

CHINATOWN COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

January 2025 – December 2027 Community Investment Plan

Section 1. Community or constituency

Our primary population is Boston Chinatown’s residential community. Chinatown CLT serves residents of all ages and cultural backgrounds, with a particular emphasis on preserving the historic immigrant, working class core. A secondary yet important population are the stakeholders and Greater Boston Chinese American community, including former residents, small business owners and community activists for whom Boston Chinatown serves as a regional social, cultural, political, and economic hub.

Chinatown spans approximately 137 acres near the heart of downtown Boston. The community considers Chinatown to be roughly bound by Essex Street to the north, Surface Road to the east, East Berkeley Street to the south, and Tremont/Charles Streets to the west, but important concentrations of the Chinese population in pockets of the Ladder District, Theater District, and the South End within affordable housing developments are part of the Greater Chinatown community, complicating demographic data analysis. (See maps and data tables in Appendices.)

Our Chinatown Master Plan 2020 report revealed that Asian Americans are approximately 48.2% of the 11,528 population of the Chinatown/Downtown area. Gentrification has increased disparities, with white median household income at \$113,678 compared to the Asian median at \$17,997 in Chinatown/Downtown (ACS 2013-2017).¹

Chinatown’s two core census tracts (702.01, 702.02) have a population of 7,475 (45.7% Asian).² Approximately 62.4% of households speak a language other than English at home, and 45.1% of the population is foreign-born.

Chinatown, while still anchoring very low income, immigrant working class families, today is a highly polarized neighborhood due to two decades of luxury high-rise development. Over 51% of households had an income of \$49,999 or below in these two census tracts. More than 20% of households had an income of \$200,000 or more, while a third are living in poverty.

This area includes 3,839 housing units, of which approximately 98% are in multi-unit buildings, with about 93% of those being renter households. Median home value in the tract that includes both luxury and affordable housing was \$1,458,300, in comparison to

¹ Chinatown Master Plan 2020, from ACS 2013-2018 data, MAPC

² American Community Survey 2018-2022 5-year census tract profiles

the tract with few luxury apartments at \$556,800. Similarly, 72.3% of units in Tract 702.01 (including luxury developments) had electric heat, compared to 64.7% of units in Tract 702.02 (including older row house streets). In this census tract, 22.9% of homes were built prior to 1939 (many built in the 19th century).

Section 2. Involvement of community residents and stakeholders

Community involvement in governance is central to the mission of Chinatown CLT, which focuses on engaging residents, small business owners, former residents, and other community stakeholders to make decisions about community issues. A majority (60%) of our board members are community residents, including one CLT resident, with others being former residents (20%) or other longtime activists. Half of the board are renters, 80% Chinese American, 80% low/moderate income according to HUD guidelines, and 70% are foreign-born. All board members are elected by community residents.

Chinatown CLT increased membership by 24% in Fiscal Year 2023 over the prior year, and engaged more than 119 volunteers in its work, increasing the variety of engagement activities as we emerged from the COVID pandemic.

Below are highlights of some recent community involvement activities:

- 16 building-based workshops and tenant meetings (including about 50 regular participants in buildings where tenants are at risk of displacement)
- 12 community meetings & actions related to reform of zoning and development review
- 8 meetings or activities related to environmental and open space advocacy
- More than 500 people signed petitions or sent emails about zoning reform, TOPA, and funding of affordable housing
- 90 community members participated in Reggie Wong Park Day to highlight community demands and offer feedback on proposed improvement plans
- Over 300 residents participated in the annual Chinatown Block Party, with interactive stations focused on community resilience

In addition to providing a variety of opportunities for casual community involvement, Chinatown CLT either facilitates or supports numerous ongoing committees for Chinatown residents and stakeholders to develop governance and leadership roles in decision-making. Some of these participatory committees are listed below.

Chinatown Master Plan Committee - *cofacilitate*

Chinatown Resident Association - *support*

Open Space Committee - *facilitate*

Friends of Reggie Wong Park - *support*

Chinatown Power/Chinatown Microgrid Committee - *facilitate*

Immigrant History Trail Committee - *facilitate*

Row House Preservation Team - *facilitate*

29 Oak Street Leasehold Condominium Trust - *support*

95 Hudson Street Leasehold Condominium Trust - *facilitate*

8 Oxford Place Tenants Committee - *facilitate*

Mass Pike Towers Tenants Association – *support*

Section 3. Plan goals

Goal 1. Preserve affordable homes and commercial spaces.

Chinatown CLT has a particular focus on removing small properties in Chinatown from the speculative market to preserve them as permanently affordable, resident-controlled housing. We also seek opportunities to preserve affordable commercial space, particularly in small mixed-used properties. These small properties tend to house Chinatown's most vulnerable residents and small family businesses. The organization uses 99-year ground leases to ensure permanent affordability and remains involved as a stakeholder in supporting the ground lease tenants.

Goal 2. Plan and advance a Chinatown historic and cultural district.

Chinatown/South Cove has nearly 200 years of history as an immigrant, working class neighborhood, yet was only recognized as a residential neighborhood in 1990. Chinatown CLT is redefining "preservation" to focus not only on architecture and buildings but also on Chinatown's history, character, and ongoing role as an anchor for immigrant working class families and small businesses. The historic and cultural district strategy includes many initiatives, from historic and cultural designation to new documentation and public art projects that support this narrative.

Goal 3. Work for environmental justice and a resilient neighborhood.

Chinatown has suffered from a history of urban renewal, railroad and highway construction, institutional expansion, and discriminatory zoning practices, making it the environmental justice community it is today. The neighborhood is the hottest location in the city, is vulnerable to flooding, and has the highest levels of particulate air pollution in Massachusetts. With increased priority on environmental justice at all levels of government, Chinatown CLT seeks to secure tangible gains in open space, green infrastructure, and energy justice for Chinatown.

Goal 4. Grow independent, community owned resources

As Chinatown CLT pioneers important experiments in collective control and governance of shared resources, one of our goals is to grow community ownership and wealth. Through these initiatives, we both protect community assets and involve residents and stakeholders in participatory decision-making. This work includes growing a Row House Preservation Fund, the Greater Boston CLT Fund, and co-development of the Chinatown Microgrid.

Section 4. Activities to be undertaken

Goal 1: Preserve permanently affordable homes and commercial spaces

The Row House Preservation Project involves:

Acquisition of small properties to preserve as permanently affordable, resident-governed homes or permanently affordable commercial space. We now have sold seven (7) permanently affordable condominiums to low-income, first-time homebuyers and continue to work with and support the two condo associations. We also have stabilized four (4) households in an occupied rental property. Chinatown CLT is currently negotiating for acquisition of other small residential and mixed use properties.

Community governance means that residents make collective decisions about their homes. As a non-voting member of the condo associations on CLT land, we continue to support the condo associations. Renters are involved in planning and decision-making about property renovations and management, and we work with tenants to explore both cooperative housing and rent-to-own models. Due to the challenges of small scattered-site property management, we are working with the Greater Boston CLT Network and Common Good Management to launch a shared property management solution for area CLT properties.

Community organizing is a core piece of our acquisition strategy. By working closely with tenants at risk of displacement and other residents community-wide, we encourage building owners to work with us to keep tenants in place if they plan to sell their buildings. We also will continue to advocate for policies that counter displacement and promote neighborhood stabilization.

Zoning reform is a central point of our advocacy, focused on stricter height and massing guidelines as well as use restrictions and procedures to support neighborhood stabilization. . Our zoning campaign has focused on 1) correcting historic inequities, 2) expanding and defining historic Protection Areas, and 3) embedding community planning priorities from the Chinatown Master Plan into the code. We will continue to engage residents as well as the Chinatown Master Plan Committee throughout the process, with BPDA expected to release its zoning proposals for Chinatown this spring.

Goal 2: Plan and advance a Chinatown historic and cultural district

We will work to define the historic and cultural district as one which celebrates and maintains the neighborhood as an anchor for immigrant, working class families.

Historic Conservation District - Chinatown CLT will work with residents, stakeholders, and partners to research and petition the City for an architectural conservation district, proposing a slate of members to appoint to a Historic District Commission to define characteristics, standards and guidelines, and to oversee

preservation. Upcoming activities include involving both property owners and tenants at risk of displacement in defining goals and building support, launching historic research to prepare the petition, and strengthening partnerships in the historic preservation sector.

Cultural District: We are currently working with Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, several neighborhood groups, and the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture on a Cultural Plan for Chinatown, which will become an application to establish Chinatown as a Cultural District. The collaborative planning process is as important as the designation itself: We seek to strengthen partnerships between social-practice artists and community groups, weave a variety of public art and cultural events to strengthen community fabric and a common place-keeping narrative, and improve cross-departmental city planning for working class residents and small family businesses to thrive.

Immigrant History Trail: This public art and place-keeping project celebrates immigrant working class history. The project involves fabricating and installing physical photographic markers throughout the community that include a QR code to scan to hear a story and access a website of archival photographs and documents. We will launch four trail markers and the website this year, hosting a spring and summer promotional event, and will continue to expand trail markers over the next several years, working with a volunteer governance committee.

Worker Statues Project: We are partnering with artist Wen-ti Tsen to serve as fiscal/administrative and community support for his Chinatown Worker Statue Project, which will place life-sized bronze statues of Chinese immigrant laborers at four points around Chinatown. Four potential sites have been identified in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, with public review of siting in 2024 and installations expected in 2025.

Goal 3. Work for environmental justice and a resilient neighborhood.

Green Infrastructure and Open Space: Chinatown CLT is working with *Friends of Reggie Wong Park* to execute its \$1/year lease from MassDOT that will secure this recreational park's future, implement Phase 2 soil remediation of the site, and begin design of park improvements with a focus on both community uses and climate resilience. We will select a landscape design firm this summer and expect Phase 2 soil remediation to begin in the fall. In December 2023, we successfully organized to end Tufts Shared Services' parking permit for a piece of land envisioned for a *Chinatown Library Park* and will continue to organize to secure this site. Working with other stakeholders through the Chinatown HOPE initiative, we have also won the City's commitment to implementing Phase 2 redesign of Phillips Square ("tactical urban plaza" on Harrison Avenue).

Chinatown Microgrid: Chinatown CLT and the Chinese Progressive Association are launching a community-owned energy micro-grid to reduce emissions, increase resiliency, and share cost-savings, literally putting power into the hands of those most impacted by environmental injustice. The microgrid plan includes energy efficiency measures, backup generators, battery storage, solar panels, and cloud-based controls to optimize energy use. Our most immediate benchmark will be installations to pilot the concept at Mass Pike Towers, a 200-unit affordable housing development. Due to the pioneering nature of this design, we anticipate that the rest of the Phase 1 installation, at seven other multi-family affordable housing projects, may be complete in two to three years. We will also begin to organize around demands for a community solar field on DOT land.

Goal 4. Grow independent, community owned resources

Row House Preservation Fund: Chinatown CLT continues to raise more than \$100,000 annually in private donations to help us move nimbly and flexibly in our preservation efforts.

CLT Loan Fund: We are working with CLT partners and Local Enterprise Assistance Fund (LEAF) on a shared loan fund that focuses on removing property from the private market and piloting new models, and exploring an expanded facility with partners such as National Cooperative Bank.

Co-development of microgrid: Chinatown CLT and the Chinese Progressive Association have incorporated Chinatown Power Inc. as a public benefit corporation to codevelop and govern the Chinatown Microgrid, in partnership with Working Power and Consigli Construction.

Section 5. How success will be measured and/or evaluated

Success will be evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative measures.

Goal 1: Preserving affordable homes and commercial spaces

- Measures of success and progress will include:
- Number of properties in negotiation with owners
- Number of affordable units in predevelopment phase
- Number of properties acquired
- Number of affordable units preserved and/or households stabilized
- Progress toward or passage of protective zoning code amendments

Goal 2: Plan and advance a historic and cultural district

Measures of success and progress will include:

- Number and diversity of community members involved and engaged
- Number of meetings, workshops, and events held
- Project benchmarks achieved (i.e. Cultural Plan published, historic commission appointed, district status application submitted, approved)
- Documentation of lessons learned

Goal 3: Work for environmental justice and a resilient neighborhood

Measures of success and progress will include:

- Progress achieved toward open space improvement/expansion
- Benchmarks reached toward microgrid installation
- Community members involved in open space and microgrid planning
- Number of meetings, workshops and activities to address resilience issues

Goal 4: Grow independent, community-owned resources

Measures of success and progress will include:

- Dollars raised for the Row House Preservation Fund
- Dollars raised for the shared CLT Fund or facility
- Benchmarks reached in co-development agreements for the microgrid
- Community members involved in planning and decision-making

Section 6. Collaborative efforts to support implementation

Chinatown CLT is involved in a variety of partnerships and collaborations to promote a stable future for Chinatown and to advocate for community stabilization policies for all neighborhoods. Below are some core collaborative efforts.

Chinatown Master Plan Committee is a monthly, unfunded roundtable of Chinatown resident and stakeholder representatives to share neighborhood development news, promote open communication across organizations/sectors, and monitor the implementation of the Chinatown Master Plan. Chinatown CLT's executive director was a founding member, and the committee continues to be co-facilitated by the directors of Chinatown CLT and the Asian CDC. Regular participants also come from the Chinatown Resident Association, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, Chinese Economic Development Council, Chinatown Main Street, Chinese Progressive Association, Josiah Quincy Upper School, and other groups, as well as City of Boston department representatives, the mayor's liaison, and the district city councilor.

Offshoot collaborative efforts include the Chinatown Cultural Planning initiative led by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and Chinatown HOPE (Health, Opportunities, Possibilities, Empowerment), a seven-agency partnership to activate open space with wellness programming and increase access to nature and gardening.

Greater Boston CLT Network brings together eight local community land trusts, coordinated by the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, and works to coordinate peer learning, develop shared resources, advance a shared agenda, and grow the CLT model. Other members include: Dudley Neighbors Inc, Boston Neighborhood CLT, Boston Farms CLT, Highland Park CLT, Comunidades Enraizadas CLT, Somerville CLT, the developing Cambridge CLT, and Chinatown CLT.

Resilient Urban Neighborhoods – Green Justice Coalition is a team of technical and community partners working to design, plan, and implement a new model for locally governed microgrids in environmental justice communities. This partnership has been working together, primarily on a volunteer basis, for more than seven years, and is now poised to bring the Chinatown microgrid into design and implementation phase. The team includes Climable Inc, Clean Energy Solutions Inc, Peregrine Energy Group, Community Labor United, GreenRoots Chelsea, the Chinese Progressive Association, Chinatown CLT, and academic partners. RUN-GJC received the Northeast Clean Energy Council's Partnership of the Year Award for 2023! The team has recently brought on Working Partners as co-development partner for the Chinatown microgrid.

In addition to these ongoing collaborations, Chinatown CLT has a diverse set of partners across sectors to support the implementation of our plans.

Government – Chinatown CLT works closely with the Mayor's Office of Housing, Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture, Community Preservation, Environment Department, Boston City Council, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, and Chinatown's elected officials at the local, state, and federal level. We also collaborate with officials from Somerville, Malden, Quincy, and Cambridge.

Financial – Citizens Bank, Eastern Bank, Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC), Life Insurance Community Investment Initiative, Local Enterprise Assistance Fund (LEAF), and National Cooperative Bank.

Corporations – New England Biolabs, Ryan LLC, Sasaki, Maloney Properties, Marcus Errico Emmer & Brooks PC, Law Offices of Adam Chu, E3 Development LLC, Wongxu Construction

Education/Research – MIT Department of Urban Studies & Planning, Suffolk University Law School, Tufts University Urban & Environmental Policy and Planning Department, UMass/Boston Institute for Asian American Studies, Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Boston College and Northeastern University

Community – Chinatown CLT partnered with 36 community organizations and non-profits with a wide range of backgrounds and expertise over the past year

Section 7. Integration of activities/consistency with community strategy and vision

The Chinatown Community Land Trust works to stabilize the future of Chinatown as a neighborhood for working class families and elderly and a regional hub for the Chinese community. We work for community control of the land, development without displacement, permanently affordable housing, and shared neighborhood spaces, consistent with the Chinatown Master Plan.

As seen in our “Work Areas Circle” (Appendix 3), Chinatown CLT’s activities integrate a variety of activities within an overall strategy to increase community control of land and a consistent framework of preserving and growing Chinatown as a historic and cultural district that anchors immigrant working class families and small businesses. The historic and cultural district framework grew out of numerous community meetings as part of the Chinatown Master Plan 2020 process, and continues to be developed through a series of community focus groups and creative interventions this year soliciting input about “What makes Chinatown *Chinatown*?” Chinatown CLT also reports to and seeks input from community members at quarterly or biannual bilingual member meetings.

Integrated activities include:

- Preservation of permanently affordable, resident-controlled housing, with a focus on historic row house properties
- Planning, implementation, and designation of Chinatown as Historic and Cultural District
- Advocacy and implementation of environmental justice projects
- Planning and organizing to improve and expand open space
- Policy and planning work to support Chinatown stabilization and these strategies

Section 8. Financing strategy

Chinatown CLT's income comes from private foundation and corporate grants, project-related government grants, individual donations, and service revenue that is aligned with the organization's mission.

Due to the variety of programs and work areas, Chinatown CLT is well-positioned to continue enjoying grant support and targeted government grants for projects. With the incentive and support of the CITC program, we will continue to gradually grow our individual donor base and maintain service revenues as a consistent piece of our annual budget. Affordable housing projects will be financed by a combination of public financing, developer contributions, philanthropic contributions, and private loans.

Chinatown CLT's long-term financing strategy includes a portion of income from ground lease fees, development fees, and microgrid revenue, as well as development of an annual fundraising event.

Grants

In the past year, 30% of Chinatown CLT's revenues came from \$174,975 in private foundation grants, and 3% (\$17,500) from corporate grants. Significantly, the organization has enjoyed multi-year, general operating grants from several local foundations.

Individual Donors

Chinatown CLT raised \$193,145, or 33.2% of its revenues from private, individual contributions in the past year. With the support and incentive of the CITC program, we have successfully increased this portion of our fundraising each year.

Government

Government grants for historic preservation of row house exteriors and public arts/cultural programming made up 26.6% of our revenues in the past year.

Service Revenue

Fees for services such as educational Chinatown tours, speaking engagements, convening of community focus groups on environmental justice and cultural topics provided \$41,858 or 7.2% of total revenues.

Section 9. History, track record, and sustainable development

Chinatown CLT has established a significant track record of accomplishments within a relatively short period of time.

Reclaiming three historic brick row houses (11 units) and preserving them as permanently affordable housing reflects our commitment to **expanding housing opportunities** and **advancing equity** with a combination of homeownership and stabilized rental homes in a low income, people of color neighborhood.

Chinatown CLT played a leadership role in partnership with the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission in both the Chinatown Master Plan 2020 process as well as the current Cultural Planning Process. The first involved hundreds of residents and stakeholders as well as eighteen community organizations, resulting in the publication of Chinatown Master Plan 2020. The current process involves four core community partners, MAPC, the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, and a broad array of community leaders, residents, and business owners to develop a cultural plan that improves coordination among artists, small businesses, organizations, and residents to improve Chinatown's future. This work reflects our commitment to **regional planning** that advances equity, supports meaningful and participatory decision-making, and increases **job and business opportunities** for the community.

Our pioneering role in developing the Chinatown Microgrid for resilience at eight multifamily affordable housing projects, anchoring efforts to preserve and improve Reggie Wong Park, and our leadership role in organizing and advocating for open space expansion and green infrastructure demonstrate our commitment to **protecting the land and ecosystems** and planning for climate change adaptation by **using natural resources wisely** and **promoting clean energy**.

In recognition of Chinatown CLT's accomplishments, its executive director has received the following appointments and recognitions:

- Senior Fellow for 2019-2020 at UMass/Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy
- Boston Preservation Alliance's 2022 Codman Award for lifetime achievement in recognition of the work to redefine historic preservation
- 2023 appointment to the Massachusetts Environmental Justice Advisory Commission
- 2024 appointment to Boston's Commemoration Commission
- Co-published papers on "Advancing Environmental Justice in the Community Using Charrette: A Case Study," "Two communities, one highway, and the fight for clean air," "CBPR Partnerships and Near-Roadway Pollution," and "Collective Ownership is a Community Control Tool."