

Experiences of Chinatown



**REIMAGINING PUBLIC SPACE IN
VANCOUVER'S CHINATOWN**

Starting a conversation

Vancouver's Chinatown is a thriving community that needs improved public space for locals and visitors.

This project is meant to spark a community conversation about what public space in Chinatown could be, especially as the area changes.

"Chinatown is a place of intergenerational connections."

"We have an opportunity to showcase Chinese culture."

What makes Chinatown unique?



"Honour the Memorial."

"I want a place I can visit with my family."

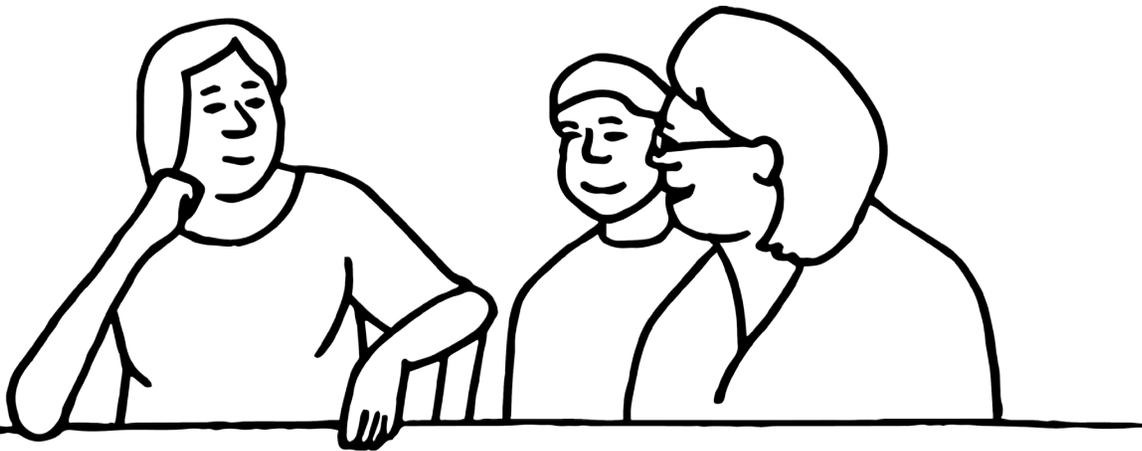
"The food is my favourite part of Chinatown."

How can we celebrate the spirit of Chinatown in our public spaces?

What could the heart of Chinatown become?

“Greenery is very important!”

“Wouldn’t it be great to have flexible space for performances and festivals and the night market?”



“Make sure there is plenty of seating and covered areas, especially for elders.”

“I’d like to see a mix of contemporary and traditional Chinese elements.”



Listening to the Community

This design concept was created directly from the ideas we heard from community members.

People shared their hopes and dreams for public space with us at two pop-up street closures, where we tested how an expanded plaza could actually look!

More information on the engagement and design process can be found in the full report for this project.

A small site with big potential

Chinatown Memorial Plaza is an important space that many consider to be the heart of Chinatown. However, the current space is small and surrounded by vehicle traffic.

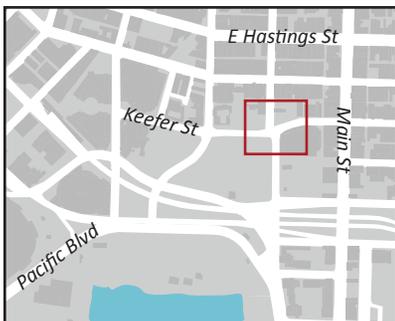
Our vision reclaims this key site by closing Columbia Street from Keefer Street to the lane. This significantly expands the plaza and connects it to the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Park and Garden.

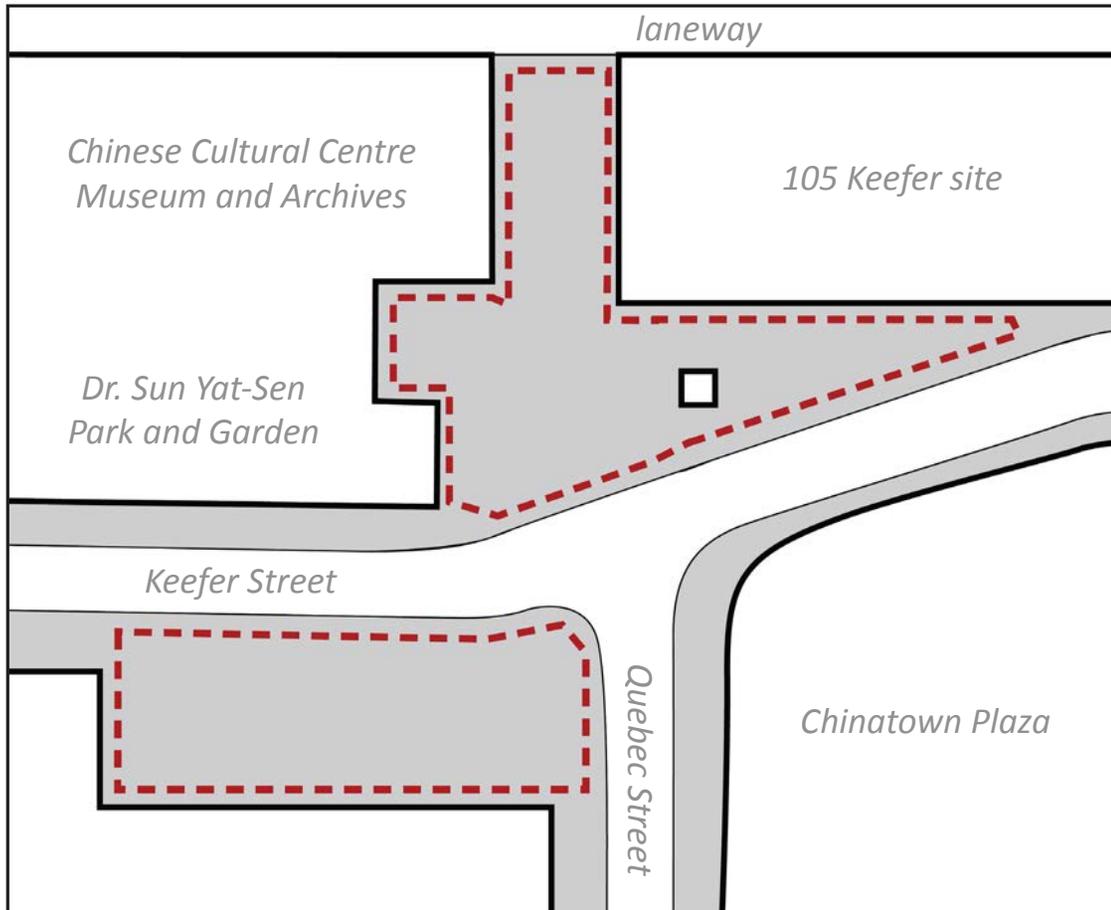
The design also includes a new pocket park to the south of Keefer Street. A new public space in this location is proposed in the Northeast False Creek Area Plan draft park design. Our design envisions what could go there to meet the desires of residents.



Current Public Space

- Small, irregularly shaped spaces
- Too small for large gatherings
- Key sites are separated by roads
- Limited seating and greenery





Potential Public Space

- Large, continuous spaces
- Flexible enough for large events
- Key sites are connected together
- New opportunities for seating, greenery, and covered areas



An Olympic Opportunity

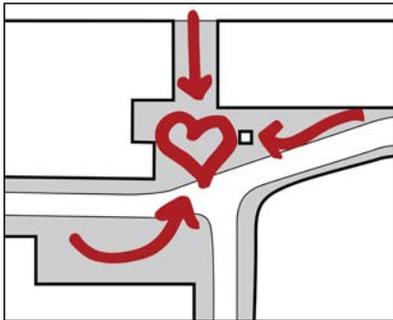
Converting just this small portion of Columbia Street would create a public space comparable in size to the Olympic Village Square. The current Chinatown Memorial Plaza is just a third of this size.

Just like Olympic Village, Chinatown needs a usable public space for events, markets, or just hanging out!

Experiences of Chinatown

We heard that a new plaza should celebrate all of the special experiences that you can only have in Vancouver's Chinatown. It should reflect Chinatown's unique sense of place, and serve as the centre for a thriving community.

Our design expresses the spirit of Chinatown with four parts: a central plaza and three paths to welcome people in, each highlighting a distinct experience of Chinatown.



The Heart of Chinatown

Chinatown's central plaza, with plenty of room for festivals and celebrations.





Vibrant Chinatown

A lively covered path that is bustling with activity and locals hanging out.



Serene Chinatown

A peaceful garden path for rest and reflection, leading to the Memorial.



Playful Chinatown

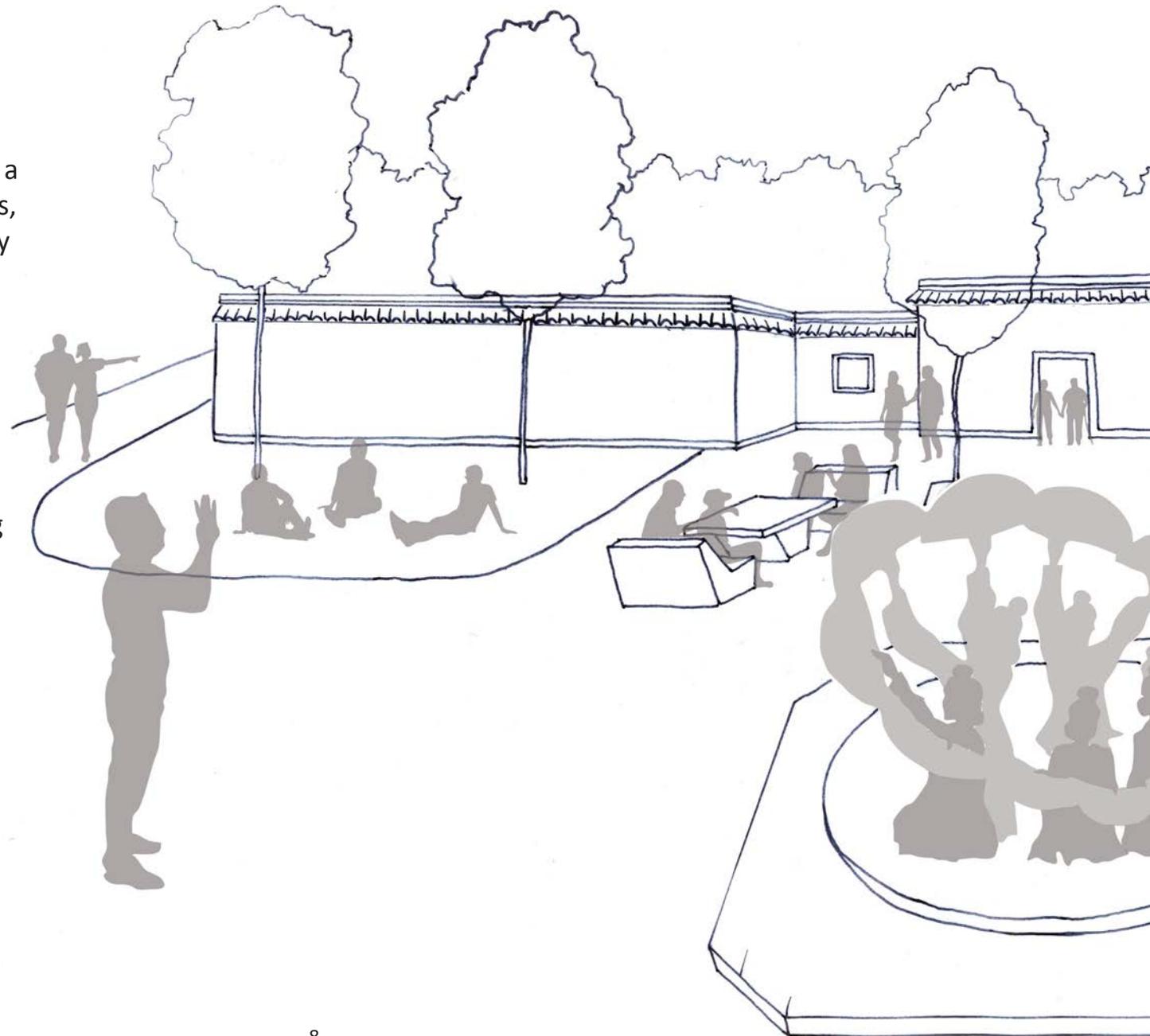
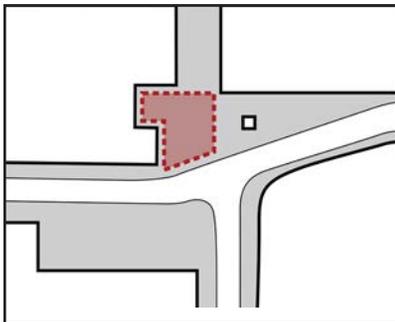
A neighbourhood park with a playground and activities for all ages.

The Heart of Chinatown

What if Chinatown had a central community square to host cultural celebrations for the whole city? With a stage and plenty of seating for crowds, the Heart of Chinatown will be a lively destination for residents and visitors.

Experience the Heart of Chinatown:

- Meet your friends at the mid-autumn festival
- Learn to play mahjong at the weekend mahjong social
- Join the crowd of people watching elders play chess
- Watch a Chinese fan dance performance
- Celebrate Lunar New Year with thousands of others





Culture on Stage: A raised stage invites community members to share their culture with others. There is no lack of talent in Chinatown!



Festivals and Celebrations



Chinese Chess Tables



Mahjong Socials



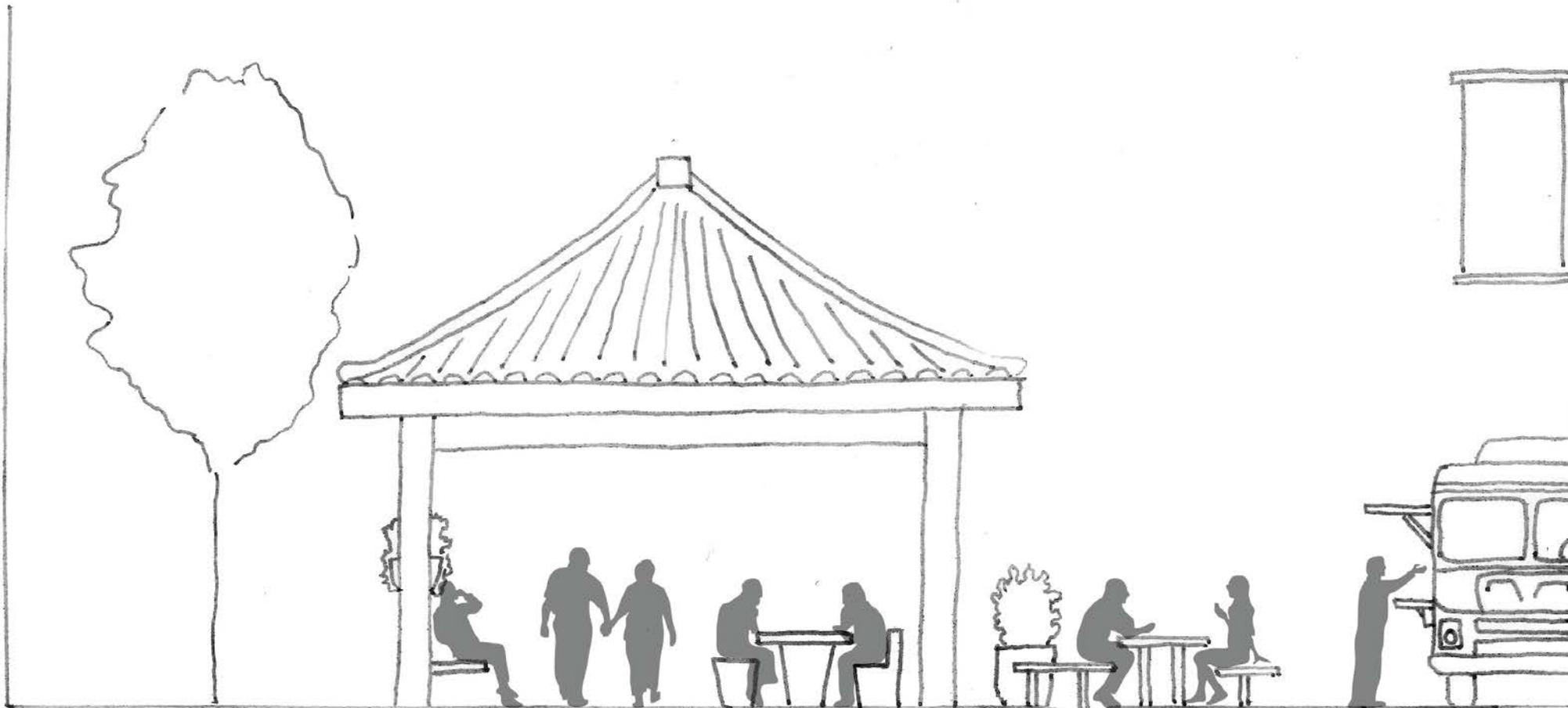
Public Seating

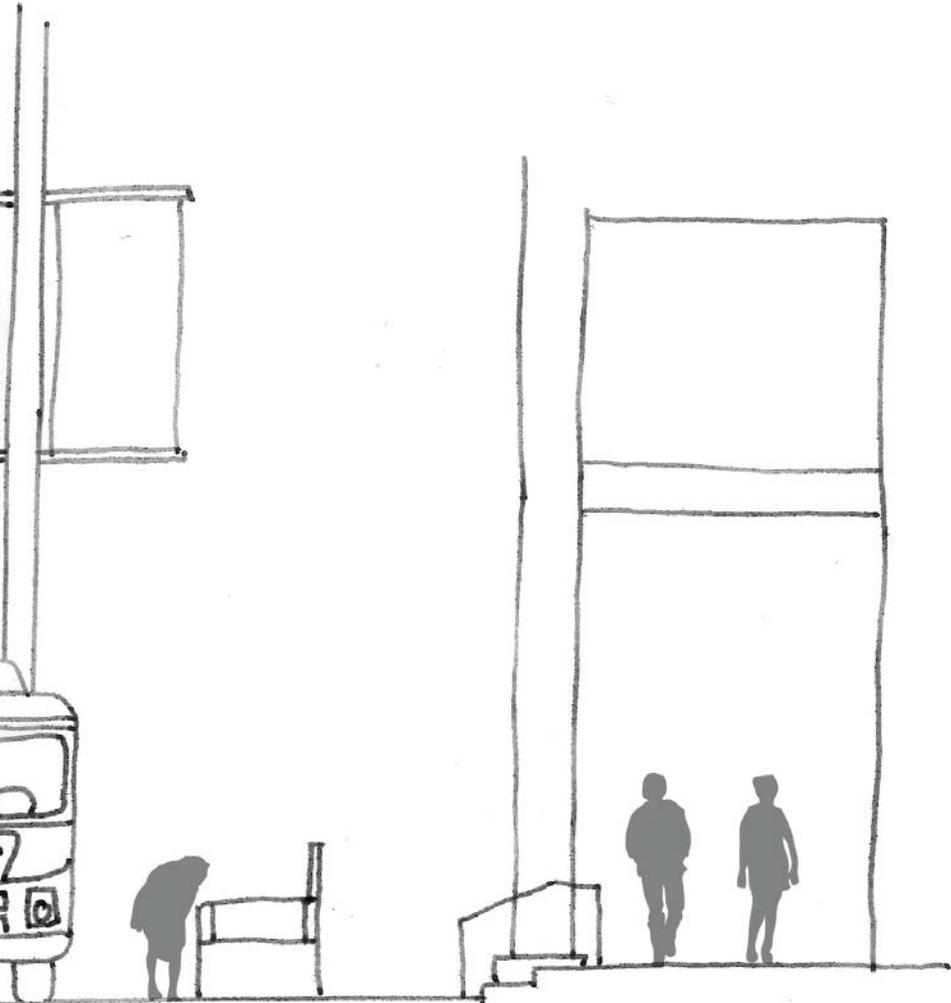
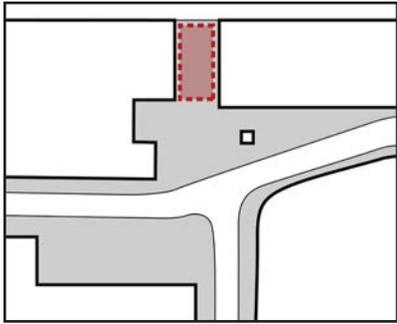
Vibrant Chinatown

This bustling walking street is where you can meet a friend and take in the sounds of locals just hanging out. You might come across a pop-up market or tempting food carts. The covered path echoes the traditional style of the Chinese Cultural Centre and welcomes passersby from historic Pender Street.

Experience Vibrant Chinatown:

- Share some fresh buns with a friend
- Buy street food at the night market
- Enjoy the paintings along the path
- Browse the goods on display
- See exhibits at the Chinese Cultural Centre Museum and Archives, and Chinese Canadian Military Museum





The Painted Path: The beams along the covered path include paintings that showcase stories from the history of Vancouver's Chinatown.



Market Stalls



Overhead Art



Food Carts



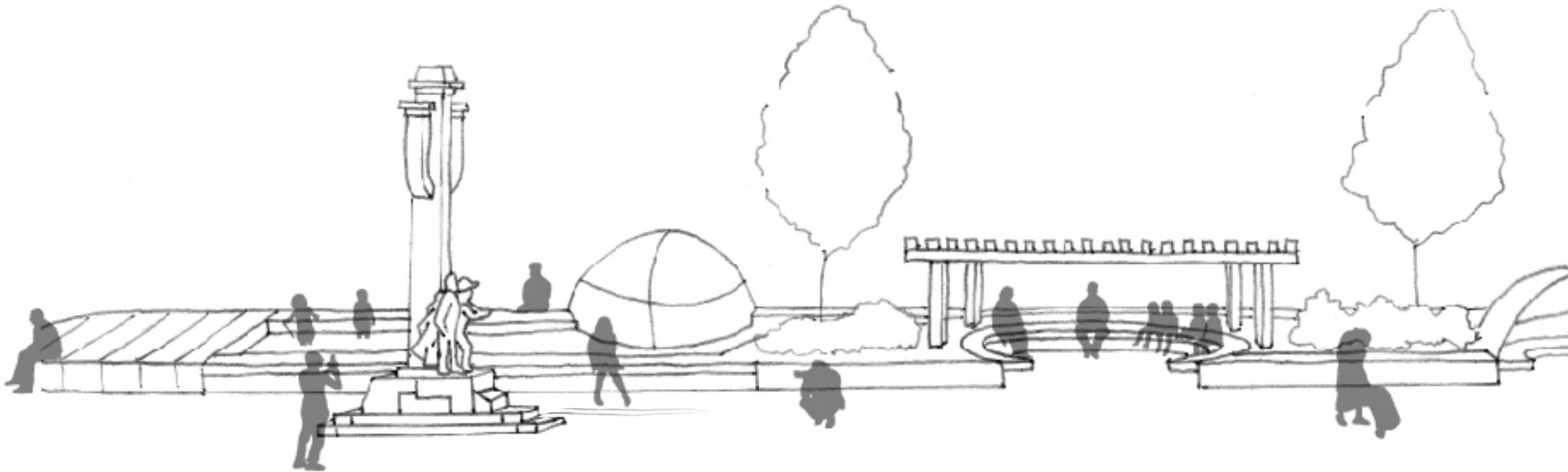
Movable Furniture

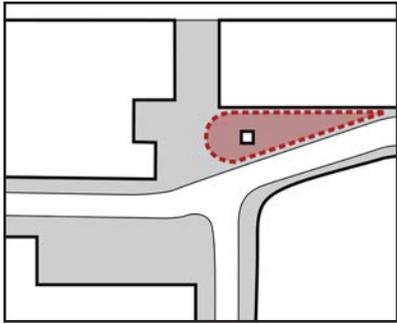
Serene Chinatown

The story of Vancouver's Chinatown is one of perseverance and resilience. This winding path through a lush garden offers a moment of reflection on the community's history. This space is anchored by the Chinatown Memorial honouring the contributions of Chinese railway workers and Chinese-Canadian veterans.

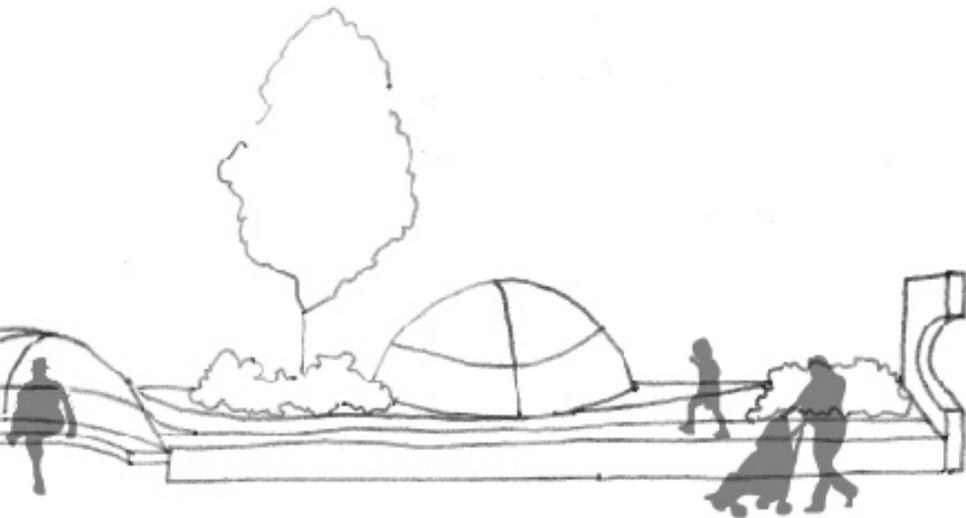
Experience Serene Chinatown:

- Commemorate Chinatown pioneers and Chinese-Canadian history
- Observe Chinatown community service on Remembrance Day
- Recite Chinese poetry to the sound of flowing water in a garden nook
- Rest under the shade of a tree
- Admire the change of seasons through native plants





Honouring Sacrifice: The path leads to an expanded Memorial, augmented with railway tracks and spikes recovered from the Arbutus Corridor.



Covered Space



Seating Nooks



Water Feature



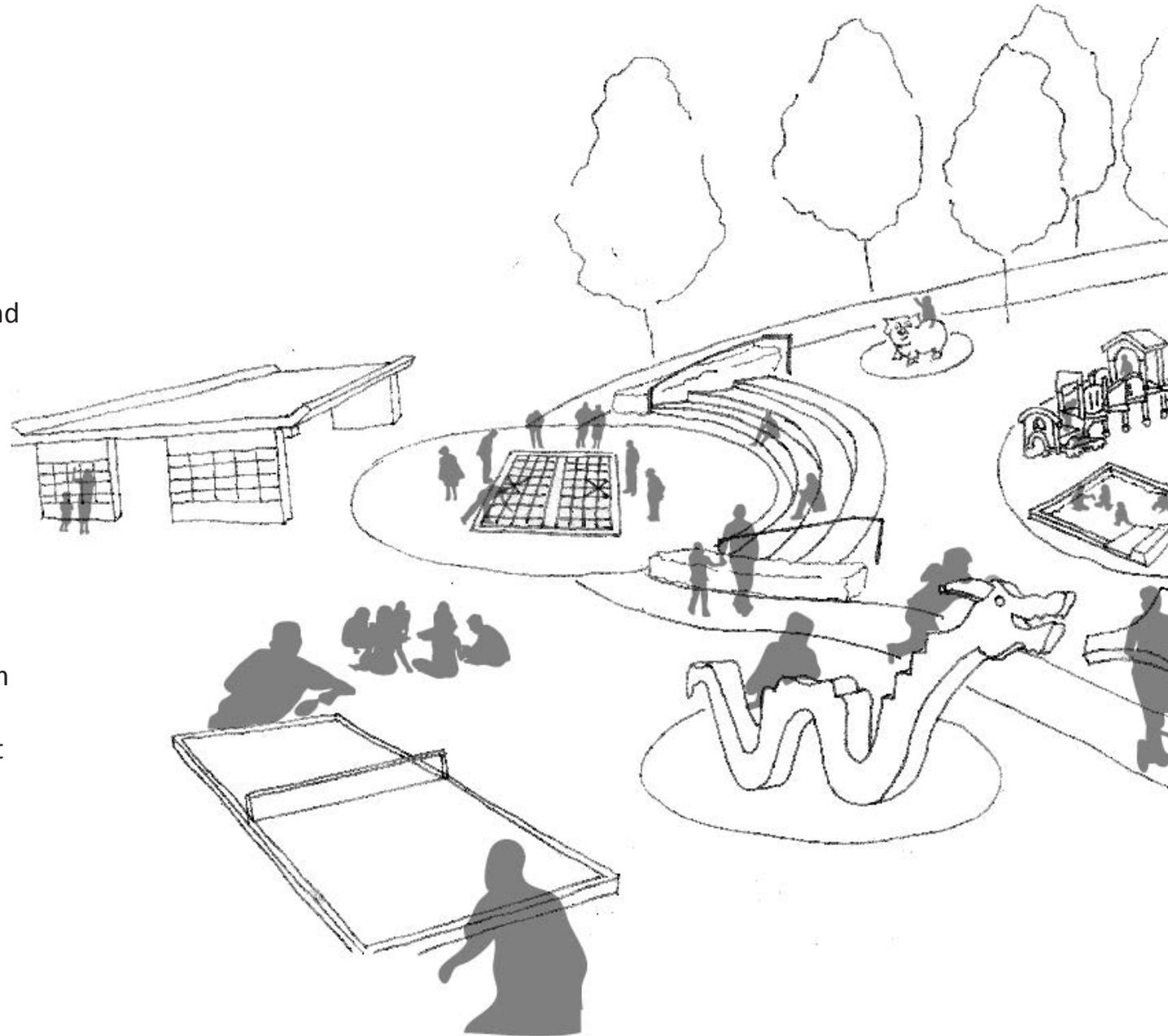
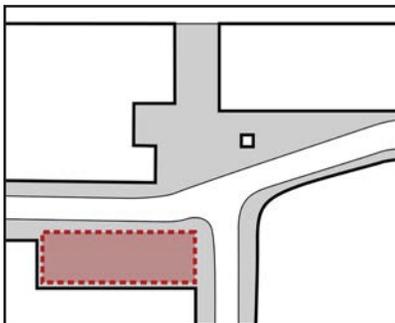
Chinese Garden Elements

Playful Chinatown

Chinatown is an intergenerational place where kids, adults, and elders can all play and learn together. With a playground, exercise equipment, badminton court, ping pong tables, and more, this new pocket park has room for everybody in the family.

Experience Playful Chinatown:

- Have fun on the playground with your entire family
- Follow the animals of the Chinese zodiac around the park
- Participate in a group tai chi class
- Learn how to grow vegetables from an elder at the community garden
- Challenge a friend to game of giant Chinese chess





Race the Zodiac: 12 animals line the park path, recreating the legend of how they raced to heaven to form the zodiac. Climb on and learn the story!



Giant Chinese Chess



Ping Pong Tables



Community Garden



Exercise Equipment



This design booklet is a product of the public space project **“Hot+Noisy” Chinatown** conducted in Summer 2017 through a VIVA Refresh grant from the City of Vancouver. It is excerpted from a full report outlining our project methodology, which is available on request.

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