

# GREEN CHINATOWN MONTRÉAL

## L'ESPACE VERT DU QUARTIER CHINOIS DE MONTRÉAL



Dear Commissioners of the OCPM,

My name is Dr. Leslie Cheung and I am writing on behalf of Green Chinatown Montréal (GCM), and our approximately ten volunteer gardeners. I have been a community member and gardener with GCM since 2016.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed new height and density permissions of buildings situated in Chinatown. GCM strongly supports the City of Montréal's proposal to lower the height and density allowances.

GCM is a completely volunteer-run collective community garden whose missions is twofold:

1. To build a community environment of intercultural and intergenerational sharing and exchange for Chinatown residents by exploring and practicing urban gardening and organic food culture;
2. To increase awareness of food security and urban sustainability in Chinatown.

From 2011 to 2017, we were located on the grounds of the Montréal Chinese Hospital, until the hospital reclaimed that space with the intention of re-landscaping. Since 2017, we have been building partnerships to keep our garden going in alternative locations, with the expressed intention to return to Chinatown as soon as possible. GCM currently operates an above-ground container garden on Masson Street in the Plateau Mont-Royal in partnership with *l'Arrondissement du Plateau-Mont Royal* and the *École des métiers de la construction*. Please follow this [link](#) to a letter of support for GCM from Marianne Giguère, *Conseillère de la Ville, Arrondissement Le Plateau-Mont Royal. District De Lormier*.

We ask the City of Montréal to affirm the heritage designation of Montréal's historic Chinatown from René-Levesque to the North to Viger to the South, and rue de Bleury to the West and Sainte-Élisabeth to the East. We also ask the City of Montréal to affirm their proposal to lower the height and density allowances to encourage the creation of more outdoor green space in Chinatown that can be used as gathering space for social and leisure life, sites of intergenerational or intercultural exchange, and hopefully the return of public community gardens in Chinatown. The City has already committed to increasing the availability of land for urban agriculture and community / collective gardens, as articulated in the City of Montréal's

recently published document *Strategie d'agriculture urbaine 2021-2026*, and we hope Chinatown will be included in these initiatives.

Any limitations on height should ensure that there is enough sunlight to sustain these green spaces and gardens, and any limitations on density should allow and encourage development of green space and gardens in underutilised spaces around buildings, especially taller buildings that only use a portion of their lot. Having more green space in the Chinatown will also help to reduce the heat island effect overall, but more specifically in a neighbourhood that is heavily populated by low income and racialized communities, which thereby can help reduce the negative impacts of environmental racism. These outcomes will also help contribute to sustainability goals for all levels of government.

The creation of these spaces in Chinatown are important to GCM as a way to preserve and pass down the cultural knowledge of the elders in the community. The elder residents and community members of Montréal's historic Chinatown hold invaluable knowledge about traditional farming, plants and herbs, and oral histories about the neighbourhood that may soon be lost as this population ages. Gathering for gardening activities provides a pathway to preservation of this knowledge and culture.

Beyond affirming the heritage designation of Chinatown and the height and density limits, we join our fellow neighbours and community members in their concerns that the current measures alone will not sufficiently bring about the desired results mentioned above. We hope with the adoption of the proposed changes to the Plan d'Urbanisme, the City of Montréal and the Borough of Ville-Marie will further consider creating a more holistic development plan for Montréal's historic Chinatown that aims to protect, preserve, and promote the history and culture of its historical populations. This should also include considerations around sustainability and public outdoor spaces that encourage opportunities for continued intercultural and intergenerational exchange, which is vital for ensuring that the histories of the neighbourhood are not erased and remain a part of the Canadian and Québec narrative.

We hope you will take this recommendation seriously and continue to use the feedback of residents and community members to develop a holistic plan that values the unique character of and the people living in Montréal's Chinatown. GCM is eager to contribute to the plans for green space and community gardens in Chinatown.

Regards,

Dr. Leslie Cheung  
Volunteer community gardener, Green Chinatown Montréal