(RE)VISIONING WINNIPEG’S CHINATOWN:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After decades of disinvestment, Winnipeg’s Northwest Exchange District and Chinatown are the focus of recent revitalization initiatives led by non-governmental planning organizations. The intent of this Capstone project is not to provide an in-depth analysis, nor critique of the recent Development Strategy. By comparing organizational mandates, jurisdictional boundaries, and stakeholder perspectives, I argue the voices and interests of those experiencing homelessness, Indigenous Peoples, and other non-Chinese BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) are marginalized and missing from the planning process, placing them at risk of displacement.

Participants consisted of representatives from community organizations (COs), non-governmental planning organizations (NGPOs), and housing- and homelessness-focused non-profit organizations (HNPOs). Data from emotional mapping and semi-structured interviews was analyzed through a perspective informed by gentrification literature and settler-colonial literature. All participants saw a need for reinvestment in Chinatown and the Northwest Exchange. However, most participants, especially COs and HNPOs, expressed concerns about changes that would displace their community, residents, and/or client base. Social issues, such as homelessness and poverty, are only worsening and similar urban renewal initiatives in the past have done little to improve circumstances for the city-centre’s inhabitants. There was a desire for Chinatown to be an inclusive and multi-cultural space; but some participants discussed conflicts around how physical representations can exclude those who do not identify with its branding. Lastly, the current and historic Indigenous inhabitants of the area and Indigenous-led grassroots movements are concealed and erased by a lack of representation in the Development Strategy’s key policies.

Based on these findings, a plan for the area's social development is needed, created through multi-stakeholder involvement. Indigenous people should be recognized as inhabitants of the space and strategies should be incorporated to address aspects of Indigenous homelessness. These strategies should be led by Indigenous people, but with support from the City and other organizations.

METHODS

Participants
1. 3 COs, 3 NGPOs, 3 HNPOs (12 participants total)
2. 3 participants identified as working for Indigenous organizations
3. 3 self-identified as Chinese-Canadian
4. Located in or near the study area

Emotional Mapping
Participants mapped where they perceived the boundaries of the Exchange District and Chinatown to be.

Responses were amalgamated into separate maps per area and per stakeholder category

Semi-structured Interviews
Questions were grouped into three parts: 1) Participants’ scope and mandates; 2) PARK analysis of Chinatown; and 3) experiential and personal connections.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, KEY FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Q1: What are the similarities and differences in how different stakeholder categories* define, perceive, and experience Winnipeg’s Exchange District and Chinatown?

Q2: What gaps exist in planning for Chinatown and its vicinity? What perspectives have been marginalized or are missing from the area’s dominant planning processes?

Q3: How might Chinatown develop in a way that reflects the needs of its current inhabitants and those in its surrounding areas?

KEY TERMS

Displacement
- A process, rather than a point-in-time event, includes being physically displaced from an area. Also includes symbolic displacement (losing connection with a space) and exclutionary displacement (losing the ability to participate in a space).

Inhabitants
- Individuals and households who live and/or work in the study area. Includes those who are experiencing homelessness.

Indigenous Homelessness
- Understood as being the direct result of settler-colonialism and the displacement and dispossession of Indigenous People from their Lands. A holistic view that extends beyond being physically homeless.

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PHYSICAL IS IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE. ALL CITIZENS NEED TO SEE SOMETHING THAT REPRESENTS THEIR HISTORY, AND THEIR CultURES, THEIR LANGUAGES, AND THEIR ARCHITECTURE.