



# **LIFE IN CHINATOWN LANES**

**Exploring Hidden  
Opportunities for Activation**

# THE LAND ON WHICH WE STAND

We would like to acknowledge that this toolkit and the research behind it have been produced on the traditional, ancestral, unceded and occupied territories of the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations. The land where Chinatown and Vancouver are situated was never surrendered by these First Nations to Canada or to British Columbia. Any conversation on public space and community belonging must critically engage with the colonial history of ongoing displacement and inequity in the city. As settlers on this land, we are grateful to be given the opportunity to learn and share with others. We hope that this toolkit can encourage people to reflect and think more deeply about the complexity and importance of decolonizing urban public space.



Traditional Chinese architecture at the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, with new condos as a backdrop.  
Photo: Stella L. Zhou

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## Who we are

We are a team of graduate students at UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) who prepared this toolkit to empower others to activate public space in Vancouver's Chinatown.

Cover photo: Stella L. Zhou

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Naomi W. Reichstein and Stella L. Zhou**

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# PART I: INTRODUCTION

At the alley entrance to 350 East Pender, 1951. Photo: Lillian Ho Wong; City of Vancouver Archives



Chinese New Year decorations. Photo: Stella L. Zhou

## WHAT THIS TOOLKIT IS FOR

This toolkit is a knowledge resource for supporting your ideas on activating lanes in Chinatown, whether you're a community member from Chinatown or you have meaningful connections with Chinatown in another way. Although it's designed to help you untangle the complicated civic processes of activating public lanes, please don't take it as a step-by-step 'how-to' guide. Instead, it should assist you in taking mindful, sensitive steps toward making Chinatown's lanes more vibrant, inclusive and engaging for local residents and neighbouring communities. This toolkit focuses on temporary activations, but some may leave lasting legacies. Before you start and as you read through this toolkit, please think about the following questions:

- **What is the purpose** of your lane activation?
- **For whom** will the lane activation be done?
- **How** can the activation **benefit** the larger Chinatown communities?

**If you are interested in activating a lane in Chinatown**, email the City of Vancouver's Chinatown Transformation Team at [chinatown@vancouver.ca](mailto:chinatown@vancouver.ca).

You can drop by the Team's office hours at Chinatown House (188 East Pender Street):

- Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: 10am to 4pm
- Tuesday: 1pm to 4pm

# VANCOUVER'S CHINATOWN

## Early history<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of Chinatown was rooted in racial discrimination and physical segregation. Only in recent years has Chinatown been recognized as an important part of the city's urban fabric and history. Many Chinese labourers came to B.C. during the Gold Rush, and most stayed to help build the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) across B.C. in the 1880s. Chinese workers were a crucial part of building the railway because they were often tasked with its most challenging and dangerous sections. However, when CPR completed the work in 1886 and sited its terminal in Vancouver, Chinese workers were abandoned. A heavy discriminatory Chinese head tax was immediately put in place for all new Chinese immigrants. With little money to return to their families and nowhere else to go, some started building homes at the edge of the newborn city.

Despite the head tax and the 1907 Anti-Asian Riot, Chinese immigrants continued to come to Vancouver, and Chinatown kept

growing for the next few decades. Where the Millennium Gate stands now was drawn the physical segregation line between the Chinese neighbourhood and the rest of the city. Chinese-Canadians back then were not allowed to own any property or operate any businesses beyond Taylor Street. Chinatown was situated on swamp land, it was crowded, and many social issues arose; however, it was also vibrant, and people created lives for themselves in a constrained space. Even amid discrimination, they and their descendants built a Chinatown that was both resilient and thriving.

That was the birth of Vancouver's Chinatown, a history that is often untold. In October 2018, the City of Vancouver officially apologized for the historical discrimination against people of Chinese descent. In addition, the City is exploring the option of applying for UNESCO World Heritage Site designation for Chinatown. History should not be forgotten, but this is a significant milestone and a new start for Vancouver's Chinatown.

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<sup>1</sup> For a further account of Chinatown's history, see *Journeys of Hope: Challenging Discrimination and Building on Vancouver Chinatown's Legacies*, by Henry Yu, 2018, Vancouver: University of British Columbia, Initiative for Student Teaching and Research in Chinese Canadian Studies.





## Chinatown's heritage

**Tangible heritage** refers to built form, including architecture, urban design and streets. Being a National Historic Site of Canada,<sup>2</sup> Vancouver's Chinatown has some of the best-preserved and oldest heritage buildings in the city, dating back to the early 1900s. The recessed balconies, glazed roof tiles and mezzanines are all distinct characteristics of Vancouver's Chinatown. The internal courtyards of some buildings were also connected to streets and back lanes through narrow passages, which aided in the ventilation of the courtyards. This distinctive urban fabric symbolizes the effort and struggle of early Chinese-Canadians in making a home away from home at the edge of a growing city.

Apart from tangible heritage, Chinatown also has **intangible heritage** carrying important cultural and historical values. Intangible heritage includes traditions, practices, sights and sounds that are difficult to define in physical features alone. Farmers selling fresh choy on the streets; people playing mahjong while chit-chatting; restaurants' takeout windows with long lines; elders sipping tea on their balconies; kids running around with egg tarts in their hands; the lion dancing, calligraphy writing, lantern riddles and informal food stalls during festivals: these are all examples of intangible heritage passed on through collective memories, storytelling and lived experience.

If tangible heritage is the shell and bones of Chinatown, then intangible heritage is the heart and soul. These two forms of heritage need to come hand in hand and be passed on to future generations.

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<sup>2</sup> Vancouver's Chinatown National Historic Site of Canada, Parks Canada, Directory of Federal Heritage Designations, [https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhdp/page\\_nhs\\_eng.aspx?id=12951](https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhdp/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=12951).



## Why lane activation?

Lanes are an essential part of Vancouver's public space network, and public space is a critical part of a livable city. Lanes are an underused resource that contribute to our city's progress, with the potential to stimulate growth and create lively communities. Here are a few reasons why laneways form an ideal backdrop for activation in Chinatown:



### Heritage value

Historically, Chinatown's lanes were more vibrant than today, filled with commercial activity. Lanes can provide places for collective memories while celebrating and protecting Chinatown's heritage. Through these hidden lanes, the cultural essence and historical importance of Chinatown can be preserved, retold and experienced.



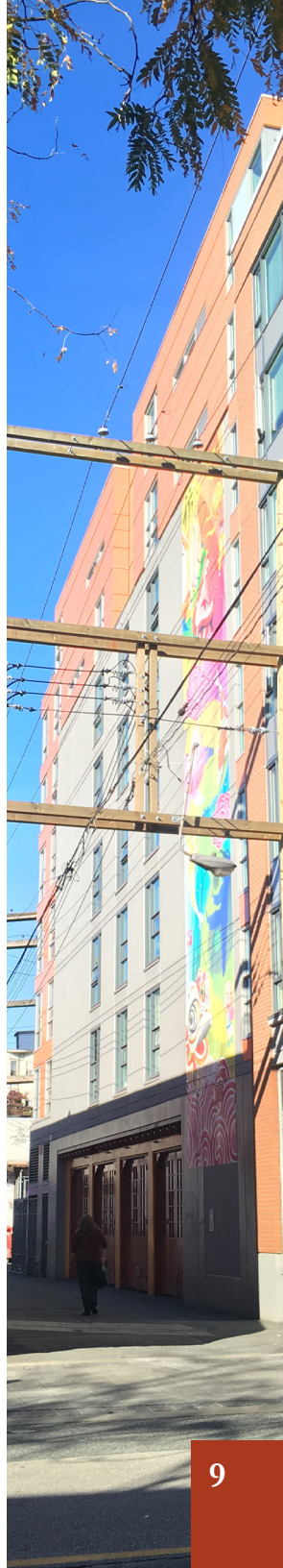
### Economic development

Revitalization of Chinatown's lanes could provide strategies for cultural and economic activity to flourish in underused urban space.



### Lack of public space in Chinatown

Other than a few key spaces, there is a lack of public space in Chinatown. Laneway activations could help enhance Chinatown's unique sense of place and provide space for locals and visitors.





2019 Vancouver Chinatown Spring Festival Parade. Photo: Stella L. Zhou

## WHAT THE COMMUNITY HAS SAID

Prior to the creation of this toolkit, Chinatown communities already went through extensive consultations on various major City projects. These projects have included the City of Vancouver's new Chinatown development policy, North East False Creek and more. Through these engagements, the people and organizations of Chinatown have brought forth their values, their concerns and what they'd like to see celebrated<sup>3</sup>:

### Cultural values

- History and culture of Chinese-Canadians as fundamental to Chinatown
- Recognition that Chinatown was built by the Chinese community through a history of discrimination
- Importance of seniors
- Strengthening intergenerational connections and youth involvement
- Desire to bring young Chinese-Canadians back to Chinatown
- Appreciation of both tangible and intangible heritage
- Local, traditional food and enterprises
- Preservation of distinct Chinatown spirit
- Need for social revitalization

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<sup>3</sup> [Chinatown Workshop: Northeast False Creek](#), City of Vancouver, April 8, 2017; [Public Consultation Summary: Proposed Changes to Chinatown Development Policy](#), City of Vancouver, April 2018; [Vancouver Chinatown Intangible Heritage Values Report](#), Heritage BC, September 2015; "[A Grandma's Eye View of Chinatown](#)": [Workshop Final Report](#), by A. Lao, E. Chia, I. But and S. Fung, September 14, 2016; [Vancouver Chinatown Social Cohesion Report](#), by Christina Lee, Hua Foundation, 2018; [Experiences of Chinatown](#), Youth Collaborative for Chinatown, 2017; [Experiences of a Courtyard](#), Youth Collaborative for Chinatown, 2018.

## Preservation and development

- Development should support Chinatown's character
- Stronger heritage protection for older buildings, preserving Chinatown's fine grain
- Concern over displacement of seniors, low-income people and other vulnerable residents of Chinatown and Downtown Eastside
- Balance between providing affordable housing and preserving historic character
- Incremental development preferred over fast development
- Desire to improve neighbourhood appearance
- Celebration of Shanghai Alley and other historic lanes
- Interest in seeing public art (murals), events and economically sustainable programming in lanes
- Activation of Memorial Plaza
- Activities brought to streets
- Desire for permeability and connection to other communities, inviting visitors into Chinatown
- Proximity of Chinatown to waterfront and local parks
- Wayfinding signage for culturally significant landmarks to preserve community memory
- Crime reduction

## Public space

- Lack of public and social space in Chinatown
- Need for playful, safe, inclusive space
- Need for flexible, welcoming community facilities, cultural programming, business improvement programs, schools, outdoor space and spaces for seniors and families
- Activation of lanes with innovative waste disposal to get dumpsters out of lanes

## Economic development

- Desire for economic development
- Desire to attract both local visitors and tourists to Chinatown
- Traditional, culturally appropriate, affordable, small, independent shops preferred over large chains

# SENSITIVITIES

It is important to be mindful of the sensitivities and risks that come with using Chinatown's lanes for placemaking activities. Please refer to these considerations when you begin planning for an laneway activation.

## Planning for all weather

Visitors generally resist attending outdoor events in inclement weather. Given Vancouver's highly variable climate, consider "weather-resistant" solutions such as tenting or combined indoor–outdoor event options. Explore amenities such as warm tea or other hot drinks to draw people in during rain. Alternatively, consider scheduling your activation during sunnier seasons: late spring, summer or early fall.

## Avoiding displacement

Transforming underused public spaces runs the risk of displacing and excluding individuals. Activations that cater to high-income people can lead to alienation and exclusion. They can also contribute to gentrification by helping to drive up real-estate values. Chinatown has already experienced some of the ramifications of gentrification. In proposing activations, please seek feedback from local stakeholders on how to avoid supporting this trend. For guidance, please see the **Neighbourhood fit** section of this toolkit (pp. 35–37).

## Substance use

Vancouver has a long history of substance use and addiction. Chinatown and the broader Downtown Eastside have been hit particularly hard as many of its residents live with substance use. Poverty and lack of quality housing have pushed many vulnerable populations into the streets. People often go to secluded areas like lanes when using drugs. It is important to understand the context of the neighbourhood in order to minimize disruptions to an activation. In choosing a lane for activation, you'll need to be sensitive to activities currently going on in lanes and seek opportunities that appear to pose lower risks of displacement. Speak with stakeholders to understand the area's sensitivities in order to minimize challenges.

## Lunar New Year festivities

Getting the community on board for your project may be challenging during the months of January and early February, while Lunar New Year events are going on. As an alternative, consider staging your event during



times of year when there are fewer simultaneous activations happening in Chinatown. The December holiday season, the spring or summer, or early fall are all possibilities.

## Keeping it local

In choosing vendors, employees, contractors and volunteers for your activation, please take care to work with local people, products and services whenever possible. You can give back to the community by procuring from the businesses and organizations that give Chinatown its distinct character. This will help celebrate and showcase the longstanding legacy businesses of Chinatown, which are vital sources of intangible and cultural heritage. This will also help ensure authenticity for the content of your activation as well as supporting local business and labour in a vulnerable area of the city. For guidance, please see the **Neighbourhood fit** section of this toolkit (pp. 35–37).

## Cultural appropriation

Chinatown has always been a place where different cultures come together in harmony. Please keep in mind the difference between celebrating culture and appropriating culture. Generalizing Chinatown culture as ‘pan-Asian’ or ‘Oriental’ is disrespectful because diverse

cultures exist within the larger umbrellas of Asian and Chinese culture. It is also exclusionary, as it obscures the past and present existence of many other cultures in neighbourhoods nearby such as Hogan’s Alley and Strathcona that influenced Chinatown’s development. In addition, elements that may seem culturally Chinese may not necessarily be authentic to Vancouver’s Chinatown. When in doubt, always discuss your proposed themes and designs with the Chinatown communities with whom you’re working.

## Language barriers

Many Chinese seniors, clan society members, legacy store owners and local Chinatown residents may not speak or understand English comfortably. It may be difficult to communicate with them if you lack language skills in Mandarin, Cantonese or Toi Shan dialect. Make sure you can communicate with community members in the language with which they’re most comfortable, sourcing translators when needed. It’s also important to have multilingual volunteers on site during your activation.

## Condition of lanes

Lane condition can constrain event design. Uneven asphalt, potholes, puddles and garbage can affect ambience. When choosing a lane to activate, you’ll want to evaluate surface condition.

# CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Chinatown is a complex neighbourhood. Rather than being one community, it's in fact a community of communities. Many different groups and organizations represent a variety of interests and preferences. Stakeholders may have multiple perspectives, some of which may conflict. Please be mindful that activations can have unintended consequences for the residents and businesses in the immediate area.

Before staging a lane activation, it's crucial to consult the people who may be most affected by it – the residents and businesses located right there. We also highly encourage collaborating with local stakeholders throughout the process whenever appropriate and possible. Please consider your activation not only as a production but also as an opportunity to engage community involvement and stewardship.

## What to do

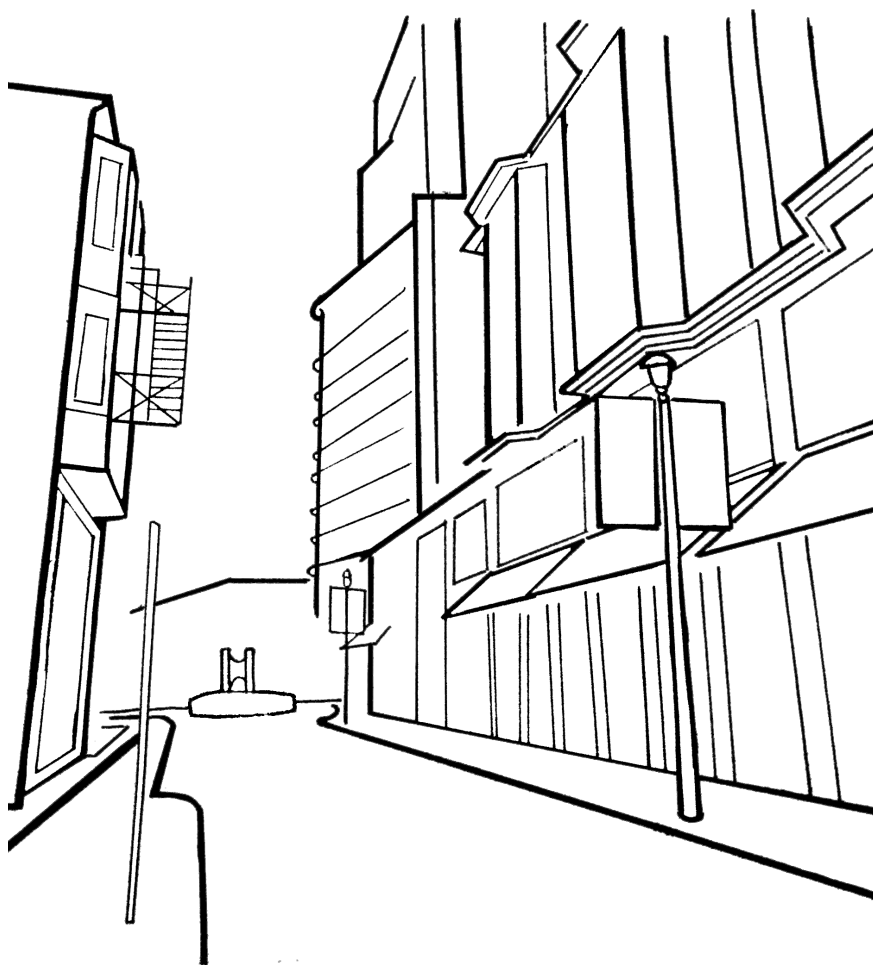
- Be mindful that no one group or person speaks for a whole community.
- Try to get stakeholders on board by engaging them throughout your planning when it's possible and appropriate.
- Speak to a variety of contrasting stakeholders: businesses, traditional retail, seniors, local residents, nonprofit community organizations, activists, tenants, youth groups etc.
- Consider whether to engage with community groups individually or combined.
- Consider speaking with community groups on site, not just over the phone or by email.
- Try to get a sense of what people really want to see happen in their neighbourhood.
- Try to see if your proposed idea could have unwanted effects on the people living and working there.

A black and white photograph of a brick building corner. The building has a weathered appearance with faded signs. On the left, there is a door with a small sign above it that has the Chinese character '中'. To the right of the door, there is a vertical sign with Chinese characters '華利' and '鐘修鏢整'. Below this, there is a sign that reads 'WAH LEE & CO. WATCHMAKER AND JEWELRY'. To the right of this sign, there is a large, faded sign that reads 'MARKET ALLEY'. The building is made of brick and has a small window on the upper right. The overall scene is a street corner in an urban area.

# PART II: POSSIBLE LANES FOR EVENTS

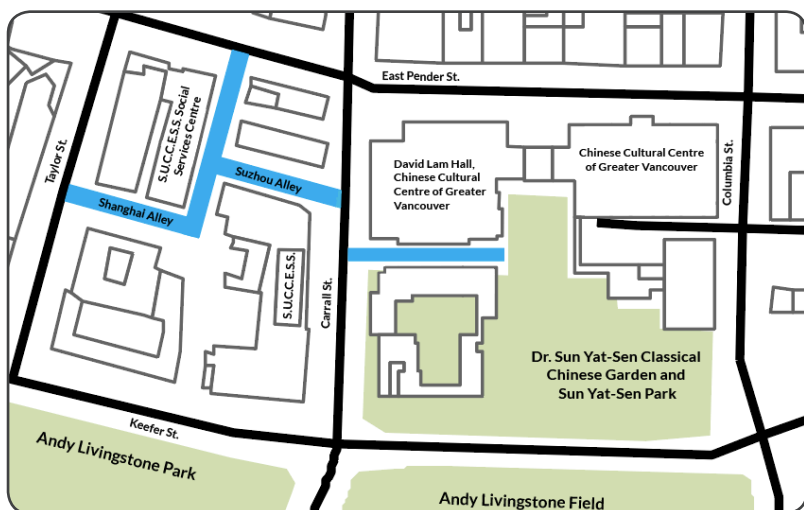
Market Alley at Columbia between Pender and Hastings, 1977. Photo: Paul Yee;  
City of Vancouver Archives

# SHANGHAI ALLEY AND SURROUNDING NETWORK



Looking south into Shanghai Alley from E Pender. Sketch: Jacqueline Hunter





For a detailed site map of this lane, see p. 51.

## Advantages

### High connectivity

**Shanghai Alley** is located between the highly pedestrianized West Pender Street and Taylor Street, with proximity to bike routes, transit routes, the Vancouver Chinatown Millennium Gate landmark, the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, the International Village Mall, Andy Livingstone Park and the Stadium–Chinatown SkyTrain station. Numerous parking spaces surround the lane, which could help draw in visitors.

A narrow pedestrian-only wayfinding path called **Suzhou Alley** intersects Shanghai Alley, connecting to Carrall Street. Presently underused, **Suzhou Alley** has high promise for small-

scale activation and placemaking and much greater potential for leading pedestrians directly to the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden across the street.

Across Carrall from Suzhou Alley, another lane (unnamed) runs perpendicular to Carrall between the garden and the Chinese Cultural Centre. This unnamed lane could also be used in activation. The lane is under the jurisdiction of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. It leads to an open courtyard that is under Park Board jurisdiction as well. (For opportunities around these lanes, see **Connections to Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden**, p. 21.)



Shanghai Alley, looking south.  
Photo: Stella L. Zhou



Suzhou Alley.  
Photo: Stella L. Zhou

## Advantages (cont'd)

### Minimal obstructions

There are no waste or recycling bins on Shanghai Alley that would need relocation during an activation. Emergency access could likely be accommodated and diverted to either Taylor or Pender Street. Vehicles could also be easily diverted from this lane.

### Existing cultural placemaking

Signage boards around Shanghai Alley explain Chinatown's cultural history. In the middle of the Allan Yip Circle roundabout stands the Han Dynasty Bell, given as a gift to Vancouver from its sister city of Guangzhou, China.

### Lighting

Shanghai Alley has both street lamps and ample sunlight. The neighbouring S.U.C.C.E.S.S. building provides wall space and an overhang that could potentially provide temporary rain/sun shelter.

### Smooth pavement

Mixed concrete and brick pavement makes Shanghai Alley promising to activate. Both Suzhou Alley and the unnamed lane alongside the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden are also smooth.



Existing cultural placemaking in Shanghai Alley.  
Photo: Jacqueline Hunter



Signposts for historic lanes.  
Photo: Stella L. Zhou

## Considerations

### Electrical power

The absence of visible power sources within Shanghai Alley could mean that you'd need to bring in sources, increasing your budget. That said, across Carrall Street, inside the courtyard next to the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, there are electric outlets managed by the garden and the Chinese Community Centre. (For information on activating those spaces and accessing power, see **Connections to Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden**, p. 21.)

### Residential access

You'll need to engage with the surrounding residential and commercial property owners. You should also notify neighbouring residential tenants of noise or activity that may arise from the activation. Consider parking and loading needs of the residential tenants around the lane as well.



Shanghai Alley activation idea. Sketch: Jacqueline Hunter



# This space would be great for

## Chinatown's seniors

Shanghai Alley and Suzhou Alley are located directly next to the S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Foundation, whose managed assisted living centre primarily serves local seniors. These lanes would be great for events accessible, inclusive and culturally appropriate for Chinatown's seniors.

## Mid-scale and small-scale events

Shanghai Alley would accommodate mid-scale events. Suzhou Alley, running perpendicular to Shanghai Alley, is very narrow and pedestrian-only. It could accommodate activations on an intimate scale, such as health-related booths, small book sales or tai chi classes.

## Permanent art and installations

The pedestrian-only Suzhou Alley would be a great place to install public art, create historical markers or paint a mural to continue the heritage themes already present in Shanghai Alley. This would also help invite visitors from Shanghai Alley to continue on to the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden. (For more detail about the opportunities around this

lane network, see **Connections to Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden**, below.)

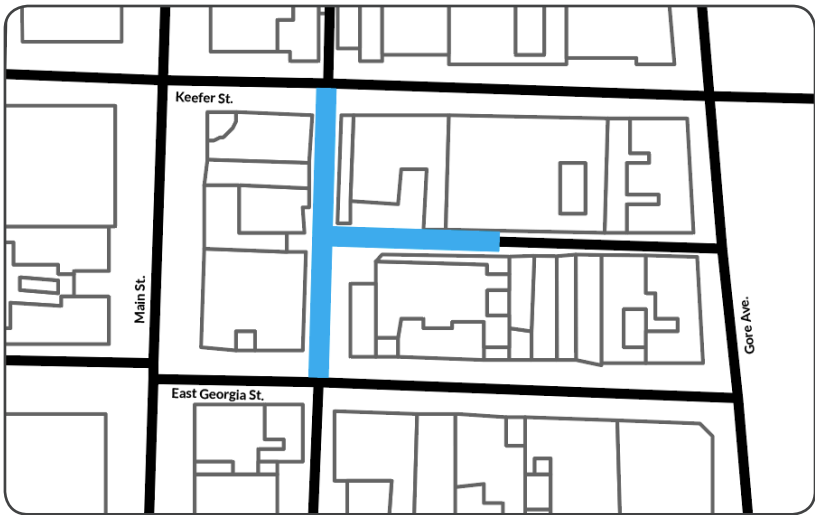
## Connections to Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden

Activating Shanghai Alley and its network could facilitate connections to other historical and cultural landmarks in Chinatown. As mentioned, Suzhou Alley connects Shanghai Alley to Carrall Street, creating a direct link to the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden across the street. There is excellent connectivity from Suzhou Alley to the unnamed lane intersecting Carrall that runs between the garden and the Chinese Community Centre (CCC) into an open courtyard. Both this unnamed lane and the courtyard are managed by the Vancouver Park Board. Inside the courtyard, there are electric outlets managed by the garden and the CCC. Please reach out to the garden for gaining power support through outlets inside and outside the garden. This will help you determine whether you need additional generators. You should also consult the Park Board on use of the courtyard and this lane by the garden.

## EAST OF MAIN STREET BETWEEN KEEFER AND GEORGIA



Looking south into the 'T-bone' lane from Keefer. Sketch: Jacqueline Hunter



For a detailed site map of this lane, see p. 52.

## Advantages

### Legacy businesses

This lane sits adjacent to several legacy businesses on Keefer Street, such as traditional grocers, bakeries, restaurants and herbal shops. These are a vital part of Chinatown's intangible heritage. These businesses attract a lot of foot traffic, making the lane feel safe and active.

### Artist-run studios and galleries

Many artist-run social enterprises, studios and galleries are nearby, including the Sun Wah Centre on Keefer.

### High connectivity

Bike routes, high pedestrianization and ample parking surround this lane. Main Street also provides easy transit access.

### Garage doors

Several garage doors opening onto this lane lead to restaurants that could be used for activation.

### Decent pavement

The lane has pavement in decent condition as well as drainage.

## Considerations

### High volume of loading and parking

Traffic would likely need diversion during a lane activation. It's possible that only a portion of the lane could be activated given the high amount of vehicle traffic. Weekend activations are preferable in this lane, as they'd avoid conflicts with weekday loading and deliveries.



Looking north down the lane from E Georgia.  
Photo: Stella L. Zhou

### Waste and recycling bins

There are 3 waste and recycling bins in this lane that might need temporary removal. The City of Vancouver's Sanitation and Engineering departments would need consultation, along with the adjacent property owners and tenants.



Local businesses close to lane.  
Photo: Stella L. Zhou

### Lack of lighting

There is a lack of lighting within this lane, except for some natural light.

### Lack of power sources

The absence of visible power sources within the lane could mean that you'd need to bring in sources, increasing your activation budget.



Garage doors that can be used for activation.  
Photo: Stella L. Zhou

## This space would be great for

### Celebrating Chinatown's legacy businesses

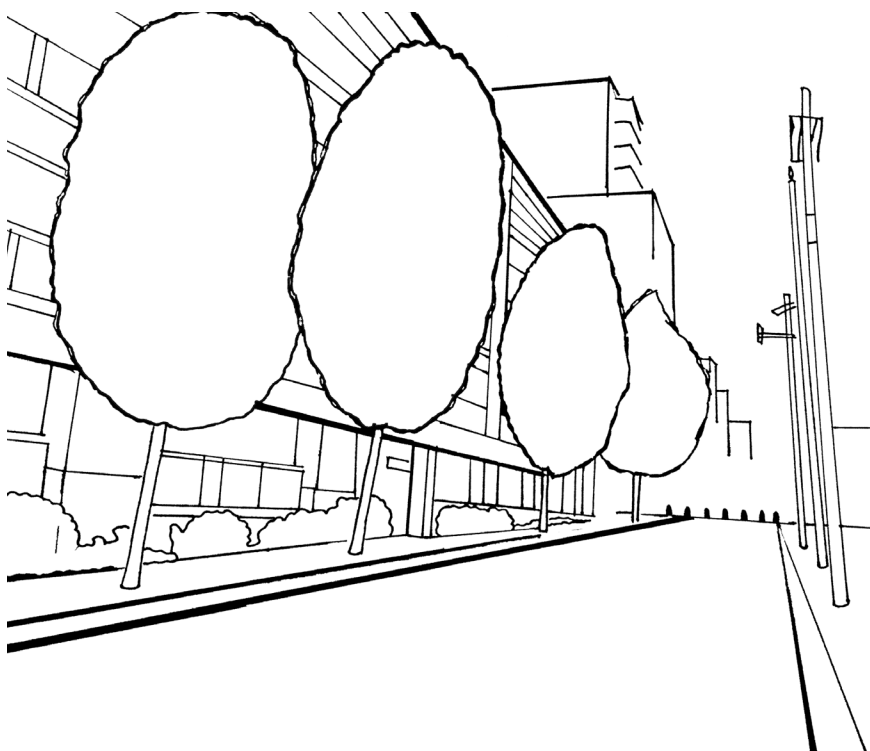
This lane is located next to several traditional grocers, restaurants, bakeries and herbal shops on Keefer.



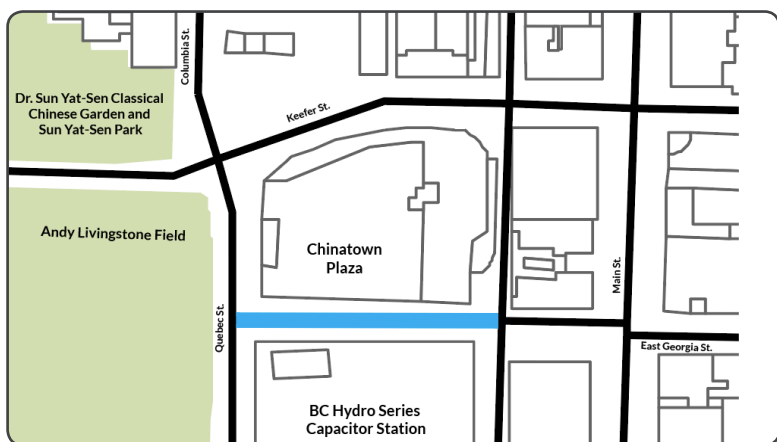
Potential activation idea for lane east of Main. Sketch: Jacqueline Hunter



## **SOUTH OF KEEFER STREET BETWEEN QUEBEC AND MAIN**



Lane lined with greenery. Sketch: Jacqueline Hunter



For a detailed site map of this lane, see p. 53.

## Advantages

### Spillover spaces

Several spillover spaces increase this lane's potential for activation, including performances. These include an adjacent lane between Keefer and E Georgia, a parking lot and a raised platform that presently houses a Mobi bike station.

### High connectivity

This lane is in a highly connected and accessible area, close to Andy Livingstone Park, China Creek skateboard park, an elementary school, transit routes, bike routes and parking facilities.

### Smooth pavement

The pavement is new from recent road improvements. Upgraded bike lanes surround the lane.

### Natural light

A high amount of natural light enters this space. There is street lighting, as well as light from the surrounding multi-storey parkade and residential buildings.

### Chinatown Plaza

The lane is next to Chinatown Plaza, a large retail building that houses several shops and offices. This attracts a lot of foot traffic, which adds to the sense of safety and security within the lane.

### Minimal obstructions

There are 3 waste and recycling bins in this lane tucked away in the neighbouring Chinatown Plaza's loading zone. However, these bins would probably not have to be relocated for an activation as they're not directly on the lane.

# Considerations

## BC Hydro jurisdiction

This lane is located beside the BC Hydro Series Capacitor Station and is thus under BC Hydro’s jurisdiction. To activate this lane, you’ll need permission from BC Hydro.

## Parkade access and loading zones

A large, multi-storey parkade and loading zones stand directly next to this lane. Access would need redirection during an activation.

## Lack of power sources

The absence of visible power sources within the lane could mean that you’d need to bring in sources, increasing your activation budget.



Looking east down the lane.  
Photo: Naomi W. Reichstein



BC Hydro station, south side of lane.  
Photo: Naomi W. Reichstein



Multiple spillover spaces for activation.  
Photo: Jacqueline Hunter

## This space would be great for

### Events and performances

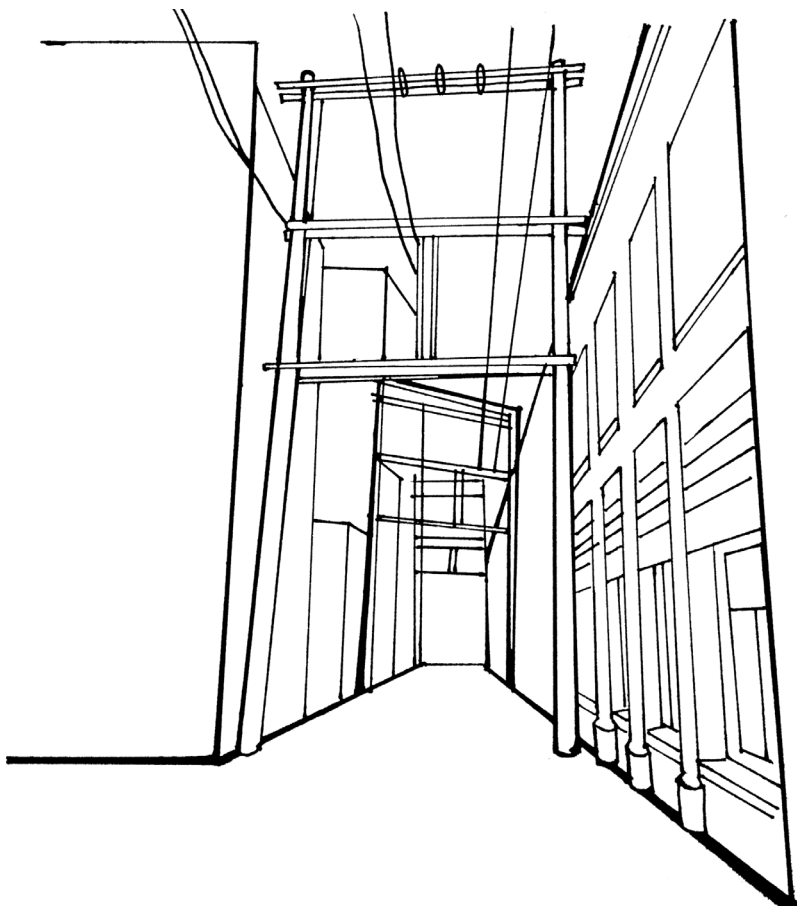
This very bright, spacious and open lane would be ideal for cultural events, performances and athletic demonstrations.



Potential activation for lane south of Keefer. Sketch: Jacqueline Hunter



## WEST OF MAIN STREET BETWEEN PENDER AND KEEFER



Looking south into the lane from East Pender.  
Sketch: Jacqueline Hunter



For a detailed site map of this lane, see p. 51.

## Advantages

### Chinatown community groups and organizations

This lane is close to a co-working space that houses many nonprofits, entrepreneurs, advocates and community groups familiar with Chinatown's public space, arts and culture. This could increase the capacity for activation in this space.

### Legacy businesses and restaurants

This lane is close to several legacy businesses, bakeries, Chinese gift shops, antique shops and traditional restaurants on both Keefer and Pender Street. These are a vital part of Chinatown's intangible heritage and could be celebrated in a laneway activation.

## Considerations

### High volume of loading and parking

Traffic would likely need diversion during a lane activation. Four highly trafficked parking spots serve clients of the Main and Pender CIBC branch. There's also a lot of loading activity within the lane. It's possible that only a portion of the lane could be activated given the high amount of vehicle traffic. Weekend activations would be preferable in this lane, avoiding conflicts with weekday loading and deliveries.

### Waste and recycling bins

There are 5 waste and recycling bins in this lane that would possibly need temporary removal. The City of Vancouver's Sanitation and Engineering departments would need consultation, along with adjacent property owners and tenants.

### Lack of power sources

The absence of visible power sources within the lane could mean that you'd need to bring in sources, increasing your activation budget.

### Garbage

A lot of garbage was observed in this lane, which would need cleaning up.



Looking north down the lane. Photo: Stella L. Zhou



Adjacent parking lot. Photo: Jacqueline Hunter

## This space would be great for

### Showcasing Chinatown's traditional food

This lane is close to many well-established legacy and traditional restaurants that could perhaps serve as vendors in a lane activation.

### Late-night activation

A number of Chinatown's nightclubs, cocktail bars, restaurants and other nightlife establishments are close to this lane, making it ideal for late-night activation.



Potential activation for lane west of Main. Sketch: Jacqueline Hunter





# PART III: TOOLS, PERMITS & FUNDING



Heritage architecture on Pender. Photo: Jacqueline Hunter

## NEIGHBOURHOOD FIT

If you're thinking of activating a lane in Chinatown, you'll need to ask yourself to what extent your idea will fit the neighbourhood.

**Neighbourhood fit** is both an idea and a tool developed by the City of Vancouver for the Downtown Eastside. The intent is to help new development fit into community context and serve local needs. Although Chinatown is a different neighbourhood, it's also a sensitive one. For this reason, we've adapted the tool to create a version for Chinatown. Using this tool can help you make sure that your activation serves the local population, respects heritage and improves the quality of the public realm without excluding or having negative effects on vulnerable people. To access the **neighbourhood fit tool**, see pp. 36–37.

## Ask yourself<sup>4</sup>

### 1. Is the site suitable for our proposed project or use?

- ☐ Strongly unsuitable
- ☐ Unsuitable
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Suitable
- ☐ Strongly suitable

### 2. Does our proposed project or use address a need in the community?

- ☐ Definitely does not address a need
- ☐ Does not address a need
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat addresses a need
- ☐ Definitely addresses a need

### 3. Will our proposal benefit or negatively affect local communities, including vulnerable ones?

- ☐ Strongly negatively impact
- ☐ Negatively impact
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Benefit
- ☐ Strongly benefit

### 4. Should our project proceed as is? Should it be changed, and if so, why?

- ☐ Should not proceed
- ☐ Changes need to be made
- ☐ Should proceed as is

(continued on p. 33)

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Neighbourhood Fit Considerations – Helping Development and Businesses to Meet Social Impact Objectives in the Downtown Eastside (D'TES), February 29, 2016, Vancouver: City of Vancouver, Planning and Development Services, <https://bylaws.vancouver.ca/bulletin/N004.pdf>.



# Rate your project

Think about your project. For each goal below, rate your project on a scale of 0–4. You may find that most projects will tend to fall in the 1–3 range on many goals.

- 0 – Does not contribute to goals at all
- 1 – Makes small contribution to goals
- 2 – Makes some contribution to goals
- 3 – Makes significant contribution to goals
- 4 – Exceptional: goes clearly ‘above and beyond’ in contributing to goals

	0	1	2	3	4
Hires local people, including people with barriers					
Purchases and/or resells local goods and services					
Provides needed, low-cost goods and/or services for residents					
Includes low-income and/or other vulnerable communities					
Fits neighbourhood (heritage, scale, urban pattern, social and community context)					
Improves quality, accessibility and inclusiveness of public spaces					
Retains, preserves or celebrates arts and culture of Chinatown					
Supports health, social services and/or affordable housing in community					
Provides community amenities and/or gathering spaces					



# CHECKLIST & TIMELINE

Here's how to host a lane event! Timelines will vary depending on the scope of your project. Other lane activations within the City of Vancouver have taken at least 1 year to execute. Included are a checklist of considerations and rough timeline to help you. For more information and examples of other lane activation timelines, visit [More Awesome Now's Laneway Learning Guide](#).

## 1–1.5 YEAR(S) BEFORE EVENT

- Develop event concept, approach potential partners and start engaging with neighbourhood residents and local businesses.
- Secure funding through grants, partnerships and donors. (See **Funding streams**, pp. 39–42).
- Brainstorm event design and draft site map.

## 6 MONTHS BEFORE EVENT

- Secure necessary permits for street closures, food, alcohol, markets, etc. (See **Permits you'll need**, pp. 43–47.)
- Liaise with property owners and tenants directly adjacent to event location to let them know if dumpsters and bins are being relocated, if delivery schedules will be impacted, etc.
- If a lane needs cleaning, contact City of Vancouver to see if it can be flushed down prior to event.
- Finalize event design and site map.

## 3 MONTHS BEFORE EVENT

- Secure event rentals (e.g., chairs, tables, generators).
- Secure volunteers to assist with setup, takedown and other event-day activities.

## 1–3 MONTHS BEFORE EVENT

- Market event and engage with media (including local Chinese-Canadian and English-language channels).

# FUNDING STREAMS

Here are some grant and funding opportunities that can help offset costs.

## City of Vancouver grants and awards

Every year, the City of Vancouver awards funding to artists and nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. Here are some of the City's [grants and awards](#) that could apply to Chinatown lane events:

### **Community Arts Grant Program**

Community-based art projects or events are eligible for funding to assist with planning, execution or promotion.

### **Creative City Strategic Grant Program**

Supports new and existing projects that advance principles of reconciliation, equity and access, investment and visibility, capacity or collaboration.

### **Cultural Grants Program**

An arts or cultural nonprofit that produces ongoing arts and cultural activities, projects or events may be eligible for funding through project grants, annual assistance grants and operating grants.

### **Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program**

Funding is available to help a nonprofit buy, build, renovate or expand a cultural space.

### **Grants to offset City services costs**

The City of Vancouver's Film and Special Events Office may offer financial relief of up to \$2,000 to eligible nonprofits to offset certain eligible City service costs incurred during special events.

### **Green Grants**

The Greenest City Fund supports projects that help achieve Vancouver's goal of becoming the greenest city in the world.

### **Public Art Community Grants**

The City provides grants to support small-scale public art projects produced by Vancouver-based organizations working with practicing artists and communities.

### **Neighbourhood Matching Fund**

Fund supports neighbourhood-based groups that want to make creative improvements to local public lands.

## Provincial grants

### BC Arts Council Enhanced Capacity Assistance

Helps arts and cultural entities increase organizational sustainability and capacity.

### Community Resilience through Arts and Culture Program

Supports arts and cultural initiatives by and for local communities. Focuses on communities experiencing hardship, historic oppression or other challenges.

### Heritage Legacy Fund

Offers support for community initiatives that conserve and increase understanding and appreciation of heritage resources.

## Federal grants

### Canada Cultural Spaces Fund

Supports improvement of physical conditions for artistic creativity and innovation.

### Canada Heritage Grant for Building Communities through Arts and Heritage

Supports community celebrations, such as festivals, events and projects.

### Canada Heritage Grants for Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives Program

Supports initiatives that build on Canada's strength as a diverse, inclusive society. Has three funding components: events, projects and community capacity-building. [Events](#) component provides funding to community-based events that promote intercultural understanding, civic memory and celebration of a community's history and culture.

### Canada History Fund

Encourages Canadians to improve their knowledge about Canada's history. Supports production of learning materials and creation or maintenance of networks.

### Canada Summer Jobs

Provides wage subsidies to employers from nonprofit organizations, the public sector and small private sector organizations to create summer work experiences for people aged 15–30.

### Commemorate Canada

Funds initiatives that commemorate and celebrate historical figures, places, events and accomplishments of national significance.



Selling Chinese New Year decorations. Photo: Stella L. Zhou

## Banks, nonprofits, credit unions and businesses

### Central City Foundation

Grants support programs that enhance inner-city communities that provide economic opportunity.

### Neighbourhood Small Grants

Vancouver Foundation gives grants from \$50 to \$500 to support projects that bring people together, share skills and knowledge, build a sense of belonging and responsibility, and respect and celebrate diversity.

### Real Estate Foundation

Funds initiatives that transform real-estate and land-use practices throughout B.C. General and special grant programs are available to eligible nonprofits, municipalities, regional districts,

First Nations, senior government departments, professional associations and other entities.

### TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

Supports a wide range of environmental initiatives, with focus on environmental education, urban greening, biodiversity enhancement and energy conservation.

### Vancity Foundation and Community Grants

Foundation focuses on nonprofit social enterprises, community-owned real estate (including housing) and collaborative approaches toward change. Funding criteria and application processes vary across foundation's granting programs.



## Other types of funding options to explore

- Nonprofit fiscal sponsors that can funnel grants and charitable donations
- Public-private partnerships that can help realize community-led initiatives on the ground
- Funding or in-kind contributions from surrounding businesses, organizations, property owners or tenants willing to provide sponsorship or services in exchange for the publicity of being connected to your project
- Crowdsourcing campaigns



# PERMITS YOU'LL NEED

## Apply to hold a special event

### Events on streets, sidewalks and public plazas

To hold an event on a street, sidewalk or public plaza, apply for a [Special Event Permit](#) through the City of Vancouver's Film and Special Events Office (FASE). Once the application is processed, a special event liaison will let you know if any additional information or permits are needed. You may be asked to submit:

- Site plan
- Production schedule
- Traffic management plan
- Safety and security plan

### Events in parks

To hold an event in a park and on the seawall, fill in a [Special Event Permit Application](#) through the Vancouver Park Board Special Events Office. You will need to email a detailed site map and/or route map to [parkevents@vancouver.ca](mailto:parkevents@vancouver.ca). Once your application receives conditional approval, you will need to provide:

- Proof of liability insurance
- Event budget
- Detailed schedule of event activities
- [Green events waste management form](#)

### Timeline

The length of time required for approval varies with event size and nature. You should apply for small to medium-sized events with street closures and/or parking requirements 2–3 months in advance. Apply for larger and route-based events (parades and runs) 4–6 months in advance. Applications for events in parks must be received at least 4 months in advance of the event date.

### Application fees and permit charges

- City events organized by nonprofits: **\$100**
- City events organized by commercial or corporate organizations: **\$200**
- Park events: **\$30**
- Additional permit fees: **variable**

*\*Note: Depending on the nature of your event, you may also need additional permits.*

**For more information on fees and permits, visit the City of Vancouver's website for [special events on public property](#).**

## Cleanliness

You're responsible for leaving the area clean and litter-free; otherwise you'll be charged. As part of your event application, you must fill in a [Green Event Application Form](#) that explains how you'll minimize your event's environmental impact.

**You can manage waste and recycling disposal by either:**

**[Applying for City waste or recycling service and equipment](#)**

The City can provide waste and recycling totes for an event for a fee, as well as equipment like water fountains, bike racks and signage. Services include delivery, pickup and cost of waste disposal. The website includes tools to help estimate the costs of City waste and recycling services.

**Or:**

**[Removing event waste or recycling by yourself](#)**

If you hire a business or manage event waste and recycling yourself, you must tell the City your plans in the green event application form. Staff are also available to help with your plan.

**For more information, visit the City of Vancouver's website for [greening your event](#).**

## Insurance

You need liability insurance to use City or Park Board property for an event. Insurance requirements for events or activities on City or Park Board facilities are a minimum coverage of \$2,000,000 commercial general liability against third-party claims for bodily injury, death, property and loss of use. You may need higher coverage and a license agreement depending on your event.

*\*Note: Don't purchase insurance until you've received conditional approval from the FASE office.*

**For more information, visit the City of Vancouver's website for [insurance requirements and facility use](#).**

## Food

You'll need a temporary food application from Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) if you serve or sell food OR liquor to the public. If other individuals or companies provide food at your event, you're responsible for ensuring that they have the necessary VCH permits. You'll have to gather contact information from all vendors providing food or liquor at your event.

You'll need to submit, at least 14 days in advance of the event date, the following documents to an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) at VCH:

- Event application forms
  - [Temporary Event Coordinator Application Form](#)
  - Completed, separate [Temporary Food Service Application Form](#) from each food vendor
  - (If applicable) Completed [Applications for Sale of Higher Risk Food at Temporary Markets](#) from food market vendors

*\*Note: This application form should be submitted at least 30 days in advance of event date.*

- Electronic spreadsheet of all vendors participating at event
- Detailed site plan and floor plans, including primary and alternative power sources, and drinking water bottle filling stations
- Event site sanitation plan, including details for liquid and solid waste disposal and schedule for cleaning of public toilet facilities

*\*Note: Service fees will be charged for incomplete applications or those submitted after the 14-day deadline. Applications received late may be denied outright.*

**For more information, visit Vancouver Coastal Health's website for [food service permits](#).**





## Alcohol

In addition to [VCH temporary food application\(s\)](#), you'll need a permit from the [BC Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch](#) if you intend to sell and serve liquor at your event.

### Application fees

- Public special events: **\$100** licence fee per day/ location
- Private special events: **\$25** licence fee per day/ location

For more information, visit BC Liquor's [Special Event Permits – Terms and Conditions Handbook](#).

## Goods and services

If you plan to sell goods or services other than food and beverages, apply for a [Special Event Market Permit](#). Organizers can also raise funds by charging vendors to sell their goods or services within event boundaries.

For more information or to apply, contact the City of Vancouver's [Film and Special Events Office](#).

## Noise

Noise and amplification should not cause unreasonable disturbance. As a general rule, no disruptive noise should occur in a City street, public plaza or open space after 10 pm.

For more information, refer to the [City of Vancouver's Noise Control By-law](#).



## Development permits

You need a development permit for:

- New construction
- Addition and exterior alterations (including paint)
- Changes of use to a building or land
- Demolitions of buildings

Development permit applications typically take 8–14 weeks to process.

**For more information, visit the City of Vancouver's [development permit](#) website.**

## Building permits

If you need a development permit for construction and renovation, you'll also need building permit(s). You need a building permit for structural elements, such as:

- Adding or reconfiguring electrical
- Attaching or mounting features to buildings

- Modifying structures
- Penetrating façades (or otherwise modifying the building envelope)
- A development permit needs to be issued before you apply for a building permit, but a simpler project may qualify for a combined development-building permit.

**For more information, visit the City of Vancouver's [building permit](#) website.**

## Outdoor murals

To create an outdoor mural, you'll need permission from the property owner, and you'll need to apply to the City of Vancouver's Mural Support Program. This program can help supply paint, can provide anti-graffiti coating and can prime a wall for painting.

**For more information and eligibility requirements, visit the City of Vancouver's [Mural Support Program](#) website.**



E Pender and Carrall St. Photo: Stella L. Zhou

## City of Vancouver's Chinatown Transformation Team

For assistance with permitting, funding and other processes involved with lane activation in Chinatown, email the City of Vancouver's Chinatown Transformation Team at [chinatown@vancouver.ca](mailto:chinatown@vancouver.ca).

Or drop by their office hours at Chinatown House (188 East Pender Street):

- Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: 10am to 4pm
- Tuesday: 1pm to 4pm

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# ICON CREDITS

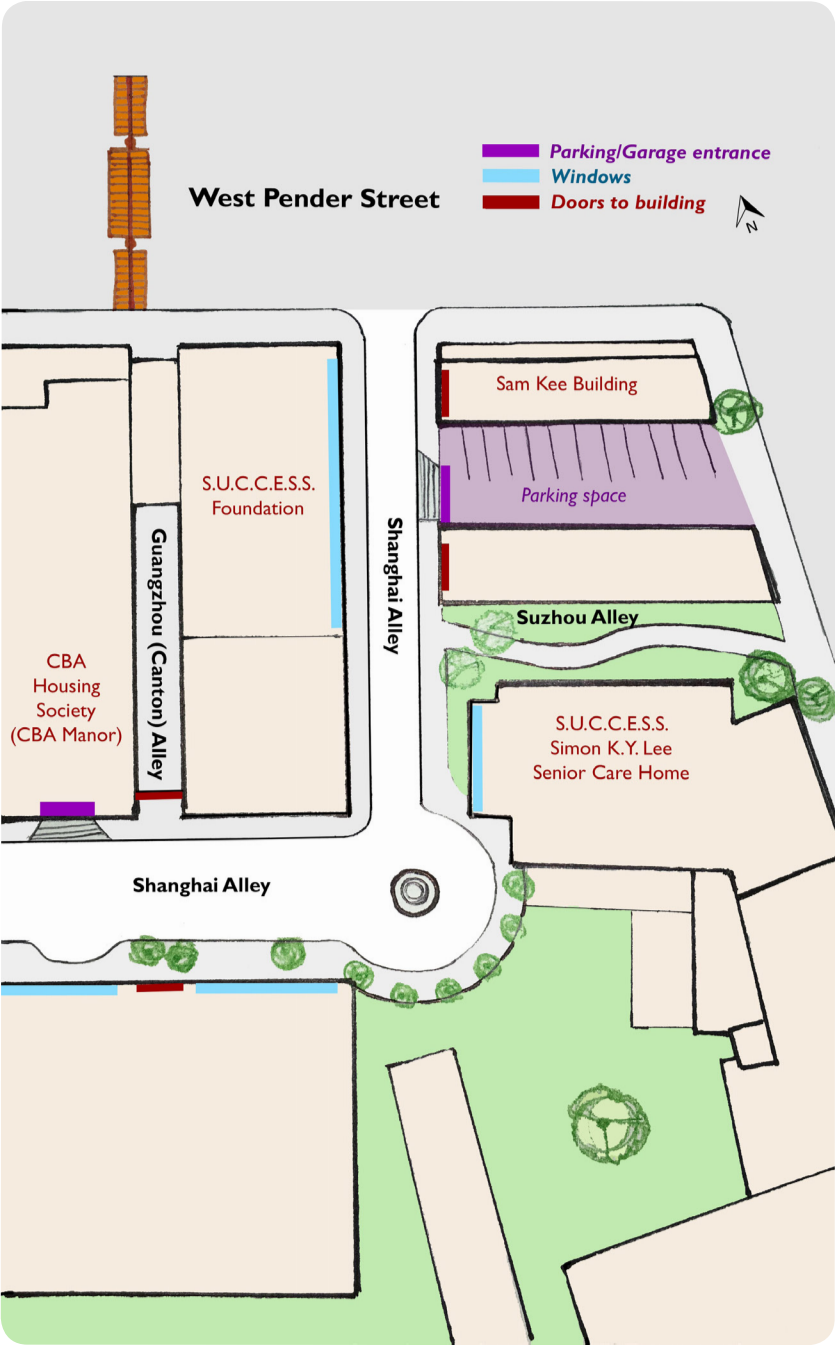
- House by Buena Buena from [the Noun Project](#)
- Public space by LA Great Streets from [the Noun Project](#)
- Store by Rafael Empinotti from [the Noun Project](#)



# APPENDIX

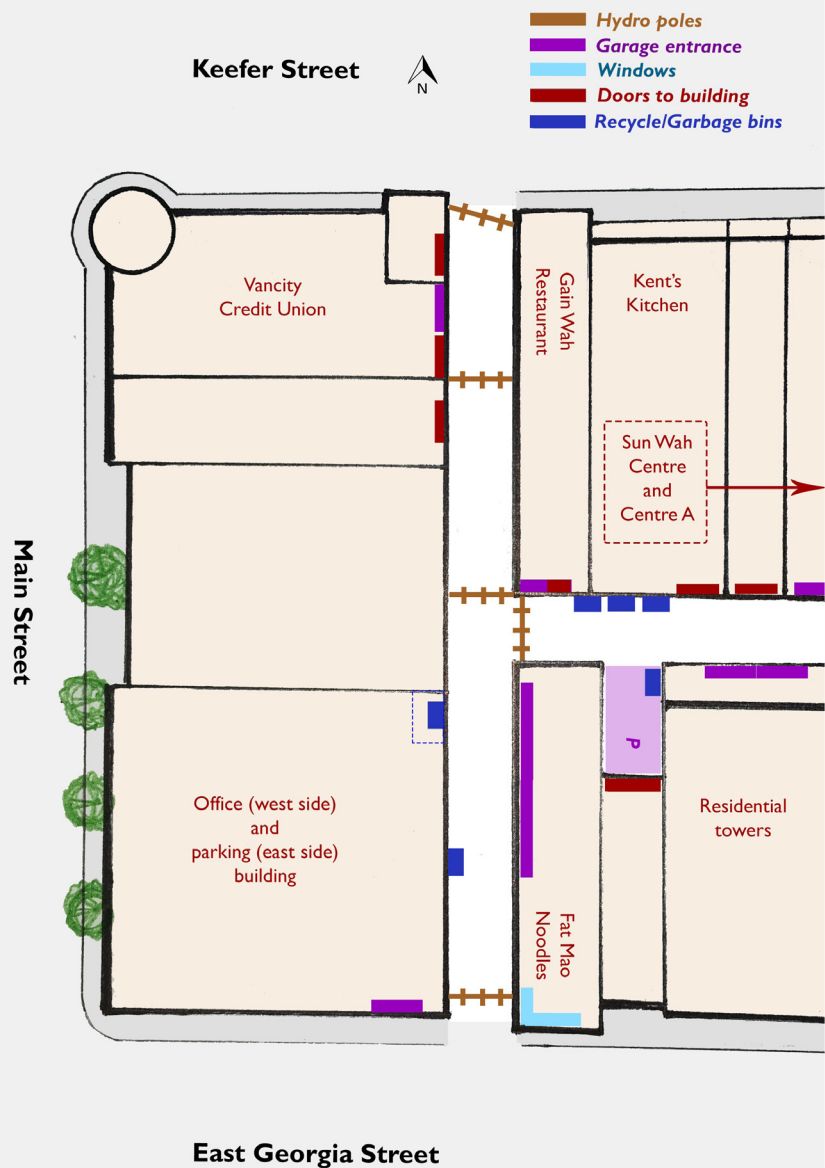


# Site map: Shanghai Alley and surrounding network

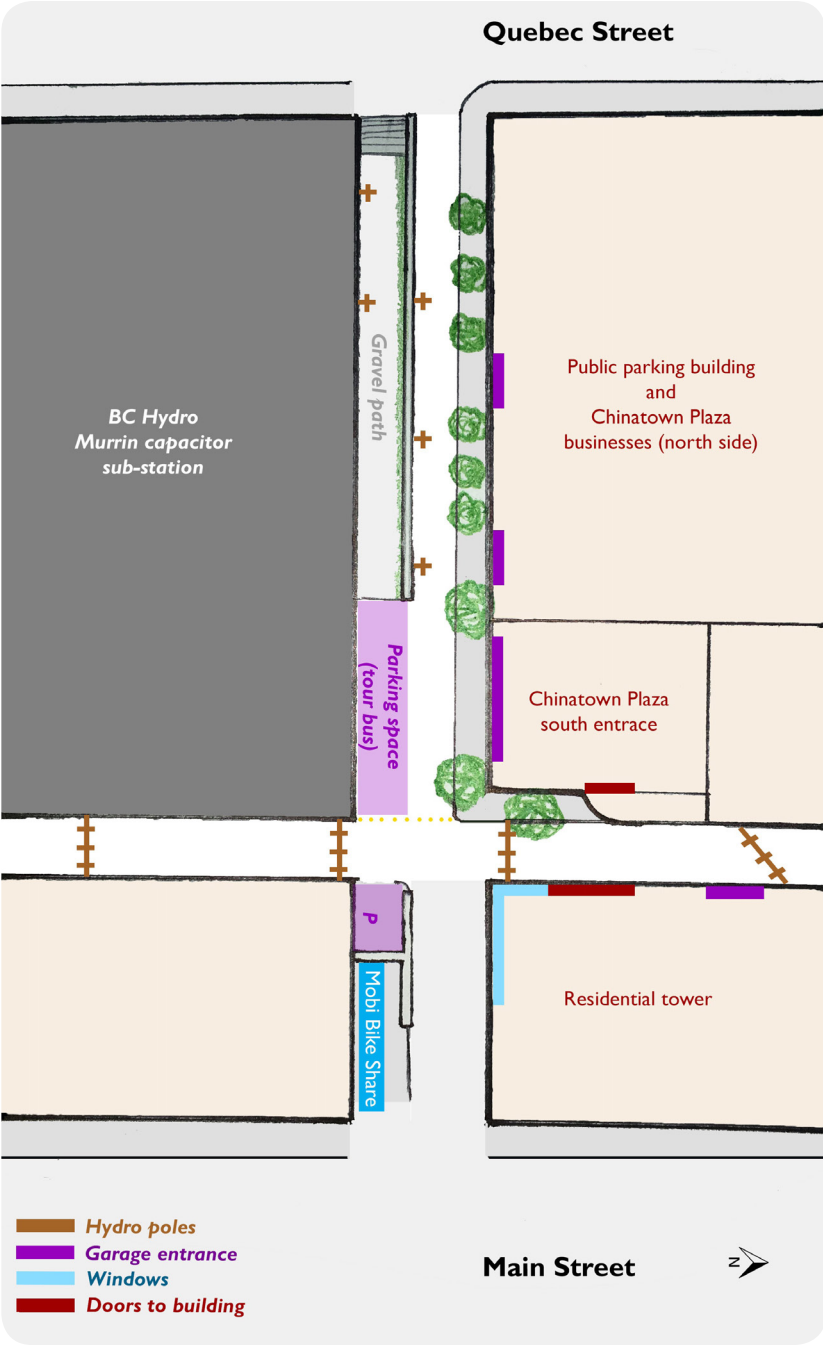




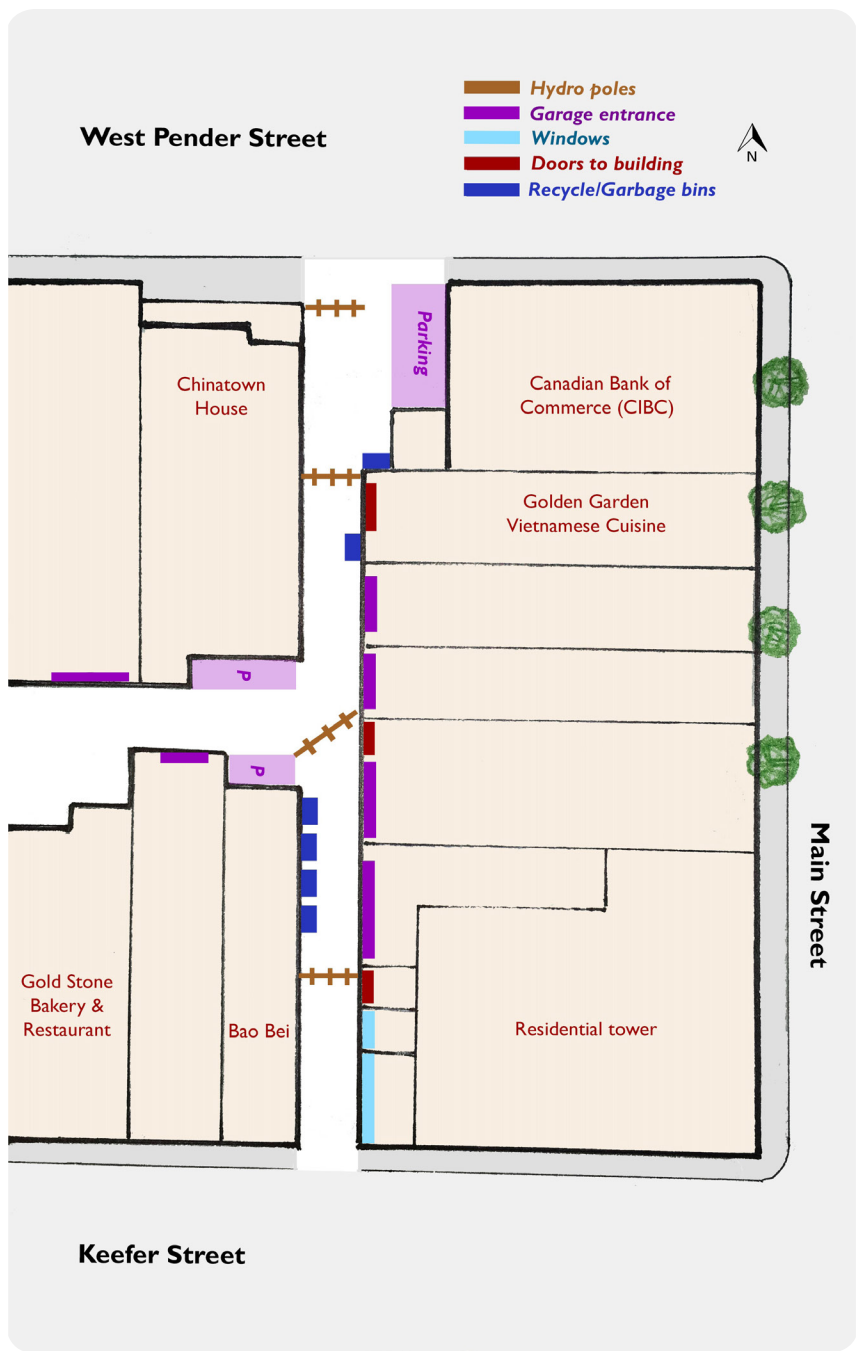
# Site map: East of Main Street between Keefer and Georgia



# Site map: South of Keefer Street between Quebec and Main



# Site map: West of Main Street between Pender and Keefer





Chinatown Millennium Gate, Vancouver. Photo: Stella L. Zhou

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