



# DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY PLAN (DTLA 2040) CHINATOWN

## Introduction

This package of information serves as a guide on how the DTLA 2040 Plan recognizes the unique history and culture of Chinatown. The Downtown Plan aims to support equitable growth into the future by adopting new policies, establishing new zoning rules, and outlining Design Best Practices for new buildings in the neighborhood. This package includes the following:

### The Policy Document Readers Guide

#### 1. The Policy Document Readers Guide

- The General Plan Land Use map shows broad designations of uses and scales. The General Plan Designation doesn't regulate height or uses on particular properties, but sets a broad range of what should be allowed.

#### 2. Draft Zoning Summary

- Zoning regulates the specific size of buildings and what activities are allowed within them. Zoning is the main tool the City uses to implement the vision of the community. The zoning code is a technical document used by city staff to review building plans. This packet includes a summary of the draft zoning and creates a link between the community vision and the draft zoning regulations. The draft zoning code can be found on the Plan website ([www.planning4la.org/dtla2040](http://www.planning4la.org/dtla2040))

#### 3. Chinatown Design Best Practice Summary

- The Design Best Practice document outlines ideas on how new development can contribute to the historic, cultural legacy of Chinatown. The document includes topics such as architectural details, access to open space, and precedent studies.

The Downtown Plan materials can be found at:

[www.planning4la.org/dtla2040#draft-plan](http://www.planning4la.org/dtla2040#draft-plan)

# 1. POLICY DOCUMENT READERS GUIDE

## Introduction

The Policy Document outlines a vision for the neighborhood and outlines specific ideas Chinatown community members shared during outreach events. The Downtown Community Plan Policy document, a collective vision for Downtown's future and includes goals, policies, and implementation programs that frame the City's long-term priorities. A main function of the Community Plan is to guide decision-making with respect to land uses. The goals and policies, together with the General Plan map, are intended to guide decision-making. Community Plan goals and policies are intended to be supportive of one another. However, it is important to recognize that goals and policies are sometimes in competition and may entail trade-offs. The singular pursuit of one goal or policy may, in some cases, inhibit the achievement of other goals or policies. Ultimately, the Community Plan's goals, policies, and programs are intended to provide guidance when planning staff is making a determination to approve or deny a development project.

## Goals

A goal is a statement that describes a desired future condition or "end" state. Goals are change and outcome-oriented, achievable over time, though not driven by funding. Each goal in the Community Plan begins with an abbreviated chapter title followed by the number of the goal (e.g. LU.1).

Example:

LU GOAL 3

ACCESSIBLE, HEALTHY, AND SAFE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES AFFORDABLE TO LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.

## Policies

A policy is a clear statement that guides a specific course of action for decision-makers to achieve a desired goal. Policies may refer to existing programs or call for the establishment of new ones. Each policy in the Plan is labeled with the abbreviated chapter title, the goal they refer to, and a unique number (e.g., LU.1.1).

Example:

LU 3.1 Recognize additional housing unit options to accommodate a variety of household sizes, including larger households, such as those with children, multi-generational living, and special needs populations.

## Implementation Program

Coordination among City departments and external agencies is critical to the successful implementation of many Community Plan policies, such as park planning and streetscape improvements. While many Community Plan policies are implemented through land use regulations and incentives enforced by the City based on its mandate to protect the health, safety and welfare of its inhabitants, implementation of some Plan policies may also require coordination and joint actions with numerous local, regional, state, and federal agencies. Below are existing and future programs and policies that address Chinatown.

Example:

P14 - First Right of Refusal: Explore the creation of Citywide first right of refusal provisions to ensure tenants of any residential unit subject to the Rent Stabilization Ordinance (RSO) or an On-Site Restricted Affordable Unit that is demolished or vacated for purposes of a proposed development project shall be granted First Right of Refusal for the replacement units.



## How to find Goals, Policies, and Programs for Chinatown

Chapter 2 contains goals and policies related to land use. The chapter organizes the goals and policies into three categories: those that apply Downtown-wide; those that relate to General Plan Land Use Designations; and those specific to the individual neighborhood level. To view the goals, policies, and implementation programs for Chinatown view the Downtown Wide, General Plan Land Use Designations (Community Center, Village, and Neighborhood Residential), and the Chinatown Neighborhood sections.

Chapters 3 & 4 Include goals and policies related to mobility, streets, and open space. All the goals and policies within these chapters are relevant for Chinatown as well as other Downtown neighborhoods.

Goals, policies, and programs provide guidance on stakeholder priorities. Below are some concepts of concern synthesized from outreach with Chinatown stakeholders.

### Housing and Displacement

- Renting a home in Los Angeles can be expensive. Approximately close to 80 percent of families with extremely low incomes in Los Angeles County spend more than half of their income on housing alone, straining the resources of low-income families who are working hard to make ends meet. The Plan recognizes that for Downtown to be truly a place for all to live and work, there should be an effective system for creating affordable housing and ensuring that the resources within Downtown benefit those most in need.
- The Downtown Community Plan envisions Downtown as a place with a diverse mix of housing that accommodates households of all income levels, with a targeted approach to increase access to affordable housing within Chinatown.
- The Plan includes specific goals and policies for Chinatown speaking to anti-displacement strategies and ensuring homes for families, multi-generational households, and restricted affordable units.
- Development can contribute to the historic, cultural legacy of Chinatown. The plan includes topics such as architectural details, access to open space, and precedent studies.

#### Example Goals and Policies include:

- LU 2.1- Foster an equitable and inclusive Downtown, with housing options that can accommodate the fullest range of economic and social needs.
- LU 28.3- Support the development of housing options that can accommodate a range of household sizes and promote multi-generational living in Downtown.

## Supporting Local Small Businesses

- Chinatown is a historic-cultural neighborhood with a variety of legacy businesses and institutions. The neighborhood is home to a long-standing multi-generational residential community, a variety of small and family-owned businesses, family associations, and institutions that serve the Chinese American, as well as other immigrant communities.
- Small businesses and neighborhood-serving businesses are integral to the community in Chinatown. In addition to providing goods and services within walking distance for many residents, local small businesses contribute to Chinatown's legacy of creating commerce and informal marketplaces. There are goals and policies addressing small and medium scale businesses, and opportunities for culturally and linguistically inclusive businesses and services, throughout the plan text.

### Example Goals and Policies include:

- LU 38.3- Support multi-generational communities that include culturally relevant and linguistically accessible local services, recreational facilities, and urban design that accommodates people of all ages, incomes, and levels of mobility.
- LU 43.1- Allow for the strategic location of small-scale neighborhood businesses so that they are safely and easily accessible to the residential community.

## Neighborhood Character

- As the Plan accommodates growth, it also aims to address the continuity of past, present, and future Chinatown. The Plan includes strategies such as encouraging the preservation of historic places, reinforcing scale in residential neighborhoods by proposing transitional heights and story limits, and proposing Best Practice design guidelines (Appendix A) for new development.

### Example goals and policies include:

- LU 41.10- Support and reinforce the historic and cultural components of Chinatown, including architectural design, and the long-standing local businesses and legacy institutions that serve the local community.
- To see a complete list of surveyed and designated Historic Resources view the Central City North Survey LA Report (Appendix B)

## Mobility for All

- Providing safe and convenient ways to walk or roll throughout Downtown’s districts is essential for healthy and accessible neighborhoods. Chinatown is well connected by rail, bus, and bicycle infrastructure, yet still needs safer connections between these civic resources. The Plan includes policies and strategies to prioritize investments in open space, walkability, and activated streets. The plan also contains policies to reinforce the connectivity already present in the community fabric of Chinatown.

Example Goals and Policies include:

- LU 41.5- Support an improved public realm, including a range of open space types that can offer opportunities for culturally relevant and multi-generational recreation, rest, and social interaction.
- LU 41.12 - Promote courtyard-style commercial developments that are characteristic of the area and reinforce the neighborhood’s historic pedestrian orientation and reflect the community’s cultural heritage.

# 2. ZONING

## Introduction

In addition to updating the Plan Text, the Community Plan Update also introduces a new zoning code. The new code allows us to develop zoning tools specifically tailored to the plan area. The proposed zoning structure consists of five key parts:



While form, frontage, and development standards regulate the built environment, Use and Density refer to the activities allowed on a site. The specific zoning for properties in Chinatown can be found on the interactive zoning map here [www.planning4la.org/dtla2040#draft-plan](http://www.planning4la.org/dtla2040#draft-plan), or in hardcopy at the City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning Records Management at 221 N Figueroa St, Room 1450, Los Angeles. Appointments must be made in advance by emailing [planning.recordsmgmt@lacity.org](mailto:planning.recordsmgmt@lacity.org) or calling (213) 847-3732

For more in-depth information on zoning tools developed specifically for Chinatown, see the map “**Chinatown Zoning Map**” on the following page.

# How are the policies implemented ?

The map below describes the zoning strategies applied to realize the plan policy objectives for Chinatown. The Form, Frontage and Use regulations complement one another and are designed to address the goals of community to: increase access to affordable housing; promote local and multi-generational businesses; enhance mobility; and reinforce the identity of the neighborhood.

Note: To find the applicable zoning regulation(s) related to the descriptions in the call-out boxes, click on the links in bold text, or reference the draft zoning code at [www.planning4la.org/dtla2040](http://www.planning4la.org/dtla2040)

The numbers on the map below locate the general application area of the draft zoning. For site specific details on where these strategies apply, reference the draft zoning map.

**1.** In order to offer an avenue to garner affordable housing, the Plan reduces existing Base FAR from 3:1 to 1.5:1 and introduces a base height limit of 3 stories. The Plan provides incentives for building up to 3:1 FAR or 6 stories in exchange for setting aside some housing units as affordable. See Form District: [LN1](#) and [LM2](#).

**2.** To balance anticipated growth with the existing character of this neighborhood and reinforce the narrow built pattern, the Plan stipulates the maximum width of a building to 75' for properties to the west of the 101 freeway, (Form District [LN1](#)) while offering greater flexibility with regard to building width and building coverage for properties to the east (Form District [LM2](#)).

**3.** To ensure compatibility with the residential character of this neighborhood, the Plan limits this portion of the plan area generally to multi-unit residential uses and neighborhood-serving uses. See Use District [RG1](#).

**4.** The Plan recognizes this area as the commercial core of Chinatown and includes regulations to maintain the low scale character of this neighborhood, while creating an avenue to garner benefits that support the community.

The Plan reduces the existing Base FAR from 6:1 to 2:1. No height limit currently exists. However, the Plan introduces a base height limit of 3 stories and a maximum bonus height limit of 5 stories. See Figures 1, 2 and 3 below.

The height limit also ensures a smoother visual transition between the low-scale residential on the west and higher development intensities on the east. See Form District [MN1](#), Form District [MN1](#). Also reference the diagrams on the following page to visualize how the Downtown Plan is changing the regulations for this area to capture more community benefits.

**5.** The plan introduces new opportunities for small business while including regulations to support retention of legacy businesses.

The Plan limits the maximum size of a business establishment to 5,000 sf to promote and retain locally owned small businesses over large corporates. See use district [CX1](#).

**6.** Requires buildings be placed close to the sidewalk to ensure new infill buildings continue to reinforce this generally consistent pattern, and enhance shade and pedestrian comfort. See Frontage District [MK1](#) and [SH2](#).

**7.** To reinforce the street orientation of shop-fronts along Broadway, and facilitate display of products along sidewalks, the Plan requires that buildings facing Broadway, between College and Ord streets incorporate a market stall or shopfront bay that See Frontage District [MK1](#).

**8.** To break down long blocks, enhance walkability and contribute to the porous and pedestrian quality of Chinatown, buildings are required to provide a building break when they exceed specified widths. See Form District [DM5](#) & [DM2](#). This requirement applies to all properties in Chinatown.

**9.** In an area with a variety of transit options, bonus development potential is a means to achieve substantial affordable housing and other community serving benefits, and increase the number of people who can benefit from access to transportation amenities.

The Plan reduces the base FAR from 6:1 to 2:1 and buildings can go up to 8.5:1 FAR by providing community benefits. See Form District [DM5](#) & [DM2](#).

Allows for more flexibility for a range of uses along the periphery of Chinatown such as hotel, entertainment and educational institutions that serve both the local and regional population. See use district [CX2](#).

**10.** Requires active ground floors and street frontages with generous amount of windows, as well as frequent entryways to activate the streets and improve the connectivity of the peripheral areas to the core of Chinatown. See Frontage District [SH2](#).

**11.** To encourage the creation of plazas, paseos and courtyards and allow for internal circulation throughout the neighborhood, the Plan requires a portion of the street fronting lot area be designed as open space amenity. (This requirement applies to all Form Districts in Chinatown)

**12.** The Plan primarily allows for residential uses and limited commercial uses. However, to encourage small local markets, daycares and pharmacies that serve the daily needs of its residents and promote local businesses, the Plan incorporates a maximum size limit for commercial tenants. See Use District [RX1](#).



**TEXT LEGEND**  
 Housing & Displacement Strategies  
 Strategies for Sustaining Small Businesses  
 Strategies for Reinforcing Neighborhood Character  
 Strategies that promote Mobility for all

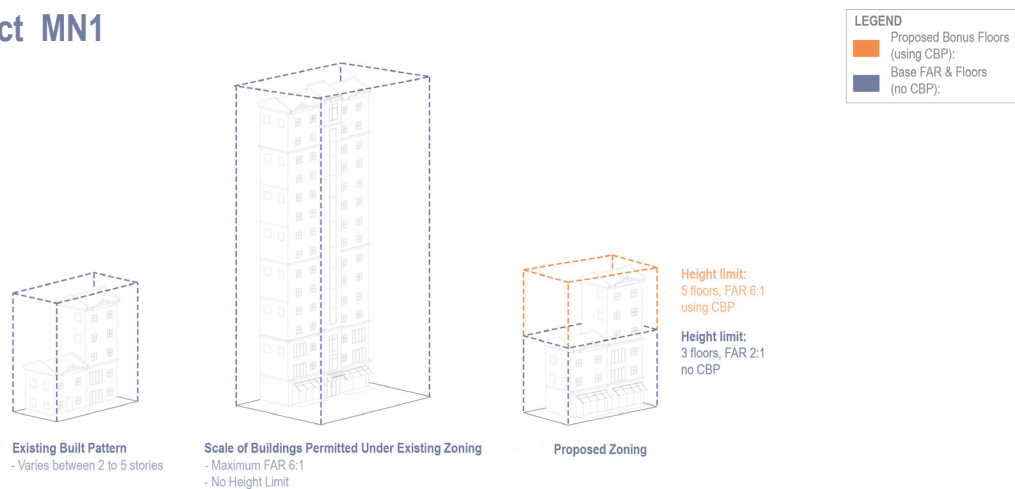
Chinatown Zoning Map

# Chinatown Building Models with Community Benefit Program (CBP)

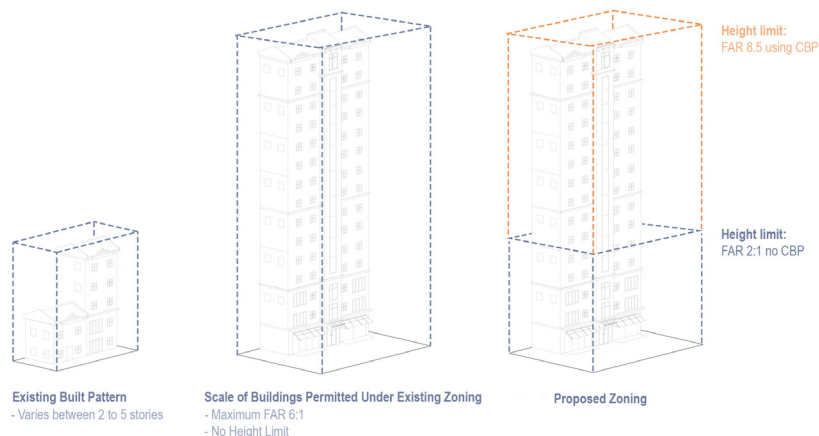
The diagrams below illustrate how the plan aims to bring more community benefits by changing the zoning in the commercial areas of Chinatown. The diagrams demonstrate how the existing zoning allows for much larger buildings than what exists today. The larger buildings are allowed by-right and are not required to provide any community benefits. By reducing what is allowed “by-right” the plan creates more opportunities for community benefits. The zoning form district “MN1” also ensures new development compliments the surrounding context by applying a height limit of 5 stories. The zoning form district “DM2” allows for larger buildings and creates more opportunities for community benefits such as affordable housing.

The new plan would The Plan’s proposed Community Benefits Program is a form of value capture based on an incentive-based zoning system. If Developers choose to participate, new buildings will provide a benefit to the community in order to build larger buildings. These benefits can range from building or preserving affordable housing, to other benefits such as publicly accessible parks and playgrounds, day cares, small business incubators, social services, schools, and libraries, that enable the social and economic success of neighborhoods.

## Zoning Form District MN1



## Zoning Form District MN2



**Appendix A**  
**CHINATOWN BEST PRACTICES**





Source: Shutterstock

# CHINATOWN

## INTRODUCTION

Chinatown is characterized by low- to mid-scale residential uses, and commercial and retail services oriented around a system of interior pedestrian streets and plazas. The architecture is predominantly mid-century, although a substantial number of Historic Cultural Resources with architectural features that are common to traditional styles are embedded within this neighborhood. Consequently, architectural features such as complex roof-lines, flared eaves, rafter tails, decoratively carved brackets and projecting balconies stand out against a more subtle mid-century context. The residential component of Chinatown predominantly consists of multi-family units and are present in the form of townhomes, garden courts, or apartments interspersed with single family homes. The urban form includes a variety of building heights ranging from one-story single family homes and retail establishments to multi-family mid-rise buildings.

More recent developments are taller in height and generally line the boundaries of Chinatown. Design elements such as plazas, water features, and public art and murals contribute to the overall character of Chinatown. Guidelines for Chinatown are intended to ensure new infill buildings are compatible with the existing context and complement its historic and cultural identity, while incorporating design, details and materials to form an integrated and interconnected neighborhood. In order to guide new construction and changes to existing buildings which contribute to this condition in a compatible manner, designers can look to traditional Chinese architectural styles and approaches. There are multiple branches of Chinese architectural styles, each with unique design rules that evoke distinct cultural context and connotation. Appendix B provides an overview of these architectural themes, with recommendations and examples of how to pair and apply traditional design elements within a modern context.

## ■ ■ ■ SITE PLANNING

Intent: An integrated relationship between buildings, streets, and open spaces that contribute to and conserve the prominence of historic and cultural structures.

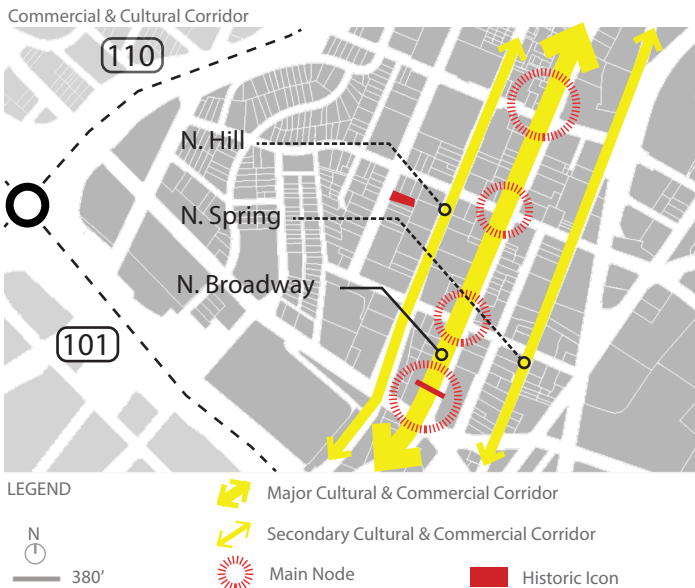
When located adjacent to buildings of significance, acknowledge their presence through appropriate building setbacks and stepbacks, so as to not overwhelm their importance.

Development along major commercial streets such as North Broadway, North Spring Street and North Hill Street can provide public plazas, interior atriums, and pedestrian passageways to break up large blocks and promote pedestrian circulation through a network of interconnected shops.

Where buildings are set back from the property line, consider designing these areas to accommodate seating or open display of products associated with businesses lining the streets.

Recognize the importance of plazas and similar gathering spaces in this neighborhood. Integrate public pedestrian pathways into new development to create a porous built environment that contributes to further enhancing this neighborhood.

When a project is sited at a strategic location such as at a prominent node or gateway, explore making the site serve as an identifiable icon, landmark, or gateway to the neighborhood.



1. N. Broadway serves as the cultural heart of Chinatown with unique local businesses, legacy organizations, and iconic landmarks. Design buildings along N. Broadway to reinforce its identity as a main "Cultural & Commercial Corridor", with a variety of uses and facilitate a network of gathering spaces during cultural and community celebrations.
2. To help promote a vibrant street and neighborhood, N. Hill and N. Spring streets are envisioned to serve as secondary "Cultural Corridors", with more mixed uses.
3. Celebrate buildings and structures at key intersections and corner sites, and utilize opportunities to create visual focus.



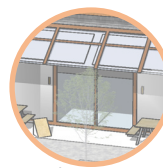
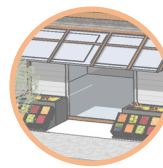
The Figure shows a pedestrian oriented cultural commercial corridor in Beijing, China. Features such as clear signage, seating, window displays, and shade have been incorporated to enhance the pedestrian experience.



The Figure shows a vibrant mixed use neighborhood. This image demonstrates how building setbacks can be activated with uses such as outdoor dining, display, and seating.

The image on the right shows design gestures that respond to the prevalent architectural styles in Chinatown.

Projects are encouraged to provide a porous ground floor design with space for open display of products and seating along the sidewalk.



## ■■■ BUILDING DESIGN AND ARTICULATION

Orient active uses, common gathering spaces, and balconies away from adjacent freeways in order to minimize exposure to sound and air pollution.

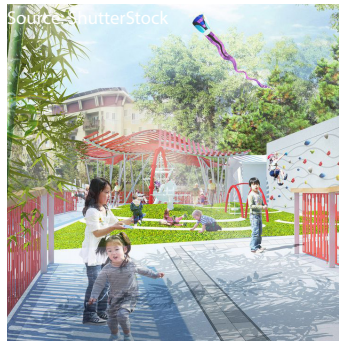
Place, orient, and shape building facades to enhance and complement adjacent open spaces.

Incorporate a variety of gathering spaces that meet the needs of a broad range of users, including families with children, seniors, and pet owners.

Design open spaces to include playground, facilities for children, as well as amenities and seating for adults and seniors to promote informal guardianship.

Employ a variety of high quality materials in public spaces that can support a range of activities.

### Oriental Activities



The images above show some common activities, especially popular among seniors: exercising, kite flying, chess, Tai Chi, plaza dancing etc.

Figures A-C show various paving materials. These public places do not need to be large; small to medium sizes are more desirable. Spaces that encourage multi-use spaces through variety in paving material/paving pattern, areas with shade and sunlight, and active play zones for children alongside passive seating areas for adults that support guardianship, are generally preferred.

Intent: Overall building design, articulation, and massing contribute to and strengthen Chinatown's role as a cultural heart of Los Angeles, characterized by buildings which contribute to a memorable and cohesive corridor.

Incorporate prominent entryways, outdoor dining, outdoor display, street furniture, or unique facade treatments to enliven the street along North Broadway.

Utilize architecturally integrated overhangs and canopies, as well as conventional and unconventional landscaping installations to provide shade and reduce heat island effect.

Highlight visibility of small neighborhood serving retail uses when adjacent to residential uses by incorporating identifiable entrances and maximum transparency along street facades.

Visually display public history or background through imagery, text, or plaque displays visible from the public right-of-way.

Create linear continuation, such as a strong cornice line or upper-level step back, to respect similarities with nearby existing structures.

### Prominent architecture as landmark - Chongqing Guotai Arts Center



Figure above shows an example of having a prominent building as the landmark. These kind of buildings, as well as Chinese Gardens, that appear at key intersections or street corners, help to form strong mental maps. These buildings serving different uses celebrate aesthetic/cultural features.

Figures D -G show various ways of public display to emphasize historic and cultural identities; Elements like traditional Chinese stone/metal engraving and calligraphy are incorporated into plaques.

Image A source from Shutterstock; Images B - E and G sources from Getty; Image F source: Mafengwo.

## ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS AND MATERIALS

Intent: Architectural details and materials echo traditional and modern building function and design in harmony with the existing built environment.

Incorporate thoughtful expression of Chinese architectural design, through the use of varied materials and textures to create patterns and dimension, rather than overt gestures. Building design and material that are internally coherent, and have minimal focal points are appropriate.

Incorporate natural materials, or natural material substitute, such as wood, stone, tile, terracotta, ceramic, and clay brick to add texture.

Consider employing a color scheme that utilizes prominent colors like red as accent colors, rather than as primary facade colors.

Provide paving materials such as tile or stones to create distinctive open spaces and building entrances.

The roof, cornice, or parapet that are visually distinctive and well integrated into the overall design of the building are desirable.

Consider employing signage that has dimensional qualities, to create a layered or stacked effect.

Retain historic signs to help preserve the district's character.

Explore making signage that is multilingual and incorporates locally spoken languages.

Incorporate existing neon signage as part of new buildings to retain this character defining feature of Chinatown.

The figure shows the lighting design in Chongqing, China. Good lighting reinforces the architectural features of a building, improves the district's safety and avoids light pollution. Consider applying lighting along distinctive roof lines, cornices, columns and balconies; to achieve design coherence especially along cultural-commercial corridors like N. Broadway.



Source: Shutterstock

Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li

This figure shows a cultural commercial corridor in Chengdu, China which successfully combines modern and historic design elements.



Source: Shutterstock



Source: Getty

Figure A & B shows durable, three-dimensional signage that incorporates local languages and adds visual interest to the building facade. Use of Chinese calligraphy, as shown in Figure A is also encouraged.

An Ancient Town in Suzhou



Source: Shutterstock



Source: Getty



Source: Shutterstock

The figure shows a color scheme in a traditional village in China: using unsaturated and calm color as basic tone, and darker color for roofs and window frames to create contrast. Note that bright colors are used sparingly and the red color is used only as a highlight to emphasize entrances and direct views. Figures C and D shows the application of red color on street furniture and decorations.


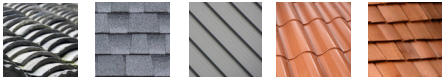


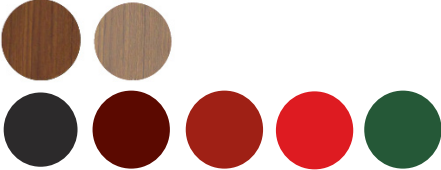
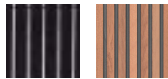


Source: Shutterstock

## Color and Material Palette

A key component of traditional Chinese design is the selection of building colors and materials, which are often paired together to signify particular meanings or occasions. The application of these elements in contemporary construction can help new buildings integrate harmoniously into Chinatown's existing fabric.

### Color & Material Palette

	Color	Material
Roof	 <p>It is customary to use dark colors for roof or ridges, and are often the same color tone as the facade color, but in a different shade. Roof color can include black; Dai (黛, a bluish-black color); dark and light grey; or burgundy, similar to the color of a brick.</p>	 <p>Roof materials can include tile, composed of clay, concrete, glazed, solar, or ceramic tile; asphalt shingles; slate; wood; brick; metal; or a green roof; or similar texture substitutes.</p>
Facade	 <p>The facade is often a soft or tranquil tone, such as white, grey, beige, light yellow, brown, or burgundy, similar to the color of a brick.</p>	 <p>While the facade color is subtle, the facade material can include texture or patterns to create visual interest. This can be achieved through textured concrete; wood or its substitute; masonry veneer, comprised of stone, brick, or tile, or its substitute; metal panels; or glass and its substitutes, which can serve as a good transitional material between modern and ancient architecture styles.</p>
Window & Door Frames	 <p>Dark tones such as a deep red, burgundy, or black can be applied to windows and door frames. New development should avoid applying white to window and door frames.</p>	 <p>Window and door frames can utilize wood, fibrex, aluminum, composite, fiberglass.</p>

Accentuate Color



Minimal but consistent use of color. The color can be used prudently as a method to highlight components of a building or district. Examples of this include red lanterns or other decorations at the entrances to a building, alley, or district; street furniture; and some window frames. Judicious application of the color red can also support other objectives such as pedestrian wayfinding and visual connection.

Transitional Color



Avoid abrupt color combinations. Transitional color and tones such as murals between the roof and primary facade material are used as a strategy in traditional Chinese architecture to avoid jarring transitions.

Texture



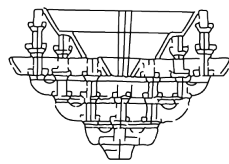
Texture is the key to success. Appropriate texture/material can play an important role in linking both traditional and modern identities. For more information, please see Material section on the left and Appendix A for application examples.

Image sources: Getty.

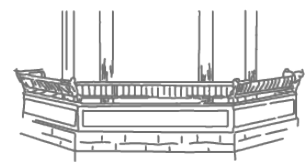
Iconic Chinese Features

Detailed descriptions and application see Appendix A, on following pages.

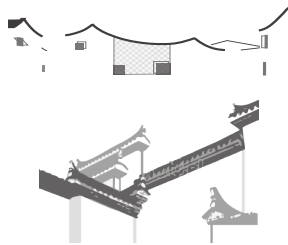
1. Dou Gong



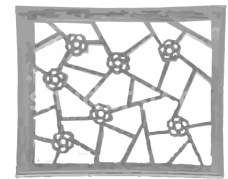
2. Mei Ren Kao



3. Sloped Roofs & Tile Ridges



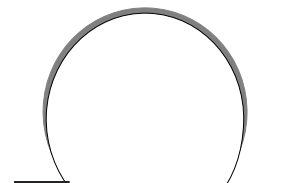
4. Lattice Pattern Windows & Screen Walls



5. Gate House (Men Lou)



6. Moon Gate



## APPENDIX A

### Iconic Chinese Architecture Design Features For Inspiration

Applying Identifiable Traditional Chinese Architecture Elements into Modern Architecture (referencing Neo-Chinese/Contemporary Chinese Style: Xinzhongshi (新中式建筑))

Below are traditional Chinese architectural approaches that cohesively integrate traditional elements with modern building design, to achieve both functionality and aesthetic beauty.

Contemporary structures which have incorporated these traditional elements successfully (新中式建筑) have done so through simplified and appropriately abstracted building structures, allowing the traditional elements to shine, as the main accentuating feature of the building. The following sections provide a selection of precedents and best practices.

#### 1. Dougong

Dougong is an interlocking set of wooden brackets, traditionally utilized as supportive and decorative structure. The use of Dougong first appeared in buildings of the late centuries BC and evolved into a structural network that joined pillars and columns to the frame of the roof. As an iconic and identifiable structure in traditional Chinese architecture, it can be innovatively adapted to modern buildings.

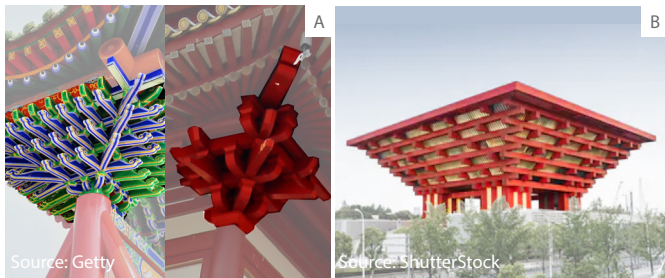


Figure A shows two examples of traditional Dougong structure, one with intricate colors and layering and the other more simplified.

Figure B is the China Pavilion Exhibition Hall, constructed in 2010 during Expo in Shanghai. This is an example of Dougong inspired architecture, which combine both the iconic geometry and rhythm of Dougong, with modernism. However, consider the building mass and surrounding environment to contextualize the application of such features.

As demonstrated in image B above, designers are encouraged to reinterpret Chinese architectural elements to a modern architectural vernacular.

#### 2. Mei Ren Kao

Mei Ren Kao (“beauty leans on”), a long linear bench that functions as both seating and parapet. It is commonly seen in the upper floor hallway, pavilion and corridor of traditional Chinese buildings. It can be appropriately modified and applied to new buildings to better connect the interior and exterior space transitions, provide resting spaces for elderly users, and offer views of the cityscape.



Figure C & D show different ways of applying Mei Ren Kao, a kind of bench, in traditional Chinese architecture. In some cases, the benches can also combine with a low retaining wall.

Mei Ren Kao can be incorporated into new buildings to function as a balcony and support businesses like bars, tea houses and restaurants. This design element also helps connect the indoor and outdoor spaces, and the upper floors to the street.

### 3. Sloped roofs & tile ridge

List A below identifies four of the more common types of traditional Chinese roofs. Although sloped roofs are not necessary in Los Angeles due to dry climate, and minimal rain and snow, they are an identifiable feature due for their unique rhythm and can easily evoke the identity of Chinese design. Designers may consider incorporating a variation of the sloped roof to fit a contemporary building's overall design.

The eave is another common characteristic of Chinese architecture, which is applied as a linear cap on walls and screen walls. These can be utilized in contemporary design to define the shape of a building and function as an accent.

Below images show several ways of reinterpreting the sloped roofs and eaves in modern architecture design.



Figure A shows a modern cultural commercial corridor project. Asymmetrical, slightly sloped roofs reflect the rhythm of traditional precedents, complement the variation in window shapes and facade texture and add visual interest.



Source: Yingshi Huang.

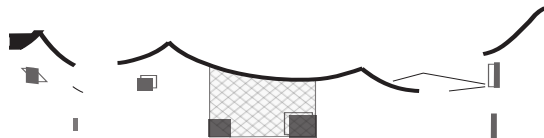


Figure B. The sloped roof is slightly curved to create a modern expression of a traditional design feature.

### 4. Lattice Pattern Windows & Screen Walls

Decorative window frames and screen walls are used throughout traditional Chinese architectural and landscape design to separate interior and exterior environments.

Contemporary buildings can incorporate lattice pattern windows and walls in numerous functional ways: 1) to articulate building facade and break up blank walls (Figure C); 2) bring in daylight to the interiors through semi-permeable walls (Figure D); 3) to create separation or sense of privacy between indoor and outdoor spaces, or to screen patio areas (Figure E); 4) to frame focal points (Figure F).

Chinese screen wall patterns typically employ cultural meanings. Thus, precedent study in advance is necessary.



Source: Shutterstock

Source: Shutterstock

Wood panel on facades

Wood attic for passive design



Source: Shutterstock

Source: Shutterstock

Wood lattice to separate spaces

Screen walls to guide views

List B: some traditional lattice pattern categories include:

- Square (grid, diamond, overlapping-diamond)
- Circle (round mirror, moon, coin, fan)
- Chinese Characters (ten (十), secondary (亚), relates to sacrifice ceremony & means noble, field (田), work (工),
- MISC (foliage, animals, etc.)



## 5. Gate House (Men Lou)

Gate House elements are commonly used in Chinese traditional design. It originated from the Han dynasty and has evolved for thousands of years. It can be placed on the wall of a garden, a temple, or at the entrance of a street.

Gate house is usually viewed as the “face” of the family or the owner, thus varies largely based on size, height, structure, style, decoration, and material etc. Some modern Chinese-inspired architecture use Gate House element directly on the building facade to create focal point, add visual interest or indicate an entrance. Most of these buildings function as restaurants or commercial uses.



Figure A & B give examples of a Gate House.

## 6. Moon Gate

In Chinese tradition, the full moon is a symbol of peace, prosperity, and family reunion. The moon gate is a common element used in Southern Chinese Garden design. The gate is often used to connect two adjacent spaces; it functions as a frame, to mediate and guide one’s attention toward a particular view, such as a focal point in the garden. The circular moon can be sometimes substituted by a similar shape, such as an octagon.

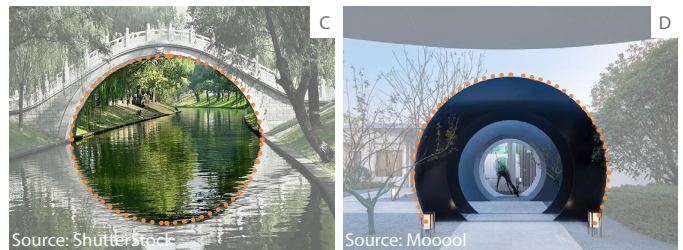


Figure C & D shows the full moon shape in traditional Chinese design. In modern design, the shape can be used creatively in various locations.

Figure C shows an example of a moon gate simulated using a reflective surface.

## Texture Application Examples



Image sources: Shutterstock.

Incorporating appropriate textures and architectural details can reinforce the identity and enhance the visual quality of this neighborhood.

These examples show Chinese Embossments: Metal panel on wall; stone lions at entrances; carved wood cornices.



Image sources: Shutterstock.

Texture & Identity: Two examples demonstrate the use of different textures to reflect both traditional and modern identities.

■ ■ ■ APPENDIX B  
**Interpreting Modern Precedents**

Case Study: Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li, Chengdu, China



Source: Shutterstock  
 Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li



Source: Shutterstock  
 Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li

The Sino-Ocean development, completed in 2014, is an example of Neo-Chinese Architecture, a winner of ULI’s 2015 Global Award for Excellence, and a LEED ND Gold–Certified development. The large-scale retail heavy development is located between a thousand-year old structure, the Daci Temple, and the most prosperous commercial and financial district in Chengdu, Chunxi Road. The development meets sustainability objectives by applying architectural fins on the facade and roof eaves for solar shading, and by employing computational fluid dynamics (CFD) analysis to inform the building orientation study and improve its surrounding micro-climate.

The development also bridges the cultural and aesthetic gaps between ancient Chinese architecture and modern skyscrapers, by selecting and thoughtfully abstracting traditional design elements into the development’s design. The development simplifies Southeastern Chinese roof designs, to visibly reflect traditional roof rhythms, where roofs sit at varying elevations and setbacks. The development also reflects local texture and color theme, through the use of materials such as wood panels, bricks, tile roofs, and subdued colors such as the lime wall.

In sections of the development with more active commercial and retail activity, the designers have incorporated contemporary glass walls. These establish high levels of transparency on the ground floor, allowing for more natural light (Chengdu is famous for its gloomy climate), which reflect the modern characteristic of the context accurately while also providing each business more opportunity to play with interior designs and lighting. This modern innovation is viewed as successful, due to the traditional roof lines and materials throughout the rest of the development.



Source: Shutterstock

Modern material: contributes to a modern identity; responds to surrounding tall building context; activates street frontages and highlights commercial use.



Source: Shutterstock

Cultural identity is reflected through material and shapes; eaves in different elevations mimic ancient towns and adds visual interest.

## Interpreting Traditional Precedents: Three Architecture Classes

There are mainly three classes in traditional Chinese architecture. Though new buildings are not encouraged to mimic traditional buildings, an understanding of the underlying theories and correlated elements are important to avoid meaningless and extravagant designs.

New building designs are encouraged to reflect Chinese identities, however, also consider sustainability, durability and functionality to avoid designs that are economically and environmentally inefficient.



Northern Vernacular Style

### Northern Vernacular Style

This image shows an example of the Northern vernacular architecture, where the building has been designed with a dark grey tile roof, a light grey brick facade, and a white lime facade for the overall color tone. Northern China has extreme winters, resulting in a natural landscape that is often barren. To infuse color and vibrancy into this context, the Northern vernacular architecture includes wooden windows and doors that are often painted in dark red or green, and sometimes the wood frames remain unpainted. Many buildings in the Northern Vernacular Style also include murals, featuring scenes or landscapes with cultural meanings. These murals are oftentimes green or blue in general, and located under the roof or cornice.



Southern Vernacular Style

### Southern Vernacular Style

An iconic example of Southern vernacular architecture is Hui Style (徽派). This style incorporates dark grey tile and white lime facade to establish a muted tone. The windows and doors are traditionally made from wood, which are left unpainted or painted with dark red or grey. Careful introduction of color and texture forms a clean and neat aesthetic.



Royal Architecture Design

### Royal & Religious Architectural Design

In ancient China, only royal palaces included yellow roofs. Other royal related and religious structures could use yellow-green, green, or green-grey roofs. This is in contrast to other types of buildings, which were limited to grey roofs. The facade of Royal or Religious structures were typically red, and in particular instances were painted green. Similar to those murals found in the Northern Vernacular Style, royal and religious structures would often feature murals under roofs and upon the cornice. These mural paintings are typically a green or blue tone. Royal & Religious structures were traditionally the only buildings that include dragons in the mural design.

### Chinese Architecture Spirit

When all elements and components of a building tell a cohesive story, demonstrate a fluent rhythm and express a unified spirit, they are often successful. If intending to reflect traditional Chinese Architecture spirit, here are a few references to choose from:

- "Harmony between universe and human" (天人合一, 因地制宜)
- Sense of ordinance: stately and magnificent (Northern Royal theme)
- Sense of relaxation, romance, freedom and philosophy (Southern Chinese Garden style)
- Sense of prosperity, auspicious and lively (vernacular theme)