

# BRIEF

Presented to  
the

*Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal*

for the

**Public Consultation on Proposed Modifications to  
the Master Plan of Montreal's Chinatown**

June 8, 2022

## INTRODUCTION

The Concordia Student Union (CSU) wishes to thank the Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal for the opportunity to submit a brief detailing the concerns of Concordia students and community regarding the Proposed Modifications by the City of Montreal to the Master Plan of Montreal's Chinatown. This public consultation is of special interest to the students and multicultural community of Concordia University, particularly concerning the City of Montréal's proposals to:

- 1- Confirm the City's heritage designation of an expanded border of Montréal's historic Chinatown, from René-Levesque so the North to Viger to the South, and rue de Bleury to the West and Sainte-Elisabeth to the East.
- 2- Reduce allowable height and density limitations for buildings in Chinatown, to encourage the preservation and promotion of community and cultural life, and local economic growth in the neighbourhood..

Both proposals, which we strongly support, and are a bare minimum of the measures needed to protect and revitalize Chinatown.

### Request for Reasonable Accommodations

As the OCPM has come to realize through the significant participation and number of registrations for these OCPM hearings and proceedings, the need for Chinese interpreters is not just for the registered participants but more importantly to provide meaningful access to the vulnerable racialized members of the Chinese and Chinatown community to overcome the systemic barriers in the OCPM process and to fully understand the issues affecting them and their community.

These OCPM hearings and proceedings represent a historical moment for the Chinese and Chinatown community proceedings in Montreal and Quebec society, and we are very disappointed that the OCPM was unable to provide the requested reasonable accommodations for Chinatown's vulnerable community members.

## 1. The CSU: Mandate and Structure

The Concordia Student Union (CSU) is the umbrella organization that represents more than 37,000 undergraduate students and over 90 student clubs at Concordia University in Montréal. It advocates for undergraduate students who are part of diverse racial, ethnocultural, religious, sexual and socioeconomic backgrounds. Its mandate is to represent these students and their rights, needs and interests within the Concordia University community, and beyond.

The CSU also operates and offers a variety of services to the student population such as the Legal Information Clinic (Clinic), the Off-Campus Housing and Job Resource Centre (HOJO), and the Student Advocacy Centre. The Clinic was created in 2007 and offers legal information and referrals, in both English and French, to Concordia undergraduate students. It works to provide students with resources that will assist them in receiving the fairest possible treatment under the law. Part of the Clinic's mandate is community outreach and support to vulnerable and marginalized groups of concern to Concordia's students.

The CSU recognizes and values diversity, human rights and inclusion, not only in terms of guiding philosophy, but also in terms of concrete undertakings because it considers these as the cornerstone of student life, higher education and civil society.

In this regard, the CSU Clinic's participation in this public consultation is a natural extension of its mandate and a follow-up of the issues raised in its previous brief submitted to the OCPM on Systemic racism and discrimination in Montréal dated October 31, 2019.

## 2. Montreal Chinatown and Systemic Discrimination in Urbanism and Land-Use Planning

An important number of Concordia students are of Chinese Canadian origin or are recent immigrants from overseas. In 2021, of Concordia's 10000 registered International Students, 16% (about 1600) were from China. Many seniors and new immigrants continue to rely on basic services located in Chinatown and the area continues to play a pivotal role in the welcoming of newcomers.

Although over the years, there has been an increase in Chinese and East Asian restaurants and businesses developing around the South Shore and Shaughnessy Village near Concordia, Chinatown remains at the heart of important social and cultural activities for the Chinese community of Québec. Chinatown has a cultural significance and rich history to the Chinese community of Montreal, and it serves as a cultural reference point for new Chinese immigrants and international students. Most importantly, Chinatown is a valuable symbol of not only Chinese but Québec historical and cultural heritage.

To date, Chinatown is having to deal with commercial, residential, and institutional development projects that are being built with little or no consultation of those residing in the Chinatown District nor of the many different stakeholders in the Chinese community, and which pose a threat towards the preservation of its cultural heritage:

- the luxury condo development projects One Viger and Hampton Inn & Serenity Condo on Viger and Saint-Laurent boulevard towering over both sides of the south Chinatown Gates, and built in exclusion of the Chinatown neighborhood and community,
- the mega Mondev luxury condo development project on 180, René-Lévesque Est between rue Hotel de Ville and De Bullion significantly damaging the quality of life of the surrounding residents,
- the lack of community consultation on the 1050 St-Laurent commercial construction project situated right next to honored Sun Yat Sen Park, Chinatown's only public park
- the exclusion of Chinatown heritage or considerations in the planning of the Place des Montréalaises near Metro Champ de Mars,
- the imposition of the REM overhead rail project cutting off Chinatown, with the community having to relive the traumatic experience of another mega- sized concrete repartition like Ville-Marie Expressway and Complexe Guy-Favreau
- the near destruction of the historic Wing's Noodles block after it was sold to real estate developers Shiller/Kornbluth Hillpark Capital who are also the financial backers of the MONDEV development project on 180, René-Lévesque Est
- the insensitive installation of a Public toilet in the honored Sun Yat Sen Park,
- etc, etc..etc.

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.

Beyond affirming the heritage designation of Chinatown and the height and density limits, we join our fellow community members in their concerns that the current measures alone will not sufficiently bring about the protection and revitalization of Montreal's Chinatown.

Furthermore, we ask the City of Montréal to:

2.1 Maintain a more scaled neighbourhood aesthetic by further limiting the height and size of buildings to about 5 stories high or 18 metres;

- 2.2 Ensure that the physical historical buildings are protected and preserved which is vital for ensuring that the histories of the neighbourhood are not erased and remain a part of the Canadian and Québec narrative ;
- 2.3 Keep commercial development right-sized for the neighbourhood and support local small and medium business ownership in Chinatown by providing municipal economic services and assistance that are easily accessible and adapted to Chinatown communities, especially for the more marginalized merchants facing language barriers;
- 2.4 Encourage young East Asian entrepreneurs wanting to start small local businesses in Chinatown, instead of favouring multinational or internationally owned big box stores trying to move into the neighbourhood;
- 2.5 Provide more opportunities to create green space and outdoor leisure space to increase the quality of life of Chinatown residents and communities;
- 2.6 Allow residents, especially seniors, students, low-income workers for Chinatown businesses, and other vulnerable populations, to remain in affordable housing and age in place and dignity;
- 2.7 Maintain and encourage social service delivery in the neighbourhood and the construction and operation of a municipal sports and leisure centre for youth and people of all ages as a hub of community life and economic revitalization;
- 2.8 Create 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

In conclusion, we hope that Chinatown continues to be a gathering place embedded with memory and history, alive with arts and culture, for generations of Asian Montréalers and for Quebec society as a whole.

Please feel free to contact us, should you have any questions.

Yours truly,

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