto, two thirds of the original Chinatown were demolished for *Nathan Phillips Square and the New City Hall* in 1965 (Fig. 22). In the 1950s, Vancouver planned major urban renewal for the “slums” in Strathcona, east of Chinatown, which...
would have essentially razed the entire neighbourhood and reconstructed it in modern fashion. In the mid-1960s, a highway was proposed through Vancouver’s Chinatown which would have destroyed half of the existing fabric. Although these last two projects were prevented, they are examples of shared challenges faced by Chinatowns.31

More recently, the rise of new condo developments on prime real estate in Chinatowns has been a source of great debate in cities like Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. In Montreal, luxury condos ONE Viger and the Hampton Inn (Fig. 23) are underway at the corner of St. Laurent Boulevard and Viger Avenue West, towering over the southern paifang and redefining the southern entrance to Chinatown with out-of-scale and out-of-character high-rise buildings. These new developments overshadow not just the prominent red gate but the community it is representative of.

Although there are numerous challenges that need to be addressed through development such as vacancy, housing conditions, and safety, there remains a vibrant community and history which deserves to be heard and reflected in these efforts. Through a conservation-based methodology these neighbourhoods can be renewed for the enjoyment of all while making use of the existing urban fabric to enhance its historic character and social vibrancy.

1.4.4 Community Advocacy in Chinatown

In 2019, the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) was formed as an initiative of the Progressive Chinese of Quebec (PCQ) to tackle many of the issues facing Montreal’s historic Chinatown. As buildings continued to be bought and replaced with luxury condos, it aimed
to unite the greater community once again and mobilize those with the specialized skills needed to pursue the protections and changes necessary to maintain a vibrant historic and cultural neighbourhood for generations to come.32

As described in 1.4.2, this sentiment was not new. In the 1970s, the Chinese community came together through the Chinatown Development Association (MCDA) to advocate for their buildings when confronted with the threat of mass expropriation. They succeeded in acquiring a designation and subsequent protection for the Chinese Catholic Church and its presbytery in 1977 amidst demolition for the Guy-Favreau Complex. Again in the 1980s, they prevented the loss of the Lee's Association Building during the widening of rue St-Urbain.

Through petitions, outreach, and recommendations, the CWG carried a similar fervour fighting to protect the remaining buildings which contributed to the sense of belonging, social cohesion and cultural expression of Chinatown. It has succeeded in gathering the support of the City of Montreal in protecting Chinatown while building networks with relevant organizations across Canada. These efforts have prompted the City to hold community consultations, develop a Chinatown Action Plan, designate part of Chinatown and its historic buildings, and implement additional safeguard measures to reduce speculation and manage developments.

In September 2022, the CWG evolved into two new organizations which carry on the work today: the Chinatown Roundtable, a community board which acts as a liaison between community members and multiple levels of government; and the JIA Foundation, a registered non-profit organization that develops various expertise
and tools to advocate for the protection and promotion of Chinatown and its heritage through project-based initiatives.\textsuperscript{33}

In an effort to raise awareness and inspire more equitable change, the Chinatown community has been particularly outspoken across social media and news outlets about the threat of ongoing developments, including the purchase of four historic buildings in the block containing Wing Noodles Ltd. Locals Jean-Philippe Riopel and Elyse Lévesque are recognized for sounding the alarm and organizing an online petition to the Quebec National Assembly for the protection of these buildings, garnering 7,000 names\textsuperscript{34} and contributing to the heightened consideration and mobilization towards heritage conservation in the area. Also contributing to the wide dissemination of these topics are documentaries by members of the Montreal Chinatown community, including those by Karen Cho and Jimmy Chan which explore the stories and challenges of gentrification and anti-Asian racism experienced in Montreal’s Chinatown and others across North America (Fig. 24 & 25).

These groups, individuals, and their initiatives are among many which have helped unite and garner the attention of the community and beyond to foster deeper understandings and better strategies for the protection of Chinatown. Their outreach informed the basis of this thesis and inspired a deeper study into the history and future of the last remaining Chinatown in Quebec.

\textbf{Fig. 24:} Above - Big Fight in Little Chinatown (Karen Cho, 2022)

\textbf{Fig. 25:} Below - Saving Chinatown - Rise of the Dragons (Jimmy Chan, 2021)
1.4.5 Demographics

To get a better understanding of the people that currently reside in Chinatown, an analysis was conducted based on the 2021 Census results. Because Chinatown is not identified as a Census tract, the best approximation was to combine five dissemination areas (DA) which encompassed the neighbourhood (shown best in Fig. 28), from here on referred to as the "Chinatown Area." The data should be viewed taking into consideration the actual boundaries of Chinatown within this area and how new high-rise developments

![Pie chart for City of Montreal showing the distribution of visible minorities.](image)

*Fig. 26: Breakdown of visible minorities in Montreal and Chinatown Area (Source: Census 2021)*
within or outside of these boundaries may skew the representation of the Chinatown community.

Despite multiple luxury condos constructed in the area since 2006 (shown in Fig. 27), the 2021 census shows that from a residential standpoint, over half of the population in the Chinatown Area identifies as a visible minority and over half of these individuals identify as Chinese. This is compared to only 8% of visible minorities identifying as Chinese for the whole of Montreal. Furthermore, the most common mother tongue of residents outside of the official languages was also Chinese (including Mandarin, Cantonese, and other Chinese dialects), representing 28% of all languages spoken—more than all other non-official languages combined. This indicates that while Chinatown continues to be ethnically diverse, it is also

![Map of Montreal and Chinatown Area with data collection zones and luxury developments](image)

**Fig. 27:** Percentage of visible minorities identifying as Chinese in Montreal and Chinatown Area (Source: Census 2021)

**Luxury Developments**

- **A - 2006, 10 storeys** (Le Mille Neuf)
- **B - 2014, 40 storeys** (Le V Montreal)
- **C - 2017, 35 storeys** (AC Hotel + Luxury Apartments)
- **D - 2021, 13 storeys** (Hampton Inn)
- **E - 2022, 9 storeys** (ONE Viger)
- **F - 2023, 20 storeys** (Alba Condos)
very much linked to an active Chinese community who continues to reside in the area.

Additionally, the largest age groups living in this area are young professionals, represented at 33%, and seniors at 27%, with a significant group over 85 years of age. It is possible, however, that the high number of young professionals can be attributed to the more recent condos, and may be indicative of a current shift in demographics towards a younger, wealthier population not necessarily tied to the Asian community. Census results for 2021 indicate a 16.5% increase in households in the Chinatown Area from 2016, despite the absence of any social housing projects during this period.35

Fig. 28 shows the median total household income of each DA in the Chinatown Area, revealing most areas to be low-income. It is worth noting that the area with the highest income, while still below the median for Montreal, contains the most luxury condo developments, shifting the median higher than that of the surrounding residences.
Fig. 29: Mother Tongues in Chinatown Area (Source: Census 2021)

Fig. 30: Age Groups in Chinatown Area (Source: Census 2021)
1.5 Chapter 1 Summary of Findings

• Despite their significant role in Canadian history, notably in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Chinese community in Canada has been subject to a history of unique forms of discrimination since their arrival in the 1850s.

• Chinatowns formed in cities across Canada as a means of solidarity, cultural expression and economic survival in a discriminatory environment.

• Montreal’s Chinatown has historically been an ethnically diverse working class neighbourhood, which has been home to many Asian and non-Asian diasporas.

• Historically, urban renewal plans have paid little mind to the historic fabric or deeply embedded social and cultural layers of Chinatown, posing unfair costs and few benefits to the pre-existing community.

• Despite the historic and ongoing impacts of suburbanization, urban renewal and gentrification contributing to the decline of Chinatown since the mid-20th century, Chinatown today is still home to a significant (albeit aging) Chinese population and continues to act as a hub for recent immigrants.
Chapter 1 Endnotes


5. Chan and Cooper.


9. Chan and Cooper.


13. Luce Lafontaine Architectes, 23.

15. Ibid, 25.
17. Ibid, 46.
18. Ibid, 47.
19. Luce Lafontaine Architectes, 46.
22. Sabourin and Lambert.
25. Luce Lafontaine, 76.
26. Luce Lafontaine, 82.
27. Luce Lafontaine, 76.
28. Luce Lafontaine, 76.


35. Comité logement Ville-Marie, “Pour un Quartier chinois mixte et habité,” 2022, 8.
Fig. 31: One Viger under construction adjacent to the south gate to Chinatown (Lengies, 2023).
Chapter Learning Objectives: to understand what causes gentrification to occur and the significance of its impacts for Chinatown, as well as what equitable development means for Chinatown.

2.1 Gentrification

2.1.1 Introduction

The popularization of the term “gentrification” is commonly attributed to British urban sociologist, Ruth Glass, who used the term in her 1964 publication titled “London: Aspects of Change,” to describe the influx of the middle-class, or “gentry” (defined as “people of good social position” by the Oxford Dictionary), into working-class neighbourhoods of London, UK, resulting in the displacement of the existing community and a change of social character.1

In today’s society, we continue to grapple with the complexities of gentrification, which occurs within the context of historic and present social, political and economic systems. With arguable benefits and drawbacks, discussed in 2.1.2 and 2.1.3, gentrification can also be highly controversial.

Regardless, gentrification is a common challenge for Chinatowns in Canada in which not only low-income and marginalized populations are at risk of displacement, but the representation of an important and often overlooked part of Canadian heritage. According to the Small Business Anti-Displacement Network (SBAN), a multi-disciplinary network of leaders that advocates for

Gentrification, n.
“the process by which higher income households displace lower income residents of a neighborhood, changing the essential character and flavor of that neighborhood.”
- Kennedy and Leonard, 6

Fig. 32: Conditions of gentrification (Based on Kennedy and Leonard, 6)
and develops anti-displacement tools, resources and data in the US, “urban neighbourhoods that are home to communities of colour and immigrants are those most likely to gentrify [given their long history of segregation and disinvestment].” As historically working class and immigrant neighbourhoods often subjected to urban disinvestment, Chinatowns and their respective communities are much more susceptible to changes which alter their defining characteristics compared to their wealthier counterparts, often leading inevitably to a lack of ethnic heritage representation.

Located close to downtown, and thus jobs and transit, the additional layers of historic and cultural character add to the attraction for younger and wealthier demographics to the area. Counteractively, the constant demand for new buildings and increased density leads to existing buildings being demolished and reconstructed in the name of progression and profit. Yet so often, these “improvements” result in the displacement of the existing community, excluding them from the economic benefits of revitalization.

Without a doubt, investment is needed to breathe life into the underutilized areas of Chinatown, to provide much-needed housing and economic stability, and to improve safety and overall quality of life. However, gentrification and displacement are not unavoidable by-products of development.

According to Lisa K. Bates, a professor and scholar whose research into gentrification and displacement has been widely cited, “Neighborhood change and community displacement aren’t due to ‘just the market’ acting on its own, but occur within a context set in part by plans and policies.” Causa Justa, a grassroots organization focused on housing and racial justice in the US, elaborates that
this includes "unjust economic development policies, widespread public disinvestment in historically marginalized communities, and lack of protections for existing residents." From this standpoint, displacement can be considered symptomatic of an unsustainable development approach and the regulatory context within which it is situated, factors which are within the control of regulatory bodies and planners. It also means that through the implementation of strategic plans, regulations, and incentives, policy-makers and planners can work together to mitigate the negative effects of gentrification while "build[ing] the capacity of other market actors to participate together in creating places that meet the vision of inclusive, equitable development."5

Meanwhile, developers, community members and other stakeholders, including architects, play a critical role in promoting and implementing inclusive, equitable development through project work and advocacy. While this thesis will briefly discuss how policy work can support these goals, it will focus more on why developers, community members, architects and policy-makers should look towards a conservation-based approach to development (and policies which support this direction) to mitigate the negative effects of gentrification, reinforce the historic and cultural layers of Chinatown, and empower the existing community.

The following sections will further explore the complex layers of gentrification, including the potential for positive and negative impacts upon the community. It will then briefly discuss how gentrification can be measured and the types of conservation-oriented policy tools which can be implemented to support a more equitable outcome.
2.1.2 Negative Impacts

The primary concerns regarding gentrification relate to the displacement of the existing community, which often includes lower-income or marginalized groups. This can occur at the physical (residential or commercial) and/or cultural level, both which directly impede inclusivity and equity within Chinatown.

Displacement as a result of development is of concern whether it happens voluntarily or involuntarily, especially within ethnic enclaves which depend on the collective cultural presence and social networks for its users to benefit. As larger, more costly buildings are constructed, wealthier tenants move in, demand for space increases, and the cost of property taxes and rents follow. As a result, people may choose to leave because they can no longer afford the rising costs of the area or because the changes to the neighbourhood no longer suit their needs. In some cases, building owners may allow buildings to fall into disrepair awaiting redevelopment, encouraging tenants to leave “voluntarily.” If not, tenants may be evicted.

The addition of high-end residential developments also often results in the loss of existing, much-needed affordable units without replacement due to demolition or rent increases. This leads to indirect or exclusionary displacement, preventing low-income residents who would have previously been able to find affordable housing in the community from establishing themselves and accessing its benefits as prices increase. For vulnerable populations such as recent immigrants, seniors, and low-income families who rely on the services and networks provided by Chinatown, this has deeper economic and social repercussions as they are denied access
to this support.

The displacement itself can be a stressful process for long-term residents and business-owners, especially for those of low-income status or belonging to marginalized or immigrant communities. These groups are more likely to have difficulty finding other affordable housing - especially in the midst of a housing crisis - much less in areas which may be close to their place of work, schooling, or social networks. In Chinatown, the close-knit community provides connectivity with friends and family, as well as with economic opportunities, especially for recent immigrants. It is also a safe space where they can practice their own cultural expression and participate in everyday life using their most comfortable language, with access to specialized amenities and services difficult to find elsewhere. A departure from Chinatown can mean the loss of this quality of life, in addition to missing out on the expected economic benefits of being located within a transit-oriented, developing neighbourhood.

The arrival of a wealthier demographics of different cultural backgrounds also equates to a changing clientele, impacting the profitability of small, Asian-owned businesses which previously appealed to the local community and/or characterized the neighbourhood. This can trigger the arrival of larger chain stores in their stead.

This influx of uncharacteristic development and “racial and class reconfiguration,” as described by Causa Justa, not only has an economic impact on the area, but can have deep social and cultural consequences as well. As new developments cater to the new demographic – whether different economic status, age,
ethnicity, etc. – the existing community begins to lose their own cultural and everyday spaces. Cultural spaces, specialty shops, and restaurants which once formed the basis of cultural expression and socialization for the community soon begin to disappear, making it a less welcoming space to be. This leads to the neighbourhood being taken over by unfamiliar faces and streetscapes, resulting in what is referred to as "cultural displacement," an indirect form of displacement from a neighbourhood. This in and of itself can be a cause for residents and businesses to leave the neighbourhood as it no longer meets their socio-cultural needs. As a result, Chinatown would gradually lose the unique social and economic structures that makes it "Chinatown."

This also leads to neighbourhoods losing their unique cultural, architectural, and historical identity as smaller and historic buildings are replaced or overshadowed by high-rise modern developments, forming monotonous neighbourhoods that resemble so many others.

2.1.3 Positive Impacts

In some cases, the construction of new buildings and/or influx of a new demographic within a lower-income neighbourhood may not result in the displacement of the existing community. While the interpretation of gentrification varies in related discourse, according to Bates, it is the involuntary displacement as a result of neighbourhood change which distinguishes ‘gentrification’ from ‘revitalization’. In the case of revitalization, the investment may instead provide added value for both new and existing residents by stabilizing a declining neighbourhood through increased
economic vibrancy, reduced vacancy, physical improvements, and improved safety. The existing community may also benefit from new businesses, amenities and job opportunities in the area, and home-owners may benefit from increased property values, contributing to wealth-building. In fact, some community members welcome “gentrification” as it brings much needed new life to the neighbourhood, increasing foot traffic for their businesses and promoting increased quality of life.

As we plan to revitalize lower-income neighbourhoods, and especially historic Chinatowns, it is critical that efforts are made to mitigate both physical and cultural displacement and to ensure the changes made address the differing needs of different demographics. Ensuring the existing community’s voice is heard throughout the development process is an invaluable part of maintaining an inclusive neighbourhood that allows all the equal opportunity to prosper and have their economic, social and cultural needs met.

2.2 Social Equity in Planning

2.2.1 Introduction to Social Equity in Planning

The concept of social equity recognizes the unique experiences and disparities faced by different groups of people and responds proportionately to provide equal opportunity. This differs from equality, which provides the same offering to all people, regardless of their unique traits and needs.

Within the context of neighbourhood development, this means recognizing the historic, social and economic disparities experienced

| Social Equity, n., |
| “Ensuring that all communities are treated fairly and are given equal opportunity to participate in the planning and decision-making process, with an emphasis on ensuring that traditionally disadvantaged groups are not left behind.” |

by marginalized groups and understanding why they may not benefit from certain changes in the same way as other ethnic or economic groups, or may benefit more from something different. Kennedy and Leonard's definition of equitable development describes it as "the creation and maintenance of economically and socially diverse communities that are stable over the long term, through means that generate a minimum of transition costs that fall unfairly on lower income residents." This last point is particularly relevant to this study as through gentrification in marginalized communities, benefits are typically experienced by the incoming population at the expense of the existing, low-income community. By recognizing the different set of needs of the existing demographic, it is possible to ensure they are not disadvantaged in the process of change, and can also benefit from these changes.

This concept of equitable development also supports the creation of an inclusive city, which comprises not only of ensuring everyone feels welcome everywhere, but of creating or maintaining different areas which can fully meet the diverse interpretations of quality environments and where specific groups can feel they belong, are supported, and can participate fully. Community Food Centres Canada explains it well in their company policy on inclusion, saying, "It is an intentional effort to transform the status quo by creating opportunity for those who have been historically oppressed." Incorporating social equity into city-wide and neighbourhood planning processes can help avoid the displacement and unfair treatment of communities like those in Chinatown, while empowering the people's voice. This effort aligns with the ‘Understanding’ phase of the conservation-based framework, which
not only ensures an understanding of a building, but the social context within which it is situated, allowing for the project to adapt based on historic and current conditions.

2.2.2 How is Equity Addressed in Montreal’s Definition of Quality?

Equitable development is already considered a standard of quality within the built environment by the City of Montreal. In 2023, the City released the Design Montreal Toolkit to provide planning tools for achieving modern standards of quality within the built environment and to raise awareness of the power of conscientious design to have positive impacts on our cities, communities and planet. The toolkit makes reference to the Montreal 2030 Agenda for Quality and Exemplarity in Design and Architecture which describes quality and exemplarity in design and architecture as “ecologically sustainable, economically viable, socially equitable and culturally diverse.”

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is one of the six dimensions of quality put forth, emphasizing its role in the overarching vision of quality for Montreal. Amongst many actions to bolster EDI in the built environment, the toolkit calls for:

- “[responding] to ignored or neglected societal needs, in particular those of people in situations of vulnerability, marginalization and under-representation;
- [supporting] the expression and development of communities; and,
- [providing] an environment and services that respect the identity of historically marginalized communities in support of cultural safety.”

Quality and exemplarity in design and architecture is...

“ecologically sustainable, economically viable, socially equitable and culturally diverse.”

- Montreal 2030 Agenda for Quality and Exemplarity in Design and Architecture
Importantly, the toolkit also considers culture as an important dimension of quality, calling for the recognition, protection and showcasing of history in place. It also encourages development that fits respectfully within its context, both visually and through the promotion and continuation of existing uses, a key part of maintaining the traditional social and economic culture of Chinatown.

These actions align with the conservation-based approach set out by the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places, which places emphasis on the protection of heritage and culture in situ, and on sensitive and complementary adaptation based on understanding the historical, social and environmental context. Thus, a conservation-based approach is constructive to the City's efforts towards quality - and thus equity - in the built environment, which recognize the role of conservation and design in the celebration and empowerment of diverse cultural identities.

2.2.3 Equitable Development in Montreal's Chinatown

2.2.3.1 Existing Disparities in the Chinatown Community

When seeking to understand existing disparities, it is important to recognize that Chinatown exists within the context of a past complicated by discrimination and urban renewal and continues to host historically under-represented and marginalized communities. Since long ago, this has prompted the formation of culturally-specific social networks, which are deeply embedded in the tangible and intangible make-up of Montreal's Chinatown (described in Chapter 1), and has impacted the community's access to services.
and cultural gathering spaces, opportunities to build wealth, and ability to expand outwards.

Chinatown’s negative relationship with urban renewal, which occurred throughout the second half of the 20th century, will need to be carefully considered in the continued development of the neighbourhood. Considering the previous lack of community consultation, the resulting loss of a significant portion of the community, including valued residential, commercial and community spaces, and little within the new developments to acknowledge or contribute to the community within which it was situated, part of equitable development for Montreal’s Chinatown will involve working alongside the different levels of government who played a role in these historic events to determine how they can now give back to and repair the relationship with the present community. According to the JIA Foundation, these types of discussions are already underway.

In Montreal’s Chinatown, community members may be more vulnerable to poor living conditions due to lack of public and private investment, below-median household incomes, and/or higher rates of homelessness; to urban heat island effect as a result of minimal green space and excessive parking lots; and to poor air quality from large-scale construction and major roadways to the north and south. Additionally, some groups and individuals may be more likely to feel excluded from certain benefits, planning processes, spaces, or other neighbourhoods due to the language, cultural, financial or physical barriers common amongst the present demographic.
2.2.3.2 Community Consultation

To better understand the needs of the Chinatown community, this section will summarize the results of a public consultation held in Chinatown in 2022, as detailed in the Rapport de consultation publique du Quartier chinois by OCPM. However, this thesis recognizes that there may be other opinions and diverse voices that still need to be heard or that may not be fully represented by this consultation/summary.

Of the responses provided, it was emphasized that many in Chinatown, especially seniors and recent immigrants, benefit greatly from the proximity of culture-specific affordable housing, job opportunities, and multilingual services within a socially tight-knit and walkable community. For many Asian-Canadians, it represents a safe space and a cultural/service hub. For the elderly, it offers an opportunity for a social and independent lifestyle, where they can age in situ with comfort and dignity within the comfort of their native language. The public consultations highlighted the necessity of these functions of Chinatown to lead comfortable lives, and the need for additional affordable housing for low-income families and seniors to continue having access to and benefiting from this environment. To respond to the needs of the community and promote inclusivity thus involves the protection of these amenities with consideration to the diverse groups which continue to use and reside in Chinatown.

In addition to housing, many also expressed the importance of the symbolic value of the buildings as well as the cultural and community life of the place and its traditional practices. They also raised the need for green space, cultural spaces, and additional
supports to empower small businesses, which struggle to compete against larger incoming businesses but which are characteristic of Chinatown's commercial identity.

2.2.3.3 Built Environment

While many studies illustrate the various policy-based anti-displacement tools and strategies which can be used to mitigate the negative impacts discussed in 2.1, few discuss the role of architecture itself in gentrification.

In addition to economic exclusion, the Chinatown community faces the recurrence of social and cultural exclusion over the course of history, now occurring through the modern gentrification of their historic neighbourhood. When contemplating approaches to minimizing the threat of cultural and physical displacement and protecting cultural identity, it is important to acknowledge the embeddedness of place attachment, identity and cultural expression within the built environment.

Jerome Krase, Professor Emeritus at Brooklyn College and scholar in sociology and gentrification, is one of the scholars who discusses this connection, describing gentrification as a symbolic or aesthetic practice in which the monotony of gentrification poses both a social and visual threat to ethnic neighbourhoods. For Chinatowns across North America, the issue of gentrification deserves particular attention as it threatens to further minimize the history and presence of Asian-Canadians, especially of the Chinese. As Krase aptly points out in his paper comparing the impacts of gentrification in ethnic neighbourhoods in the US and abroad, “Not only are local residents and businesses displaced, but the symbolic representations of people and their activities are as well.”

In the gentrification of ethnic enclaves...

“...not only are local residents and businesses displaced, but the symbolic representations of people and their activities are as well.”

-Jeremy Krase
of people and their activities are as well."^20

In Montreal’s Chinatown, the process of gentrification has already begun, resulting in the loss of the historic, small-scale buildings characteristic of the neighbourhood for the construction of massive government complexes and luxury condos. It has also led to the loss of local, Chinese-owned businesses and to the visible influx of higher-class restaurants and trendy cafés. As historic streetscapes become unfamiliar and overshadowed with new structures, a redirection of focus to the conservation and sensitive reuse of existing buildings can aid in decelerating the rate of change while encouraging quality interventions which enable the existing community to thrive alongside the new.

2.3 Regulatory Frameworks of Equitable Development

This thesis recognizes that plans and policies are fundamental to creating an anti-displacement framework which effectively manages the short-term and long-term impacts of gentrification. Thus, efforts towards conservation-based development should be conducted in addition to and in coordination with a strategic selection of tools following a thorough assessment of the neighbourhood to maximize benefits to the existing community.

While this research focuses on the contributions of adaptive reuse as one possible strategy to achieving equitable benefits, this section will introduce the much-needed regulatory approach and contextual understanding of gentrification within which adaptive reuse is situated.
2.3.1 Measuring Gentrification

For an introduction to developing equitable development frameworks, Lisa Bates’ paper on *Gentrification and Displacement: Implementing an Equitable Inclusive Development Strategy in the Context of Gentrification* (2013) is a great resource, and has been widely cited for its methodological approach to determining the ‘stage of gentrification’ of a given neighbourhood. The ‘stage of gentrification’ indicates how far along a neighbourhood has progressed in the gentrification process and thus its level of vulnerability to further displacement. As each stage of gentrification presents different conditions and subsequent opportunities, it is thus used as the basis for determining which tools and policies will be most effective at preventing or mitigating negative effects such as displacement at that given time.

Determining the stage of gentrification is based on a thorough understanding of the contextual conditions and specific characteristics of the neighbourhood in question, as summarized by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood Type</th>
<th>Vulnerable Population?</th>
<th>Demographic Change?</th>
<th>Housing Market Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susceptible</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Adjacent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early: Type 1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Accelerating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early: Type 2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Adjacent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Accelerating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Appreciated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued Loss</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Appreciated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Six stages of gentrification. (Based on *Gentrification and Displacement Study*, Lisa K. Bates, p. 31)*
the following three factors:

1. **vulnerability to housing displacement**: comprises of socioeconomic factors - such as proportion of renters, ethnicity, education and income - which lead to a reduced ability for the current demographic to withstand increased housing costs as a result of gentrification;

2. **demographic change**: considers the change in ethnic representation, homeownership, level of education, and household income in the neighbourhood over a 10 year period.

3. **housing market appreciation**: identifies changes in median home values compared to the citywide median and appreciation rates for owner-occupied units.\(^{21}\)
Based on the resulting data, it can be determined whether the neighbourhood is in the Early, Mid or Late stage of gentrification, as represented in Table 1.

Alongside the stage of gentrification, an additional analysis of detailed neighbourhood characteristics informs the selection and prioritization of tools and investments for that particular community. This includes but is not limited to identifying disparities, stakeholder groups, and past experiences with previously adopted plans.

In her study, Bates provides a detailed example of applying this full process to the Cully neighbourhood in Portland, Oregon, including an annotated list of policies that target various goals at the different stages of gentrification.

Another beneficial example of a temporally organized set of recommended policies is the Social Equity Toolkit presented by ARUP in their 2019 report titled *Development without Displacement* (see Fig. 33). This toolkit maps the recommended policy tools along a timeline of the development process to inform stakeholders such as practitioners, community organizations and developers of the best time to implement each tool to maximize impact.22

### 2.3.2 Strategies for Equitable Development in Chinatown

Bates’ strategy to establishing a regulatory framework for equitable development includes three main parts:

1. Careful planning;
2. The creation of incentives; and,
3. Capacity building.23
The planning stages include anticipating, monitoring and understanding market dynamics and demographic trends, while identifying key objectives. This includes determining the ‘stage of gentrification’ and informs how policy tools, priorities and partnerships will be matched with the needs of the changing neighbourhood conditions. Secondly, the strategic implementation of regulations and incentives can then help leverage public investment to achieve these goals. Finally, capacity building amongst community members, public sector and private sector actors will ensure strategic partnerships to carry out the end goal.

2.3.2.1 Preliminary List of Tools for Conservation-Based Equitable Development

Recognizing the relationship between building conservation and equitable development, a preliminary list has been assembled to highlight specific tools through which these two goals synergize, found in Appendix A of this thesis.

This list of tools is sorted based on the approximate timing with relation to ongoing development they should be considered to maximize impact. It has also been identified whether they support the offset of cultural and/or physical displacement, in some cases providing examples where these have been successfully applied in other neighbourhoods.

This is not an exhaustive list of tools available to combat gentrification through a conservation-based approach, and is by no means a complete set of recommendations for Montreal’s Chinatown. However, they have been assembled throughout my research based on their pertinence to equitable and sensitive conservation-based
development in lower-income neighbourhoods with important historical and cultural layers, as exhibited by Chinatown. This list aims to raise awareness of the types of tools, initiatives and regulations which can aid in tackling gentrification and provide a starting point for conversations regarding how conservation-based development can be mobilized in support of this goal by a number of stakeholders. Each tool requires further in-depth research, and should be considered on a case-by-case basis with respect to the context of the neighbourhood.

For a more expansive list of potential tools for tackling displacement, please refer to Appendix D of Lisa Bates’ *Gentrification and Displacement Study* (2013) and ARUP’s *Development without Displacement* (2019).

### 2.3.2.2 Capacity Building

In Bates’ study, attention is brought to the importance of recognizing both community members and private developers as partners in neighbourhood development, and thus in the implementation of an equitable and inclusive development framework.

For Montreal’s Chinatown, the community includes but is not limited to residents, business-owners, and those with strong ties to Chinatown through cultural or religious associations. It is extremely important to engage these individuals throughout the process to ensure they will benefit from the development. However, it is important to consider that many belong to traditionally underserved and underrepresented groups of people and/or may experience additional barriers to participating in planning processes due to language or cultural barriers, as discussed in 2.2.3.1.24 These
barriers can be mitigated through providing varied and adapted platforms or activities, for example, through which one can choose to make their voice heard using whichever method or language they are most comfortable in.

In order to unite the voices of Montreal's Chinatown, the Chinatown Working Group was established in 2019, which has since evolved into the JIA Foundation and the Chinatown Roundtable, the latter which represents the multitude of voices in Chinatown with representatives from the different organizations, of residents, and of businesses in Chinatown. Furthermore, consultations with the community were carried out by the Centre d'écologie urbaine de Montréal (CEUM) in 2019 and the Office de consultation publique de Montréal (OCPM) in 2022 to determine the needs, values, challenges and overall vision of the community. These have been critical to bringing different voices in the community together, although it is recognized that there may still be voices with opposing views or who do not feel represented within these organizations or activities.

Community-based efforts have also been a key driving force in flagging gentrification and calling for preventative action in Montreal’s Chinatown, including successful rezoning and heritage designation within the area. This demonstrates the power and value of community groups as a resource and as a mediator between the community and the public sector. By partnering with, informing, and enabling the community to participate in the development process, it is possible to develop and enact more effective strategies for preventing or mitigating the effects of gentrification which account for the diverse entities impacted by these changes.

Community mobilization, however, is just one part of the equation.
It is also important to mobilize developers to equally participate in the process of equitable development. To reduce the barriers to developer participation, it is important to understand the challenges developers face when adapting projects to meet additional objectives of equitable development. For example, Bates refers to the challenges and reluctance experienced when adopting new economic models or development approaches (including building reuse) to integrate community needs, especially without “proof of concept.”²⁵ It is also unfavourable to private developers to bear the full costs of a development which may be more costly and less profitable – whether due to community-oriented functions, higher sustainability targets, or the inclusion of affordable units – when they could otherwise better capitalize on the site. This issue was raised by the developer for the Wing’s Block during a phone conversation we had in February 2023, pointing out it can be difficult to find someone to manage community programs or to find the funding to make it financially viable.²⁶ During another conversation I held in May 2023 in support of parallel research on office conversions, an architect in Ottawa also recounted the difficulty of incorporating more affordable units or a higher degree of sustainability into a project unless it was enforced for all developments through regulation or incentivized to offset the costs to the developer.²⁷

As a result, it is also important for the City to actively build capacity with developers to participate in an equitable framework through means such as incentives, education, competitions, and demonstration projects to provoke interest, increase viability, and provide successful examples. Bates also suggests the need for
better equipping developers with technical assistance to be able to capitalize on various programs which support the development of affordable and mixed-income housing. This could similarly be applied to government programs incentivizing sustainable design, heritage conservation, building reuse and the development of community or arts-oriented spaces. Recognizing that a developer’s decision-making process is often constrained by economic, risk-based and time-based factors, these are also significant means of enabling developers to contribute to equitable, inclusive development framework.

Communication between the community and private developers for new developments in Chinatown, however, has been limited, with a current focus on restrictive action (i.e., zoning changes and heritage designations) rather than incentives which can better motivate collaboration. This has created a barrier to developing equitable proposals which work for the developer, the City, and the community, increasing risk of community displacement.

2.4 Chapter 2 Summary of Findings

- Given their long history of segregation and disinvestment, urban neighbourhoods that are historically home to communities of colour and recent immigrants, like Chinatown, are those most likely to gentrify.
- Physical and cultural displacement as a result of development directly impact inclusivity and equity within Chinatown while threatening its social and visual character.
- Community displacement isn’t an inevitable response to the market - it is the result of limited and unjust policies
and plans.

- Each stage of gentrification poses different conditions and subsequent opportunities for mitigating displacement - the selection of tools and policies should thus be based on the stage of gentrification and specific neighbourhood characteristics in order to maximize the mitigation potential.

- There are a number of tools available which reflect the synergies between anti-displacement efforts and conservation-based approaches.

- Policy-makers, urban planners, community members, developers and architects all play a role in planning for and implementing visions for equitable development in the built environment and require additional strategies to effectively mobilize each group and encourage productive collaboration.
Chapter 2 Endnotes


18. Office de consultation publique de Montréal, 32.


20. Krase, 212.


26. This was expressed during a brief phone conversation between the author and the developer of the Wing’s Block in Montreal’s Chinatown in February 2023.

27. This was expressed during an interview between the author and an architect working on a development in Ottawa in support of parallel research for the SSHRC Partnership Grant on Quality in Canada’s Built Environment. The interview was held in May 2023 with regards to an office to residential conversion project.

Fig. 34: Wing Noodles Building (Lengies, 2023)
Chapter Learning Objectives: to understand the synergies between building reuse and socio-cultural, environmental and economic goals.

3.1 Adaptive Reuse as a Means to Quality

3.1.1 Quality in the Built Environment

Chapters 1 and 2 have aimed to provide the historic context of Montreal’s Chinatown and suggest a framework for equitable development. The following section will delve into how adaptive reuse can contribute to quality in the built environment by responding to the social, cultural, environmental and economic needs of the community. It also seeks to identify the synergies across disciplines, city-wide objectives, and inherent neighbourhood qualities we must capitalize on to achieve them.

As the quote by the Chartered Institute of Building suggests, the concept of quality in our built environment embodies the many social, cultural, and environmental interests of the public. Through studying Montreal’s Chinatown, this thesis finds that as an ethnic enclave with deep-rooted socio-cultural value, Chinatown already inherently possesses a foundation of qualities which are often sought in neighbourhood development.

Historically, Chinatowns have played an important role in cities as affordable and ethnically diverse neighbourhoods. Even today, they continue to maintain a human scale, a unique character, and a high level of social cohesion and walkability. However, Chinatowns also deal with a unique set of needs and challenges, and its buildings

"Quality is not just a measure of regulatory compliance or aesthetic appeal...

It is about the greater public good we expect from our buildings to promote human health, safety, and wellbeing as well as addressing today’s many social, cultural, environmental and economic concerns."

- Chartered Institute of Building, *Improving Quality in the Built Environment*, 2018
are particularly vulnerable to demolition, neglect and gentrification.

Confronted with growing demand for social equity, environmental sustainability, affordable housing, inclusion and diversity in our cities, it is no longer adequate to approach development from a purely profit-geared perspective, nor building conservation from a purely heritage perspective. Instead, we must recognize the greater value of historic buildings for their many tangible and intangible heritage values, their social values, their economic value, and their carbon reduction potential.

3.1.2 Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is the process of modifying an existing or historic structure to accommodate a new use. For vacant and underutilized buildings, it is a means of breathing new life into the old, infusing newfound relevancy. This layering of interpretation also allows for the transmission of stories across generations, evoking countless memories and deeper connections between people and the built environment. The conservation and enhancement of the historic built environment further contributes to numerous qualities in Chinatown by promoting a stronger cultural identity and sense of place, while driving tourism and contributing to a circular economy.

Although adaptive reuse has long been recognized by preservationists for its social, environmental and economic benefits, it is now reaching mainstream discourse as extensive documentation and data become available on the benefits of heritage conservation and building reuse compared to new construction. Some major publications that are referenced in this thesis include The National Trust for Historic Preservation's *The Greenest Building: Quantifying*
the Environmental Value of Building Reuse (2011), which found that “building reuse almost always offers environmental savings over demolition and new construction”; Donovan Rypkema’s The Economics of Historic Preservation (1994), which makes a solid business case for building conservation and reuse; and Sasha Tsenkova’s Reimaging Affordable Housing through Adaptive Reuse of Built Heritage (2023), which discusses the synergies between adaptive reuse and affordability.

The data thus far clearly indicates that building reuse offers many inherent benefits which can support the triple bottom line as we strive towards a more equitable and sustainable future.

3.2 Vacant and At-Risk Buildings in Chinatown

For the purposes of this research, I have specified both “vacant” and “at-risk” buildings, referring to any buildings at risk of being lost by the community, whether through vacancy, dwindling conditions, or development which threatens to negatively impact the existing community through projected physical or cultural displacement.

This thesis began as an assessment of vacancy in historic main streets and city centres, an issue faced by many cities across Canada and the US as our building stock ages and our needs change. However, while a shared challenge for many cities, it is of particular concern for Chinatowns. During this thesis, I visited the historic Chinatowns of Calgary and Vancouver in addition to that of Montreal. While each had its own story to tell, all displayed similar challenges with vacancy and are in need of culturally-sensitive and equitable revitalization strategies - even more so in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
Fig. 35: Some of the vacant buildings in Chinatown, many within the Wing’s Block and along Clark St. (Lengies, 2023)
Walking through Montreal’s Chinatown, vacancy and blight are visible, especially along Clark Street and in the block containing Wing Noodles (see Fig. 35). Based on conversations with the JIA Foundation, no comprehensive survey has been completed to date which fully assesses the number of vacant and underutilized spaces in Chinatown, whether entire buildings, floors or units. This is challenging to achieve due to the varied ownership of buildings and spaces, some of which may be owned by the older generation, societies, developers, or overseas individuals. Although inconclusive for Chinatown buildings as a whole, a 2022 study by Altus Group titled Étude de la structure commerciale du Quartier chinois found that the commercial vacancy rate of Montreal’s Chinatown was at 17% according to area. Comparatively, the average commercial vacancy rate of the adjacent city centre is at 10.7%.²

In Chinatown, vacancy contributes to a self-perpetuating cycle of neighbourhood decline. As buildings sit unused, they not only detract from the social and economic vibrancy of the area, but negatively impact the visual character of the street. They may also impact its safety, becoming more susceptible to pests and vandalism, while fostering spaces for crime and drug use. Furthermore, the longer they sit unused and undermaintained, the more difficult, costly, and thus unmarketable they become for reuse, making them vulnerable to demolition by neglect. As a mixed-use residential and commercial hub with numerous cultural institutions, vacancy impacts quality of life for local business-owners, residents, and visitors alike.

While the advent of suburbanization and a history of urban renewal and mass speculation played a large role in the increasing vacancies since the mid-20th century, Chinatown’s unique socio-
cultural, political and economic landscape adds additional layers of challenge for many buildings to remain occupied and/or under the ownership of the Asian community.

According to a recent report by the Institut de recherche et d’informations socio-économiques (IRIS), many buildings in Chinatown which are owned by the community end up vacant as a result of a lack of succession plans. Interviews with locals corroborated this challenge, pointing out the presence of an aging population waiting to pass on their buildings or businesses to the next generation. However, as younger generations are increasingly seeking higher education, fewer are attracted to living or working the family business in Chinatown, instead moving out to the suburbs and taking on more white collar jobs. Furthermore, it is difficult for many building owners – of which seniors and family associations make up a significant portion – to maintain or upgrade the aging buildings. An overall low rate of ownership in the Chinatown community (75.8% of households in Chinatown are rentals compared to 63.3% in Montreal) makes it even more difficult for the community to retain spaces in the neighbourhood.

For the buildings that do become vacant and on the market, the appeal for outside investors is often low in Chinatown due to challenges relating to complex zoning, the limited existing demographic, and public disinvestment in the surrounding area. On the other hand, this leads to the undervaluation of buildings which attracts real estate developers. Thus, with its ideal location near the downtown core and low land prices, buildings may be bought and left vacant as a result of speculation and on-going development proposals.
This is the case of the Wing’s Block - the focus of this study which will be explored in the next chapter - which currently remains partially vacant.

While only three buildings are listed as vacant in all of Chinatown according to the City of Montreal’s online mapping tool, there are many more which are at least partially vacant yet undocumented (or at least not publicly known).

### 3.3 Environmental Considerations

#### 3.3.1 Building Reuse as Climate Action

In March 2023, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its Synthesis Report for the Sixth Assessment on climate change, reporting “widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people” as a result of human-induced increases in global surface temperatures. With a goal of maintaining temperatures within 1.5°C of 1850-1900 levels, the report further concludes that, “Rapid and far-reaching transitions across all sectors and systems are necessary to achieve deep and sustained emissions reductions and secure a liveable and sustainable future for all.” In order to achieve this goal, drastic changes will be required in the building sector, which accounts for 40% of global greenhouse gas emissions. This includes “using materials more efficiently, reusing and recycling products and minimizing waste.”

In 2019, the City of Montreal committed to taking action by pledging to decrease its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 55% below 1990 levels by 2030, citing the building sector as one of its key target areas.
With 27% of carbon emissions associated with building operations and 13% with materials and construction (referred to as operational and embodied carbon, respectively), efforts need to look not just at cleaner and more efficient energy solutions, but at more efficient use of material resources as well. That includes existing and historic buildings.

The conservation and reuse of existing buildings aligns with the well-established sustainability concept of a circular economy, which the Ellen MacArthur Foundation describes as “[a systems solution framework] that tackles climate change and other global challenges...
like biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution, by *decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources.*”¹⁴ This definition suggests that development and other means to economic growth can be achieved through sustainable methods, such as building reuse.

Building reuse can offer a creative opportunity to accommodate new uses while benefiting from layers of history and a connection to the community; at the same time, it offers a low impact approach to development by avoiding the loss of embodied carbon already expended as a result of the extraction, production and transportation of materials from the original construction. It also reduces the material waste, energy consumption, and air pollution attributed to demolition and new construction.

As articulated by Sasha Tsenkova, a professor and researcher in urban sustainability at the University of Calgary, in her recent paper, in order to achieve our desired sustainability outcomes, we must train ourselves to “view buildings as reusable resources as opposed to consumable products.”¹⁵

Furthermore, recent studies have shown that even with more efficient operations in a newly constructed building, retrofitting an existing building often still outperforms it in terms of carbon savings solely because of the enormous amounts of embodied carbon associated with the construction itself.¹⁶

### 3.3.2 Environmental Equity

As an underinvested and predominantly low-income area with an aging population, the Chinatown community is particularly vulnerable to environmental challenges such as heat waves, high

“We cannot build our way to net zero”

- Patrice Frey and Vincent Martinez
energy expenditure, and air and noise pollution. This is likely exacerbated by the presence of major vehicular arteries to the north and south of Chinatown - the René-Lévesque Boulevard and Ville-Marie Expressway, respectively, developed during late 20th century urban renewal efforts. At the same time, this demographic would disproportionately benefit from access to strategies which address climate concerns, including greening efforts and energy retrofits.

In the 6th Assessment Report, the IPCC reinforces the importance of equitable climate action, stating that “Prioritising equity, climate justice, social justice, inclusion and just transition processes can enable adaptation and ambitious mitigation actions and climate resilient development.”

For example, as an ethnic community where many residents spend
a large portion of their time within the neighbourhood to live, work, socialize and/or shop, most notably the elderly, the population is especially vulnerable to the negative impacts of demolition and large-scale construction such as air and ground pollution and constant noise levels. Adapting an existing building has been found to generate less construction waste and have shorter turnaround times than demolition and new construction. It thus minimizes the intensity and period of impact on the community while offering multiple other long-term environmental benefits, as detailed in the previous section.

Providing better shading and green spaces to offset the heat island effect in Chinatown would also contribute to climate resilience while contributing to the health and well-being of those in Chinatown, especially the large senior population and other vulnerable groups who often congregate outdoors and may not have access to air conditioning. This could take place in the form of additional courtyards and/or green roofs.

By focusing on retrofitting and reusing existing buildings to meet the needs of the Chinatown community, we can support development that benefits the environment, the health and well-being of the existing community, and reduces energy costs.

3.3.3 Sustainable Development Goals

To assess the greater impact of the adaptive reuse of existing and historic buildings on our society, we can also look to the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which comprise environmental and social sustainability targets, among many others. The 17 SDGs were adopted in 2015 as an urgent call to action for
all countries to achieve sustainability and quality of life for all. Most applicable to adaptive reuse is SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, which makes reference to inclusive and sustainable urbanization, heritage conservation, and the environmental impact of cities.¹⁸

Within the context of Montreal’s historic Chinatown, reusing buildings in support of the existing community supports inclusive and sustainable urbanization for the existing ethnic population by serving as a safe space for many Asian business owners and citizens. This is accomplished, for example, by retaining access to and enhancing: affordable housing; transportation; culturally-adapted religious, educational, and health institutions; safety, walkability and social cohesion; and economic opportunities in a neighbourhood that is historically built upon the congregation of Asian-owned and run businesses and deeply embedded social networks - all which are valued aspects of SDG 11. Protecting this neighbourhood for the well-being of the Asian-Canadian community is thus an important piece of sustainable development for Montreal.

### 3.4 Socio-Cultural Considerations

Less often discussed, and of immeasurable value, is the impact of the built environment on the socio-cultural well-being of a community.

What is unique to Chinatowns is their deeply rooted sense of community and high level of social cohesion. This is built into the dense city blocks of Chinatown as Chinese family associations (a.k.a. tongs), religious spaces and community centres, alongside the numerous culturally-adapted services, amenities, and housing complexes which provide the foundation for social networks and
cultural expression within the community.

Social sustainability also depends on access to affordable housing, essential services, and transit, all of which are walkable within the boundaries of Chinatown, making it a uniquely sustainable mixed-use neighbourhood, especially for aging Chinese residents, who represent a third of the population and who rely heavily on these services.

While the programs themselves are the building blocks of the community, the architectural character of the built fabric clearly distinguishes them from surrounding neighbourhoods and has long been attributed to the Chinese community in Montreal. The architectural and decorative layers of ownership added to and built into these places - whether Chinese stylistic elements, signage, or functional elements - along with the familiarity and historic association of these buildings, play an important role in the sense of place and belonging within the neighbourhood. These buildings are thus deeply rooted in the cultural identity and historic continuity of the place and of the community within it through strong tangible and intangible values. Furthermore, as a piece of Asian-Canadian identity, collaborating with the community to sensitively adapt these buildings to their current needs strengthens their relationship with the neighbourhood as a safe space and empowers them to fully engage in social, cultural and political activity.

Following a conservation-based approach to development supports a holistic understanding of the existing occupants and associated community so that new development sufficiently reflects their needs, values and identity. This is crucial to leading inclusive development and avoiding displacement as it enables the existing

“...old places, while important for the disciplines of history and architecture, are meaningful to the greatest number of people because of the sense of continuity, memory, and identity they provide. Old places contribute to people’s sense of who they are and their place in the world and give them emotional and psychological stability, a stability that is critically important. We see how important this sense of stability is when we witness that devastating impact of displacement – where people lose the network of people and place that supports their very conception of who they are.”

- Thompson Mayes, Why Old Places Matter (2016)
occupants to remain while supporting their ability to stick together, practice their culture, and pass on their history and values within a changing environment.

The benefits of heritage conservation through adaptive reuse, however, are shared by the wider community as well, as its unique character is part of what make Chinatown a unique place to visit, live and work. The historic architecture, characterized by three to four storey heights, brick and stone compositions, and ground floor commercial forms a more intimate living and shopping quarters by bringing a human scale and warmth to the neighbourhood, and enabling more impromptu encounters amongst neighbours and visitors.

Adaptive reuse also provides a means of retaining the memory of early Chinese and Asian immigrant experiences while allowing for continued and layered representations of diverse histories, roots and identities of the Asian diaspora in Canada. As a multi-cultural society that promotes the celebration of diverse cultures and the tolerance of differences, the protection of the Asian-Canadian heritage should be valued for its role in fostering mutual respect, cross-cultural understanding and cultural appreciation.22

3.5 Economic Considerations

3.5.1 Economic Case for Building Reuse

While the environmental and socio-cultural benefits of adaptive reuse are valuable contributors to quality development, these impacts are often experienced over time, and may not offer immediate or direct benefits to a developer’s business case. Thus, "If Vancouver is to keep its title of being a multicultural city, preservation of its cultural heritage should be prioritized. We should be able to see economic development, which does not displace the most vulnerable populations."

Fig. 38: Images of select historic and purpose-built buildings in Chinatown which contribute to its visual character (Images: Various sources online).
the economic factors often pose the largest question for building
owners and developers, and are conversely the driver with the
largest potential. If a project lacks a strong financial case due to
high immediate costs and low returns, a developer will be more
inclined to choose an alternative path to maximize the return on
investment. Although not all developers aim solely to maximize
profit, a project must still be reasonably profitable and economically
sustainable for the business. Reuse projects tend to have higher
upfront costs compared to new construction due to the low cost
of demolition, the costs of retrofits and specialized conservation
work, property taxes, and limited financing options.\textsuperscript{23} With the
accumulation of deferred maintenance, retrofitting an existing or
historic building can become even more arduous of a task. This can
be especially so for individual building owners in Chinatown, who
may deal with a number of additional barriers relating to personal
finances, language, or a general lack of awareness of rehabilitation
processes and regulatory systems.

Unable to pay the costs of maintaining and upgrading historic
buildings, many building owners are more likely to sell to developers
who can cover these costs, but who may be less inclined to conserve
the building or its values. Community members are thus not able to
fully profit from the increased values of heritage buildings in good
condition, nor can they profit from the raised value as a result of
other urban improvements or development in the area once they
can no longer afford to stay there.

It can thus be challenging to demand more equitable, community-
based reuse projects without ensuring adequate regulatory and
financial support or other incentives are in place to ease the process,
lower risk, and/or offset potential short-term losses.

Despite higher short-term investment, however, building reuse makes long-term economic sense. At a local level, the historic fabric and continued use of these buildings by the community itself not only enhances local culture, but is a significant contributor to the economic well-being of a unique and vibrant commercial hub. The conservation of historic buildings benefits local trades and the production of jobs, supports tourism and boosts the local economy by contributing to the beautification and increased security of the neighbourhood.

Reusing existing buildings also comes with indirect economic benefit, including faster turnaround times compared to demolition and the new construction of a comparable building, and sometimes higher performance on the market. According to data from a construction company in Toronto that does both building reuse and new construction projects, the price difference between adapting an existing building and constructing new was found to be minimal, with building reuse sometimes less. They also found that building reuse projects could save six to eighteen months by avoiding various time-consuming approvals for demolition, and that the cost of unknowns and scope creep could be reduced by conducting adequate pre-design investigations and research to fully understand the building and by working with professionals experienced with existing and historic buildings. Similar experiences were shared by a developer in Ottawa I had interviewed in March 2023 who had recently completed their first office to residential conversion.

Considering the great benefits of historic buildings not only to Chinatown, but to our society, grants and incentives to aid
community members in the maintenance and upgrading of their historic buildings would not only support the retention of buildings by the community and for the community, but would enable more historically-sensitive revitalization projects while encouraging a circular economy.

3.5.2 Affordable Housing

Gentrification can sometimes be spurred by the rehabilitation of older buildings as it naturally leads to higher rents and tenant change-over due to property investment. This is to the detriment of low-income households who can no longer afford to live in the same neighbourhood. A business case for the rehabilitation of twelve society buildings in Vancouver in 2015 stated that in order to retain an “affordable, inclusive, multi-cultural and inter-generational district,” public and community funding would be critical to “[moderating] market forces.”

A shortage of social and affordable housing was identified as a major challenge in Chinatown in the Comité logement Ville-Marie’s recent report, *Pour un Quartier chinois mixte et habité* (2022). Citing a 16.5% increase in housing units between 2016 and 2021, they raise the concern that none of these new projects included social housing, despite the large number of low-income seniors, families and singles who would greatly benefit from a residence in Chinatown. With tenants being evicted and sites being redeveloped for market-rate and luxury condos, the community which identifies with Chinatown is being forced out due to the rising rental costs, only to be replaced by a different ethnic and economic demographic.

However, if done correctly, building reuse can lend well to
addressing urgent needs for affordable housing, especially considering the quicker turnaround times associated with building reuse and the long-term savings associated with energy retrofits. Low-income households are likely to spend more on energy bills as a result of outdated systems and undermaintained buildings. Thus, retrofitting existing buildings to meet higher performance standards, such as improving envelope performance, integrating better indoor environment regulation systems, or incorporating demand-response data or solar panels, can significantly reduce energy bills, thus increasing affordability for occupants while lowering GHG emissions.31

While upfront costs may be higher, the benefits of quality, sustainable affordable housing well-integrated within the historic fabric of Chinatown are unparalleled. While there are various social financing strategies for managing affordable housing such as community land trusts and community bonds, Tsenkova expresses a general need for better synergies across financial, regulatory and planning instruments to incentivize equitable development and heritage conservation. She lists “inclusionary zoning, reduced land costs and taxes, and alternative standards” as some examples, while calling for the implementation of “cost-sharing government programs that subsidize capital-intensive conversion [projects].”32

This topic of how we can better leverage financial, regulatory and planning tools to enable adaptive reuse with a social purpose, while not new, continues to be a point of contention, and is deserving of further in-depth research. While not explored in detail within the scope of this thesis, it is one of the recommended topics for further research listed in Appendix C.
Fig. 39: Map of multi-family housing options in the Chinatown neighbourhood.
3.6 Barriers to Adaptive Reuse in Chinatown

Based on literature review and parallel research on barriers to adaptive reuse as part of the SSHRC Partnership Grant on Quality in Canada’s Built Environment, it is clear that there are many underutilized synergies between heritage conservation, climate action, and equitable development which converge in the process of adaptive reuse, and to which siloed and outdated policies favouring new construction are a significant barrier.

The National Trust for Canada’s report, *Making Reuse the New Normal* (2020), provides an excellent analysis of the higher level cultural, technical, regulatory and economic barriers to building reuse within the Canadian context. These barriers, ranging from industry and consumer bias towards new construction, to a heightened risk of unexpected challenges and costs for building reuse, to longer approval processes, all contribute to the complexity of an adaptive reuse project. However, each site carries its own mix of challenges and opportunities, which should be identified and thoroughly explored to determine a suitable approach.

While the following may not be a comprehensive list of all challenges facing building reuse in Chinatown, it provides a glimpse at some of the specific barriers to regularizing building reuse, and why it may not have occurred to date.

- *Incomplete database of vacant and underutilized buildings*: The borough of Ville-Marie, within which Chinatown is situated, tracks and publishes vacant and unoccupied buildings in order to better inform and encourage the repurchase and/or rehabilitation of these buildings. However, this list does not
fully depict the extent of vacancy evident within Chinatown, in turn preventing a full understanding of the buildings at risk and limiting the capacity for the community and potential developers to form appropriate and timely solutions, including the possibility of adaptation to meet collective interests.

- **Insufficient vacant buildings policy:** At the time of writing, there is little regulation regarding the upkeep of vacant buildings. However, the City of Montreal has proposed a new bylaw that will force building owners to register and better maintain their vacant buildings. This could help reduce cases of demolition by neglect, but does not necessarily ensure buildings will be repurposed in a timely manner. Furthermore, enforcement may be difficult due to lack of inspectors and public awareness.

A further step to vacant building policy would be to facilitate transfer of ownership for the purpose of rehabilitation in the case of continued negligence. An example in the US is the Baltimore Vacant Property Receivership Program, in which a ‘receiver’, typically a non-profit organization, is appointed to sell, rehabilitate or demolish the property.

- **Insufficient incentives for private investment in vacant/historic buildings:** New construction is often favoured due to lower start-up costs and quicker return on investment, whereas the “short-term, capital intensive investment” required for adaptive reuse projects can be a deterrent to private investments. In 2021, Heritage Montreal reiterated their call for stronger incentives and strategies for the maintenance and rehabilitation of vacant buildings. While the current by-law (09-046) provides
subsidies for work involving vacant buildings, it equally incentivizes their demolition.\textsuperscript{38}

As an example, the City of Saskatoon implemented a Vacant Lot & Adaptive Reuse Incentive Program which encourages the redevelopment of vacant buildings through the provision of financial and/or tax-based incentives. More interestingly, the incentive amount is determined using an evaluation system which assigns points based on the project’s alignment with policy objectives identified in the City’s Official Community Plan. This includes the revitalization of vacant buildings, the creation of housing, environmental sustainability, heritage conservation, and more.\textsuperscript{39}

- \textit{Insufficient funding/incentives towards maintenance}: A significant portion of the community is made of low-income families and individuals, seniors, and family associations with aging members. Additional grants and financial incentives would lessen the financial burden on building owners in upkeeping their buildings, especially those of historic value. Better maintenance leads to higher reuse potential and lower costs in the future.

- \textit{Code issues for older buildings}: Many buildings in Chinatown are in need of major renovations to meet current seismic and code requirements. This can be both technically challenging and costly. It is also especially difficult to meet these requirements within the limited footprints of the small-scale buildings typical of Chinatown.

- \textit{Lack of conservation knowledge in the community}: A general lack
of awareness of the socio-cultural, historical, and environmental value of the buildings within Chinatown, along with the lack of knowledge regarding how to rehabilitate them and the tools available prevents community members from engaging in reuse/rehabilitation projects. This is a general cultural barrier across our society.

- **Language and cultural barrier:** For a community that is so diverse and that includes a significant portion that speaks neither official language, there is a barrier to communicating the diverse experiences and values of Chinatown, to collaborating with public figures and industry, and to promoting diverse heritage representation through cross-cultural understanding, all which impact the case for building conservation. While mobilization efforts through the Chinatown Roundtable and JIA Foundation, interpreter-supported public consultations, and artistic endeavors in recent years have elevated many voices and stories of the community, there are still many diverse cultures, views, and histories within Chinatown which need to be heard as efforts continue.
3.7 Chapter 3 Summary of Findings

- Considering the urgent need for climate action, building reuse provides an opportunity to avoid the loss of significant amounts of embodied carbon in addition to operational carbon.

- Historic buildings are deeply rooted in the cultural identity and historic continuity of Chinatown. The conservation of their tangible and intangible values through sensitive adaptation can strengthen the Asian community’s relationship with the neighbourhood as a safe space and empower them to fully engage in social, cultural and political activity.

- Heritage conservation additionally fosters stronger social cohesion, sense of belonging, and cross-cultural understanding and engagement in the greater community.

- Building reuse can have high upfront costs, but long-term social and economic benefits. It can also offer indirect benefits to developers through faster turnaround times and higher marketability than demolition and new construction.

- Due to the high costs of rehabilitation, building reuse can sometimes spur the gentrification process; however, with the right policies, incentives and funding programs in place, displacement can be mitigated.

- Faster turnaround times and lower energy bills as a result of building retrofits provide an opportunity for rapid affordable housing already integrated into the historic and social fabric of the community.
3.8 Case Studies: Adaptive Reuse with Social Purpose

3.8.1 Skwachàys Lodge – Aboriginal Hotel and Gallery

Location: 31 W Pender St, Vancouver, BC (DTES)
Original Construction: 1913
Original Architect: W.T. Whiteway
Original Use: Palmer Rooms (Residential) / Pender Hotel (Single-room occupancy hotel) / Wingate Hotel
Year of Reuse: 2012
Conversion Architect: Joe Wai
New Use: 2012 - Healing Lodge / 2014 - Art Gallery, Boutique Hotel, Artists’ Residences + Studio

Socio-Cultural Benefits: Provides artists in residence program, offering affordable housing, a shared studio, professional development opportunities, and a gallery to address social and economic inequities Indigenous artists can face. Creates a safe space for Indigenous cultural expression and fosters cross-cultural understanding and engagement in the community, adding new layers to the existing building within a historic neighbourhood.

Environmental Impacts: Retained carbon investment of historic facade through rehabilitation.

Economic Viability: The hotel, gallery and studio function as a self-sustaining social enterprise. Artists are paid fair compensation for their art and earnings from hotel guests contribute to the affordability of on-site residences. This successful business model was made possible through a partnership between the Vancouver Native Housing Society

Awards:
- RBGV Award for Social Housing 2012
- City of Vancouver Urban Design Award 2016

Heritage Designation:
- Municipal (City of Vancouver)

Social Enterprise
“an organization that applies commercial strategies to maximize improvements in human and environmental well-being, rather than maximizing profits for external shareholders.” (Source: Skwachàys Lodge)

Fig. 40: Skwachàys Lodge business model as a social enterprise. (Source: Skwachàys Lodge)
(VNHS), a not-for-profit society, and InnVentures Hospitality Corp., alongside donated services from other industry and design professionals.\textsuperscript{40} The initial healing lodge conversion was the result of investments by the federal, provincial and municipal governments, stemming from a stimulus program, cultural grants, the land, and waived fees.\textsuperscript{41}  

\textbf{Fig. 41}: Skwachàys Lodge exterior (Skwachàys)  

\textbf{Fig. 42}: Skwachàys Lodge rooftop addition (Skwachàys)
3.8.2 Chinatown Storytelling Centre

Location: 168 E Pender St, Vancouver, BC (Chinatown)

Original Construction: 1925
Original Architect: Townley and Matheson, W.H. Chow
Year of Reuse: 2021
Conversion Architect: N/A
New Use: Chinese-Canadian history museum

Awards: City of Vancouver Heritage Award - Education and Awareness 2023
Heritage Designation: Municipal (City of Vancouver)

Socio-Cultural Benefits: Maintains and benefits from the building’s historic association with the Chinatown community, contributing modern socio-cultural layers within the historic streetscape. Shares the history and culture of Chinese-Canadians with the larger community through tangible and programmatic means, fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Environmental Impacts: Retained the carbon value of the historic facade.

Economic Viability: Received funding from the federal government to develop the museum as part of a cultural spaces fund. Admission fees to the exhibits help support running the space.
Fig. 43: Chinatown Storytelling Centre exterior (Chinatown Storytelling Centre)

Fig. 44: Chinatown Storytelling Centre interior exhibit (Kenneth Chan / Daily Hive)

Fig. 45: Chinatown Storytelling Centre theatre space (Chinatown Storytelling Centre)
3.8.3 Écomusée du fier monde

Location: 2050 Rue Atateken, Montréal, QC
Original Construction: 1927
Original Architect: Joseph-Omer Marchand
Original Use: Bain Généreux (indoor public bath)
Year of Reuse: 1995
Conversion Architect: Felice Vaccaro
New Use: Museum about the industrial and working-class people of South Central Montreal

Socio-Cultural Benefits: Maintained its community-oriented program, bringing people together while fostering an inclusive space of sharing, learning and creating. Protects the scale and historic character of the neighbourhood.

Environmental Impacts: Avoided loss of carbon expenditure by reusing the concrete structure and brick and stone envelope. Minimized adverse health impacts and potential risks to adjacent historic buildings by avoiding demolition.

Economic Viability: Building transferred from City of Montreal and received financial support of $1M from the Government of Quebec to be redeveloped as the Écomusée.43

Awards:
- Prix orange de Sauvons Montréal pour la qualité de la rénovation et la préservation du patrimoine du bain Généreux en 1996;
- Prix d’excellence de la Société des musées québécois en 1997;
- Prix d’interprétation de l’Association québécoise d’interprétation du patrimoine en 1997;
- Prix patrimoine architectural Montréal en 2002
  (Écomusée du fier monde)

Heritage Designation: N/A
Fig. 46: Exterior of Ecomusée du fier monde (Lengies, March 2023)

Fig. 47: Before adaptation - Indoor pool (Service des Parcs de Montréal / Écomusée du fier monde, 1962)

Fig. 48: After adaptation - Ecomusée du fier monde (Lengies, March 2023)
### 3.8.4 The Metro @ Chinatown Senior Lofts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>808 N Spring St, Los Angeles, CA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original Construction:</td>
<td>1920 &amp; 1916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Architect:</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Use:</td>
<td>Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Reuse:</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion Architect:</td>
<td>The Architects Collective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Use:</td>
<td>Affordable senior housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Socio-Cultural Benefits:** Provides an affordable, amenity-rich housing option for seniors within Chinatown, benefiting from neighbourhood walkability and proximity to public transportation. Retains the historic character of the neighbourhood while minimizing impact from construction to the small businesses around it.

**Environmental Impacts:** Avoided loss of carbon expenditure by reusing the concrete and brick structures of a seven- and nine-storey building.

**Economic Viability:** This project benefited from numerous partners and lenders, including municipal, state and federal government neighbourhood development and affordable housing programs, in addition to the Bank of America.\(^4\)
Fig. 49: The Metro @ Chinatown (Source: The Architects Collective)
Chapter 3 Endnotes


2. GROUPE ALTUS, Étude de la structure commerciale du Quartier chinois, juillet 2022, p. 21. (seen here: https://iris-recherche.qc.ca/publications/quartier-chinois-de-montreal/#footnote-023, p. 29)


4. Based on conversations held with JIA Foundation and Jean-Philippe Riopel in May 2023.


9. IPCC.


20. According to the 2021 Census, seniors represented 27% of the population; however, this percentage accounts for a number of high-rises constructed in recent years which primarily cater to a younger, wealthier population not necessarily related to Chinatown. (See 2.4 Demographics)


22. UNESCO.


25. Heritage BC.

27. Scanlon.

28. Based on an interview held with an developer InterRent REIT in March 2023 through the SSHRC Partnership Grant.


32. Tsenkova, 3.

33. The most recent list of vacant and unoccupied buildings in Ville-Marie was published in December 2022. These reports are titled, “Inventaire des bâtiments vacants : Planification pour la réhabilitation de cadre bâti du centre-ville.” These can also be found on the City of Montreal’s interactive map, found here: https://spectrum.montreal.ca/connect/analyst/mobile/#/main?mapcfg=-%20Ville-Marie (accessed July 30, 2023)


35. Baltimore City Department of Housing & Community Development, “Vacant Building Receivership” (Baltimore, n.d.).


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PART II

ADAPTIVE REUSE OF
THE WING’S BLOCK
Chapter Learning Objectives: to understand the heritage values and conditions of the selected buildings, which will inform their adaptation.

4.1 Building Selection Criteria

4.1.1 Introduction

Based on site visits, research, and consultation with the JIA Foundation, seven sites were identified as areas of interest – that is, buildings within Chinatown with current or expected vacancy and/or buildings which were perceived to be at risk of uncharacteristic development. These sites were evaluated based on various criteria, as shown in Fig. 50, to determine which building(s) fit best with the desired direction of the thesis research as well as with the JIA Foundation’s current efforts and the community needs. The final site was also selected based on its potential to provide the most impactful case study in terms of illustrating the benefits and barriers to a conservation-based approach to development in Chinatown.

4.1.2 Overview of Selection Criteria

The following criteria were used to evaluate which site would be the most fitting case study for this thesis:

Heritage Designation: Buildings with individual heritage designation or within designated heritage areas face a unique set of challenges in reuse and may be subject to additional policies.

Historic Value: Buildings that played a role in the history of Chinatown and its development, and that would aid in sharing that
story for future generations.

**Community Impact:** Buildings that have long been a part of the Chinese community and contribute to the identity and culture in Chinatown; buildings that would provide opportunity to house desirable programs as expressed by the community.

**Building Condition:** Buildings in reasonable condition, making it a good candidate to study the value of reuse versus demolition.

**At Risk:** Buildings that suffer from the effects of vacancy or which are considered to be under threat of demolition / uncharacteristic redevelopment.

**Alignment with Current Advocacy Efforts:** Buildings which were the focus of current discussions by local community and advocacy groups in Chinatown were of primary interest in order to allow for collaboration and maximize the impact of research efforts on the current trajectory of development in Chinatown.

The following is the list of preliminary site options that were explored for further study:

1. 1009 rue Côté, Wing Noodles Building
2. 987-991 rue Côté, Former Free Presbyterian Church
3. 106-118 rue de la Gauchetière Ouest (Maison Joseph-Barsalou, former Chinese Hospital, former Chinese Masonic Temple)
4. 1100 and 1104 Clark St.
5. 1088 Clark St, Chinese Community and Cultural Centre
6. 998 St-Laurent Blvd, Swatow Plaza
7. 90 rue de la Gauchetière Est, Former PAQ
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base Data</th>
<th>Site 1</th>
<th>Site 2</th>
<th>Site 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Name</td>
<td>Maison Wing / Wing Noodles Building</td>
<td>Former S. Davis &amp; Sons Cigar Manufacturers Building</td>
<td>Rue de la Gauchetièrè Ouest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>1009 Rue Côté / 120 rue de la Gauchetièrè Ouest</td>
<td>987-991, rue Côté</td>
<td>106-108 de la Gauchetièrè Ouest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former/Alternate Name</td>
<td>British and Canadian School</td>
<td>Former Free Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>Former Chinese Hosp / Chinese Association Montreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Typology</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>Commercial / Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>James O'Donnel (arch); John Redpath (Contractor)</td>
<td>John Ostell (TBC); John Redpath (Contractor)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Construction</td>
<td>1826-1827</td>
<td>1884 (using walls of the church built on the same site in 1848)</td>
<td>Between 1853-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage/Community Value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Chinese Community</td>
<td>Since 1963 (60 years)</td>
<td>Since 1970 (53 years)</td>
<td>Since 1925 (98 years)</td>
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<td>Individual Heritage Designation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Condition/Technical Value</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacancy</td>
<td>Expected vacancy in 2023</td>
<td>Partially vacant</td>
<td>Partially vacant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exterior Condition</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair to Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
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<td>Future Plans</td>
<td>Purchased by developers for residential development</td>
<td>Purchased by developers for residential development</td>
<td>Purchased by developers for residential development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threat Level</td>
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<td>High</td>
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**Fig. 50:** Evaluation chart of preliminary site options.
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<tr>
<th>Site 1</th>
<th>Site 2</th>
<th>Site 3</th>
<th>Site 4</th>
<th>Site 5</th>
<th>Site 6</th>
<th>Site 7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Name</td>
<td>Former/Alternate Name</td>
<td>Building Typology</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>Original Construction</td>
<td>Heritage/Community Value</td>
<td>Future Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clonack Building</td>
<td>Briar and Canadian School</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>James O’Donnel</td>
<td>1826-1827</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Purchased by developers for residential development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116-118A de la Gauchetière Ouest</td>
<td>Former Free Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>John Redpath (Contractor)</td>
<td>1884 (using walls of the church built on the same site in 1848)</td>
<td>High</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Chinese Masonic Temple / Ancien club Zhigongtang</td>
<td>Maison Joseph-Barsalou; Restaurant L’Occidental; Former Chinese School; Restaurant Orange Rouge</td>
<td>Commercial / Residential</td>
<td>John Ostell (TBC); John Redpath (Contractor)</td>
<td>Between 1853-58 Before 1845</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>To continue as is</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun Ko Wah (Boutique Orientale, la Librairie Chinoise)</td>
<td>Former Chinese Hosp/Chinese Association of Montreal</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Before 1845</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Plans for Chinese community to buy back full building for mixed community uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Donat Beaupré / George Lamothe JR, Architecte</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>Alan Hui (Hui Architecture)</td>
<td>1935 (major renovation in 1995)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Purchased by developers to become hotel with ground floor retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1858-1865</td>
<td>1935 (major renovation in 1995)</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2008-2010</td>
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<td>Site Designation</td>
<td>Part of Undesignated Historic Site Context</td>
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| Yes | Yes | Yes | Par
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| No | No | No | Fully occupied |

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<td>Exterior Condition</td>
<td>Exterior Condition</td>
<td>Exterior Condition</td>
<td>Exterior Condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Poor (partially demolished)</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<td>Threat Level</td>
<td>Threat Level</td>
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<td>High</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Designation</td>
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<th>Site 4</th>
<th>Site 5</th>
<th>Site 6</th>
<th>Site 7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plans for Chinese community to buy back full building for mixed community uses</td>
<td>Plans for Chinese community to buy back full building for mixed community uses</td>
<td>Plans for Chinese community to buy back full building for mixed community uses</td>
<td>Plans for Chinese community to buy back full building for mixed community uses</td>
</tr>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Site 4</th>
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<th>Site 6</th>
<th>Site 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partially vacant</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>Partially vacant</td>
<td>Partially vacant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
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<td>Vacant</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.1.3 Selected Site: Wing’s Block

As a result of the evaluation process, the Wing Noodles Building was initially selected as the building of focus for this study. As one of the few buildings in Chinatown with a formal heritage designation, a history of 60 years with the Chinese community and nearly 200 years in Montreal, it represented a key contributing fixture to the history and character of the neighbourhood. Moreover, its iconic presence marked the cornerstone of a historic block which had been purchased by private developers in 2021, the topic of much recent discussion in the community.

Continued conversations with the JIA Foundation, however, concluded that to ensure a higher level of cohesion in the reuse of this building, it should not be adapted in isolation, but in tandem with the adjacent historic buildings, acknowledging their long-standing relationship. As a result, the buildings analyzed for

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**Fig. 51:** Selected buildings within the historic block (key plan).

**Fig. 52:** Images of preliminary site options (Various sources online)
Fig. 53: Selected buildings in the Wing’s Block (Lengies, 2023)
Former Chinese School
(Maison Joseph-Barsalou)

Roméo-Caillé Building

Former Chinese Hospital

(Chinese Association of Montreal)

Former S. Davis & Sons Cigar Manufacturer

Fig. 54: View of the Wing’s Block south of rue de la Gauchetière Ouest (Daniel Heikalo, 1978)
adaptive reuse in this study include the Wing Noodles Building (1009 rue Côté), the former S. Davis and Sons cigar manufacturer (987-991 rue Côté), and the former Chinese Masonic Temple (116-118A rue de la Gauchetière Ouest). These buildings were selected for their direct adjacency to the Wing Noodles Building, with the former S. Davis and Sons cigar manufacturer internally linked as an extension of the factory, and the former Chinese Masonic Temple backing onto one of the few green spaces in the area, enclosed by all three buildings.

Throughout this thesis, these three buildings at the corner of rue de la Gauchetière Ouest and rue Côté will be referred to in short as the "Wing’s Block." This block will be used to study what a sensitive development might resemble and how its collective reuse can contribute to equity, environmental sustainability, and empowerment in the community.

4.2 Heritage Designations

4.2.1 Provincial Heritage Designation

In July 2023, the Wing Noodles building (former British and Canadian School) and former S. Davis & Sons cigar manufacturer received official designation as provincial heritage sites under the Cultural Heritage Act by the Ministry of Culture and Communication (MCC) of the Province of Quebec. This was a major step forward in recognizing the historic and cultural importance of these buildings. The designation creates an additional layer of protection from demolition and uncharacteristic interventions by requiring building owners to obtain approvals from the culture minister prior to conducting any work on the building.\(^1\) It also makes them eligible
for additional financial support from the City of Montreal for eligible restoration work or upgrades, including to meet Code compliance or to be adapted for a new use.2

4.2.2 Institutional Core of Chinatown

In addition to the two new individual designations, all three buildings in this study are situated in the Institutional Core of Chinatown, an officially designated heritage site as of 2023.

Although the designated area, as defined in Fig. 55, is limited to a small portion of the historic Chinatown, it contains some of the oldest buildings of the district, including some of the early organizations foundational to Chinese community life since the early 20th century. The statement of significance outlines that this zone has been designated for its historical, architectural and social values, and is not only the best preserved part of Chinatown but the only significant Chinatown preserved in Quebec and Eastern Canada.3

With buildings dating back to the early 19th century, its resulting architecture is witness and product of the many phases of development in the area, such as the densification and industrialization of the late 19th century, as well as the establishment of the Irish, Jewish and Chinese communities in Montreal.4 Its three to four storey adjoined buildings recall the many others which used to line this part of rue de la Gauchetière prior to redevelopment in the 1970s and evoke the visual identity of Chinatown, a human-scale neighbourhood with shops at ground level and organizations or residences above. The presence of the Chinese community is apparent throughout, reflected in the

“En reconnaissant l’importance patrimoniale du Quartier chinois, nous souhaitons non seulement protéger et mettre en valeur notre histoire, mais aussi souligner la contribution des communautés chinoise et asiatique à la richesse historique et culturelle de la métropole.”

- Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montreal (@Val_Plante, Twitter, July 25, 2023)
architectural elements, signs and inscriptions, and is marked to the west by the archway at the corner of rue de la Gauchetière and rue Jeanne Mance.

The area is also identified as a testament to the "establishment of services and support associations for the Chinese community, [which enabled] them to cope with a difficult socio-economic context and generated in particular by discriminatory measures." This includes the Chinese Catholic Church, the former Chinese school, the former Chinese Hospital, the former Chinese Masonic Temple, and the Chinese Association of Montreal (Fig. 54), some which remain active and influential organizations in the community today. With both old and new organizations throughout Chinatown, it is not only a representation of historic times, but of a vibrant and breathing neighbourhood still intertwined with its past.

The visual and social dimensions of the buildings within the Wing's Block are inextricably linked with those of the surrounding buildings and site. In order to lead a more holistically beneficial development, any alterations must begin by respecting these contextual aspects.

4.3 Site History

4.3.1 Wing's Block Scope

Because the scope of this study was initially focused on the Wing Noodles Building and only later expanded to include the former Chinese Masonic Temple and former S. Davis & Sons building, a more thorough historic and heritage values assessment has been completed for the Wing Noodles building.

While the following sections will provide brief overviews for
the former Chinese Masonic Temple and former S. Davis & Sons building based on preliminary research, these latter two buildings are deserving of more in-depth historic research to inform planning and intervention beyond this study. Each of these buildings also hold countless stories of significance to Chinatown’s and Montreal’s history relating to the evolution of the buildings and their various occupants over the years.
4.3.2 Wing Noodles Building

4.3.2.1 Building History

Constructed in 1826 by John Redpath to the designs of architect James O’Donnel, the former British and Canadian School is the oldest remaining purpose-built school in Montreal and one of the oldest in Quebec. The school was built for and run by the British and Canadian School Society, an organization inspired by the British and Foreign School Society of London, England, to offer a non-sectarian education to children of working class families and of various ethnic backgrounds. The school employed the “monitorial system” in which one instructor would teach the advanced students (or the “monitors”) who would then teach the younger students.

In 1866, the school was incorporated into the Protestant School Board. During this period, it underwent numerous changes to accommodate the growing needs of the school, including the transformation of the original pavilion roof into a false mansard roof with dormers, the extension of the building by 4 ft eastward to abut the adjacent building (site of the former Chinese Masonic Temple), and the construction of a small annex on the southeast corner.

In 1894, the school relocated and the building was sold to Andrew S. Ewing to be converted for industrial purposes, a product of the rapid industrialization of Montreal in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Major alterations included the addition of a third storey and the reconfiguration of the windows from two to three rows. The southeast addition was extended up to the adjacent factory to the south (the S. Davis and Sons cigar manufacturer) and a small one-
storey addition constructed on the southwest corner. The building would be used as a coffee and spice steam mill for nearly 25 years, then later sold to various other owners, serving various industrial uses, including a tobacco manufacturer and printing press.

In 1963, the building was purchased by the Lee family through Fashing Realty Co for their company Wing Hing Lung - later rebranded as Wing Noodles Ltd. Alterations were then made to evoke the character of a Chinese business, painting the building white with red accents; enlarging the three openings on the west facade and characterizing them with false upturned wooden lintels, red frames, and glass block inserts below; constructing a new entry using materials evocative of modern Chinese architecture; and adding its iconic neon signage and brick lettering to the building.

After having been occupied by Wing Noodles for 60 years and passed through three generations of the Lee family, this building has become emblematic of Chinatown and representative of the success of the Lees. Many within the Chinatown community have crossed paths with Wing’s, either as employees, friends, restaurateurs or customers. It is also a well known Canadian manufacturer and supplier of Chinese noodles, sauces and fortune cookies. After the building was purchased by developers in 2021, the community rose together to insist its character and history be preserved for future generations. The building was subsequently designated as a provincial heritage resource in 2023, and the block within which it is situated as the Institutional Core of Chinatown. Plans are currently underway for the redevelopment of the site.
**BUILDING HISTORY**

- 1820: British and Canadian Society is formed in Montreal
- 1826: Construction of the British and Canadian School
- 1866: Transfer of school to Protestant School Board
- 1869: Transformation of roof to a false mansard with dormers
- 1870: Extension of building by 4ft to the east
- 1879: Addition of small annex on the southeast corner
- 1894: Building sold to Andrew S. Ewing to become Montreal Coffee and Spice Steam Mill
- 1897: Expansion of southeast annex to current dimensions between 1916-1918
- 1899: Addition of a third storey and third row of windows to the original building
- 1918: Building is sold to Edward Carter and is later held by various owners over the years
- 1946: Company rebrands as Wing Hing Lung, manufacturer of fresh noodles, egg roll covers, and wonton covers.
- Mid-1960s: Company begins production of bilingual fortune cookies
- 1970: The Lee family purchases the adjacent factory to be used in part as storage for Wing Noodles Ltd.
- 1997: Mr. Hee Chong Lee starts Wing Lung, a company based on the import/export of Chinese goods
- 1963: Building is purchased by Lee family for Wing Noodles Ltd.
- Post-1963: Replacement of existing windows; modifications to west windows; red accents; Wing’s signage; addition of new entrance on southwest corner
- 2021: Building purchased by developers
- 2023: Building officially designated a provincial heritage site

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**COMPANY HISTORY**

- 1820: British and Canadian Society is formed in Montreal
- 1826: Construction of the British and Canadian School
- 1866: Transfer of school to Protestant School Board
- 1869: Transformation of roof to a false mansard with dormers
- 1870: Extension of building by 4ft to the east
- 1879: Addition of small annex on the southeast corner
- 1894: Building sold to Andrew S. Ewing to become Montreal Coffee and Spice Steam Mill
- 1897: Expansion of southeast annex to current dimensions between 1916-1918
- 1899: Addition of a third storey and third row of windows to the original building
- 1918: Building is sold to Edward Carter and is later held by various owners over the years
- 1946: Company rebrands as Wing Hing Lung, manufacturer of fresh noodles, egg roll covers, and wonton covers.
- Mid-1960s: Company begins production of bilingual fortune cookies
- 1970: The Lee family purchases the adjacent factory to be used in part as storage for Wing Noodles Ltd.
- 1997: Mr. Hee Chong Lee starts Wing Lung, a company based on the import/export of Chinese goods
- 1963: Building is purchased by Lee family for Wing Noodles Ltd.
- Post-1963: Replacement of existing windows; modifications to west windows; red accents; Wing’s signage; addition of new entrance on southwest corner
- 2021: Building purchased by developers
- 2023: Building officially designated a provincial heritage site

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**Fig. 62:** Timeline for the Wing Noodles building
4.3.2.2 History of Wing Noodles Ltd.

Initially known by the name Wing Lung - and later Wing Hing Lung - Wing Noodles Ltd. (fr: Nouilles Wing Ltée) is one of the early Chinese-owned businesses of Montreal, dating back to the beginnings of Chinatown at the end of the 19th century.

In fact, its beginnings link with the first immigrant of Chinese origin to settle in Quebec, Yin Geow Lee. Although he himself ran a laundry, he invested in a small grocery store in Montreal’s burgeoning Chinatown which, after bringing his brothers from China, he would pass on to one of his newly arrived brothers, Hee Chong Lee, in 1897. An import/export business of Chinese goods in its early days, by 1946 it would instead become specialized in the on-site production of fresh Chinese noodles, egg roll covers, and wonton covers, later expanding to also include products such as dry noodles, fortune cookies, and sauces in the 1950s and 1960s. They would become known as the first oriental food manufacturer to incorporate bilingual (English and French) messages in their fortune cookies as well as to have an entirely kosher certified product line.

The Lee family purchased the former British and Canadian School building to accommodate their expanding operations in 1963. In 1970, they would also purchase the adjacent former S. Davis & Sons factory building to house additional factory and storage space.

Over 60 years of operation, Wing Noodles has made an indelible mark within the Chinese community, with its philanthropic contributions to the community; its role as a supplier to Chinese restaurants, stores and households; its role as a major employer of members of the community; and now as the last remaining Chinese-
owned factory in Chinatown.

To this day, the business continues to be run by the Lee family, having been passed from Hee Chong Lee onto two of his eldest sons, Arthur and Samuel Lee, in the 1940s, and later to three of his grandsons, who own and operate it today.

4.3.3 Former Chinese Masonic Temple

Located at 116-118A rue de la Gauchetière Ouest, the former Chinese Masonic Temple shares its western wall with the Wing Noodles Building and its eastern wall with the former Chinese Hospital, now the Chinese Association of Montreal. Although presenting a rather simple, undecorated façade of cut grey stone, this three-storey residential structure represents a very typical architectural typology within Montreal’s Chinatown. Although an exact date is not known, fire insurance plans indicate it was constructed between 1825 and 1845. It was originally constructed as a two-storey building with a gable roof and dormers; a third storey was added between 1894-1912. The original stone corbels are still visible indicating where the roofline once sat.

Originally constructed and owned by French-Canadians, it was first adopted by the Chinese community in 1912 when the Chinese Freemasons (致公黨 / Zhigongtang / Chee Kung Tong) moved in. A political party, fraternal association, and secret society, the Chinese Freemasons had both strong political and social underpinnings in Chinese communities across Canada. They were also one of the three main political parties in Montreal’s Chinatown, including the Chinese Nationalist League (國民黨 / Guomindang / Kuomintang) and the Chinese Reformist Party (Hin Jing). In addition to raising

Fig. 64: Chinese Masonic Temple (Source: BanQ, 1912)
money in support of Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s efforts to overthrow the Qing dynasty back in China, the Chinese Freemasons also provided a social welfare system to its many members, mostly working class men from Southern China. It also founded the Chinese Hospital of Montreal in 1920, provided rooming for the Chinese community, and hosted the Dat Coon Club in the building from 1929 to 1933.9

In 1944, the building was acquired and occupied by the Yep family, who resided there until 2012. It then continued to be rented out as residences and a ground floor commercial unit by the subsequent building owners until it was purchased by developers in 2021.

4.3.4 Former S. Davis & Sons Cigar Manufacturer

As Montreal was becoming increasingly industrialized in the late 19th century, the six-storey brick building at 987-991 rue Côté was constructed in 1884 to accommodate the industrial operations of Samuel Davis and his three sons. The building is unique in that it reused the original walls and portico of the existing Free Presbyterian Church on the site (see Fig. 65), originally constructed in 1848 and purchased by Davis after the church relocated to a larger site on rue Crescent.10 The reused portions are identifiable by their light grey stone and tall, round-arched windows in contrast against the reddish brown brick and rectangular windows which characterize the rest of the building. At the time of the factory’s construction, S. Davis & Sons was already the largest cigar manufacturer in Montreal, considered the “cigar capital of Canada.”11

The new factory was later occupied by other manufacturing companies, including the American Tobacco Company of Canada, the Empire Tobacco Company of Canada, and Montreal Cotton & Wool

Fig. 65: Above – Free Presbyterian Church (a.k.a. Côté Street Church) (Source: BanQ / John Stirling)

Fig. 66: Below – S. Davis & Sons cigar manufacturer (BanQ, 1894).
Waste Co. Ltd.

In 1970, the building was purchased by Fashing Realty Co., a company owned by the Lee family, to be used as an extension for the Wing Noodles factory. During this time, it was mainly used as storage, with some space rented out to Florasynth Canada Ltd. and to Chinese Family Services. It was purchased by the same developers as the previous two buildings in 2021.

4.4 Character-Defining Elements

4.4.1 What are Character-Defining Elements

The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (Parks Canada, 2010) define character-defining elements as “The materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to the heritage value of an historic place, which must be retained in order to preserve its heritage value.” These features, both tangible and intangible, also represent the stories embedded within the site, and their endurance facilitates the remembrance, recognition, and teaching of those stories.

It is recommended that a full interior assessment and walk through with the Lee family and/or other remaining tenants be completed prior to finalizing any plans for interventions for these buildings. This would confirm the presence of any additional elements of heritage value and to better understand the social and functional attributes of these spaces, some of which have been used by the Lee family and Wing Noodles Ltd for 60 years, so they can be shared as a part of Chinese-Canadian and Montreal history.

Fig. 67: West façade of the S. Davis & Sons building (Lengies, 2023).
4.4.2 Wing Noodles Building

In the case of the Wing Noodles building, its character-defining elements reveal the evolution of the building from its time as a school to that of an industrial building, alongside its significant role in the Chinese community in Montreal. They tell of the ideas and trends of the times, the industrialization of the city, and the accomplishments of its owners throughout history.

**Exterior**

The following list of character-defining elements is sourced from the official heritage listing by the Ministry of Culture and Communications:

- its imposing massing, including the rectangular plan, the four-storey elevation including the false mansard roof pierced with gabled dormers;
- the materials, including the limestone masonry, consisting of cut stone on the north and west facades, the stone ornaments and the wooden windows;
- the openings, including rectangular twelve-paned sash windows generally arranged regularly, except for some openings on the south wall;
- the east bay of the north wall, visually separated from the rest of the wall by stones painted red, pierced by a rectangular portal and framed by stone corbels under the false attic, indicating a later addition;
- the ornamentation, including the strip encircling the building at mid-wall height, the chains of angles and the

Fig. 68: Character-defining elements of the original portion of the Wing Noodles building (Lengies, 2023)

Fig. 69: Character-defining elements of the annex to the Wing Noodles building (Lengies, 2023)
stone architraves (some decorated with squares on the two lower floors);

- the original sign along the centre strip on the west facade;
- the elements evoking Chinese architecture, including the red and yellow illuminated sign, the false upturned lintels, the red paint highlights and the roof tiles of one of the annexes;
- the small annex housing the main entrance, including its nearly square one-storey volume topped with a flat roof and brick facing;
- the large annex perpendicular to the main body, including its four-storey rectangular volume topped with a flat roof, the red brick facing, the large rectangular windows (some closed by glass blocks) and the inscription “WING’S” on the west facade.

Interior

Since a visit to the full extents of the interior was not possible during the period of this study, it was not possible to identify all character-defining elements of the interior. Based on a brief visit to the main lobby and on discussions with individuals who had toured the building, some of the front of house areas of the original building exhibit Chinese-style interior detailing implemented when Wing Noodles Ltd purchased the building. This includes the stair baluster (as in Fig. 70), ceiling tiles in the upstairs lobby, and additional elements in the offices. Some materials are also said to have been sourced from China. Discussions have also revealed there is an apartment space on the second floor preserved as it was when
the current owner’s mother used to reside on site. Additionally, the attic space exhibits an exposed wooden vaulted ceiling which may be of architectural interest.

Many of the other spaces, in both the original building and the addition, are more utilitarian and industrial in nature, as seen in brief recordings and based on other personal accounts. It is said there is little suggesting its past function as a school as it fully accommodates the workings of a factory; however, a more targeted assessment would be necessary to identify the areas, features and materials of historic value in telling the story of its evolution throughout its phases as a school, factory and residence.

The building also hosts a number of artifacts, accumulated over the years by the Lee family from their company, from other community members in Chinatown, and from previous owners. This extensive collection of movable heritage is currently being documented by local resident, tour guide and museologist, Jean-Philippe Riopel.13

4.4.3 Former Chinese Masonic Temple

Exterior

As this building does not have an individual heritage designation, a preliminary list of character-defining elements was assembled based on exterior observation, preliminary research, and conversations with current and previous residents:

- the utilitarian facade including its simple stone stringcourse at each level, and the stone corbels indicating the original roofline;
- its simple, rectangular openings with flat lintels;

Fig. 71: Former Chinese Masonic Temple (Lengies, 2022)
• the cut grey stone construction;
• its small-scale, narrow form with shared walls, typical of early 19th century construction in Montreal and characteristic of Montreal’s Chinatown;
• the Zhigongtang sign on the third level (reads: 堂公致) identifying it as the former Chinese Masonic Temple;
• its enclosed courtyard, accessible from each level by a spiral staircase, and shared with the adjacent former Chinese Hospital (now Chinese Association of Montreal).

Interior

Due to limited access, it was not possible to confirm the presence of any character-defining elements of the interior spaces. This space is divided into three enclosed units, each accessible off of a shared interior staircase.

4.4.4 Former S. Davis & Sons Cigar Manufacturer

Exterior

The following list is sourced from the official heritage listing by the Ministry of Culture and Communications:

• its imposing massing, including the rectangular plan, six-storey elevation and flat roof;
• its materials, including the brick facing, the stone masonry of the lower part of the side and rear walls, and the cut stone of the basement and various ornamental elements;
• the composition of its main facade, including the organization into three distinct parts (basement, central

Fig. 72: S. Davis & Sons exterior (Lengies, 2023)
section and crowning), the central avant-corps and the slightly projecting corner towers, the three portals and their stone staircases;

• the numerous and regularly distributed openings, including the central freestone portal pierced by a door with an arched and glazed tympanum, the two freestone side portals with low arches, the rectangular sash windows (simple or double), the arched windows of the crowning in the facade and the high arched windows of the lower half of the side walls;

• the ornamental elements, including the stone bands and lintels, as well as the decorative effects created by the brickwork under the coping windows;

• the elevator tower and brick walkway at the rear of the building;

**Interior**

Although it was not possible to visit the building, information provided by community members indicates the original wooden staircases to be one of the character-defining elements. The basement also contains original church columns and exposed stone walls. Further analysis is required to confirm other interior elements of heritage value from the various periods of the building.

**4.5 Nara Grid**

**4.5.1 Nara Grid Framework**

In order to better understand the heritage value of the Wing’s Block, this study uses a Nara Grid as a framework for analyzing the
tangible and intangible values of the site. Based on the principles of the *Nara Document on Authenticity* (1994) developed by the World Heritage Committee, this framework recognizes the variety of social, cultural and material values that can be attributed to heritage across different cultural concepts thereof, fostering a more holistic understanding of heritage value. This analysis is intended to inform a better assessment on what contributes to the “authenticity” of the site. This in turn facilitates the identification of areas of high, medium and low heritage value to inform the level of conservation and intervention acceptable without compromising the integrity of the place. Due to the lack of access to and information on the building interiors, the current assessment is solely based on the exterior.

The exploration of tangible and intangible values of the Wing’s Block as a collective, as shown in Fig. 74, and the Wing Noodles Building itself, as shown in Fig. 75, highlight prominent artistic, historic and social values based around their association with typical 19th century construction, the industrialization of Montreal, and various family, institutional and commercial uses representative of the Chinese community. These are visually represented through the historic construction and architectural vestiges which exhibit the evolution of the buildings through their varied uses and occupations over their lifespan.

The former Chinese Masonic Temple has been long associated with political, community and family life, whereas Wing Noodles, architecturally and culturally emblematic of Chinatown, is a symbol of early success for Chinese-Canadians. The S. Davis and Sons building, while also tied to the community through Wing Noodles
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIMENSIONS</th>
<th>Artistic</th>
<th>Historic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Scientific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form + design</td>
<td>The architecture ranges from utilitarian to more stylistic, evoking typical residential architecture, school design, and industrial design, with vestiges and stylistic elements evoking their Chinese occupation. Design of newer additions is inspired by and compatible with architecture of the original buildings.</td>
<td>Represents the variety of buildings constructed in the 19th century and adapted to the industrialization and Chinese occupation of the neighbourhood, all of which were modified to physically abut or connect with each other over time, forming courtyards. The connection between Wing’s and the S. Davis &amp; Sons building represents their relationship for over 50 years.</td>
<td>Details and vestiges of Chinese occupation visually tie the buildings to the community.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials + substance</td>
<td>Variety of stone, brick and modern materials which evoke the evolution of the buildings and Chinese stylistic elements.</td>
<td>Original stone and brick construction which reveal the different periods of construction and building evolution.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use + function</td>
<td>Reflects the original and current functions as a residence, school, church and factory through signage and typological architectural elements.</td>
<td>Representative of early residential, school and church construction of the early 19th century.</td>
<td>Former use by the Chinese Freemasons, the Yep family, the Wing Noodles Factory, the Lee family, and Chinese Family Services, which played key roles in employment, social welfare and community life in Chinatown, with strong ties to social, political, business and community networks.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition, techniques + workmanship</td>
<td>Simple craftsmanship but of good quality.</td>
<td>Techniques used are typical of Canadian craftspeople who had learned under the French regime.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location + setting</td>
<td>The buildings form a corner lot with adjoining primary facades visible along De la Gauchetière and Côté, forming an inner and outer courtyard.</td>
<td>It is situated in what was historically a working class neighbourhood, and what became the heart of a developing Chinatown towards the end of the 19th century. Contains some of the oldest surviving buildings in Chinatown.</td>
<td>Located within the early beginnings of Chinatown and is in a prominent location within what’s now recognized as Chinatown’s institutional core.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit + feeling</td>
<td>The stylistic detailing, signage and red accent paint evoke their connection to the Chinese community.</td>
<td>Original Chinese signage/elements reflect characterization of Chinese businesses and associations which are/were in the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>As some of the early and foundational businesses and political associations of Chinatown, Wing Noodles and the Chinese Masonic Temple have been an anchor of the Chinese community.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 74:** Nara grid of tangible and intangible values of the Wing’s Block.
### Nara grid of tangible and intangible values of the Wing Noodles building

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASPECTS</th>
<th>DIMENSIONS</th>
<th>Artistic</th>
<th>Historic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Scientific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form and design</td>
<td></td>
<td>The original building combines a classically-inspired construction with simple, symmetrical detailing, repetition of windows, a stringcourse, a false mansard roof, and dormers, with Asian stylistic elements such as the upturned window lintels, red paint, and signage reflecting its occupation by a Chinese noodle factory. The industrial addition complements the original in its simple massing and linear composition.</td>
<td>The original building is representative of institutional architecture from the early 19th century. Its various additions and modifications over time reflect the changing needs of the school and the various manufacturing companies that occupied it, including the Wing Noodles Company. It is also one of the few remaining examples of work by the architect James O'Donnell in Quebec, who is well known for his design of the Notre-Dame Basilica in Montreal.</td>
<td>Its form reflects the original role as an educational institution, and its details are visually associated to the Chinese community with which it is deeply connected.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials + substance</td>
<td></td>
<td>The original stone is in good condition, with windows and roof maintaining their historical appearance (modifications unconfirmed). The materiality of the addition (brick and concrete) reflects its industrial use while new materials in the original facades (red paint, coloured bricks, tile, glass block) add a Chinese element to the aesthetic, characterizing it as the Wing Noodles factory.</td>
<td>The original building was constructed in 1826 by the master mason, John Redpath, who is also associated with the construction of the Lachine Canal and the Rideau Canal in Bytown, was a well-known businessman and philanthropist, and was the founder of Redpath Sugar.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use + function</td>
<td></td>
<td>The original building continues to express its initial use as a school, with late 19th century additions expressing its change to an industrial use and embedded brick lettering indicating its occupation by Wings.</td>
<td>This is the oldest surviving purpose-built school in Montreal, and one of the oldest in Quebec. Its original function as a school reflected the desire for a non-sectarian education for the children of working class families, while its evolution to an industrial use at the end of the 19th century reflected the rise of industry in Montreal at the time and later, the rise of Chinese immigration as well.</td>
<td>The building is most significantly associated with the British and Canadian School Society and their vision of bringing students of diverse backgrounds together in a non-sectarian learning environment; it now hosts a third-generation, family-owned business, Wing Noodles Ltd, a producer and supplier of Chinese noodles and fortune cookies emblematic of Chinatown.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition, techniques + workmanship</td>
<td></td>
<td>Simple craftsmanship but of good quality.</td>
<td>Techniques used for the original building are typical of Canadian craftsmen who had learned under the French regime.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location + setting</td>
<td></td>
<td>The building is situated on a corner lot, with three facades or the original building and one facade of the addition visible, forming an inner courtyard.</td>
<td>It is situated in what was historically a working class neighbourhood, and what became the heart of a developing Chinatown towards the end of the 19th century. It is also one of the oldest surviving buildings in Chinatown.</td>
<td>It is located within the early beginnings of Chinatown and is in a prominent location within what's now recognized as Chinatown's institutional core.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit + feeling</td>
<td></td>
<td>The stylistic detailing, neon signage and red accent paint evoke its connection to the Chinese community.</td>
<td>Chinese elements reflect the approach since the early days to characterize Chinese-owned businesses in order to attract clientele.</td>
<td>As one of the early and foundational businesses of Chinatown, Wings Noodles and its owners have been an anchor of the Chinese community for over three generations.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 75: Nara grid of tangible and intangible values of the Wing Noodles building.
Ltd, is also strongly associated with the industrialization of the area. Each building, physically connected and adapted to the needs of the community over time, reflects the tight-knit nature of the neighbourhood and those within it.

It is both these tangible and intangible values which must be considered in determining an appropriate new use for the building which respects the historical as well as the present connections to the community.

### 4.5.2 Areas of Heritage Value

Following the Nara Grid analysis of the exterior of the site, areas of high, medium and low heritage value were attributed to the three buildings.

The primary facades of each building (those visible from the street) are considered of **high heritage value** due to their level of visibility, integrity and thus familiarity, contributing to the recognizable character of the neighbourhood. These facades also express most clearly the form, use and evolution of the buildings from the early 19th century to present day. It is recommended to conserve and maintain the visibility of these facades and their character-defining elements in order to illustrate these different parts of the building history, their historic association to the Chinese community, and their relevance to the development of the neighbourhood as a whole.

Secondary facades, including the lower portions of the Wing Noodles Building facing the parking lot and the south facade of the former Chinese Masonic Temple, are of **medium heritage value**. These areas contribute to the overall understanding of the building,
Fig. 76: Heritage value assessment of the Wing's Block.

- **High Heritage Value** - Maintain expression of exterior form and conserve its character-defining elements. 
  
  *Primary conservation treatment*: Conservation

- **Medium Heritage Value** - Maintain if possible. These features contribute to the overall understanding of the use and evolution of the ensemble, but are less visible or have been partially obscured over time. Opportunity for sensitive adaptation. 
  
  *Primary Conservation Treatment*: Conservation/Rehabilitation

- **Low Heritage Value** - These features contribute to the functionality of the building and may hold architectural interest. Further information required to determine extent of potential heritage value. Opportunity for sensitive adaptation. 
  
  *Primary Conservation Treatment*: Rehabilitation

- **No Heritage Value** - Redevelopment possible where it is distinguishable, compatible, and subordinate with the overall existing form and its character-defining elements. 
  
  *Primary Conservation Treatment*: Rehabilitation

*Archaeological Value* - Archaeological potential to be preserved or documented prior to development decisions.
but are less visible or obscured by later modifications. These areas could benefit from conservation and/or sensitive rehabilitation.

The garage is considered of low heritage value due to the long-time presence of a connection between the Wing Noodles Building and the former S. Davis & Sons building, expressing their programmatic relationship. The interior vaulted roof structure and skylights may also be of architectural interest and require more in-depth research to determine their significance.

Areas of no heritage value include those which do not contribute to the visible character or evolution of the ensemble, or are more recent or out-of-character modifications which do not contribute to the values outlined in the Nara Grid. Redevelopment in these areas is possible where it is compatible, subordinate to and distinguishable from the existing building and its features, in following with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

4.6 Exterior Condition Assessment

4.6.1 Wing Noodles Building

The feasibility of retaining the existing structure and other materials depends on their current condition. A visual assessment of the exterior conditions was completed on site and through photographic documentation from January 2023. Since the interior was not accessible at this time, it is not yet possible to gain a full understanding of the impact of these conditions on the structure.

Overall, the building appears to be in generally good structural condition and continues to be in use. However, certain areas display
localized deterioration and may require repairs and/or surface cleaning.

The roofing has suffered damage from water collection around the dormers, with cracking and minor bulging of the stone masonry directly underneath the overhangs on the north and west sides. The north facade displays inconsistent and alligatoring paint throughout, with more extensive loss of paint on the sills and adjacent masonry units of the upper windows indicating possible water drainage issues. Graffiti can be seen at ground level on both the north and south facades. On the west facade, there is more extensive deterioration of the windows frames and wood lintels, with cracked stone sills.

The main entry is mostly in good condition, save for some minor water damage around a pipe which has resulting in cracking of the substrate and the detachment of red tiling.

The industrial addition also appears in generally good condition, but does exhibit some bulging and cracking of the wall finish below the central basement window where snow has been accumulating. Dark staining is also visible in some upper areas of the brick facade, with localized areas of efflorescence.

A visit to the publicly accessible areas of the original building, including the entrance lobby and front reception, show these parts of the building in good condition with mostly modern finishes. However, additional information provided indicates that interior conditions in other parts of the building such as the factory may be becoming more difficult to maintain or keep up to code standards due to its age and size.
4.6.2 Former Chinese Masonic Temple

Based on a visual exterior assessment only, the building seems to be in good structural condition. Only the top unit continues to be occupied. It appears to be in generally good condition, although it is subject to some staining on the facade, particularly below the balcony. Further investigation is required to confirm conditions.

4.6.3 Former S. Davis & Sons Cigar Manufacturer

The former S. Davis & Sons building continues to be in use as storage for Wing Noodles Ltd, but is partially vacant. Based on a visual exterior assessment only, the building appears to be in fair condition, with significant deterioration around the ground level, particularly around the entrances. The concrete steps at all three entrances are in poor condition, as well as some parts of the stone foundation and brick directly above, displaying cracking, spalling, and missing mortar. Staining is observed on brick and stone elements. Further investigation is required to confirm conditions.

Fig. 78: Exterior conditions of the former Chinese Masonic Temple (Lengies, Jan. 2023)

Fig. 79: Exterior conditions of the former S. Davis & Sons building (Lengies, Jan. 2023)
4.7 Chapter 4 Summary of Findings

- The Wing Noodles Building (former British and Canadian School) and the former S. Davis & Sons cigar manufacturer are designated heritage buildings. These buildings, in addition to the former Chinese Masonic Temple are located within a designated site referred to as the Institutional Core of Chinatown.

- Each building has a long history associated with the development of Montreal and Chinatown, with strong artistic, historic and social values based around their association with typical 19th century construction, the industrialization of Montreal, and various functions representative of the Chinese community.

- While the primary facades are considered high heritage value and are recommended for conservation, the parking lot on site offers opportunity for low-rise, sensitive intervention.

- Further investigation is required to confirm the presence of character-defining elements for the interior.

- By exterior visual assessment only, each building appears to be in good to fair condition for reuse.
Chapter 4 Endnotes


8. Luce Lafontaine Architectes, 56.


10. Luce Lafontaine, 46.


5.1 Site Analysis

5.1.1 Program Analysis

As shown in Fig. 80, a significant portion of the buildings in Chinatown are owned and/or occupied by the Asian community, whether for commercial, residential, institutional, religious, or other purposes, and are mostly concentrated along and between rue St-Urbain and boulevard St-Laurent.

The Wing’s Block is located just west of the high-traffic commercial zone. Less visited by tourists and increasingly residential towards the west, this portion of rue de la Gauchetière is often used as a resting area for locals due to the presence of benches. Within the same block is a mix of residential, commercial and institutional spaces, including the Chinese Association of Montreal and the Chinese Catholic Community Centre, which hosts the Chinese school and additional cultural activities for its associated community.
The map below is based on data from Luce Lafontaine’s 2021 report (p.99), and cross-referenced with housing data from *Pour un Quartier chinois mixte et habité* (2022), the Ville de Montréal’s “Ma carte interactive,” Google business records, and recent site visits by the author.

**Fig. 80:** Overview of Asian-occupied buildings and green spaces in Chinatown, Montreal, in 2023.
This map is based on information from Luce Lafontaine’s 2021 report and cross-referenced with recent Google data and exterior site visits by the author. Data needs to be verified.

**Fig. 81:** Program and walkability analysis of Chinatown.
5.1.2 Transit Study

As shown in Fig. 82, Chinatown is a highly connected area, with easy access by car, foot, bike and public transit systems. The site of study is located at the intersection of the pedestrianized portion of rue de la Gauchetière Ouest and rue Côté, a relatively quiet vehicular street. The Wing’s Block is directly adjacent to the Place-des-Armes metro station within the Palais des congrès. Multiple bus lines are within a five minute walk, with bike lanes along rue Anderson, rue St-Urbain, boulevard St-Laurent, and boulevard René-Lévesque.

Fig. 82: Transit analysis of Chinatown.
5.1.3 Sun Conditions

A sun study (Fig. 83) of the Wing’s Block and nearby buildings indicates plenty exposure to the sun from the south side, benefiting the Wing Noodles Building and S. Davis and Sons building. Considering the height of the latter, the current parking lot area still receives ample light.

5.1.4 Ground Cover Assessment and Green Space

As shown in Fig. 80, there are minimal green spaces in and around Chinatown, with the closest park across the busy boulevard René-Lévesque to the north. Fig. 84 shows the green cover in close proximity to the Wing’s Block, revealing few young trees which dot rue de la Gauchetière, rue Côté, and the courtyard of Palais des congrés, with a larger shaded area within the Sakura Garden; however, this does not provide adequate shading to counteract the heat island effect created by the extensive hardscaping.

Ground cover primarily includes dark pavers for most areas around the Wing’s Block, differentiating pedestrian and vehicular areas by the size of the pavers and a detailing strip. Most other areas are covered with concrete or asphalt, with ample parking lots and no known green roofs. The dark materiality absorbs heat easily with minimal shading and contributes to increasingly uncomfortable temperatures. With increasing frequency of extreme temperatures expected as a result of climate change, this will only become more noticeable.

In public consultations and opinion letters to the Office de consultation publique de Montréal, concerns regarding heat island effects and a lack of green space have often been raised. Green
Fig. 85: Site conditions.
spaces are needed both as outdoor public gathering spaces as well as for respite from the heat for the many locals and visitors who rely on outdoor spaces for cooling off in the hot months. This is especially important as, within a low-income neighbourhood with aging residents and buildings, many may not have access to air conditioning and may be more susceptible to heat exhaustion.

5.2 Conceptual Design Framework

5.2.1 Community Vision for Chinatown

Based on the results of the public consultation published in the 2022 *Rapport de consultation publique: Quartier chinois*, as well as opinion letters and ongoing discussions with JIA Foundation, Fig. 86 explores some of the most highly expressed needs and values of the Chinatown community.

![Values of Chinatown Diagram](image-url)

*Values of Chinatown*

Based on the community consultations by the Centre d'écologie urbaine in 2020 *(Rapport synthèse des besoins et d’attentes - Quartier Chinois)*

**Fig. 86: Values of Chinatown**
5.2.2 Thematic Exploration of the Wing's Block

To explore programmatic opportunities which would be in line with the historic layers and current values of Chinatown, I looked towards recurring themes within the Wing's Block for inspiration and guidance.

These themes, as illustrated in Fig. 87, were extracted from the previous functions of the three buildings, as well as known stories and values associated with them through historical records and community discussions. Themes of making, learning, and coming together as a community were strongly represented through this study.

Fig. 87: Existing themes for the Wing’s Block.
5.2.3 Intergenerational Values of Chinatown

As a declining neighbourhood, the community has expressed a need for intergenerational spaces which attract the younger Asian diaspora back to the neighbourhood and provide opportunities for them to reconnect with older generations.

With vastly different experiences, I found it important to explore both shared values and the uniquely defining values of each generation. Values which perpetuate across generations of the Asian community include a strong sense of resistance, the desire for a sense of community, opportunities for cultural expression, and food. However, based on various social posts, webinars and other sources, it is observed that the younger Asian community identifies less and less with historic Chinatowns due to the aging traditions and associations which no longer serve the increasingly assimilated and educated diaspora. While many of the earlier generation sought

Fig. 88: Intergenerational values of the Chinatown community.
community and security within the tightly-knit networks of family associations, political associations, and religious organizations, younger Asian-Canadians no longer face the same challenges in society and do not necessarily see their needs reflected in these aging associations.

Instead, many young Asian-Canadians seek safe spaces to explore diverse identities within the Asian-Canadian diaspora, to reconnect with their own heritage roots and other youth, and to express themselves creatively.

Based on this study, Chinatown needs to provide more creative, multi-functional, and social gathering spaces where different generations feel comfortable and can cross paths and interact on common interests while learning from each other based on different lived experiences. This could take the form of a community art studio, co-working spaces, a tea room, or community “living room” and kitchen, which prompt the community to socialize and explore their respective interests in shared spaces. Active programming within these spaces, however, will also play an important role in bringing the community together.

While these conjectures are based on my research, conversations over the course of the year, and my own personal experiences, it is by no means a comprehensive summary of the values of all Asian-Canadians. This exploration is mainly intended as a process to understanding the wider community as a means to inform the design process and site proposal. It relates to the question of “who” Chinatown is for, and “how” to ensure Chinatown remains relevant for this evolving community.
5.2.4 Program Exploration

The following diagram aims to tie together the findings of the thematic and intergenerational values explorations to identify more specific program ideas for the reuse of the existing buildings within the Wing’s Block.

**Fig. 89:** Program exploration.
5.3 Site Proposal

5.3.1 Site Intensification

The following diagram shows the various massing that is possible to intensify the site. In response to public concern over the possibility of a 20-storey building being constructed on the site, zoning was revised in 2022 to implement a height limit of 25m, down from 65m. This was intended to reduce speculation, which increased chances of rising property values and building neglect, and encourages development that is more compatible with the scale of the neighbourhood, which is largely defined by three-storey buildings.

Fig. 90: Intensification study.
At 25m in height, an infill would greatly detract from the historic character of the site, obstructing the annex from view along with its relationship to the original school building and the adjacent factory. At 8m in height, an infill would align with the third level, maintaining visibility of the connection between the two parts, the character-defining roofline, and the Wing’s lettering. However, this would still obstruct the original church windows of the former S. Davis & Sons building and, considering the need for accessible green space in the community, could alternatively provide for a vibrant outdoor community space. As such, a minimal intervention approach is taken in this proposal to show how the open lot could be repurposed as much needed green space, maintaining full visibility of all facades and enhancing their historic and modern relationship with each other and the community.

5.3.2 Design Proposal

The proposed design focuses on revitalizing the relationship between the three buildings and their occupants through shared, engaging outdoor spaces. A pedestrian walkway flows through the block from rue Côté to rue St-Urbain along the footprint of the existing garage, which forms the connecting artery of the semi-private functions of each building. While gates at either end of this artery can ensure security for tenants after hours, the presence of lamps and full visibility from both ends of the pathway further enhances a sense of safety to the public. This new passageway doubles as a gathering space and encourages visitors to travel through the site, as well as tenants to interact with each other and benefit from the adjacent amenities. It provides the main point of access and visibility into the makerspace in the Wing Noodles
building, the shared amenities in the former S. Davis and Sons building, and to the courtyard of the former Chinese Masonic Temple through the existing brick wall forming the north side of the garage.

The integration of production, exhibition, and residential programming in the existing buildings supported by shared transitional spaces aims to nurture and grow the sense of community within Chinatown by creating a place of intergenerational gathering, cultural expression and exploration. This is enhanced by the sense of place founded upon layers of history, evoked not only through the architecture but through the thematic activities which would continue to take place. These spaces are also intended to provide

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**Fig. 91:** Proposed programmation of the Wing’s Block.
(Not to scale. For visualization purposes only)
additional greenspace and reduce the heat island effect in the block.

By responding to the history and character of the site as well as to the needs of the existing community, the adaptive reuse of the historic site aims to reduce the risk of cultural displacement while attracting new visitors. It does this by creating spaces for gathering, cultural and artistic expression which are physically, financially, and culturally accessible to the existing demographic and which can form a hub for the greater Asian-Canadian community. Meanwhile, the integration of commercial spaces and mixed-income residences ensures housing and community spaces on the site can remain affordable so that all members of the community can benefit from the amenities provided.

This proposal is intended as a community-oriented vision for the reuse of the site to show what could be possible when maximizing the social, cultural and environmental potential of building reuse. It has been inspired by community opinion pieces and discussions with the JIA Foundation and Chinatown Roundtable during this year of research, and has been shared with them as part of ongoing conversations. As one interpretation of community and site values, it recognizes that there may be alternatively suitable programs and approaches to developing the site which can honour the needs and values of the community while contributing to the economic viability of the project.

5.3.3 Proposed Building Programs

The proposed programs are inspired by the prominent themes of Making, Learning and Community based on the conceptual design
framework explored in 5.2. They are intended to balance the community-oriented functions and profitable functions to support economic viability, while building on the foundational principles of Chinatown to include newer generations of Asian-Canadians and offer opportunities for intergenerational interaction and cross-cultural understanding. Considering the limited understanding of the building interiors and spatial requirements of each function within this study, the proposed programs and their placements within the site are intended as preliminary concepts to visualize and inspire further discussion regarding the possibilities for the site.

5.3.3.1 Wing Noodles Building (1009 rue Côté)

As a prominent and iconic heritage building within the block, the proposal for the site repurposes the Wing Noodles building as an anchor space for more public-oriented creative and cultural functions.

**Chinatown Ecomuseum:** As an anchor tenant, the Chinatown Ecomuseum would benefit from the history and character of the Wing Noodles building as a venue for showcasing the history of Montreal's Chinatown and the Asian-Canadian experience in Quebec.

**Art Gallery + Gift Shop:** The museum would be complemented by an art gallery and gift shop where local artists can sell their work, particularly those within the artists-in-residence program.

**Makerspace:** The addition, which has always been used as a space to manufacturer various goods, would emphasize the underlying
theme of making. To support local creatives and embrace modern technology, the lower floors would host a makerspace, which offers services such as printing, 3D printing, laser cutting, wood shop and studios where members of the public can explore ideas in a shared space. This would provide an additional source of income for the site.

**Artists-in-Residence:** The artists-in-residence program would provide a prime location in terms of amenities, accessibility, history, and character for artists to explore relevant themes within Chinatown and across diverse Asian-Canadian identities. Residences and related support spaces would be on the upper two levels of the Wing Noodles building, overlooking the courtyards, and would have a private entrance off of Rue de la Gauchetière Ouest. Residents would have private studios and common spaces in addition to access to the public makerspace amenities. Artists could display and sell their work in the gallery/shop on site, in the proposed café, or in the courtyards.

**Community Garden:** The former parking lot will be converted into a courtyard with a community garden to increase greenspace in the neighbourhood and to provide a space for people to rest, socialize and reflect. This would provide a space for local seniors, families, youth and resident artists to interact, learn and benefit from locally-grown food, and can provide for a community fridge on site to support those in need.

5.3.3.2 Former Chinese Masonic Temple (116-118A rue de la Gauchetière Ouest)

With themes of family and community gathering in this building,
this would be proposed as a locally-owned café, community space and affordable housing. Visitors and tenants alike would have access to the courtyard, which is shared with tenants of the adjacent Chinese Association building and which would be accessible to the general public through the café or rear passageway during the daytime.

**Residence:** The upper floor will continue as a private residence.

**Co-Working Space:** The second floor would provide shared meeting and working spaces for Chinatown working groups such as the JIA Foundation, the Chinatown Roundtable, the Youth Committee, and Green Chinatown Montreal to support community efforts and foster collaboration across diverse groups.

**Tea House / Café:** A tea house on the ground level would act as a casual meeting space which would benefit from the courtyard seating area and adjacency to the Chinatown Ecomuseum. It is intended for this to be an affordable, locally-run shop that could appeal to the older generation as well, in contrast with the many expensive bubble tea shops in Chinatown which appeal primarily to the younger generation and which offer limited seating options.

### 5.3.3.3 S. Davis & Sons Cigar Manufacturer (987-991 rue Côté)

As a large scale building with ample windows and high ceilings, it is proposed that this could be converted into mixed-income residences with communal amenities accessible to all residents in the block.

**Mixed-Income Residences:** A mix of residence types available to a varied range of incomes would ensure it responds to the needs
of the existing community while attracting new residents and remaining economically feasible.

**Shared Amenities:** The basement level, accessed within the building and through the existing garage entrance directly across from the makerspace entrance, would contain amenities such as bike storage and a gym which would be available to the tenants of the three buildings and to members of the Chinatown community.
**Fig. 92**: Wing’s Block proposed programs (elevation).
(Not to scale. For visualization purposes only)
**Fig. 93:** Proposed programs (plan diagram).
**Fig. 94:** Proposed community corridor in different seasons of Montreal.
Fig. 96: Proposed sections and elevations (Not to scale/measurement. For visualization purposes only)
Exisiting entrance. Main entry to commercial/residential functions.

Exisiting entrance. Private entry for artists in residence.

Exisiting entrance. Main entry to museum.

Exisiting window to be new loading dock.

Exisiting door to be new window.

Exisiting entrance. Main access to residence.

Exisiting staircase to be removed and door opening converted to window.

Exisiting garage to be removed. North wall to remain.

Exisiting silo to be removed.

Exisiting door opening and new window openings into proposed Makerspace.

New door and window openings into courtyard.

Fig. 97: Close-up up connecting passage between buildings (Section A-A).
Not to scale/measurement. For visualization purposes only.
5.4 How does a Conservation-Based Approach to the Wing's Block Support Equitable Development?

5.4.1 Socio-Cultural Value

As discussed in Chapter 3, the built environment is closely tied with culture, memory and identity. The sensitive adaptation of these buildings thus protects the heritage and representation of the Asian-Canadian community while fostering a safe space for cultural expression and cross-cultural understanding. The reuse of these buildings also counters the historic and ongoing pattern of the loss of built heritage and displacement of the Asian community for new development, instead enhancing the existing sense of place and community.

While the proposed new uses will attract new people and more vibrancy to the site, it does so while minimally disrupting the existing memories, character, and familiarity of the neighbourhood for the existing community. By incorporating the built fabric within the new use for the site, it becomes easier for visitors to relate to and engage in diverse aspects of Canadian history, enhancing the learning and creative processes prompted by the ecomuseum and makerspace. Furthermore, the proposed inclusive programming and thoughtful design, informed by a thorough understanding of community and site values, ensure the existing community can continue to benefit from the changes made, reducing the risk of cultural and physical displacement.

5.4.2 Environmental Value

In addition to their heritage values, the buildings within the Wing's
Block contain significant carbon value. Both the Wing Noodles Building and former S. Davis & Sons building are large-scale buildings with concrete and steel structures. In addition to creating considerable waste from their demolition, concrete and steel are some of the highest carbon-emitting materials in the construction industry due to their intensive manufacturing process, and this carbon has already been spent. Retaining as much of the structure as possible will maximize the value of this carbon investment and minimize the additional environmental impact of extracting, processing and transporting new materials for construction. It will also reduce risk of damage to adjacent historic buildings. Furthermore, reducing construction time and pollution from demolition will benefit the health and well-being of those who frequent the site, while minimizing disruption to small businesses and community services within the block.

The addition of green space will also improve the quality of life for locals, providing cooler walking and gathering spaces and reduced energy costs in the summer, particularly benefiting senior and low-income residents.

5.4.3 Economic Value

The unique historic character of these buildings and the neighbourhood in which it is located offers the opportunity through adaptive reuse to support cultural tourism while benefiting from enhanced attractiveness to locals and visitors. As a unique and memorable project, this would not only increase the marketability of residential units, but could also draw attention to the proposed arts-oriented commercial functions like the Chinatown Ecomuseum,
gallery, café and makerspace, as well as other small businesses along this end of rue de la Gauchetière Ouest. The proposed mix of commercial functions and residential units at different rates proposes a joint effort towards the affordability of a portion of the residences and community-oriented spaces on the site, similar to the business model of the Skwachàys Lodge, described in 3.8.1. By ensuring the existing community is not displaced through an appropriate business model, thoughtful programming, and other anti-displacement strategies, the existing community should be able to continue benefiting from the improved conditions, land values and economic vitality of the site.

The reuse of the buildings may also lead to a quicker turnaround time for the new uses, minimizing construction costs and allowing for earlier occupancy, benefiting the developer. This would need to be verified for this specific site, however, by a thorough building analysis to confirm the structural conditions, code compliance, and any hazardous materials which may impact the timeline of reuse.

While the reuse of these buildings does provide economic benefits to a development on the site, and while the proposed programs in this study do incorporate an element of profitability, this proposal would still greatly benefit from the implementation of various funding mechanisms and partnerships, as described in 2.3.2.2 and 3.5, in order to be fully economically viable, especially considering the higher upfront costs of reuse and a significant community-oriented portion. The separation of building programs, however, does allow for phased implementation, presenting flexibility based on the flux of partnerships or financial resources.
This thesis finds that the adaptive reuse of historic buildings does support equitable and inclusive neighbourhood development for Chinatown. Recognizing that the built environment is intricately tied with memory and representation, the conservation and reuse of historic buildings in Chinatown thus plays an important role in the continued representation and sense of continuity for the Asian-Canadian diaspora. In fact, the sensitive adaptive reuse of these buildings is found to have many social, cultural, environmental and even economic benefits over demolition and new construction when faced with existing, vacant or underutilized buildings.

While adaptive reuse does have the potential to contribute to gentrification, such as through increased property values and market appeal, the physical displacement of the existing community can be mitigated with the timely implementation of appropriate regulatory and financial tools, and through inclusive programming informed by community consultation so that the existing community can continue to benefit from the improvements made to the neighbourhood. That being said, adaptive reuse does play an active role in reducing cultural displacement by protecting the existing character, historic associations, and sense of belonging within the neighbourhood.

Tools such as Design Guidelines, Community Bonds, and Community Benefits Agreements can encourage and leverage conservation-based development projects for heightened social, cultural, environmental and economic value to the existing community and
to all citizens.

While encouraging conservation-based development can lead to a more vibrant, healthy, sustainable and equitable neighbourhood, it requires the investment of time and resources on the part of the local government, community, and developers to establish effective policy-based frameworks, financing tools, guidelines and design approaches which work for all stakeholders. Partnerships and community collaboration are critical to equitable development.

In sum, building reuse alone is not enough to ensure equitable development. However, the combination of a holistic, conservation-based design approach in tandem with community collaboration and anti-displacement tools can mitigate the effects of gentrification while fostering a comparatively more inclusive, culturally vibrant, and sustainable neighbourhood which embraces and builds on the unique character and inherent values of Chinatown.

This thesis concludes that there is value in further discussing the synergies between anti-displacement efforts, heritage conservation, and environmental sustainability, and that while these combined efforts would benefit development in any historic neighbourhood, it is especially beneficial to the pursuit of equitable development within the unique economic, cultural and historic context of Chinatowns.
As a one-year thesis project conducted with little starting knowledge on the topics explored, this thesis represents a learning process and developing frame of thought regarding the challenges faced by and potential solutions for development in Chinatown. It also recognizes that there are many differing views and alternative solutions for the development of the proposed site and the neighbourhood.

Additionally, the number of sensitive issues and larger systemic issues involved in the past, present and future of Chinatown have added layers of challenge, and may not have been able to be fully addressed within the scope of this project.

While beyond the capacity for this thesis, a continued evolution of the project could include surveying the wider Chinatown community to develop a more thorough understanding of their perceptions of gentrification in their neighbourhood and visions for the Wing’s Block, as well as with the Lee family and others who hold memories with the buildings in question.

Although the development of the Wing’s Block has posed a sensitive topic of discussion with the developer due to media coverage, development opposition and recent regulatory modifications to the site, it would be beneficial to hold further discussions with the developers to better understand their vantage point on the development potential of the site, barriers to reuse, and suitable strategies for mobilizing them towards a shared vision for equitable development in Chinatown. This continues to be a major gap in normalizing building reuse and equitable development, as not
enough developers are included as part of the conversation.

As this thesis has primarily focused on theoretical benefits of the adaptive reuse of the buildings within the Wing’s Block, it would greatly benefit from **data-based analyses of the environmental and economic benefits of their reuse**. For example, this could include a carbon value assessment of the three buildings and the amount of waste which may result from their demolition. It may also consider the potential time and material costs or savings, or projected change in value of the buildings if the original structures and their historic character were incorporated into the new use. While this would require access to the buildings and architectural drawings, it would provide valuable data on the measurable impacts of building reuse which could inform future development projects and associated policies in Chinatown.

In the process of this research, I have also encountered additional areas of interest for future research which would contribute to an understanding of the various **stakeholder perspectives and strategies for mobilizing them** towards the implementation of a conservation-based anti-displacement framework. **Appendix C** includes a map of these and other topics which would be of relevance to the continued discussion on the protection of Chinatowns in Canada from an adaptive reuse perspective.
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Chinatown


Lai, David Chuenyan, and Timothy Chiu Man Chan. "Le Quartier chinois de Montréal, des années 1890s à 2014." Translated by Jack W. Lee and Marc


Building Conservation


Ethnic Enclaves


Gentrification


ARUP. “Development without Displacement,” n.d.


Sustainability of Building Reuse


APPENDIX

Appendix A - Preliminary list of tools for conservation-based equitable development in Chinatown

Appendix B - Precedents for a Conservation-Based Approach to Development

Appendix C - Adjacent Research Topic Mind Map
**APPENDIX A.**

**PRELIMINARY LIST OF TOOLS FOR CONSERVATION-BASED EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CHINATOWN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Displacement Offset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Land Trusts</td>
<td>A Community Land Trust is a non-profit, community-based organization that acquires and holds onto land in perpetuity on behalf of a community to provide community uses such as affordable housing and gardens. This can be used to retain historic buildings for community functions.</td>
<td>Cultural + Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Bonds</td>
<td>A social financing tool which enables non-profit organizations to attract capital for socially impactful projects through interest-bearing loans from investors with a fixed rate of return and fixed term. This tool can be used to offset the high upfront costs of building rehabilitation and reuse for projects which benefit the community, such as affordable housing or cultural spaces.</td>
<td>Cultural + Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demolition policy</td>
<td>Policy which discourages demolition and encourages building maintenance, retention, and sustainability.</td>
<td>Cultural + Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Buildings Policy / Incentives for reuse</td>
<td>Policy which mandates the maintenance and/or transfer of vacant buildings for reuse or incentivizes their rehabilitation to avoid demolition by neglect of historic buildings.</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage policy</td>
<td>Policy which protects heritage buildings from being demolished or significantly altered without review or prevents unsuitable construction projects within heritage districts.</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning</td>
<td>Review heights and uses allowed in zoning by-law to protect against speculative development and allow for more flexibility in building reuse proposals.</td>
<td>Cultural + Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Design Guidelines</td>
<td>Conservation guidelines and design criteria for new construction and conservation-based development to protect and enhance the visual character of Chinatown.</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to development</td>
<td>Reactionary to gentrification</td>
<td>Early in development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lease-to-Own Programs</strong></td>
<td>Financial support in the form of caps or breaks on property taxes for longtime residents or loans for renters/small business-owners to purchase their units/buildings and protect them from unaffordable rent increases while retaining buildings with long-term association to the community.</td>
<td>Cultural + Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legacy Business Program</strong></td>
<td>Funding and assistance programs to help preserve long-standing small businesses which have contributed to the history and identity of the neighbourhood and which provide local employment.⁵</td>
<td>Cultural + Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mandatory Community Consultation</strong></td>
<td>To ensure the existing community (incl. residents, business-owners, unhoused individuals, and other minority groups) is reflected in and/or benefits from the proposed changes in amenities, services, and built environment.</td>
<td>Cultural + Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Benefits Agreements (CBA)</strong></td>
<td>A project-specific, legally bonding agreement between developers, government and/or the community to ensure the local community benefits from the investment, often in exchange for community support of the project.⁶</td>
<td>Cultural + Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developer incentives</strong></td>
<td>Financial or non-financial incentives to developers in return for addressing policy objectives such as offering affordable housing or including community-based programming.</td>
<td>Cultural + Physical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A Endnotes

1. Some examples are the Boston Chinatown Community Land Trust, the Toronto Chinatown Land Trust recently formed in 2023, the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust and the Kensington Market Community Land Trust (also in Toronto). The Milton-Parc Community in downtown Montreal also has an established Community Land Trust.

2. The Mount Community Centre in Peterborough, ON, is an example of a non-profit which used Community Bonds to raise $2M to finance the transformation of a historic building into affordable housing (Tapestry Capital). In Montreal, non-profit Brique par brique has shared learnings from issuing Community Bonds to finance affordable housing in Parc-Extension (https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/nhs/nhs-project-profiles/2018-nhs-projects/using-community-bonds-finance-affordable-housing-projects).

3. The City of Saskatoon implemented a Vacant Lot & Adaptive Reuse Incentive Program which encourages the redevelopment of vacant buildings through the provision of financial and/or tax-based incentives.

4. Design criteria for new construction and building transformation projects to protect the unique character of Chinatown is included as Recommendation 6 of the Rapport de consultation publique: Quartier chinois (2022).

5. A Legacy Business Program has been successfully implemented in San Francisco since 2015.

6. Vancouver introduced a mandatory CBA policy for developments over 45,000 sq.m. in 2018 (https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/community-benefit-agreements.aspx). The Ottawa Community Benefits Network, formed in 2019, is also establishing CBAs to encourage equitable private and public developments, including for the new Ottawa public library, Adisôke (https://ottawacommunitybenefits.ca/blog/2021/06/26/ottawa-public-library/).
APPENDIX B.
PRECEDENTS FOR A CONSERVATION-BASED APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

The following resources are intended to provide some further reading on other initiatives in Canada and the US which explore conservation-based development/revitalization with community-oriented priorities in comparable neighbourhoods to Montreal’s Chinatown.


   Launched in 1979 by the National Trust for Canada, the Main Street Regeneration Approach was a private-public partnership that applied a conservation-based approach to revitalizing historic main streets, viewing “heritage buildings, traditions and local character as practical tools to drive economic, social and cultural activity and boost confidence and pride in the downtown.” It followed a 4-point approach to systematically revitalize business areas through design, economic development, marketing and promotion, and organizational development.


   Main Street Quebec (La Fondation Rues Principales), evolved out of the success of Main Street Canada in 1985, continues to provide expertise on the socio-economic revitalization of
main streets with a focus on improving quality of life for locals and enhancing the existing sense of place from a conservation perspective.


   In 2015, the City of Vancouver initiated a matching grant and related studies to support the rehabilitation of twelve heritage designated Chinese Society buildings in Vancouver’s Chinatown. The program aimed to stabilize the buildings so as to maintain current uses, activate underused spaces and conserve heritage features. This funding was needed to enable the Societies to take on this investment to stabilize and increase affordable housing, strengthen Chinatown’s economy, and pass on their culture and traditions to the next generations.


   This report looks at how public spaces can contribute to equitable development in gentrifying communities. With a focus on the Rail Park, an ongoing urban development project which reuses a formerly abandoned viaduct structure and which cuts through Philadelphia’s Chinatown, it looks to develop a policy agenda based on project analyses and community engagement which can adapt the current approach to the project to achieve a more equitable outcome for the existing low-income and aging community.

This study looks at capitalizing on the cultural assets of Vancouver’s Chinatown by proposing sensitive yet contemporary interventions to four historic Society Buildings to incorporate additional housing as a means of stimulating urban regeneration and promoting long-term community sustainability.


This webinar, posted by the York Centre for Asian Research (York University), explores the relationship between the preservationist movement of historic Chinatowns in Canada, intangible heritage, and urban and regional development through the perspectives of planners and activists from the Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto.


This session was recorded as part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s annual conference, and explores different approaches to cultural preservation in American Chinatowns, including place-based strategies and policies which centre community priorities. It also discusses various proposals for conservation-based developments in Chinatown.
What role does adaptive reuse play in the gentrification process?

How do we avoid attracting opportunistic developers and furthering gentrification?

How can adaptive reuse contribute to affordable housing?

Affordable housing in Chinatown / Senior housing

Homelessness in Chinatowns - what is the source of this relationship and how do we manage a space for “all” when the needs of different groups contradict one another?

How do we balance policy and flexibility to allow cultural neighbourhoods to flourish while ensuring appropriate developments?

Strategies/Tools: mitigating the negative effects of gentrification and encouraging equitable and culturally-sensitive development

How do we ensure development benefits the existing community, avoiding economic and cultural displacement?

What role has adaptive reuse or building conservation played in its continued vitality of surviving Chinatowns, if any?

What is Placemaking vs. Creative Placekeeping?

What is Sustainable, Equitable and Beautiful Development?

Case Study: The Mount Community Centre in Peterborough, ON

https://tapestrycapital.ca/community-bond-resources/

How do we ensure building ownership and development is in the hands of the community?

Community Land Trusts & Government Ownership

Community Bonds (Case Study: The Mount Community Centre in Peterborough, ON)

What are some examples of cities that have implemented varied levels of conservation-based guidance? (look to Europe and US)

What level of guidance/policy is ideal in the Canadian context to allow for development while encouraging a quality conservation-based approach / context-sensitive design?

Factors of gentrification

i.e., Zoning (heights and typologies), land speculation

APPENDIX C.
ADJACENT RESEARCH TOPIC MIND MAP