

*I wish you could have been with me in Chinatown when I grew up in the 1960's*

Yep 葉堅立 Geen Lup (Sandy)

## **OCPM Consultation on Modification of Plan D'urbanisme Presentation Sandy Yep, June 9, 2022**



### **A Land and Ancestral Acknowledgement**

My name is Sandy Yep. Yep Geen Lup 葉堅立 is my Chinese name meaning Strong Foundation.

I am 5<sup>th</sup> Generation Quebecois-Chinois descendant of Charlie Duk Yee Yep from the Pai Gee village in Sun Wui Guangdong Province, of southern China. In 1892 Charlie Yep immigrated and settled into Montreal's Chinatown. He was among the first five hundred or so Chinese pioneers living in Chinatown.

In 1902 on May 26, the Montreal Gazette reported that he wedded Liw She of Vancouver B.C. one of seven Chinese females in Montreal. My great grandmother was the first Chinese woman in Montreal to marry. It was in 1942 that the Yep family purchased 116-118A rue de La Gauchetière – where my grandfather Willie, uncles, aunties from China and my father James lived. I was raised in that house the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, and there is where I will sleep tonight in the home of my friend Jean-Philippe Riopel.

I acknowledge all my ancestors and all of yours who have brought us here in this moment to speak to the present and future of Chinatown. I recognize the Indigenous lands on which we gather, and the many peoples les Quebecois, Irish, Scottish, Jewish, Portuguese, the settlers of Prés de Ville, and the Chinese and Asians that followed. I am proud to be a descendant of one pioneering family.

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## **My Ancestral Home in Montreal's Chinatown – Mon village, My Lineage**

In 1987 I went back to my ancestral village and home of Charlie, Willie & James of SunWui. Retuning to my roots, touching the earth entering our home was moving, cathartic and grounding. The space, place and building is no more. The buildings and surrounding heritage have been torn down.

**Destroyed by - modernization, gentrification,  
developers & unprotected by government.**

Montreal' Chinatown and the building on 116-118A rue de la Gauchetière is now my ancestral home, and that of my son Alec. C'est carrément mon village à cœur. On est des Québécois-Chinois de Sun Wui. Moi je suis un québécois-chinois errant à Toronto 😊

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Growing up in the 60's I was surrounded by a parc (Dufferin) my church (presbyterian), houses, businesses, and many people. Lots of Chinese friends and families. Groceries stores were full. Kids ran. We parked in the streets. Generations of families gathered, gossiped and laughed together. My Grandfather Willie and I used to get groceries. He would hold my hand as we walked from Ho Ho Snack bar to Dufferin Park ending up under a huge, beautiful tree. We would sit and I would be happy, just to eat my Chinese Butter roll with loh yeh gung.



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## **Systemic Erasure & Eradication of our Built Asian Heritage: The 'Push OUT' of the Chinese Community (Éléments Significatifs Disparus.....)**

That Chinatown is no more. Every time I return - I see My Chinatown of the 60's engulfed by offices, towers, hotels, concrete and disgusting development. I say disgusting because nothing of what I see reflects the heritage, height, density and economic and social life of the days of the past. In the 2021 *L'étude de l'Évolution historique et caractérisation du Quartier Chinois Montréal*, Luce Lafontaine has multiple sections entitled *Éléments significatifs disparus*. I agree. I witnessed the disappearance of each of those buildings, and of significant tangible heritage loss.



Right Image: Montreal Land Use Map 1949 depicting my grandfather's house and Dufferin Park. Cynthia Hammond, "La Ville extraordinaire: Heritage, Community, Conservation." Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada. UQAM, Montreal. 28 May 2022.

**I lost my church. I lost the park where my grandfather and I sat ;-( A year ago I contemplated bringing my son to Montreal to possibly witness the tearing down of his ancestral home.**

The neighborhood of my Loh Yeh Gung's house is fronted by Guy Favreau, a cold mirrored brick building that tried to be community-oriented but is not. The park that replace Dufferin is gated for the condo dwellers. Elderly find refuge in a concrete government building. My church has moved twice and is slated to move again – losing more its heritage each time.

Throughout the 70's and into the 80's I witnessed the systemic erasure and eradication of our built Asian Heritage. The Chinese community and families were pushed out – with more than 200 buildings lost and 90 % population loss.

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### **Protection from Destruction – My Ancestral Home: Loh Yeh Gung's House**

This part of Chinatown is now designated as an Institutional hub (une site patrimonial du Noyau-Institutionnel-du-Quartier Chinois) by the provincial government.

This provincial protection covers the Wing's Noodle Block including Wing's Noodles (British and Canadian School) right next to my Grandfather's (Loh Yeh Gung) house and S. Davis and Sons' factory, where the Chinese Family Services of Greater Montreal was formerly located, where I got my very first job.

Our roots run deep.

### **RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSED MODIFICATION OF THE PLAN D'URBANISME**

I Sandy Yep, as noted in the CWG submission to the OCPM, support the proposed changes to the Plan d'urbanisme by the City of Montréal. I strongly encourage they *'be part of the steps taken facilitate a human-scale urban environment centred around its living communities and urban cultural landscapes'*

Further I support:

- *the heritage designation by the City of Montréal of Chinatown as a historic site with its new boundary from Blvd René-Levesque to the north, Ave. Viger to the south, de Bleury to the west and Saint-Elizabeth to the east;*

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- *the identification of Chinatown as un secteur de valeur exceptionnelle and adding Chinatown as one of the “territories of archaeological interest” in Plan d’urbanisme.*
- *the proposal to reduce allowable height and density in Chinatown as an essential step needed to reinforce Chinatown’s heritage status, deter further land speculation, and start setting up a basic framework that can guide development in the area in ways that respect both Chinatown’s tangible and intangible heritage.*

### **HEIGHT and HERITAGE: Chinatown’s Arches as Protection & The Significance of Feng Shui**

The Chinatown of the past, present and future needs protection from real estate pressure, highlighting a distinctive Chinatown architectural character. While I appreciate the downzoning of the proposed modifications the restrictions do not go far enough to protect Chinatown’s built heritage.

Those working, living and visiting Chinatown should be entitled to see Old Montreal, and City Hall from the south and if possible, Mont Royal to the north. Everyone is entitled to the sun without casted shadows from high-rises, and poorly circulated air from buildings that surround the Chinatown Core.

- The Chinatown’s Arches as gateways, provides protection to our village should ALWAYS remain prominent and not be encroached as they currently are on St. Laurent, and De La Gauchetière West.
- These Arches, like Dr. Sun Yet Sun Park should be used as reference points for current and future development and support the identification of Chinatown’s unique architecture-style. Further research must be undertaken to create tools to enhance this architectural integration.
- The S. Davis & Sons’ factory building that was afforded heritage status should remain the highest building in the Chinatown core, as was the case at the turn of the century. While I agree with a lower height and density, the proposed the height limit of 25-35 metres and density of 4 is too high.
- Buildings along the Chinatown core of rue De La Gauchetière should not be higher than 20 meters and buildings along Viger limited to 25 meters so

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people can see Old Montreal. The northern limitations should be restricted to 35 metres, with the existing pocket on René Levesque between Clarke and St. Laurent remain a maximum of 25m. All buildings 25M or higher should have top floors set-back from the street to provide more light.

Chinatown can no longer be an island in a sea of high-rises. The sun must be able to shine into Chinatown, this is good Feng Shui. Consideration must be given to human-scale urban development centred around living communities with parcs, places of leisure, and community gardens.

I would love to invite you to the garden at Loh Yeh Gung's ancestral home. It is possibly the last remaining untouched space in Chinatown dating back to Prés de Ville. Deemed une 'zone d'intérêt archeologique' (Borden Code) as a result of Jean Phillippe Riopel's efforts, this space is so very special to me, and can be equally specially to people living, working and visiting Chinatown.

**COMMERCIAL LIFE + SOCIAL INVESTMENTS = ECONOMIC VITALITY: *Chinatown as a Destination Jewel and Livable Safe and Secure Community for ALL***

The Chinatown, of the present and future needs development alongside legacy businesses, arts and cultural groups. Equally, dedicated government monies needs to directly support an economically viable community, alongside resources to support safe and inclusive space for everyone who sets foot in Chinatown.

A number of investment considerations can be made in this direction:

- Invest and build co-operative and affordable housing to bring families back who will require grocery stores, provisions and supplies;
- The city needs to invest into infrastructure to support arts and cultural spaces, and low-cost rents for artists and students to bring artistic value to our community;
- Socially minded developers can work alongside the Chinese community to consider multi-use buildings that support small business, sports, leisure & green spaces;
- City social services need to be invested directly into Chinatown to alleviate homelessness, and address mental health concerns;
- Investments in social and security services can help to improve commercial and economic viability, by reducing stigma for the businesses to thrive; and,

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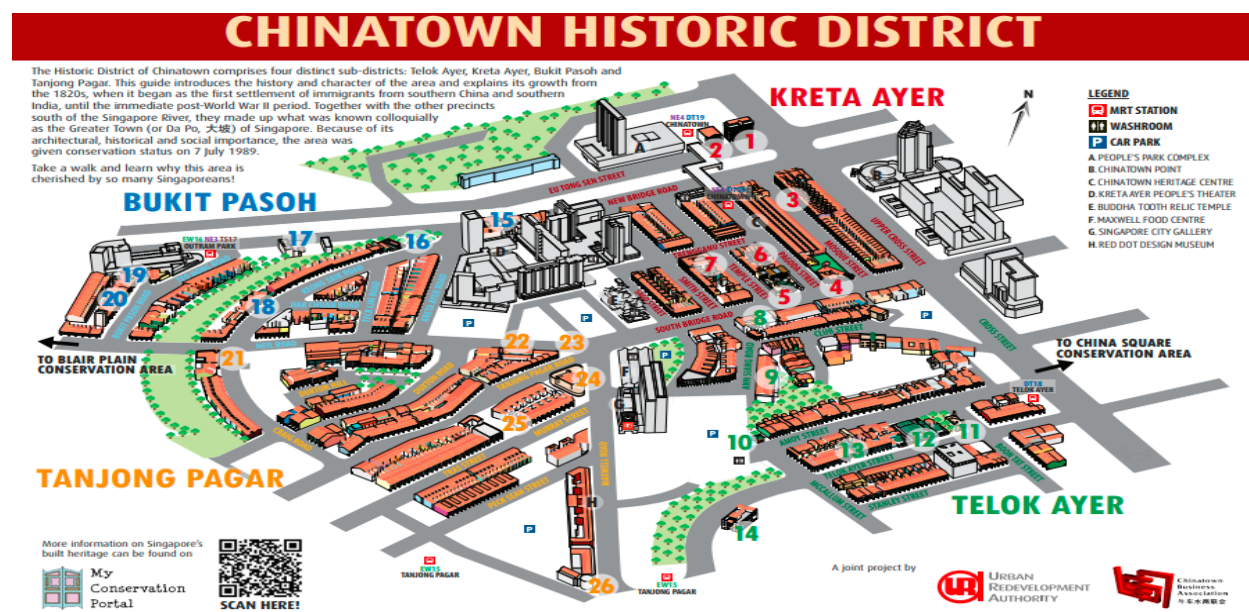
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- We can maximize use of existing parking infrastructure like Palais de Congrès, Complex Guy Favreau to provide affordable and accessible parking 24/7 with incentive programs to park, shop and eat.

We do not need a Swatow hotel, while 50+ hotels surround Chinatown! Tourism Montreal and Quebec needs to promote Chinatown as a historic heritage jewel, a destination place that is built on heritage values and surrounded by history and entertainment destinations such as Old Montreal and le Cartier des Spectacles.

Where in the world can you walk from the old port, old Montreal, the immigrant artery that is Rue St. Laurent that attaches Chinatown to Cartier des Spectacles. This intimacy is what people come for when they visit Montreal.

### Singapore as Model – Supported by Government Protection and Investments



The Historic District of Chinatown comprises four distinct sub-districts: Telok Ayer, Kreta Ayer, Bukit Pasoh and Tanjong Pagar. This guide introduces the history and character of the area and explains its growth from the 1820s, when it began as the first settlement of immigrants from southern China and southern India, until the immediate post-World War II period. Together with the other precincts south of the Singapore River, they made up what was known colloquially as the Greater Town (or Da Po, 大坡) of Singapore. Because of its architectural, historical and social importance, the area was given conservation status on 7 July 1989.

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Marik Boudreau, "Rue de Lagauchetière," 1976,

### **Bring Chinatown Back to its Former Glory**

Montreal's Chinatown must be protected from future unconscionable development with strict measures of control, height density. Our community needs to be brought back to its former beauty based on the following conditions:

- Protection and investment into existing built heritage with future development tied to low-rise buildings consistent with the current morphology & conforming to Asian aesthetics;
- Government investment dollars in Chinatown's living heritage and urban development as comparable to Old Montreal & Mille End;
  - The revitalization of a strong circular economy based on legacy businesses including provisions for 1) an aligned collaboration with Tourism Montreal/Quebec, 2) business investment incentives and a special economic enterprise zone; and
  - A Historic urban landscape approach where the city and province support and invests in community & people assets e.g. cultural institutions, green space vs concrete space, community gardens, leisure space etc. for an enhanced quality of life for residents, business owners and tourists.

### **How best will YOUR REPORT respect the SPIRIT and Heritage OUR CHINATOWN, le Chinatown de Montreal, le dernier cartier Chinoise du Quebec**

- Can u make it as grand as our neighbours Old Montreal by affording it the protection it deserves?
- How will you respect the roots that are grounded in 'Prés de Ville? and the Chinatown that was?
- How will your report's recommendations bring PEOPLE back to LIVE in Chinatown and support its intangible heritage?

I no longer need to bring my son back to see his ancestral home disappear. Instead, I look forward to the day when I can bring my grandson to sit under a huge tree, share a Butter Roll, and talk about how We once saved Chinatown for him. I wish you could have been with me in the 60's you would feel what I feel is missing today...