

The Well-being of Low-income, Monolingual-Chinese Senior Residents: The Impact of Disinvestment and Gentrification in Vancouver's Chinatown

by

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Abstract

This study asks: how has Chinatown's disinvestment and gentrification impacted the well-being of low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents? Vancouver's Chinatown has undergone rapid neighbourhood change, yet the experiences of its marginalized residents are largely unknown. Using the City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy as a framework for well-being, I interviewed twelve non-English speaking, low-income seniors who live in Chinatown. I found that while some revitalization projects of the 1990s added value to residents' lives, the addition of trendy, high-end boutiques, cafes and restaurants over the last five years have negatively affected the seniors' quality of life. Despite these harmful impacts, Chinatown continues to be an important neighbourhood for the well-being of low-income, elderly Chinese-only speaking residents. The neighbourhood's existing social and physical infrastructure, along with culturally and linguistically appropriate services and goods require protection from gentrification to ensure vulnerable residents can thrive in the community.

Keywords: commercial disinvestment; gentrification; Chinatown; well-being; Chinese seniors

Dedication

To my mother and grandmother for their constant love and support. I also dedicate this thesis to my late father. 這篇論文謹獻給我的父母和外婆.

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SRO	Single Room Occupancy
DTES LAP	Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Vancouver's Chinatown has undergone more than a decade of disinvestment and is now experiencing rapid gentrification. Supporters of the revitalization efforts praised the changes since Chinatown was widely accepted to be a dying neighbourhood in the early 2000s. However, little is known about how the socioeconomically disadvantaged Chinese residents, who have lived through Chinatown's transformation, have been affected. To understand this dynamic, my study asks: *how has Chinatown's disinvestment and gentrification impacted the well-being of low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents?*

According to Smith, disinvestment is the withdrawal of capital in all its forms from the built environment (238-240). Sustained disinvestment by landlords, financial institutions or governments results in land devaluation. Once land is devaloured, a rent-gap (the difference between actual ground rent and potential ground rent of the land) appears. Devalued land creates ideal conditions for reinvestment by developers and land owners seeking to extract maximum profits through speculation, rebuilding lots and transforming neighbourhoods (Quastel 706; Beauregard 12). These changes can drive the process of gentrification. This research adopts a broad definition of gentrification. Scholars like Beauregard argue that *gentrification* is a "chaotic concept" that implies diverse and complex interrelated events and processes (12 – 13). To capture the diversity of this term I turn to Davidson and Lee for a wide understanding of gentrification. Davidson and Lee's approach focuses on four main elements of the process: (1) reinvestment of capital, (2) social upgrading of locale by incoming high income groups, (3) landscape change, and (4) direct or indirect displacement of low-income groups (Lee et. al xvi). I chose this process focused definition because the changes occurring in Vancouver's Chinatown matches the description. Furthermore, Davidson and Lee's process concept is broad enough to capture the consequences of neighbourhood change.

Many inner-city Chinatowns across North America have undergone disinvestment and are now experiencing gentrification. Residents of these communities tend to be socially and economically disadvantaged. Given that urban changes affect people differently depending on their position in society, the experiences of vulnerable residents of Chinatown demand greater attention to ensure their well-being is not jeopardized.

My research examines the impacts of disinvestment and gentrification on Vancouver Chinatown's residents. Residents of Vancouver's Chinatown, are poorer, older and less acculturated than those in the rest of the city. According to the 2006 Canadian census, Chinatown was one of the poorest neighborhoods in Vancouver (City of Vancouver - Chinatown Neighbourhood Plan 11). The average median household income was \$17,658, well below the \$47,299 average for Vancouver. In addition, Chinatown is home to a disproportionately large senior population. Psychological and physiological changes may limit seniors to their immediate surroundings (Glass and Balfour 304-305). As a result, the quality of a neighbourhood can either exacerbate or buffer the effects of aging. Furthermore, more than half the neighbourhood's residents live alone. This may add additional psychological challenges to their well-being because seniors living alone may experience isolation from their community and society. Additionally, about 30% of Chinatown's residents spoke a dialect of Chinese at home (City of Vancouver – Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan 20). Whether or not this group is monolingual is unclear given the lack of current and available data. The informational survey in this thesis provides partial data to approximate how many residents are monolingual-Chinese, but more research needs to be done in this area. Assessing the number of Chinese-only speakers is important because the consequences of not being able to speak English is widely understood to be a barrier to accessing critical services (Wong 26). Also, knowledge of how many monolingual-Chinese residents live in Chinatown may help policymakers make plans to meet this group's needs.

Despite the seniors' disadvantaged position in the community, few provisions were made to protect their needs in the 2012 Chinatown Neighbourhood Plan and Economic Revitalization Strategy. The needs of low-income residents were overshadowed by plans for residential intensification, retail development and tourism. The impact of this emphasis and their exclusion is clear. Chinatown is now home to a number of trendy, high-end cafes,

restaurants and boutiques, whose clients are significantly younger and wealthier than the low-income senior residents. Gentrification and changes to the social and physical fabric of the historic neighbourhood may mean the annihilation of an affordable, culturally and linguistically appropriate community for those who need it the most.

Not only have the voices of low-income, monolingual-Chinese been left out of urban policies, scholarship on this group's experience of neighbourhood change has been sparse. For example, much of the research on race, class and gentrification has left out the experiences of Chinese people. Similarly, literature on Chinatown is mainly focused on its historic segregation, identity and new Chinese communities in the suburbs (Ng; Anderson; Li & Li) and does not capture the current function and role of historic, inner-city Chinatowns. Likewise research on immigrant Chinese seniors in the field of gerontology is not situated in the context of urban processes or environmental shifts (Mui). Due to the interdisciplinary nature of my research, the findings may help to fill in knowledge gaps across various fields.

In addition to filling the knowledge gap in academia, policymakers of North American Chinatowns may find the results of this study useful. The Chinatowns of major North American cities, including San Francisco, New York and Boston are also all experiencing gentrification. Much of the policy in response to this gentrification has been focused on residential displacement, but aspects of well-being have received less attention. This research aims to highlight a different angle of the effects of commercial disinvestment and gentrification on low-income Chinese seniors living in Chinatown. Furthermore, there are now more seniors than young people in Canada (Statistics Canada). Of the nationwide senior population, 10 percent were of Chinese origin (Statistics Canada). The sheer size of this group requires a better understanding of their unique challenges and needs in the cities they live in. Moreover, the findings from this study may be of use to community organizers who are interested in understanding the intersection between urban neighbourhood change and ethnic, low-income residents.

In sum, the rapid transformation of Vancouver's Chinatown may be impacting the well-being of vulnerable, low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents. The following chapter (Chapter 2) provides a conceptual framework which supports and

informs this study. Chapter 3 reviews the history and context that has led Chinatown to its current state of commercial disinvestment and gentrification. The second part of the chapter examines the role of Chinese benevolent associations and societies as housing providers for low-income residents. In Chapter 4, the research design, framework for well-being and methods are presented. Chapter 5 discusses the results and findings from both the informational survey and in-depth interviews with residents. In Chapter 6, a series of policy recommendations are presented for planners to consider in order to prevent low-income, monolingual Chinese seniors from being further marginalized from their own community. Chapter 7 concludes this research by summarizing key findings and compares results with existing scholarship across disciplines.

Chapter 2.

Conceptual Framework

In order to understand how disinvestment and gentrification impact the well-being of low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents, I have developed a conceptual framework based on three bodies of literature. The first literature examines the relationship seniors have with their neighbourhoods. This body of literature demonstrates the significant role a neighbourhood has on the well-being of seniors. Secondly, I engage with literature on disinvestment and gentrification of low-income, racialized neighbourhoods. I look to this scholarship for insights on how urban changes impact vulnerable neighbourhoods and their residents. Specifically, I look at research that analyzes the impacts of gentrification as it relates to race and class. Additionally, I turn to research on the commodification of culture, which leads to gentrification via ethnic packaging. The last body of literature examines the important role of inner-city Chinatowns across North America for low-income, monolingual-Chinese, seniors and immigrants to understand the function they serve presently.

2.1. Importance of Neighbourhoods for Seniors

As this study examines how a changing neighborhood impacts the wellbeing of senior residents, it is necessary to understand the relationship between older adults and their environment. Scholars in fields ranging from gerontology to geography are studying the effects of neighbourhoods on individual health. Researchers such as Glass and Balfour have made a number of strong cases for the need to examine the relationship between neighbourhoods and senior populations (Glass & Balfour 304): the results of living in poor environmental conditions may be exacerbated as seniors age and experience biological and psychological vulnerabilities; neighbourhoods may be more critical for older adults because their ability to move around may shrink with age, making the immediate community increasingly important; and older people depend more heavily on community resources and services for integration (ex. seniors center) due to shrinking social networks (ex. death of spouse) (Glass & Balfour 304-305).

Although there are many important reasons to study the topic, research on the relationship between neighbourhoods on older adults is highly varied and disparate. Yen and others classify six general neighbourhood categories that recent environmental gerontology research has examined (457). The six neighbourhood categories include socioeconomic composition, racial composition, demographics, perceived resources or problems, physical environment and social environment (Yen et al. 457). Pulling literature from studies that examine neighbourhood characteristics similar to Vancouver's Chinatown will form an understanding of the link between communities and seniors' health and well-being.

One of the focuses of environmental gerontology is the relationship between socioeconomic attributes of a neighbourhood and seniors (Aneshensel, et al.; Cagney et al.; Subramanian et al.). Socioeconomic characters of neighbourhoods are generally defined by census boundaries or by the composition of people living in a defined area (Yen et al. 457). Researchers of this topic have generally found that neighbourhood poverty and deprivation are associated with poor health (Yen et al. 457). Subramanian and associates found that seniors living in the lowest income category (\$5,000 or less) were more than twice as likely to self-report poor health than older adults living in the highest income category (Subramanian et al. S157). In fact, with each \$1,000 increment in median neighbourhood income, the likelihood of seniors reporting poor health decreased by 6% (Subramanian et al. S157). These results demonstrate that being low-income or living in a low-income neighborhood can result in decreased health outcomes for seniors. However, other scholars have suggested the link between low socioeconomic neighbourhoods and poor health in seniors are not as straightforward.

Research suggests that negative impacts on seniors' health stemming from poverty-stricken neighbourhoods can be buffered by certain social environmental conditions. Scholars measure a neighbourhood's social environment by assessing their social cohesion, social capital, collective efficacy, and neighbourliness (Yen et al.; Cramm et al; Ostir et al.; Krause). In one study from the Netherlands, Cramm investigated whether social capital (obtaining support through indirect ties from other residents of the neighbourhood) and social cohesion (interdependencies among neighbours) within neighbourhoods had a positive impact on the health and well-being of seniors

(142). Cramm's analysis postulates that single and low-income seniors reported lower levels of well-being than married and higher-income seniors (142). On the other hand, when neighbourhood services, social capital and social cohesion were considered in the analysis, the adverse impacts of being single and low-income were mediated. Similarly, research conducted by Krause confirms the notion that strong social relationships can act as buffers for seniors living in dilapidated neighbourhoods (185)

The other focus of environmental gerontology looks at the relationship between seniors and their physical neighbourhood surroundings. For example, Balfour and Kaplan who examined different census tracts in Alameda County, California found that seniors living in neighbourhoods with multiple environmental quality problems such as heavy traffic, loud noises, crime, litter, lighting and poor public transportation had a higher risk of overall functional deterioration compared with older adults who lived in neighbourhoods without these deficits (507). Specifically, their data showed that the most impactful environmental factors on increasing health risks were associated with excessive noise, poor lighting and heavy traffic (Balfour and Kaplan 507). These studies show that there are important consequences for seniors living in low-income neighbourhoods with poor environmental conditions like Chinatown. However, the research also points to benefits such as social capital and cohesion which may be present in Chinatown to buffer seniors from the negative impacts of aging.

Although there is a growing body of literature examining neighbourhood effects on seniors' health and well-being, the majority of research does not take ethnic or racial contexts into consideration. Acknowledging the minimal research that exists in this field, Ostir and associates examined the link between older Mexican Americans living in neighbourhoods below the poverty line as it relates to depressive symptoms in five southwestern states (987-988). Ostir's findings suggest that Mexican American enclave communities may abate the negative consequences of poverty on the psychological well-being of residents (990). Their data shows "high neighbourhood ethnic density may buffer the deleterious effect of poverty on health" (Ostir 991). Attributes of an ethnic enclave such as shared language, common cultural identity and appearance may contribute to the health of individuals (Ostir 991). Ostir's findings of reduced levels of morbidity, mortality, depressive symptoms, and higher levels of self-rated health are generally in line with other

literature focused on the impacts of Latino enclaves on seniors (Yen et al. 457). These findings may be applicable to the experiences of Chinese seniors living in the ethnic enclave such as Chinatown.

Research focused on ethnic, cultural and racialized neighbourhood effects on seniors is mostly limited to Latino and African American communities (Yen et al. 457). Studies looking at Asian neighbourhoods are sparse, especially those specifically examining Chinese enclaves and their impacts on seniors (Dong and Bergren 1). Dong and Bergren published one of the few pieces of scholarly literature examining the role and prevalence of social cohesion (interdependencies and interactions with neighbours) and neighbourhood disorder (neighbourhood qualities such as loud noises, litter, poor lighting) among Chinese American seniors as they relates to health, well-being and quality of life (2). These researchers found that Chinese (mainly Cantonese and Toisanese) seniors living in Chicago's Chinatown experienced the highest levels of social cohesion compared with other non-ethnic enclaves in the city (Dong and Bergren 14). The researchers attribute this to a strong sense of community because of Chinese seniors' preference to live close to others like them and to this group's low level of acculturation rates (Dong and Bergren 14).

The literature on neighbourhood effect on Chinese seniors' health is limited. Nevertheless, the literature review provided here suggests the importance of ethnic enclaves to low income seniors' health, a hypothesis I will test when it comes to low-income, monolingual-Chinese seniors in Vancouver's Chinatown.

2.2. Disinvestment and Gentrification Impacts on Low-income, Residents of Color and Their Communities

As this research project looks at the impacts of neighbourhood change on low-income, monolingual-Chinese residents of Vancouver's long disinvested and now rapidly gentrifying Chinatown, it is important to understand the relationship of race and class as it relates to disinvestment and gentrification of ethnic communities. These dynamics will be explored in two sections. The first part looks at how gentrification affects the lives of people

of color. The second section explores how ethnicity is commodified and used as a tool for gentrification and exclusion against the long-term, low-income ethnic community.

2.2.1. Effects of Disinvestment and Gentrification on Low-Income, Residents of Color

Freeman's research on the revitalization of Clinton Hill and Harlem in New York presented a nuanced and complex picture of neighbourhood change. For example, some of Freeman's African American interviewees enjoyed the emergence of new stores and supermarkets, especially after commercial disinvestment left the neighbourhood with few retail and food options (63). For several long-time residents, the accessibility to fresh, quality food and the addition of a pharmacy positively affected their health (Freeman 63). Although some residents in Freeman's study welcomed the convenience of new stores, others recognized the loss of mom and pop shops that anchored the community (Freeman 68-69). In addition, residents found the cost of goods and food sold at the new retailers far exceeded their incomes. For instance, one long-time Harlem resident was outraged by a slice of \$4 cake; the resident claimed he could purchase an entire cake for the same price in older establishments in Harlem (Freeman 64). Even though the price point for cake in the new Harlem store was on par with the rest of Manhattan, there was a mismatch between what long-time residents could afford and what middle-class gentrifiers could pay (Freeman 64). More obvious experiences of gentrification are captured by Zukin's work on the effects of new boutique restaurants, designer clothing stores, galleries and cafes on long-time African American residents in Harlem. She found stores that served long-time, low-income and less mobile clients were being pushed out by rising property taxes and were replaced by retailers that catered to more affluent residents (Zukin et al. 49 & 62). Furthermore, Zukin suggests that the new high-end boutiques ignore the "old expressions of ethnic homogeneity and contrast[ed] with low-status identities" in the neighborhood (Zukin et al.). In other words, gentrification of Harlem created a sense of exclusion and lack of belonging for poor, long-time residents.

The influx of more affluent residents who do not share the neighbourhood's culture, history or traditions can also bring challenges to the existing low-income or long-term residential community. Murdie and Teixeira found that original, working-class Portuguese

residents experienced a lack of tolerance by gentrifiers in Toronto's Little Portugal (77). For example, long-time residents received noise complaints by new residents during a Portuguese cultural event in the park, even though similar celebrations had been held in the area for more than 30 years (Murdie and Teixeira 78). This resulted in tensions between the two groups (Murdie & Teixeira 77). Similarly, Cahill found that gentrification in the Lower East Side of New York caused long-time young Latino and African American women to feel anger and anxiety and to experience psychological harm (307). Cahill postulates the disruption originates from the removal of personal and cultural symbols, such as Puerto Rican flags and ethnic shops (Cahill 307). The researcher states that, "the relationship people have with their "environmental surroundings, [which] contribute to the formation, maintenance and preservation of the identity of a person, group or culture," can be harmfully disrupted through gentrification (307). Ultimately, the young Latino and African American women experienced a loss of history and community (Cahill 307). Indeed, Rankin who examined Mount Dennis, a low-income suburb with a high-percentage of immigrants in Toronto, argues that racialized people can be erased from redevelopment plans and visions, and as a result commercial spaces that meet their needs can be stigmatized in the process (221).

There is limited research about gentrification as it relates to Chinese residents of Chinatowns. The scholarship about gentrification and Chinatown is mainly focused on Washington DC and Montreal. (Pang & Rath; Leeman & Modan; Lou). Lou's research suggests that the linguistic shift from Chinese to English signage in DC's gentrified Chinatown no longer serves the health needs of monolingual-Chinese residents (34). Chinese immigrants interviewed by Lou in D.C., expressed worry and fear about living in Chinatown due to their lack of English skills (34). In one instance, Lou had to assist a long-term Chinese resident fill her prescriptions at the pharmacy because there were no Chinese-speaking pharmacists left in the community (35). In the case of Montreal's Chinatown, gentrification and redevelopment in the 1980s dispossessed Chinese residents, their cultural institutions and commercial spaces in order to make way for provincial, federal and private development projects (Chan 70). Chan's study reports that despite the bulldozing of Chinatown there was a steady and growing number of Chinese seniors moving into the neighbourhood (71). Elderly Chinese chose to live in area because of the accessibility to peers, familiarity with the ecology of the neighbourhood, a sense of

belonging to an ethnic community and its institutions, and the availability of community resources and services (71). However, these elements that made Chinatown attractive for Chinese seniors were jeopardized as developers and senior levels of government worked to gentrify the area and pushed out Chinese seniors (Chan 76). Chan states the new buildings “hover over and encroach upon the low-lying buildings of Chinatown like tombstones, seemingly reminding the Chinese people that the days of urban space are numbered” (70). Ultimately, Chan suggests that Chinatown, home to the elderly, the poor, and the disadvantaged was paved over to accommodate commercial interests (76).

2.2.2. Gentrification and Ethnic Neighbourhoods

Gentrification is fundamentally a process of class transformation (Lee et. al 261). However, the influx of wealthier residents does not capture the complexities of urban neighbourhood change. Researchers have examined the intersection, consequences and perspectives of social differences such as race and ethnicity as they relate to gentrification. In this section, I draw on literature that examines gentrification through a racial and ethnic lens.

The changing landscape of ethnic neighbourhoods can directly impact the well-being of residents. Leeman and Modan suggest that the gentrification of Washington DC’s Chinatown is attributed to state and private corporations’ commodification of Chinese symbols, ethnicity, culture, language and architectural forms (338). City leaders and urban planners used Chinatown’s symbols to commodify the neighbourhood in order to produce a supposedly authentic and distinctive experience to attract new residents and tourists (Leeman and Modan 339). The researchers examined the District of Columbia’s Chinatown neighbourhood plans and found that the District’s design guidelines which enforced Chinese signage acted as a branding mechanism to sell not just Chinese goods or services, but nearly everything and anything (339). This leads to the separation of Chinese artifacts, people and culture from their context, which results in the erasure of the very people it was meant to support (Leeman and Modan 353). Leeman and Modan also postulate that once the neighbourhood was reconfigured to target middle class residents and visitors, the neighbourhood itself excluded the Chinese people they commodified and appropriated (Leeman & Modan 339). In an analysis of gentrification in DC’s Chinatown,

Lou found that private companies have been able to create a facade in which they become corporate benefactors and share the narrative that gentrification of Chinatown is a positive transformation (625). Furthermore, Pang and Rath suggest that corporations like Verizon, which setup a stadium in the community are not the only ones propping the ethnic economy, but that self-appointed Chinese spokespersons and businesses uphold the ethnic branding of Chinatown (191). Overall, the literature suggests that the commodification of the Chinese ethnicity and its symbols is created and benefited by those with higher economic statuses, while those who are low-income and Chinese are harmed in the process of gentrification.

2.3. The Function and Role of Present-Day Chinatown

Up until the 1980s, inner-city Chinatowns in North American cities such as San Francisco, Vancouver and Toronto were the cultural, economic and social hubs for Chinese immigrants from China's Pearl River Delta (Kwong 3). Since then, new Chinese enclaves have emerged in the suburbs away from the original Chinatown. For example, Richmond, a suburb of Vancouver has been the centre of a growing Chinese population since the 1990s. (Li & Li 16-19). In the U.S, satellite Chinatowns include Flushing in New York, Monterey Park in Los Angeles and Oakland in San Francisco (Kwong 3). Much of the literature on Chinese settlement has shifted to focus on these new Chinese communities outside of old Chinatowns (Chen; Ling). Some scholars (Chen; Kwong and Miscevic) suggest that the new Chinese communities have similar roles to historic Chinatowns. For example, Chen examined Chinese restaurants in Monterey Park, a satellite of the old Chinatown in Los Angeles and argues that the new restaurants and neighbourhood provided the same cultural experience as their inner-city counterpart.

However, researchers like Chen fail to identify key differences between the social functions of traditional Chinatowns and new Chinese communities. A few scholars (Ley & Smith; Hsu, Li & Li; Ling; Wong) have offered insights into the critical role of old Chinatowns as homes for monolingual, low-income Chinese immigrants. In Ling's examination of American Chinatown trends, she identified the demographic differences between Chinese immigrants living in Chicago's two historic Chinatowns and those living in the suburbs (84). Ling found that the Chinese residents of the city's older South and

North Chinatowns are generally employed in low-skill jobs earning minimum wage and live in substandard housing (84). This group works in Chinese restaurants, grocery stores and factories. On the other hand, Chinese immigrants living in the suburbs are high-income earning professionals employed in sectors like technology or healthcare (Ling 84). Furthermore, Wong suggests that inner-city Chinatowns in New York and San Francisco are important neighborhoods for many new immigrants who are not familiar with the English language (14-15). Immigrants still often need Old Chinatowns as stepping-stones into American society (Wong 14-15). Chinatowns are employment hubs and offer social and health care services, entertainment and recreation (Wong 14-15). Some Chinatowns even have hospitals and funeral homes for immigrants who need Chinese-language-specific services and health care providers (Wong 14-15). For many Chinese immigrants, Wong concludes, "Chinatown acts as an intermediary between the Chinese population and the larger society" (Wong 14-15).

In the Canadian context, Li and Li closely examined the demographics of the Chinese living in Vancouver's Chinatown in 2006. The authors found that overall, Vancouver's Chinatown has a high percentage of low-income seniors born in China (19). Although the authors' analysis of the demographics of the neighbourhood provide an understanding of Vancouver's Chinatown's population and composition, their examination pays no attention to what the neighborhood's transformation means for its vulnerable residents.

To understand the role of Vancouver's Chinatown to Chinese-only speaking low-income residents, I turn to research by Smith and Ley. Smith and Ley identified Chinatown, and the broader neighbourhood of the Downtown Eastside, as an area of concentrated poverty in Vancouver. In their interviews with new Chinese immigrants living in Chinatown and other similar poor neighbourhoods, they found that in spite of a sense of insecurity due to crime in the area, ease of access to services such as schools, shops, transportation, community programming and free food outweighed safety concerns (Smith and Ley 707 - 708). Moreover, this marginalized population found that the supportive social capital in the ethnic neighbourhood was immensely important. Residents use neighbourhood and social connections to find basic services such as doctors, dentists and suitable and affordable housing (Smith and Ley 696). In fact, Hsu's research on and

everyday practices among monolingual-Chinese seniors living in Montreal's Chinatown suggests that the neighbourhood is foundational to their well-being (342). Hsu learned that the majority of elderly women she interviewed moved into Chinatown from the suburbs after caring for their grandchildren (339). Chinese-only speaking seniors found Chinatown attractive not only for convenience and autonomy but also for sociability (Hsu 339). The interviewees expressed their sense of safety, comfort and security when moving within the neighbourhood for culturally appropriate groceries, socialization, peer support and recreation needs (Hsu 339). In addition, they relied on the conveniently located shops and businesses below their apartment buildings for groceries and services (Hsu 340). When walking in the community, the seniors experienced a sense of security and belonging because they were able to maneuver and communicate with ease since Chinese is the dominant language in Chinatown (Hsu 340). The comfort that seniors felt in Chinatown was a stark contrast to the fear and anxiety they experienced when attempting to navigate the suburbs of Montreal (Hsu 340). Contrary to what scholars have said about Chinatown being neighbourhoods of decline or irrelevance, Hsu shows that living in Chinatown is in high demand. At the time of her research, Chinese Montreal residents applying to live in one subsidized one or two bedroom apartments in Chinatown had to wait four years (Hsu 340). Hsu attributes this high demand to the autonomy, sociability and peer support of the neighbourhood (340). Ultimately, Hsu suggests this positive way of life for Chinese monolingual low-income seniors is dependent on the ethnic functions of the neighbourhood. The small ethnic community gives this vulnerable population "meaningful habitual practices" (340).

As demonstrated above, Chinatowns are critically important for new and old Chinese immigrants. While there is substantial literature about the history of Chinatown and new satellite Chinatowns, little attention has been paid to the role of traditional Chinatowns in the modern context for low-income, Chinese, elderly immigrants. Hsu's research gives an account of how Chinatowns are critical for the well-being of poor Chinese seniors in spite of research and rhetoric that claim that these neighbourhoods are in need of commercial reinvestment. My research aims to illuminate the experiences of gentrification on this understudied group.

Chapter 3.

Context: Vancouver's Chinatown and Chinese Benevolent Societies

Commercial disinvestment and revitalization are major defining issues of Vancouver's Chinatown today. In order to understand the impacts of the two neighbourhood processes, it is necessary to review the historical and current factors that have shaped the lives of current Chinatown residents. The first context section looks at external forces that have contributed to the residential and commercial growth and decline of Chinatown. This section also examines events and processes that led Chinatown to its current state of rapid gentrification. The second part of the chapter explores the role of Chinese associations as housing providers for low-income Chinese seniors. The housing provided by associations make up a significant portion of the affordable housing stock for ethnic, low-income, seniors.

3.1. The Waxing and Waning of Chinatown

In 1858 Chinese migrants began to arrive at the Fraser River for the gold rush. Thirty years later, a small group of about 114 Chinese moved and settled on the southern fringes of Vancouver's future city centre (Ng 10). This piece of mud flat north of False Creek would become the foundation of today's Chinatown (Ng 10). Modern day Vancouver's Chinatown, much like Chinatowns in San Francisco, New York, and Toronto are and have always been "sanctuar[ies], residential neighborhood[s], and economic zone[s]" for Chinese immigrants (Li 31). They are neighbourhoods where residents can practice traditional culture and have convenient access to Chinese shopping, food, restaurants, transportation and employment opportunities (Li 31). Most fundamentally, Chinatowns provide residents the "opportunity to live among Chinese-speaking persons" (Li 31).

Contemporary Chinatowns across North America have had to adapt to shifting market forces, globalization, technological development and changes in international,

national and regional policies (Li 31). The result of these transformations has contoured Vancouver Chinatown's social, physical and economic landscape. For example, the Immigration Act of 1923, which barred Chinese people from entering Canada, decimated Vancouver's Chinatown, whereas the easing of immigration in the 1960s flooded the neighbourhood with businesses and residents. The section below examines the forces and pressures that have shaped Vancouver's Chinatown in the recent decades.

3.1.1. Rise and Decline of Chinese Residents and Businesses in Chinatown

During the late 1960s and 1970s, Canada saw a significant increase of Chinese immigrants due to the country's growing acceptance of ethnic minorities. From 1967 – 1970 alone, 28,440 Chinese immigrants arrived in Canada. Even as local-born Chinese residents moved away to the suburbs and the City's urban renewal projects displaced more than 3,000 residents, new immigrants rejuvenated the residential base of Chinatown. This wave of immigration also reinvigorated Chinatown's commercial activity. In 1967, lawyer Harry Fan's letter to city council expressing the lack of commercial space in Chinatown illustrates the high concentration of economic activity and the dire need for more commercial space in the neighbourhood:

In the short street blocks of Pender Street East, there are 115 business establishments. There are: 13 Chinese supermarkets, 11 grocery stores, 7 butchers, 4 chicken houses, 2 fish shops, 12 restaurants, 11 tea shops, 9 gift shops, 4 banks, 3 law offices, 6 realtor offices, 4 barber shops and 27 businesses such as taxis, hotels, travel agencies, and newspaper offices, and in the upstairs of these 115 shops, there are 75 associations, including the Chinese Benevolent Association, the Veterans club, the farmers' co-op, the unions, and 3 musical societies. Not anywhere in Canada do we have so many business establishments in such a concentrated area of three street blocks...(Anderson 215)

In the late 1970s and 1980s, residential growth in Chinatown began to decline as the Canadian government shifted its focus on a different socioeconomic class of immigrants; upwardly mobile, highly educated, English speaking Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and other Asian countries that had experienced recent economic growth began to immigrate to Canada (Li and Li 14). This new wave of Chinese immigrants brought with them substantial capital. As a result, they had the ability to settle in suburbs

like Richmond where homes were more spacious compared to those in Vancouver's inner-city (Pottie-Sherman 177; Li & Li 14). In addition, prosperous Chinese-Canadians already settled in Canada joined the postwar middle-class exodus from central city to the suburbs, further depleting Chinatown's residential base.

Chinese businesses followed suit and flourished in suburban malls and other Chinese enclaves that emerged across the region (Li and Li 14). Li and Li found that by 1981, only 20 per cent of 1,952 Chinese business establishments in Vancouver were located in Chinatown (16). Commercial disinvestment of Chinatown was in full swing. The historic neighbourhood was no longer the only place to access culturally and linguistically appropriate goods and services. By the end of the millennium, Chinatown had lost three Chinese movie theatres, a large department store, an herbal medicine store, the 50-year old Hong Kong Café, and a newspaper (Mickleburgh). It also lost its entire nightlife because of the city council's decision to concentrate and restrict nightlife to Granville Street in the downtown core (Pottie-Sherman 177). In 2011, consultants for the City of Vancouver found that 64 per cent of businesses in Chinatown had experienced a decrease of revenue over the last three years (City of Vancouver - Economic Revitalization Strategy). Two years later in another city-funded study found that 16% of storefronts were vacant. By 2013, the Chinatown portion of Pender Street, spanning from 1 East Pender to 296 East Pender (Recovery and Relief) lost all of its supermarkets and grocery stores. Only four meat shops (fish, butcher and poultry shops) remained, a sharp dive from 13 meat shops in 1967. Not only that, Pender Street's strong professional service sector made up of lawyers, realtors and travel agencies was all but gone. In short, this commercial landscape was starkly different in 2013 compared to 1967 when businesses in Chinatown were vying for scarce commercial space.

3.1.2. Rise of a Supermarket and Mall and the Fall of Mom and Pop Shops

Another contributing factor to small business decline was the emergence of a nation-wide supermarket and a mall at the edge of Chinatown in the late 1990s. T&T Supermarket, a big-box grocery store competed against independent, mom and pop grocers, bakeries, cafes, butchers and fishmongers for the remaining Chinatown

consumer base. T&T Supermarket opened its doors on the periphery of Chinatown in 1996. It is a full-service Asian supermarket that sells fresh produce, fish, meat, prepared foods and dry goods from many Asian countries. As T&T itself put it, “In 1996, T&T opened its third store in Vancouver Chinatown and brought a modernized retail operation to the traditional mom & pop retail territory” (T&T Supermarket). The supermarket on the outskirts of Chinatown has proven to be popular to both Chinese and non-Chinese shoppers. As a national grocery chain that opened its first store in Burnaby, T&T is a gentrifier. However, it differs from the contemporary form of gentrification consisting of clothing boutiques and cafes that have emerged in the last few years. T&T offers food that serves the preferences, tastes and needs of Chinese residents who continue to live in the neighbourhood.

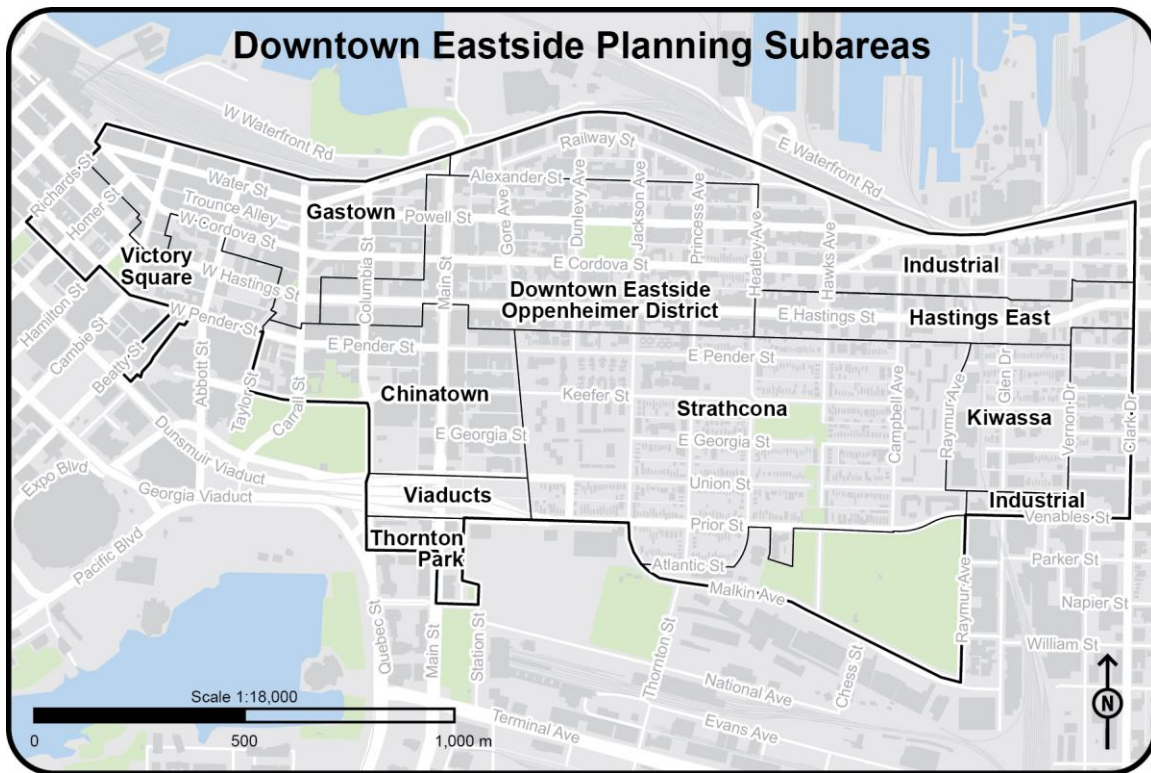
Across from T&T Supermarket is International Village mall. The mall, completed in 1999 was originally designed to “revitalize Chinatown and help gentrify the surrounding area,” because the neighbourhood was experiencing economic disinvestment (Chow). The developer, Henderson Development, had originally planned for this mall to be “the most upscale shopping mall in Canada” (Mackie). Today the mall is home to an eclectic, mostly downscale collection of retailers including a Rexall Pharmacy, a Japanese toonie general store, discount goods store, food court and a movie theatre. Similar to T&T, International Village mall initially had set out to gentrify Chinatown and its surrounding areas. However, due to the mall’s inability to secure upscale retailers, it now serves as a space for some monolingual-Chinese senior residents to gather and shop for low-cost goods. In short, by the late 1990s, Chinatown’s economy had fierce commercial competition from new retailers who served the neighbourhood’s residents’ needs.

3.1.3. The Downtown Eastside and Chinatown

In addition to a declining number of Chinese residents and businesses, Chinatown’s attractiveness as an economic hub was impacted by a series of catastrophic policies that impacted the adjacent Downtown Eastside in the 1980s. The following section briefly introduces the planning and historical relationship between the two neighbourhoods.

Chinatown is one of ten sub-planning areas of the city of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (see figure 1). The other nine planning areas include Gastown, Victory Square, Downtown Eastside/Oppenheimer District, Hastings East, Strathcona, Viaducts, Thornton Park, Kiwassa and Industrial. Chinatown is bound by Gore Avenue on the east, Hastings Street on the north, Taylor Street on the west, and Union Street on the south. However, the neighbourhood's boundaries are fluid as residents live, recreate and shop in Chinatown's surrounding subareas.

Figure 1. Map of Downtown Eastside



Source: City of Vancouver – Social Policy and Projects

Chinatown shares a similar social and economic profile with its broader Downtown Eastside planning area (City of Vancouver – Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan 19). Residents of the community tend to be more disadvantaged and vulnerable than the rest of Vancouver. More than half of the residents living in the Downtown Eastside depend on pensions and Income Assistance support, social services and charities to make ends meet. Although common characteristics such as poverty are shared with residents of the broader neighbourhood, Chinatown has its own set of independent plans, policies and

strategies. Plans that shape Chinatown include the Chinatown Neighbourhood Plan (2012), Chinatown Economic Revitalization Strategy (2012) and the Chinese Society Buildings Matching Grant Program (2014). In addition to localized plans, Chinatown is part of the wider Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan (DTES LAP) which was approved by council in 2014. In the DTES LAP, the goal for Chinatown is the “accelerat[ed] implementation of the Economic Revitalization Strategy, and to continue to work with the community to advance neighbourhood revitalization” (City of Vancouver – Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan 44).

The Downtown Eastside originally formed around the Canadian Pacific Railway repair yards and Hastings Sawmill. To support these industries, temporary housing in the form of single room occupancy (SRO) hotels were built for the predominantly single, male labourers. Along with housing, bars, restaurants and stores began to emerge. As the local economy began to deindustrialize and focus on post-industrial sectors, unemployed male labourers started to permanently settle in the neighbourhood (Sommers and Blomley 19-20).

In addition to the high concentration of unemployment and poverty in the Downtown Eastside, the neighbourhood’s landlords began evicting hundreds of low-income tenants from affordable SROs as Vancouver prepared to receive tourists for the Expo 86 World's Fair. Many of these men became homeless (Sommers and Blomley 20). The Downtown Eastside eventually became synonymous with decline, poverty and “derelict masculinity” (Burnett 158). This new identity of the neighbourhood created a justification for local police to deliberately channel the sex and drug trade to the Downtown Eastside as other parts of the city experienced development and gentrification (Sommers and Blomley 20). Then in the early 1990s, Woodward’s department store, a retail anchor of the neighbourhood closed its doors. The closure of the department store, coupled with the rise of suburban malls led to the “collapse” of the Downtown Eastside’s economy (Pottie-Sherman 175). By the start of the new millennium, the Downtown Eastside was characterized by deep poverty along with a sex and drug trade that was heavily concentrated in its small geographical area.

Separating the Downtown Eastside's history of deindustrialization and development pressures from in and around the city, the media portrayed the neighbourhood as being cancerous, implying that if not contained, poverty, drug-use and prostitution would spread throughout Vancouver (Sommers and Blomley 20). Contrary to the media's perceptions of the neighbourhood, community members in the Downtown Eastside refer to the area as a sanctuary (Pedersen and Swanson 10). In the Carnegie Community Action Project's 'Community Vision for Change in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside' document, residents reported that "it is a place of sanctuary where people who are suffering feel at home and get help" (10). Nevertheless, journalists reported that the Downtown Eastside's troubles were spilling over into the historic Chinese neighbourhood. Rod Mickleburgh of the *Globe and Mail* wrote, "The spillover of drug addicts, lost souls and petty crime from the ravaged streets of the nearby Downtown Eastside has hit Chinatown's historic centre right in the solar plexus." Many in the Chinatown community began to blame the Downtown Eastside's problems for the historic neighbourhood's demise. In another article in the *Globe and Mail*, reporter Gabriel Yiu illustrated the perceived threat of Downtown Eastside residents on Chinatown's visitors and residents:

There used to be an unwritten law that [Downtown Eastside residents] would stay on Hastings Street [a block north of Chinatown's main thoroughfare, Pender Street East. But that undrawn line that informal protocol, has broken down. They're spilling over into Chinatown. Now, there are car break-ins, assorted robberies. There's a perception of personal risk (Yiu).

For business leaders at the time, the "spillover" effect directly deterred visitors and tourists from going to Chinatown. According to Yiu, this caused patrons to visit Chinese businesses outside Chinatown instead. The perceived threat to personal safety caused by crime, drugs and break-ins further spurred the neighbourhood's commercial challenges. The commercial disinvestment, competition from big-box stores and concerns about safety led to depressed land values in Chinatown which primed the neighbourhood for gentrification.

3.1.4. Chinatown in this Moment: Residential and Commercial Gentrification

As the pool of undeveloped sites in Vancouver shrank with the development of Yaletown and False Creek, developers began to expand into inner-city neighbourhoods like Chinatown. (Quastel 716). Proximity to the downtown core made Chinatown a desirable place to develop. One of the early projects which brought in wealthier residents into Chinatown was the 2008 upscale condominium building, Ginger. This development was one of the early markers of gentrification of Chinatown. In an interview with the *Vancouver Sun*, David Porte, Ginger's developer said, "take a look around: you can see how everything's moving eastward. It began with the Concord developments, and continues with the Olympic Village and the Woodward's District. We're very excited to be on the leading edge of this Chinatown renaissance" (History Colours Ginger's Condos).

In addition, developers were further attracted to Chinatown after city council approved the Historic Area Height Review in 2011 and passed the Chinatown Neighbourhood Plan and Economic Revitalization Strategy in 2012. The strategy encouraged residential intensification by allowing higher and denser buildings to "guide growth" in the traditionally low-rise neighbourhood (City of Vancouver - Chinatown Neighbourhood Plan 27). The City also sought to attract "new technology-based businesses and start-ups that find cultural and even edgy neighbourhoods appealing" (City of Vancouver - Chinatown Economic Revitalization Strategy 50). Furthermore, the plan called for improvements in the restaurant sector to "make Chinatown a culinary and dining destination again" (City of Vancouver - Chinatown Economic Revitalization Strategy 50). The neighbourhood is now indeed a restaurant hub for a select group of visitors and residents.

Although revitalization projects in Chinatown started in the 1990s with the introduction of T&T and International Village mall, these types of developments are starkly different from the commercial businesses found in the neighbourhood today. A 2013 report by planning consultants, Recovery and Relief, examined the commercial landscape of the Downtown Eastside, and revealed that a new class of retailers had set up to serve a different group of consumers. These new gentrifying retailers target patrons who speak English and are generally wealthier and younger than the Chinese-speaking low-income

residents of Chinatown. Table 1 is a consolidated list of gentrifying retailers, tenants, and services located on Pender Street (from 1 East Pender to 296 East Pender) in 2013.

Table 1. Gentrifying Spaces Located on East Pender Street (2013)

Gentrifying Retailers	Type of Service or Products Sold
Bombast	Contemporary furniture
The Modern Bartender	Bar supplies
Rennie and Associates Realty Inc.	Real estate services, marketing and art gallery
Storm Salon	Hair salon
Peking Lounge Furniture	Antiques, furniture and collectibles store
Vancouver Film School	Education
Besties	Restaurant
El Kartel	Clothing
Flatspot Longboards	Skateboard shop
Besties	Restaurant
Blim Local Designs and Workshops	Arts, crafts, workshop facility
Fortune Sound Club	Night club
Giant Ant	Motion and Animation Studio
Eden Medicinal Society	Cannabis dispensary
UNIT/PITT Studio	Art gallery, artist studio offices

Source: Recovery and Relief, *Retail Continuity in the Downtown Eastside*. 2013, Web. Jan 2016.

Note: Retailer websites: www.bombastfurniture.com; <http://themodernbartender.com>; www.about.rennie.com; www.stormsalon.com; www.facebook.com/Peking-Lounge-Furniture-153097977395; www.vfs.edu; www.Bestie.ca; www.blim.ca; www.fortunesoundclub.com; www.giantant.ca; UNIT/PITT www.helenpittgallery.org/about/studio-spaces

Spaces such as art studios and galleries along with new expensive clothing stores are visible markers of gentrification (Ley, Zukin et al.). For example, El Kartel is a clothing boutique that sells high-end fashion. They bring in "exclusive brands from all over the world" (El Kartel). Not only is their clientele more affluent than the low-income Chinese seniors of Chinatown, they are much younger. For instance, they attract young people to their store by "showcas[ing] artwork from international and up and coming local artists while featuring in house-DJs" (El Kartel). Gentrification has rapidly picked up along Pender Street. In 2012, *Scout*, a local online magazine claimed that Chinatown was "about to blow up with four or five new independent businesses from young Vancouverites" (Morrison). One of the new businesses was Besties. The restaurant "serves up a selection of finely crafted sausages, crispy fries, tasty side salads, fresh baked pretzels, and Chinatown's finest currywurst." Since then, other restaurants such as Sai Woo, a restaurant serving globally-inspired cuisine has opened in the neighbourhood. Other gentrifying additions that have emerged over the last two years include Livestock, a premium footwear boutique; Stretch, a yoga studio and Studio 126, a custom furniture shop. These spaces of consumption are outside of the financial means of low-income residents of the area. For example, a three-hour knitting workshop held at Studio 126 costs \$159.00.

In October 2015, two months after my final in-depth interviews, Chinatown Supermarket, a grocery store that a number of respondents relied on for fresh produce closed its doors permanently. The property had an asking price of \$4,800,000. An advertisement in *Colliers international*, a real estate newsletter, marketed the property as sharing the neighbourhood with hip adjacent businesses:

Bars and restaurants have also picked Chinatown as the place to be, Keefer Bar, London Pub, Phnom Penh, Bao Bei, Mamie Taylors and The Union, to name a few. Join Vancouver's most prominent developers and trendiest restaurants and invest in Vancouver's hottest and most historic neighbourhood (Colliers International 2).

The realtor also noted that there are over one million square feet under development in its immediate proximity (Colliers International) with the potential for other similarly trendy commercial tenants.

The prospect of ongoing development of upscale spaces of consumption has come at the cost of longstanding grocery stores and meat shops. In addition to Chinatown Supermarket closing, the corner lot of 288 East Hastings and Gore Avenue was also advertised on Colliers International. The corner lot was home to the historic Lee Loy BBQ Meats Co. Ltd., Golden Wheat Bakery Ltd., a barbershop, and Ferry Market. These shops closed three months after my last interview with residents. In sum, boutiques and restaurants that serve the middle-class are quickly replacing shops that serve low-income earners of the Chinatown community.

3.2. Chinese Clan Societies and Benevolent Associations

Chinese benevolent associations have played a critical role as housing providers in Chinatown for low-income residents, many of whom are monolingual-Chinese seniors. In addition to housing, associations are social hubs that provide welfare programming for Chinese residents. To explore the important function of associations for the well-being of low-income, monolingual-Chinese residents living in Chinatown, this section will provide an overview of the historic and current role of clan societies and benevolent associations. This section will also give context to the challenges associations face as they continue to provide affordable housing with limited support from senior levels of government during a period of divestment and gentrification in the neighbourhood.

3.2.1. Roles of Clan Societies and Benevolent Associations

Voluntary and community associations set up by Chinese immigrants have existed in Canada since Chinese labourers arrived in the late 1800s. Systemic segregation and racism imposed onto Chinese settlers by white society limited their economic, residential, educational and social opportunities (Li 71). As a response to the oppression, Chinese immigrants formed associations to provide members with a sense of belonging and security in a foreign country through social support, economic support, mutual aid, communal housing, and recreational and social activities (Li 71).

The majority of voluntary associations are based on Chinese residents grouping themselves with others from the same county or surname (Willmott 33). Almost all of the

early migrants were from Guangdong, China, specifically from the Pearl River Delta region (Ng 14). Inside the association buildings, benevolent societies historically operated schools, health clinics, and boarding rooms; they even developed their own quasi-judicial systems and acted as internal employment agencies (Willmott 36; Li 71-72; City of Vancouver – Society Buildings in Chinatown). Today the societies’ main focuses are on providing recreational spaces for socializing and affordable housing.

3.2.2. Chinese Associations and Societies as Housing Providers

Reports from the City of Vancouver, BC Housing and personal communication with community members and Chinese association board members revealed that there are currently at least 639 units of affordable social housing that are either owned or operated by Chinese benevolent societies located in Chinatown and neighbouring Downtown Eastside and Strathcona (see table 2). However, this figure is likely an underrepresentation, because some associations do not share their housing information publicly.

Table 2. Chinese Associations with Affordable Housing Units in and around Chinatown

Building Name and Association	Address	Units
Sun Ah Hotel* (Lung Kong Tien Yee Association)	100 East Pender St	42
Asia Hotel* (Mah Society of Canada)	137 - 139 East Pender St.	38
May Wah Hotel* (Shon Yee Benevolent Association)	254 - 262 East Pender St.	120
Yee Fung Toy Society of Canada*	226 East Georgia St.	12
Yue Shan Society*	37 East Pender St.	14
Natives of Toi Shan Benevolent Society of Vancouver (Phoenix Hotel)*	237 East Hastings St.	33
Shon Yee Benevolent Association*	408 Jackson Ave	45
Chau Luen Kon Sol Society of Vancouver*	325 Keefer St	81
Ming Sun Reading Rooms (Ming Sun Benevolent Society of Canada)*	439 Powell St	8

Yin Ping Benevolent Society of Canada (Yip Ping Benevolent Society)*	414 Columbia St.	14
Chinese Freemasons Manor**	768 Prior St.	81
Dart Coon Club**	490 Columbia St.	32
CBA Manor**	32 Pender St.	28
Shon Yee Place**	628 Hastings St.	72
Multiple associations' combined total units		19
	Total	639

Source: City of Vancouver, "Chinese Society Buildings Matching Grant Program – Progress Update," City of Vancouver. 10 December 2015. Web. 5 January 2016.
BC Housing, "Choices for Seniors and Adults with Disabilities Zone 6 – Vancouver," 2015. Web. January 2016.

Note: * The number of affordable housing units extracted from City of Vancouver's summary of Chinese Society Building Matching Grant Recommendations. **Housing data compiled from BC Housing – Housing for Seniors and Adults with Disabilities. The units in the Ming Sun reading room are currently out of commission. The CBA Manor has 35 units in total, but seven are market housing units.

Chinese benevolent associations play an important role in housing members of the Chinatown community. Many low-income seniors who live on government assistance depend on affordable housing to make ends meet. According to the City of Vancouver's 2009 survey of low-income housing in the Downtown Eastside (Chinatown is a planning sub-area of the Downtown Eastside) there were 6,274 units of non-market housing and 3,875 rooming homes and residential hostel units. Of the total 10,149 units of low-income housing in the Downtown Eastside, Chinese associations are providers of about seven percent of the affordable housing units. Seven percent of affordable, stable and long-term rental housing is a vital community asset given Vancouver's current housing crisis. In 2015, the average monthly rent was approximately \$1,054 (Hume). This rate is beyond the means of many seniors living on government assistance (the monthly shelter allowance for residents with disabilities or on welfare assistance is \$375; 30% of the Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement is \$360). By contrast, the majority of units provided by Chinese associations charge less than \$400 a month for rent.

3.2.3. Pressures and Challenges Faced by Associations

Benevolent societies face a number of challenges. One threat that directly impacts the well-being of low-income residents are the expensive structural upgrades that association buildings – especially those that are more than 100 years old - need to continue renting out units. In 2015, a City commissioned report found that an estimated minimum of \$36 million dollars would be required to implement a program to rehabilitate and stabilize 12 Chinatown association buildings (City of Vancouver - Chinese Society Legacy Program 1).

One example of a historic building that requires major upgrades is the Mah Society of Canada's, Asia Hotel. The society owns the hotel but the non-profit group, ATIRA, manages the rental units. The 103-year-old Asia Hotel houses about 38 low-income tenants. In a 2012 *Megaphone Magazine* article, the owners shared concerns over the lack of funds needed for the aging building. In the article, a Mah Society representative expressed uncertainty about the association's ability to keep rent below \$400 a month due to the expensive nature of heritage building upgrades (Megaphone). One resident was quoted saying, "we can't even use a toaster down here without the breaker popping." With the assistance of the municipal government, the Mah Society has since been able to raise funds for some repairs.

According to a board member of the Mah Society, they have received tempting offers to sell the property, but stood firm against it because the building "is a sacred trust," which they intend to keep as a SRO hotel (Megaphone). However, not all associations have been able to resist offers to sell their building in the face of major repairs. The Kwong Chow Association, which was located at 140 East Hastings, sold its property in 2012 to a condominium developer due to the dilapidated state of the society building and the perceived sense of crime and danger in the Downtown Eastside. The society offered low-income rental housing to Chinese seniors and featured a recreation hall (Leung). The executives of the association decided to sell the building due to concerns over personal safety. Leung, an executive member of the association and a prominent figure in Chinatown captured the rationale to sell:

[The building has been] dilapidated from its original glory [and] is now also [a] part of the Downtown Eastside with all the bad elements. Presently it's scary to walk along and about in this area of Hastings Street...many ladies' handbags are grabbed from their shoulders and hand[s]. The men ha[ve] difficulties too as they fight their way [in]to the Association in the middle block of Hastings Street full bad elements. I [made a] recommend[ation to] the Kong Chow Association to sell outright the property...and to purchase another property elsewhere where [there are] less of the bad elements (Leung).

As a result of the sale, tenants were displaced from their homes. Ultimately, the financial opportunity, inability of the Kwong Chow Association to upkeep the old building, and fear for personal safety resulted in a loss of homes and the relocation of a community hub.

Everything Will Be, a 2013 documentary film, captured the difficult financial position of non-profit Chinese associations. These societies require substantial funding to maintain their historic buildings while balancing support for affordable housing. In the film, the audience is introduced to Mr. Su of the Yue Shan Society. The society's building is more than 100 years old and sits adjacent to real estate company, Rennie Marketing Solutions. In a scene where the two neighbours meet, Bob Rennie offers to help the society finance its renovations if they sell him a piece of the heritage building. Bob Rennie states, "My dream is the back two buildings. That I'd like to purchase from you and add onto my museum and that would give you money for the front [of the building]." Associations such as Yue Shan are being asked to sell living space used by tenants and visitors to fund the repairs for other parts of their historic building.

Aside from rental income, benevolent societies generate revenue from commercial tenants. Many associations own the ground-level storefronts of their buildings. Having faced years of commercial vacancy due to disinvestment, benevolent societies are now renting space to retailers that have not historically been a part of Chinatown. For example, the Chinese Freemasons who own multiple buildings with more than 100 affordable rental housing units in the Chinatown area, rent their commercial space to retailers such as Flatspot, a skateboard shop; Duchesse, a vintage clothing store; Bestie, a currywurst restaurant serving German sausages and beer, and; The Shop, a motorcycle-themed coffee and merchandise shop (Bula). Rent from their commercial tenants help run the association's non-profit operations and maintain the buildings themselves. However, the

same gentrifying shops may be problematic for the wellbeing of the long-term, low-income Chinese senior residents who live in the buildings.

This section has given an overview of the current challenges faced by Chinese associations that provide affordable housing to hundreds of residents, most of whom are low-income, Chinese-speaking, and elderly. Some non-profit benevolent societies face financial challenges and pressures to sell their buildings when they are unable to make critical upgrades and repairs. Others have been placed in the position of having to rent commercial space to gentrifiers that may not serve the needs of their low-income tenants.

Chapter 4.

Research Design and Methods

4.1. Framework for Well-being

The first step to understanding the impacts of commercial disinvestment and gentrification on the well-being of Chinatown's low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents was to identify a framework for well-being. I selected the City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy as the general framework for several reasons. First, the framework is broad enough to capture the day-to-day aspects of well-being. Second, the strategy aims to improve itself through ongoing learning (City of Vancouver – Healthy City Strategy Four Year Action Plan). As a result, my findings may be useful in filling in the cultural, age, linguistic and affordability gap in the current framework. Third, the strategy which is grounded in Vancouver makes the goals and indicators contextually relevant. Last, the strategy's use of evidence-based indicators suggests that the goals are generally adopted by policymakers. My research results may be of use to other municipalities seeking to strengthen existing indicators with an additional socioeconomic lens.

The Healthy City Strategy is an “integrated plan that helps [the city] think, act and work together in new ways to change the conditions that impact the health and well-being of people, places and the planet” (City of Vancouver – Healthy City for All 4). The strategy recognizes the intersectionality of marginalized individuals; however, this point is oversimplified and lost in the strategy's goals and indicators (City of Vancouver – Healthy City Strategy 56). One result of the strategy is to increase the health and wellbeing of vulnerable populations. According to the document, the strategy will allow the City to identify priorities, clarify roles and shift tools to address challenging issues by using evidence based approaches.

The strategy's framework consists of three focus areas: (1) Healthy people, (2) Healthy communities and (3) Healthy environments. Nestled inside the three focus areas are twelve goals, each with its own accompanying targets and indicators. Three goals: 'A Good Start', 'A Home for Everyone' and 'Making Ends Meet' are not applicable to low-

income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents and to the neighbourhood scale of Chinatown. For example, 'A Good Start,' is about ensuring children of Vancouver enjoy a healthy childhood and are ready for school when they enter kindergarten (City of Vancouver- Healthy City for All 13). 'A Home for Everyone,' also does not apply to this research because the population I am studying have secure, affordable housing (all of the rental units are less than \$420 per person, close to the 30% income to rent rate) through non-profit organizations such as the Chinese benevolent societies in Chinatown. Last, 'Making Ends Meet,' which is about employment, also has little to do with the group of participants because my sample group consists of retired seniors. The nine remaining relevant goals are, 'Feeding Ourselves Well,' 'Healthy Human Services,' 'Being and Feeling Safe and Included,' 'Cultivating Connections,' 'Active Living and Getting Outside,' 'Lifelong Learning,' 'Expressing Ourselves,' 'Getting Around' and 'Environments to Thrive In.'

Each goal includes a range of indicators to help the City measure success. For this research project, indicators will be used as general guides to understand the well-being of research participants. Similar to the goals, not all of the indicators are applicable to low-income, monolingual-Chinese seniors or to Chinatown. For example, within the goal of 'Expressing Ourselves,' the indicator 'The Artist and Cultural Workers Sector' is not pertinent to retired Chinese seniors.

The strategy's goals, targets and indicators are extensive. However, only one indicator explicitly acknowledges the role of culture in well-being. Under 'Feeding Ourselves Well,' one of the five indicators calls for "access to affordable, culturally appropriate food" (City of Vancouver – Social Indicators and Trends 2014 Feeding Ourselves Well 1). Furthermore, the strategy does not recognize language barriers that some residents may face when accessing services directly linked to well-being. For example, in Mui and Chows' studies on English proficiency and health-related quality of life, they found Asian Americans suffer from more health problems and are less likely receive to high-quality health care due to language barriers and culturally insensitive providers and organizations (Mui 125; Chow 63). Chinese immigrants with limited English skills may be hesitant to seek medical treatment because of the stresses associated with communicating through an

interpreter (Mui et al.126). Patients also experience fear of not being understood by the doctor and this further discourages them from seeking medical attention (Mui et al.126). Beyond physical health, Chinese seniors with limited English proficiency may experience social isolation, a sense of insecurity, lack of access to important information provided by mainstream media, an inability to make friends and other psychological losses (Mui et al. 125). In addition, aspects related to age are not explicit in the strategy's indicators. As a result, I have layered a cultural, linguistic, age and affordability lens to my adapted version of the Healthy City Strategy so that it is meaningful and relevant to low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents who face multiple intersecting identities (see table 3).

Table 3. Adapted City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy Framework
(**Italicized text indicates the addition of a cultural, income, age and Chinese language lens**)

Healthy City Strategy Goals	Well-being Indicators with Cultural, Income, Age and Language Appropriate Lens
Feeding Ourselves Well: Vancouver has a healthy, just and sustainable food system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Culturally appropriate and affordable*</i> food assets • Neighbourhood food networks accessible in Chinese • Distribution of Chinese food retail <i>affordable and accessible to seniors</i> • Access to affordable, culturally-appropriate food
Healthy Human Services: Vancouverites have equitable access to high quality, social, community and health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Services: Access to <i>Chinese-speaking and culturally sensitive physicians at a walkable distance</i> • Social and Community Services accessible in Chinese • Access to Community Hubs that offer <i>affordable</i> services in <i>Chinese</i>
Being and Feeling Safe and Included: Vancouver is a safe city in which residents feel secure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of Inclusion • Sense of Safety
Cultivating Connections: Vancouverites are connected and engaged in the places and space that matter to us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social connections and community Engagement opportunities in <i>Chinese</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support networks, friendships and diversity,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussion networks, ○ Trust ○ Neighbourhood connections, ○ Community and civic life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer <i>opportunities in Chinese</i>
Active Living and Getting Outside: Vancouverites are engaged in active living and have incomparable access to nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to nature • Physical health and activity • Community centre and recreation use with <i>programs in Chinese</i>
Lifelong Learning: Vancouverites have equitable access to lifelong learning and development Opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Affordable</i> lifelong learning opportunities in Vancouver <i>accessible in Chinese:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Access to internet, ○ Reading for pleasure or interest, ○ Participation in a lifelong learning event or program
Expressing Ourselves Vancouver has a diverse and thriving cultural ecology that enriches the lives of all residents and visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and culture participation • Community-based arts program available <i>in Chinese</i> • <i>Affordable</i> consumer spending
Getting Around: Vancouverites enjoy safe, active, and accessible ways of getting around the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation networks • Ways of getting around <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All trips
Environments to Thrive In: Vancouverites have the right to a healthy environment and equitable access to liveable environments in which they can thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkability <i>appropriate for seniors</i> • Planning for environments to thrive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A well planned built environment ○ A thriving economic environment to meet diverse <i>cultural, linguistic and affordability needs</i> ○ A vibrant <i>culturally appropriate</i> social environment

Source: City of Vancouver. "Healthy City for All Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy 2014-2025 Phase 1." *Healthy City Strategy Background*. City of Vancouver. 2014. Web. 6 December 2014.

Note: *Cultural, age, income and linguistic additions from the author are italicized. Non italicized text is taken directly from the City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy.

4.2. Methods

I began my research by conducting informational surveys with eight Chinese benevolent association board members and building managers. The survey was developed to capture how many low-income, monolingual-Chinese seniors (defined as 65 years old or older) living in Chinatown may be affected by commercial disinvestment and gentrification. Currently, no data exists on this specific group of residents because characteristics like Chinese-monolingualism are not captured by the Canadian Census. Moreover, the level of English required to complete a Canadian Census questionnaire likely means data about monolingual-Chinese residents have been underrepresented in the first place. Additionally, the most recent and statistically representative census information is now ten years old. The lack of data on this group has reduced the visibility of this marginalized group in plans and policies even further. As a result of this informational survey, policymakers will have a current estimate of the number of low-income, monolingual-Chinese seniors living in Chinatown. This information may help policymakers, service providers and activists better plan for the needs of this group. Next, I conducted in-depth one-on-one interviews with twelve residents of a Chinese benevolent association housing building. The interviews were designed to collect qualitative data about residents' experience of neighbourhood change in Chinatown. The mixed-methods of data collection are discussed in the sections below.

4.2.1. Informational Survey

I developed a brief survey in order to understand how many monolingual-Chinese, low-income senior residents live in Chinatown. The questionnaire had two categories. The first category of questions relate to the demographic of the tenants, whereas the second category of questions were about the building's general operations (Appendix A).

To collect demographic data, I used publicly available social housing information from BC Housing's Housing for Seniors and Adults with Disabilities document and the City of Vancouver's Chinese Society Building Matching Grant program. Through personal connections, I contacted numerous Chinese associations with affordable housing units that are not publicly advertised for additional data. Benevolent societies operate buildings

both inside and outside of the City's official Chinatown boundary; as a result, applicable buildings located in Strathcona and the Downtown Eastside were also included in the survey.

After contacting board members of the benevolent societies I connected with building managers due to their extensive knowledge of residents. I decided to have building managers complete the informational survey instead of residents themselves due to the lack of time and access constraints.

I was able to survey seven out of the fourteen publicly known affordable housing buildings owned and/or operated by ten different benevolent societies. In addition, I completed one survey with a Chinese association that does not list their affordable housing units publicly. I could not complete surveys with six of the buildings for a number of reasons. The Ming Sun Reading Rooms which had eight units of affordable housing in its building was under construction during the time of my research. I reached out to the remaining five building managers but did not receive a response.

Of the eight buildings surveyed, only six of the building managers were able to confidently present information about their tenants. One of the building managers had just transitioned into his role and was not familiar with all the residents. The other building manager was called away during our meeting. I made attempts for a follow-up meeting but it did not materialize. As a result, findings about the tenants are drawn from the six surveys and data regarding building operations stem from all eight surveys. Due to the limited response rate, the survey findings reflect only a subset of the total low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residential population living in Chinatown.

With the exception of one survey, I visited the associations in-person to meet with building managers to complete the questionnaire. Surveys were conducted throughout the summer of 2015.

4.2.2. In-depth, One-on-One, Semi-structured Interviews

I conducted in-depth, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews in Cantonese and Mandarin with twelve low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents living in an

association building Chinatown in order to answer how commercial disinvestment and gentrification impacted their well-being. I chose to conduct qualitative interviews because they best capture everyday lived experiences of the research participants. The interviews gave residents the opportunity to explain, clarify and expand on how neighbourhood changes have impacted their well-being. Other research methods such as tenant surveys would not capture the nuanced and complex impacts on their day-to-day lives. The semi-structured interview questions were informed by my adapted version of the City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy (Appendix B). Each goal and its accompanying indicators make up the overall concept of well-being for this study.

4.2.3. Interview Recruitment

During the informational survey round, I asked each building manager about their interest in advertising the interview opportunity with tenants. Only one building manager showed interest. The manager advertised the opportunity through word of mouth and announcements at their monthly tea socials. Twelve seniors agreed to participate in the research. Each interview averaged around 45 minutes.

4.2.4. Coding and Analysis

Following the recorded interviews, I transcribed relevant pieces of the conversation from Cantonese and Mandarin to English. I ceased to conduct interviews when the answers began to sound repetitive. The initial analysis was coded in Nvivo by categorizing answers into each of the nine adapted well-being framework goals. However, after a second round of analysis it became clear that each area of well-being was intimately connected. As a result, findings were categorized then analyzed based on common themes of commercial disinvestment and gentrification using the Healthy City Strategy and literature introduced in conceptual framework (Chapter 2) as guides.

Chapter 5.

Research Findings

5.1. Informational Survey Findings

There were 341 low-income residents living in the eight buildings I was able to survey. The six completed demographic surveys paint a general picture of seniors living in Chinatown's affordable housing buildings owned and operated by Chinese associations. These six buildings are home to 196 tenants; of them 167 are seniors (ages 65 years and older). About 88% of the seniors reported as living in the sampled buildings are monolingual-Chinese. Even though this survey is not representative of Chinatown's population, 88% of monolingual-Chinese speakers is much more than the 30% of residents who identified Chinese as the dominant language spoken at home in the 2006 Canadian Census (City of Vancouver – Chinatown Neighbourhood Plan). This discrepancy suggests that there may be more monolingual-Chinese speakers than previously thought. Additionally, this group of senior residents is predominantly female (65%). About three quarters (72%) of the sampled seniors live on their own, while the rest (28%) live with a partner.

The oldest senior in the sample group was 98 years old, while the youngest senior was 65 years old. The 33 year gap between the youngest and oldest senior resident could mean the two age groups experience Chinatown differently due to their respective physical and psychological challenges. Unfortunately, the broad and widely used term *senior*, flattens this diverse age group. As a result, policymakers may have missed some potentially critical differences in the way this group interacts with Chinatown. Furthermore, the majority of residents surveyed have lived in their current place of residence for more than ten years (69%). As a result, a large portion of the sample has lived through Chinatown's commercial disinvestment and gentrification. Lastly, all of the residents were independent, but some tenants received home visits from community nurses.

In terms of the Chinese associations, all but one building had a waitlist with seniors interested in renting a unit. The building without a waitlist was unpopular with older adults

because there were no elevators to access the units on the third floor. The building's steep stairs were deemed unsuitable for seniors. All of the remaining surveyed buildings were fully occupied. The building with the most units had thirty names on their waitlist. The manager explained that some seniors on the list also have their names on other associations' waitlists to speed up the process of finding a home. Out of the eight association buildings, the least expensive monthly rent for a unit for a single tenant was \$175 while the priciest was \$420. The average rent for a single person was \$380. For couples sharing a unit, the least expensive unit was \$480 per month while the most expensive option was \$700. The waitlist that each of the seven associations maintain confirms that there is a demand for affordable housing in Chinatown from Chinese seniors.

5.2. Interview Context

5.2.1. Profile of the Benevolent Association

The Chinese association that advertised the research project to tenants wanted to remain unnamed. In the building where interviews took place, each unit was enclosed and equipped with a kitchen and washroom. The majority of units were studio suites but a handful are one-bedroom units. Rent for a single-person is \$390 a month; couples pay more for a one bedroom apartment. At the time of my interviews, ten Chinese seniors were registered on the waitlist. The multi-floor building has an elevator and a shared laundry space. To qualify for a unit in this building, the tenant must be low-income (as per BC Housing guidelines), independent, and 65 years or older.

The newest tenant of the building moved in last spring. The resident who lived in the building the longest moved in 24 years ago. About 33% of the tenants had lived in the building for more than ten years, 22% had lived in the building for 5 - 9 years and 44% had lived in the building for less than 5 years. The youngest senior was 65 years old while the eldest was 96 years old. All of the seniors were independent but some had community nurses who visited on a weekly basis to assist with bathing and chores. 44% of the tenants were males and 59% were females. There were four couples living in the building. Only four residents had some knowledge of English; I was not able to assess their level of language proficiency.

5.2.2. Profile of Interviewees

All twelve of the interviewees immigrated to Canada from China. They arrived via the family reunification program. None of the interviewees spoke English, but some knew simple phrases and greetings. One of the interviewees was a Mandarin speaker, while the rest spoke a regional dialect understandable by Cantonese speakers like myself. All but one couple had lived in other parts of Metro Vancouver with their adult children and grandchildren prior to moving to Chinatown. Consistent with other research on seniors living in other North American Chinatowns, the majority of the interviewees had been caretakers of their grandchildren while their adult children worked. Many of the interviewees felt the desire to live away from their children due to differing lifestyles. All the tenants chose to live in Chinatown because of the neighbourhood's affordable housing, easy access to public transit and Chinese food, and the opportunity to live with peers. All of the female interviewees were widows. The section below provides a brief profile of the twelve interviewees. The majority of the residents did not want to be named in the research; as a result, interviewees were assigned common Chinese surname aliases.

Mr. and Mrs. Fong are one of the two couples interviewed. They moved from Montreal to Vancouver thirteen years ago after living in the French city for more than two decades. The Fongs immigrated to live with their children in 1990. Their children were not able to secure careers in Montreal. As a result, their children immigrated back to Hong Kong while Mr. and Mrs. Fong moved to Vancouver. The couple has only lived in this association building since moving from Montreal. They are both in their mid-eighties with no immediate family in the Metro Vancouver region.

Mr. and Mrs. Cho are the other couple interviewed in my research project. The Chos are 90 years old and moved into the building three years ago. Before retiring Mr. and Mrs. Cho were farmers in the suburbs. Farming was one of the few jobs they could find due to their inability to speak English. They decided to move to Chinatown when their daughter sold her home in East Vancouver. The couple's children and grandchildren visit on the weekends and take them grocery shopping at Costco and Superstore. The Chos swim at least twice a week and are in good health.

Mrs. Wu who is 77 years old has lived in this building since 2003. She also lived with her son and grandchildren in East Vancouver before moving into Chinatown. Before retiring Mrs. Wu held a number of manual labour, low-wage jobs. Her last job before retirement was dishwashing at a downtown Chinese restaurant. Mrs. Wu is very comfortable taking transit even though she does not speak English because she worked all over the Lower Mainland. Her son visits on weekends with her favourite food, fish. Mrs. Wu prefers to spend time alone in her home. When at home she enjoys assembling puzzles that her grandchildren bring her and playing the harmonica.

Mrs. Lum who is in her eighties used to live in the Marpole area with her youngest daughter and grandchildren. When Mrs. Lum's youngest daughter immigrated back to Hong Kong she decided to continue living in Vancouver. After months of waiting, a unit opened up in the association building. Mrs. Lum's eldest daughter lives in Vancouver and visits weekly. She has recently been experiencing pain in her knee due to osteoporosis.

Mrs. Li who arrived in Canada in 1989 is 80 years old. She moved into the building with her husband in 2000. Unfortunately, Mr. Li passed away a few years ago. Before moving into Chinatown, she lived in Tsawwassen with her children and grandchildren. She helped raise her granddaughters while her son and daughter-in-law worked full-time jobs. Mrs. Li is very active and is able to get around the city independently by transit on her own. For example, she took the Canada Line to pick up relatives from the Richmond airport just days before our interview.

Mrs. Huang who is in her mid-nineties was the eldest senior I interviewed. She immigrated to Canada in the 1970s and moved into Chinatown about twenty years ago. Before moving to Chinatown she lived with her son by the University of British Columbia. Mrs. Huang is healthy and independent but spends most of her time in her apartment. She walks daily to the nearby grocer and bookstore to pick-up produce and the daily newspaper.

Mr. Chong who is in his 60s moved to Vancouver from Cawston, B.C. about ten years ago. He first settled in East Vancouver with his daughter but moved to Chinatown less than two years ago. He supplements his income by collecting recyclable cans and bottles and returning them to the local recycling depot. Mr. Chong is very active and

frequently visits Renfrew swimming pool. He finds many more options in Chinatown for Chinese vegetables and fruits compared to the interior town of Cawston.

Mrs. Choi is 91 years old and immigrated to Canada in 1991. She moved into the building with her late husband five years ago. Prior to this, she lived at the Kwong Chow Association on Hastings Street, but the benevolent association sold the property and relocated to Pender Street in Chinatown. As a result, Mrs. Choi and her husband had to move. After months of waiting, a one bedroom unit opened up and the elderly couple moved into their current building. Mrs. Choi's husband passed away two years ago and she misses him dearly. Mrs. Choi's children visit on weekends with food and other goods and takes her out to eat in the neighbourhood. Her favourite hobby is sewing and playing mah jong with her neighbours.

Mrs. Mah is in her eighties has lived in the building for about three years. She has a group of friends in the building with whom she exercises and dines. She enjoys exercising by walking throughout the neighbourhood, but is not comfortable using public transit.

Mrs. Tong is the only Mandarin speaker in the building. She sometimes feels isolated because she is not able to communicate with the Cantonese-speaking tenants. However, she expressed that after living in the building and in Chinatown (which is predominantly Cantonese) for two years now, she is able to understand the Cantonese language better. She moved into the neighbourhood after living in Richmond and in West Vancouver with her daughter. Mrs. Tong finds living in Chinatown convenient because of its many bus route options. On Thursdays she takes the bus to Burnaby for choir practice.

5.3. Qualitative Interview Findings

This chapter presents findings from in-depth interviews conducted with the twelve low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents I profiled above. Guided by the city's Healthy City Strategy, I asked interviewees to express how their well-being has been impacted by Chinatown's commercial disinvestment and gentrification. Although the participants share a similar socioeconomic status and are all seniors, as a group their

responses are quite heterogeneous. The diverse range of physical mobility and ability to navigate the transit system make for varied experiences of neighbourhood change.

To explore my interview findings, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first group of findings relate to the negative impacts that commercial disinvestment and gentrification have placed on the twelve low-income, Chinese-only speaking seniors living in Chinatown. However, not all neighbourhood changes have been negative for the well-being of interviewees. In the second part, interviews reveal that some revitalization projects of the 1990s have been positive for elderly Chinese residents. Additionally, the interviews demonstrate that certain social institutions, community services and culturally, linguistically and economically appropriate assets continue to make Chinatown a highly suitable neighbourhood for low-income monolingual-Chinese seniors. However, if gentrification continues to accelerate unchecked, the benefits of living in the community may be harmfully disrupted for poor, elderly seniors.

5.4. Negative Impacts of Disinvestment and Gentrification

Interviews with the residents reveal that aspects of Chinatown's disinvestment and gentrification have negatively impacted their well-being. The first part of this section presents findings on how disinvestment and gentrification have affected some tenants' health and damaged their connection with the community. Although none of the residents I interviewed lived in Chinatown thirty years ago when commercial disinvestment first started, the lasting effects of businesses closing and concerns over safety have shaped the environment in which today's low-income, monolingual-Chinese seniors live. The second half of this chapter demonstrates that gentrification in the form of cafes, boutiques and restaurants that cater to young, middle-class, English-speaking patrons has altered the way seniors feel connected to Chinatown, leading to sentiments of exclusion and distress.

5.4.1. Adverse Effects of Disinvestment

Access to Recreation

Concerns around safety, due to disinvestment, arose for interviewees who do not seek recreational activities outside the neighbourhood or are not able take public transit on their own. All of the participants associate crime with disinvestment of the area. This relationship can be traced back to the 1990s when the troubles of the Downtown Eastside spilled into Chinatown. As a result, this has caused some residents to modify how they exercise and access green spaces in the neighborhood.

Mr. and Mrs. Fong moved from Montreal's Chinatown to Vancouver's Chinatown more than ten years ago. The couple moved west after their adult children immigrated back to Hong Kong. The Fongs' exercise routine illustrates the precautions they take when walking at the nearby Andy Livingstone Park, which features a large artificial grass playing field.

Mr. Fong: "Yes, on Keefer Street, there's a park. Often we go there to walk. One time, we saw on the news that an elderly Chinese couple was robbed at the park in the morning. After that [event], we were afraid to go in the morning or late at night. So now we walk less there. We don't want trouble."

Sophie: "So you only go at noon? Like now? When there are more people around?"

Mr. Fong: "Yes, we would only go when there are lots of people."

Sophie: "Would you go there to walk if that incident didn't happen?"

Mr. Fong: "Yes, we would."

The elderly couple is very careful about when they visit the park, only going when it is busy. Like Mr. and Mrs. Fong, Mrs. Wu has also made changes to her exercise regime due to safety concerns. Although she is an experienced transit user, having worked a variety of manual labour jobs across Metro Vancouver, walking is her preferred choice of exercise. Walking at Andy Livingstone Park makes the most sense to her because it is located two blocks away from her home. Mrs. Wu described her exercise routine to me, "I walk around the field but I don't do the stairs anymore. I used to do figure eights every

day. There are 28 steps. But now I don't." Mrs. Wu told me that she changed her routine because during hours when she visits the park there are not enough people to watch over her if she were to fall or trip. Like the Fongs, Mrs. Wu only exercises on the stairs when the park is busy.

Perceptions of danger in the community dictate when this group of seniors can and cannot exercise. The theft incident in the park brought up by Mr. Fong is not an isolated event. According to the City of Vancouver, in 2012 Strathcona (sub-planning area adjacent to Chinatown) had the highest rate of reported violent crimes (City of Vancouver- Being and Feeling Safe and Included, 10). Around the same time I was conducting interviews, a man was murdered at Andy Livingstone Park (CBC News). Less than two months after interviewing residents, four women aged 59, 80, 81 and 91 had their purses taken from them while walking in Chinatown (CBC News).

Interviewees were not able to provide examples or experiences indicating how gentrification has impacted their safety; perhaps the effects of gentrification on safety are too early to be assessed. In sum, residents with mobility challenges are limited to when they can go for exercise in Chinatown due to a sense of personal danger.

Access to Physicians

In addition to limitations to how and when the seniors recreate, disinvestment has caused two residents to travel outside of Chinatown to reach their family doctor. Mr. and Mrs. Fong's doctor moved away from Chinatown a few years ago due to the neighbourhood's disinvestment. It now takes forty minutes for the couple to reach their family doctor by bus. While the couple told me they did not mind the trip, ultimately disinvestment has caused Mr. and Mrs. Fong to travel long distances to access their doctor whereas previously, the couple could have walked to their appointment in Chinatown.

Displaced from Home and Community

Disinvestment and gentrification has caused one of the interviewees to be displaced from their previous home in the greater Chinatown area. Mrs. Choi, who is 91 years old, lived in the Kwong Chow Association building with her late husband before moving into her current home. The association building was located across the street from

Chinatown's official boundary. In 2010, citing a lack of personal safety when members entered and exited the building the association, sold the building to an interested neighbouring condominium developer. The association eventually relocated to another building on Pender Street, but Mrs. Choi had to relocate, resulting in diluted ties to the association and fellow members.

Mrs. Choi: "My husband passed away in October, 2013. In the last two years, I haven't done much at the association. I used to live at the old Kwong Chow Association. On Hastings. But they sold that one on Hastings and bought another. I would clean the mahjong tiles and helped out in small ways and work. My husband and I were part of the association so we would go help and volunteer. It was like a second home."

Mrs. Choi used to be able to walk downstairs to connect with her neighbours and other members of the association. The area's disinvestment and growing market for condominium development caused Mrs. Choi to lose a place for connection and socialization. Although she is able to walk to the new Kwong Chow Association, her intimate ties with the society and its members have changed.

Loss of Inclusion and Community Connections

Interviewees frequently mentioned the loss of the Chinatown Night Market when talking about the changes they have seen since moving into the neighbourhood. The Chinatown Night Market started in 1996. At its peak, the summertime weekend event closed off three streets to vehicle traffic and had more than 200 stalls selling food, knick-knacks and a range of other merchandise (Pottie-Sherman 177). By 1998, the market had about 20,000 visitors each evening (Pottie-Sherman 177). After years of downsizing due to a declining number of visitors, the Chinatown Night Market was cancelled in 2015. The organizers cited costs as the main factor (Cheung).

According to respondents Mr. Fong and Mrs. Fong, the cancellation of the Chinatown Night Market was a lost opportunity to socialize with friends in a festive environment, connect with neighbors, and meet other Chinese Chinatown residents.

Mr. Fong: "The biggest change is the lack of the Chinatown Night Market. There used to be the night market. But now there isn't even a night market...Even though the things for sale were kitschy and dated, it was something to do on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Everyone could go

walk and chat there. It's one less thing for us to do. Chinatown is not 'yeetlao' anymore."

There is no English translation that wholly captures the meaning, *yeetlao* (熱鬧). Its direct translation means “hot and noisy” and is often described as lively, bustling and busy. *Yeetlao* has three components: events, crowds and noise (Warden and Chen 217). Night markets that draw on these components create a space for “participants to share communal values” while combining “together the [retail] and social elements of everyday life” (Warden and Chen 217). Partaking in *yeetlao* events are rooted in Chinese traditions that invoke positivity. It gives “individuals a feeling of social security through belonging to a social group” (Warden and Chen 217). So when Mr. Fong tells me that Chinatown is no longer “hot and noisy” it is indicative of a cultural shift in the neighbourhood.

In examining the role of Chinatown's Night Market as a tool for revitalization of Chinatown, Pottie-Sherman argues that by 2010, the night market was the “leading edge of gentrification for the inner-city” (172). Pottie-Sherman found that the night market was primarily used as a product to bring capital into the neighbourhood; the needs of local Chinatown residents were only secondary to that goal. True as that may be, Pottie-Sherman paints the night market as a positive event for seniors living in Chinatown. She writes, “On any given night at the market, a group of seniors occupies the entire seating area in front of the stage. Men play *mah jong* at long tables at the northwest corner of the market while their wives watch the entertainment” (Pottie-Sherman 179). The Chinatown Night Market was the last regular evening events held in a public space in the neighbourhood. It served as a safe, public, evening event for monolingual-Chinese residents to cultivate connections and to reinforce their sense of belonging in the community. While free public evening events have disappeared from the community, private spaces of consumption for the middle-class have rapidly expanded.

5.4.2. Gentrification: From Chinatown to ‘Westerntown’

Bars and Restaurants – A Threat to Well-being

Chinatown's gentrification has brought in many new restaurants, cafes and boutiques. They tend to serve a young, affluent, trendy clientele. Bars like the Keefer Bar

serve cocktails called the Dragonfly starting at \$11.00, while Maime Taylors, a restaurant on Georgia Street, offers chicken and waffles for \$20.00. These restaurants generally do not serve the needs or preferences of low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents, in terms of the food and drinks they serve and their expensive prices. Not only that, some of them have had a detrimental impact on residents like Mrs. Li. Since the opening of the nearby Besties, the German sausage parlour, Mrs. Li has not been able to get adequate sleep during the weekends. She walked me over to the window in her suite to point out the new restaurants on her block.

Mrs. Li: "Next to the jade store there is a white [non-Chinese] restaurant. On Fridays, I don't sleep. There are lots of people talking until 2:00 a.m. or 3:00 a.m. It's very loud. And up there, up the street, I think there is a theatre. There's a lot of noise from there too. There's not much I can do. To move or not to move. To not move is difficult, to move is difficult. I've been here for more than ten years. This is my home. My husband lived here before he passed away. But now I'm alone. And wherever I go it will be the same. I don't know what to do. I'm so stressed."

Sophie: "What is it like when it's not the weekend?"

Mrs. Li: "Outside of weekends it's okay. But it is a main arterial and I understand that it's supposed to be busy. But sometimes there are people making a loud scene on the streets. When they eat they're not noisy. It's when they wait for seats or leave the restaurant. The whole night I won't get to sleep. They used to be closed some days like holidays. So back then, at least there was a day they were closed. But now, maybe they have a lot of business, they're even open on holidays. It's very stressful."

The new gentrifying restaurants and bars threaten the ability of some residents to meet basic well-being needs inside their homes in Chinatown. Environmental gerontology literature has demonstrated that seniors can experience increased health risks when living in areas with excessive noise levels (Balfour & Kaplan 507).

Chinatown No More

The changing commercial landscape of Chinatown for other interviewees means a shift in their relationships with the neighbourhood. When asked to talk about some of the major changes that have happened, many interviewees immediately referred to the loss of Chinese restaurants and other food outlets. There has been a steady decline in the number of restaurants in Chinatown since the 1990s. Many iconic restaurants have

closed and few have replaced them to serve the same low-income monolingual-Chinese patrons. Mrs. Li, who has lived in Chinatown since 2000, has seen many changes to the food scene. When asked about which restaurants and cafes were around when she first moved in, she listed a number of them in rapid fire.

Mrs. Li: "Well, many [restaurants] have closed like Fan Yuen (Flower Garden), Foo Ho Ho's and now Daisy Garden Restaurant."

Likewise, Mr. and Mrs. Fong and Mrs. Choi were all able to easily recall a number of restaurants that were open when they first moved into the neighbourhood, adding to the list Park Lock Seafood Restaurant and Diamond Restaurant. Although Chinatown has experienced a significant decline in restaurants and cafes, it should be acknowledged that not all of the interviewees dine out.

Mr. Fong: "We mostly, older people like us, we can't have like MSG, or the oil, it's too much. We prefer to eat at home."

Mrs. Lum is one of the few exceptions. She frequently visits The Boss Bakery and Restaurant for a bowl of vermicelli noodles with shredded pork and pickled vegetables, dining out is generally not something this group does on their own. As Mrs. Wu pointed out, "it's not as fun to dine alone." Overall, none of the interviewees mentioned that the closures of restaurants and cafes have negatively impacted their access to food in Chinatown.

Other respondents who do incorporate dining out into their day frequent The Boss Bakery and Restaurant, Maxim Bakery, Floata Seafood Restaurant and New Town Bakery and Restaurant. These restaurants are also where they go when their children and grandchildren visit them in Chinatown. Additionally, more mobile seniors that can navigate the bus, like Mrs. Li, will dine out elsewhere in Vancouver or in Richmond. As a result, their access to prepared food has not been impacted.

The closures, however, have altered the character of Chinatown in a more nuanced manner.

Mrs. Li: "It's silent. It's like Chinatown died. It used to be very busy. On Hastings, you know Beijing Medicine, [they] had two cashiers and the line

was still out the door. All the stores, they're empty now. No Chinese want them. No one is brave enough and is afraid of owning them. It either goes out of business or the Caucasian people want it."

Mr. Cho best captured the neighbourhood's current state.

Mr. Cho: "It's not like Chinatown anymore. The Western people are clever; no one wants the shop here so they buy the businesses. It's all Caucasian stores downstairs. It was not like that before. But slowly it is changing and they'll continue to come. It's now more like Westerntown than Chinatown."

The transformation from Chinatown to Westerntown is in reference to the rise of shops and restaurants that appear to the interviewees to serve young, non-Chinese patrons. The new retailers are foreign to interviewees because they cannot understand or connect with the businesses. For example, when Mrs. Li took me over to the window to examine the new rows of stores, she tried to tell me what she knew about each of the shops. Mrs. Li said a neighbour's grandchild figured out the store around the corner sold second-hand clothing. Mrs. Li chuckled and said, "I don't understand who would want someone else's old stuff." The residents have no concept of vintage clothing and goods, as indicated by Mrs. Li's response.

For others, Chinatown's changing linguistic landscape creates an inability to connect with their neighbourhood. Living in Chinatown is appealing for interviewees because they are able to communicate with others in the building and neighbourhood in Chinese. Mr. Fong's decision to move with his wife to Vancouver's Chinatown, even though they were unsure of the neighbourhood's safety, was mainly because so they could communicate with others in Chinese.

Mrs. Fong: "There is a sense of home here for us. Because Chinese people hope to interact and talk with Chinese people and be close to each other."

The ability to communicate with others in Chinese is critical due to the fact that none of the interviewees speak English. The emergence of gentrifying, middle-class boutiques and restaurants targeted at young, English-speaking patrons mean that monolingual-Chinese residents do not understand what services or goods are offered. Chinatown is becoming inaccessible for non-English speaking residents. Some stores have kept a plaque or sign from the previous Chinese business. For example, displayed

outside of Besties is a sign from the previous Chinese tenant. Although it pays homage to the history of that particular location, it provides monolingual-Chinese residents no information about German sausages being served inside the restaurant.

As Chinatown morphs into “Westerntown,” monolingual-Chinese senior interviewees feel excluded from their neighbourhood. When Hsu examined how Chinese monolingual seniors felt living in Montreal’s Chinatown, she stated that while “living in multiethnic neighbourhoods might indicate success in objective integration for Chinese immigrants but [residents] found these areas difficult” to negotiate (Hsu 338). In 2012, the City of Vancouver’s Chinatown Economic Revitalization Plan called for a diversification of the neighbourhood’s economic base. A diverse set of retailers have indeed invested, but this has made Chinatown unrecognizable to for the interviewees. Furthermore, their dietary restrictions, preferences and limited economic spending power make these new spaces virtually irrelevant to their well-being and everyday lives. In addition, the Chinese signs and symbols do not provide seniors with appropriate information. Ultimately, the gentrifying restaurants and boutiques do not serve the needs of the interviewees and have, in some cases, caused them harm.

In conclusion, neighbourhood disinvestment has caused some of my interviewees to alter how they access family doctors and outdoors spaces for exercise. Furthermore, disinvestment has led to the loss of important socialization spaces that strengthen a sense of inclusion to Chinatown and its residents. The recent rise of trendy boutiques, cafes, bars and restaurants for the wealthy makes the low-income, Chinese-only speaking residents feel stressed and excluded from their neighbourhood. These negative impacts from gentrification coupled with the cancellation of the Chinatown Night Market, a public gathering event that served multiple well-being functions for the residents, have led some interviewees to feel like they no longer live in Chinatown.

5.5. Chinatown: A Positive Neighbourhood for Low-Income, Chinese Seniors

Despite the numerous negative consequences of gentrification, Chinatown still remains to be a neighbourhood that positively contributes to the well-being of low-income,

monolingual-Chinese senior interviewees. The positive aspects of the neighbourhood are attributed to long-standing social institutions, low-cost, culturally and linguistically appropriate shops and services and easy access to public transit. In addition, the interviews revealed that a number of the 1990s' revitalization projects, some of which were marketed as gentrification developments, now serve as low-barrier gathering spaces for seniors in the neighbourhood.

5.5.1. Gains From Revitalization Projects of the 90s

Dominant discourse often frames gentrification as being straightforward in its negative impacts for the existing community and its residents. However, interviews with Chinatown residents illustrate that some low-income, monolingual-Chinese seniors appreciate certain Chinatown revitalization development projects of the 1990s. In particular, the opening of T&T Supermarket, International Village Mall and Chinatown Plaza have been beneficial to residents because they offer some residents affordable culturally appropriate services and goods, and free gathering space.

After years of watching grocery stores, fishmongers, butchers and bakeries close in Chinatown, a number of Chinese senior residents appreciate the variety of food available at T&T Supermarket. T&T Supermarket opened its third location in Vancouver adjacent to Chinatown in 1996. The national big-box grocery store sells fresh produce, prepared foods, meat, fish, and household items. It caters to Asian tastes and preferences. When the market opened, it announced that they would bring a "modernized retail operation to the traditional mom & pop retail territory" of Chinatown (T&T Supermarket). Although measuring the direct impact of T&T's competition on mom and pop shops is beyond the scope of this project, the opening of T&T could not have helped stop the demise of local groceries, bakeries and fish and meat shops in Chinatown during the period of commercial disinvestment. Residents like Mr. and Mrs. Fong, who are in their eighties and have lived in Chinatown for 13 years, have witnessed the closing of many grocery stores in Chinatown. However, this has not caused them many inconveniences because they generally prefer the produce at T&T Supermarket, which is located three blocks west from where they live. I asked Mr. and Mrs. Fong why they choose to shop at T&T Supermarket.

Mr. Fong: "T&T Supermarket is a little more expensive....[You know Chinese people. They shop around for the price first. But the fact is, for the majority of our shopping we go to T&T Supermarket. You know, at the end of Keefer Street? It's better there. It's fresher. Even though it's pricier, we go there.]"

Sophie: "So the places up the street on Keefer, Pender or Georgia are not as fresh?"

Mr. Fong "Yes, it's cheaper so the quality is not as good."

Mrs. Fong: "As well, fewer people go there to buy groceries, so it's not as fresh."

Furthermore, Mr. and Mrs. Fong mentioned that shopping at T&T gives them a chance to interact and see people indoors, especially when the weather conditions are poor. Similarly, Mrs. Wu does the majority of her grocery shopping at T&T Supermarket. Mrs. Wu, who has to have fish with her meals, recalls frequenting the fishmonger on the corner of Pender Street and Gore Avenue.

Mrs. Wu: "I used to go there [Pender Seafood] often to buy fresh fish, but now I mostly go to T&T Supermarket. T&T Supermarket is pretty good. It's fresh. They have weekly specials that are advertised on TV. I think it's pretty good there. It's [the produce is] fresh."

T&T's staff speak Cantonese or Mandarin as well as English. Products are also labeled in both Chinese and English. Considering these factors, it is unsurprising that residents who are able and willing to spend more money on their groceries have benefitted from T&T's large selection of Asian products and service in Chinese.

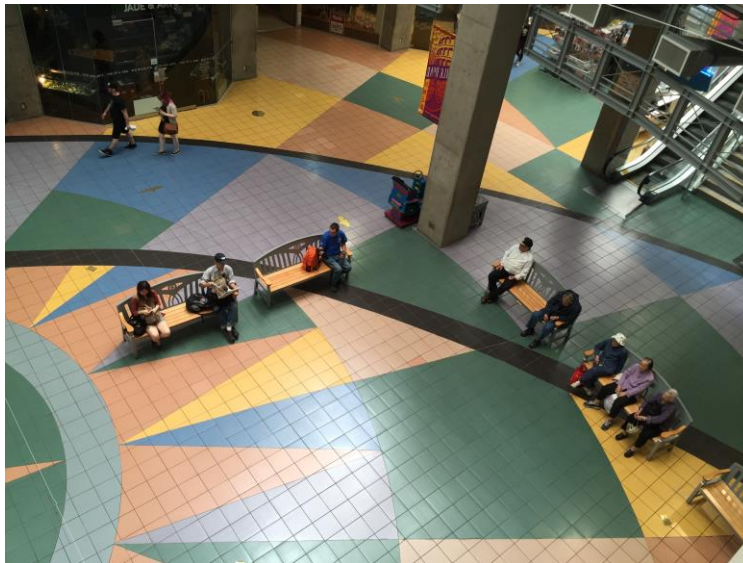
Another revitalization development that benefits some of the low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents is International Village Mall. The mall, adjacent to Chinatown, was completed in 1999. Developer Henderson Development's goal for International Village Mall was to "revitalize Chinatown and help gentrify the surrounding area" (Chow). Henderson Development's vision was to turn the space into one of the most luxurious malls and entertainment sites in all of Canada (Mackie). Seventeen years after the mall opened, it is now home to an odd mix of retail tenants. The megaplex movie theatre, which has anchored the development from the beginning, is located on the top

floor. The second floor houses the food court with a range of cuisines, from Chinese to Sri-Lankan. The ground level has a hodgepodge of retailers (shoe and bag repair, print shop, children's bookstore, furniture store, Chinese artifacts shop, clothing store, Japanese two-dollar general store, African craft store, and board games shop). Chinese seniors and other folks from the neighbourhood tend to gather in the atrium, where there are benches arranged in a circle (see figure 1). The developer's inability to bring in high-end retailers has made the mall accessible to a broad group of shoppers attracted to low-cost retail. For Mrs. Mah, the mall is where she goes to socialize and meet with her friends.

Mrs. Mah: "Sometimes at International Village Mall I would sit and socialize with folks who are from the same town as me in China. Some of them live with their sons and daughters, some live in the other parts of Chinatown. And when they have free time they would walk over to the mall."

In addition to the mall serving as an indoor gathering space, interviewees visit the Japanese toonie-store – Yokoyaya 123 – for toiletries and other household goods. The store employs Chinese staff who are able to communicate with the seniors in either Cantonese or Mandarin.

Figure 2. Gathering Space at International Village Mall



Source: Sophie Fung, 29 Apr. 2016

Chinatown Plaza was also mentioned as a gathering space that continues to serve as safe place to build connections and feel included, even since the neighborhood has

changed (see figure 2). The plaza is public-private space constructed in the 1990s with seven floors, parking and retail space. The large parking lot in Chinatown Plaza was built in hopes of attracting patrons who had gone off to Richmond where parking was plentiful (Chow). When the mall opened, the leasing agent quickly filled the retail space due to high demands. From the merchant's point of view, the mall marked Chinatown's second life. Today the plaza struggles to fill its vacant retail storefronts and is going through its own commercial disinvestment. Nevertheless, the public seating area remains to be a good gathering space for residents like Mrs. Mah (see figure 3). She told me that this is where she sometimes visits to sit and chat with friends or to people watch, especially when it is raining, because "there aren't very many places to go in Chinatown anymore." The limited number of safe, free, indoor spaces is cause for concern, especially for seniors who experience high-levels of loneliness. As Chinatown continues to change, indoor gathering spaces like the plaza need to be recognized as important community hubs.

Figure 3. Seniors Gathered at Chinatown Plaza



Source: Sophie Fung, 29 Apr. 2016

The cases of T&T Supermarket, International Village and Keefer Plaza demonstrate the importance of a nuanced understanding of the different and complicated impacts of gentrification. Trendy bars, restaurants, boutiques, cafes, T&T Supermarket and International Village Mall are all gentrifiers. However, only T&T Supermarket, Chinatown Plaza and International Village Mall have benefited the interviewees in this

study. This is because they meet the needs of the community in a way that is culturally, linguistically and socio-economically appropriate. My respondents are able to buy Chinese food and goods at T&T Supermarket while at International Village Mall they are able to get assistance in Chinese at the toonie-store. Furthermore, the seating area in the mall and plaza serves as a safe and free space for the seniors to gather and meet with their friends. Overall, T&T, Chinatown Plaza, and International Village Mall have added to the well-being of interviewees. In terms of the Healthy City Strategy, the two aforementioned spaces meet some goals that makeup the areas of Feeding Ourselves Well, Being and Feeling Safe and Included and Cultivating Connections.

5.5.2. Chinatown's Assets Support Low-income, Monolingual-Chinese Senior Residents

In addition to the revitalization projects of the 1990s, Chinatown and the broader Downtown Eastside's long standing social organizations, community hubs, and access to transit, goods and services still exist to serve the neighborhood's low-income, Chinese senior population. These assets make Chinatown a neighborhood that meets many aspects of well-being for seniors.

Mobility – Getting Around

When I interviewed residents who were avid transit users, they were all able to quickly list off the different buses that stop in Chinatown. The bus routes mentioned include, 14 - Hastings/UBC, 16 - 29th Avenue Station/Arbutus, 20 - Victoria/Downtown, 19 - Metrotown Station/Stanley Park, 22 - Knight/Macdonald, 8 - Fraser/Downtown, 3 - Main/Downtown and 50 - Waterfront Station/False Creek. Interviewees took these buses to get to their doctor's office, swimming pools, restaurants and grocery stores outside of Chinatown. Some of the more confident transit-users also regularly rode the Skytrain and the Canada Line (rapid transit lines). According to this group of interviewees, getting around via transit has been made accessible because of the low-income, seniors' transit pass administered by the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation. The pass allows users to travel across the region by transit at a significantly reduced rate. All but two interviewees had a bus pass. Seniors who are mobile and confident transit users are able to fully benefit from the Chinatown's well-connected public transit system. For

residents who use transit, Chinatown's many bus routes connect them with the city beyond the neighbourhood. As a result, access to good transit has buffered mobile interviewees from the disinvestment and gentrification of the area whereas those who are not as mobile are dependent on Chinatown's recreational space.

Active Living and Getting Outside

The low-income, monolingual-Chinese seniors interviewed are highly heterogeneous due to differing levels of physical mobility and comfort using public transit. Mr. and Mrs. Cho, who are in their early 90s, moved into their suite in Chinatown from East Vancouver less than five years ago. The Chos frequently take the bus to Hillcrest Aquatic Centre and Renfrew Pool to swim. The couple has recreation cards through the Access Leisure Program for low-income residents. This allows them to use basic recreation services and programs at city-operated community centres for free or at reduced costs. When talking about their swimming routine, they were able to tell me which days, time and locations had public swim sessions. Mr. and Mrs. Cho's knowledge indicate that physical fitness was a priority in their lives. Similarly, Mr. Chong, who is in his 60s, moved to Chinatown after living in the small town of Cawston, in the BC Interior. He also takes public transportation to get to swimming facilities across the city. This group of mobile seniors' access to recreational facilities has not been impacted by changes in the neighborhood because they are not physically limited to exercising in Chinatown.

Community Hubs – Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside

In addition to the high level of walkability to affordable and culturally appropriate spaces both in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside, the concentration of social service centres that serve the needs of the wider low-income community continues to make the neighbourhood a good place to live. Mr. and Mrs. Cho are members of the Yue Shan Society. They frequently visited the society building even before moving into Chinatown; today they live less than two blocks away. The elderly couple visits the building to socialize with friends, read the newspaper and participate in different programs and activities offered by the society. They are now closer than ever before to their key community hub and social networks. Although disinvestment and gentrification have not impacted the Yue Shan Society yet, others like the Kwong Chow Association have relocated due to

development pressures in the neighbourhood. Fortunately, the Kwong Chow Association was able to relocate within the same neighbourhood.

Social services located in the Downtown Eastside that were established to meet the needs of low-income residents serve some Chinese senior residents who live in Chinatown. For example, Mr. Cho spends a significant amount of his time at Carnegie Community Centre and Library reading the newspaper and playing cards with other seniors in the common area. Mrs. Cho describes how much her husband enjoys his time at the library.

Mrs. Cho: "He's [Mr. Cho] is always at the library. They have to ask him to leave when they close at 8 p.m. or 9 p.m.!"

Another community social service that was brought up during interviews with low-income, senior residents was the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre. Mrs. Tong, who was introduced earlier, sometimes visits the centre for free meals. Access to free meals appears to be missing from Chinatown but is available in the greater Downtown Eastside neighbourhood. By pairing affordable, culturally appropriate housing in Chinatown and services for low-income residents such as free meals in the Downtown Eastside, Mrs. Tong is able to meet some very critical well-being needs.

Sense of Inclusion

Beyond public community spaces, the apartment building where interviewees live is an important social hub due to the connections that are created by living with other Chinese-speaking seniors. For example, Mrs. Choi spends much of her time with her neighbours. When I visited the building, her door was always open. Neighbors walking past would drop in to chat. When I was interviewing Mrs. Choi, one of her neighbours came by to ask when she would be free to play *mah jong* that afternoon.

Mrs. Choi: "The lady across from me that you just met and others ask me all the time, 'Do you want to play?' And I say I'll play if you want to play! That's how we pass time. We're old. Our sons and daughters don't live with us. So we do activities on our own."

The importance of affordable housing at rates appropriate to welfare recipients extend beyond the obvious physical and financial benefits. For some seniors, the building comes

with a built in community because of the shared language, culture and experience of aging together.

Access to Health Services

Even though seven of the residents' doctors are located outside of their neighbourhood, all of the interviewees fill their prescriptions inside Chinatown at pharmacies with Chinese-speaking pharmacists. Three residents mentioned that they do not have regular medication; as a result, they were unable to provide insights regarding access to pharmacies in the transforming neighbourhood. When residents on medication were asked if changes in the neighbourhood have impacted their access to medication, each interviewee responded similarly; they have been visiting the same Chinese speaking pharmacy since moving into the neighbourhood. During interviews, residents were able to list off a number of pharmacies about two blocks away from their building, most of which are located along Main Street between Pender Street and Keefer Street.

Mrs. Li, who lived in Tsawwassen before moving into the neighbourhood, has visited the same pharmacy even before moving into Chinatown. For other residents who take medication daily, like Mrs. Tong, access to pharmacies is critical.

Mrs. Tong: "Yes, on Main Street there's a row of pharmacies. They have everything there. It's all very convenient living here. I would not want to move away from here because it's so convenient."

When talking about pharmacies in the neighbourhood, some residents illustrated the importance of having Chinese speaking pharmacists, not only because they are able to communicate and understand their prescription, but because it adds to their sense of community.

Sophie: "Can you tell me about the pharmacies that you have visited since moving into Chinatown?"

Mrs. Choi: "There are Chinese speaking pharmacists at the pharmacy like Corning Pharmacy. The girls there are very, very good. They always greet me and ask how I am. It reminds of my grandchildren because they are around that age."

Even though there have been no impacts experienced by interviewees on access to pharmacies caused by disinvestment and gentrification in Vancouver's Chinatown, pharmacies should be included as an indicator in the city's Healthy City Strategy. Furthermore, access to pharmacists that meet the language needs of ethnic neighbourhoods should also be taken into consideration. This is especially important for neighbourhoods where gentrifying shops ignore the neighbourhood's traditional language and operate new businesses solely in English. In researching Washington D.C's gentrifying Chinatown, Lou found that no Chinese speaking pharmacists remained in the neighbourhood (34). While doing fieldwork, Lou herself had to assist a long-term monolingual-Chinese senior resident in filling their prescription because there were no Chinese-speaking pharmacists left in Chinatown. As gentrification process nears completion in Washington D.C., English is now the dominant language of service the neighbourhood (Lou 34). If gentrification in Vancouver's Chinatown follows in the footsteps of Washington D.C's, there may be a risk of having no Chinese-speaking pharmacists left in the area. The lack of Chinese speaking pharmacists could have serious negative impacts on the health of monolingual-Chinese senior residents who are less mobile.

Safety

While some residents talked about modifying their exercise routine when visiting Andy Livingstone Park due to safety concerns, the same respondents revealed that the neighbourhood's overall safety was not what the media had painted it to be after years of disinvestment in the area. Mr. and Mrs. Fong, who moved from the Chinatown in Montreal to Vancouver's Chinatown, had heard about the crime and drug-use in the area before moving in 2002.

Mr. Fong: "Initially, we knew that there were drug users and were very scared. But after a while, we realized that they didn't have bad intentions. They don't have bad intentions. Maybe because we're old. Even when we come home at night, they would be around, we were initially afraid, but we got used to it. They would not harm us. When they see us trying to get in, they quickly move away. They are very polite. They get up very quickly. Not much of a threat."

Mrs. Wu, who has lived in the building since 2003, illustrates the change in levels of fear.

Sophie: "Has your sense of safety changed since moving in into Chinatown in 2003?"

Mrs. Wu: "It's been always good. Often there are police that come to patrol the area. When I first moved in, I was scared. Sometimes there would be a man sitting at the stairs of the entrance to the building. There are fewer of them now. Once in a while still [people sit there]. But when I say 'excuse me' they would say 'sorry' and move away from the door. Before they would be smoking or using needles. Quite often it would be like that. They would say sorry. Before I was scared, but they are not harmful or a threat. I've seen everything now."

Although residents are sometimes uncomfortable when faced with drug-use on the streets and by their door, they generally feel safe moving around in the neighbourhood. This demonstrates that although the area has experienced years of commercial disinvestment, poverty and drug trafficking, Chinatown remains a good place to live.

Environments to Thrive

A high level of walkability remains in the neighbourhood because there are appropriate and affordable places to walk to both in and around Chinatown. Those who moved into the neighbourhood in the last five years in order to access affordable housing expressed great appreciation for living in Chinatown. For instance, Mr. and Mrs. Cho, who are very mobile seniors, lived in East Vancouver with their children and grandchildren for decades prior to moving into Chinatown four years ago. The elderly compared their previous home with where they live now.

Mrs. Cho: "We used to live with my daughter. The house was on Renfrew and 6th and was up a big hill. It's quite the hill. It used to not be convenient. It's much more convenient to buy things here [Chinatown]. Things are close. Transportation is convenient to walk to."

Mr. Cho added,

Mr. Cho: "Everything's so convenient here [Chinatown]. Shopping, bussing, walking to the park. On nice days there are lots of people walking in the park. When we were living on 6th Avenue we didn't have many people to talk to around us, unless we went to the swimming pool. Here we bump to people and we sit on the benches and chat."

For Mr. Cho and Mrs. Cho, moving into Chinatown was a positive contribution to their well-being. They are able to access opportunities and spaces to cultivate connections and to strengthen a sense of inclusion. In addition, Mrs. Cho pointed out that the relatively flat terrain of Chinatown is suitable for seniors and makes getting around their current neighbourhood fairly easy. Lastly, the ease in which they can access groceries inside and outside of Chinatown by walking or by taking the bus furthers their well-being compared to when they lived at Renfrew and 6th Avenue.

When speaking with low-income, monolingual Chinese residents about where they go for day-to-day household items, many listed nearby retailers like Army and Navy and the two-dollar store, Yokoyaya 123 at International Village. Army and Navy is a large discount department store established in 1919 located in the Downtown Eastside, just outside the official Chinatown boundary. The department store has remained in business through years of commercial disinvestment in the area and has continued to operate today despite the neighbourhood's rampant gentrification. Mrs. Wu visits Army and Navy because of its low prices and proximity to home. When talking about the distance from her home to the store, Mrs. Wu exclaimed that "It's just up the street!" Similarly, Mr. and Mrs. Fong walk to Army and Navy for household supplies.

Mr. Fong: "Things there [Army and Navy] are not too expensive. There's also places in International Village [Yokoyaya 123]. The two-dollar store. It's very convenient from here to walk to shops."

The discount retailers located in the Downtown Eastside allows Chinatown residents to shop close to home and at prices that fit their low-income budgets.

Mrs. Choi's primary mode of transportation is by foot. While talking about her day-to-day movements in the neighbourhood, she shared with me her sewing hobby. While pointing at the shirt she made on top of her drawer, Mrs. Choi gave me directions on how she gets to Dress Sew, a local fabric and sewing supply store that has been in the Downtown Eastside since the 1960s.

Mrs. Choi: "It's the place on Hastings. It is five traffic lights from here. Past the park. They have lot of different patterns. Lots of fabric! I walk there...I have a sewing machine and sometimes I help people in the building mend their clothes. I have a lot of fabric. I've made an outfit for the 94 year old"

lady across the hall from me. I made an outfit for her for Chinese New Year. I do it for free. I just do it to help.”

For Mrs. Choi who does not use the transit system, living in a neighbourhood where she is able to get around by foot is important to her overall well-being. By foot, she is able to access affordable culturally appropriate food, reach her doctor’s office and even access shops that fuel her hobbies. As indicated in the city’s Healthy City Strategy, walkability is an “indicator of the health of its built, natural, economic and social environments (City of Vancouver – Environments to thrive in 4).” Without appropriate, safe places to walk to in and around Chinatown, the neighbourhood’s walkability for low-income, monolingual Chinese senior residents could be diminished.

Walkability and Access to Affordable Cultural Food

Whether or not residents get their produce inside Chinatown, all interviewees expressed positive sentiments about the accessibility and affordability of Chinese groceries inside the neighbourhood. On the other hand, two distinct groups experience access to culturally appropriate food differently depending on individual physical mobility and comfort with navigating public transit.

The first group is not limited to food shopping inside Chinatown because they can use public transit. Take Mr. and Mrs. Fong for example. This couple is able to shop at T&T Supermarket because they have two incomes from their pensions. This allows them to spend more money on groceries than those with less money and those who are widowed. Others who are more mobile use Chinatown’s many transit routes to get to other grocers in the city. For instance, Mrs. Wu, who has worked in various manual labour jobs across the city since immigrating in the 1980s, is very comfortable using the public transit on her own. Her ability to use transit speaks to how disinvestment and gentrification of Chinatown does not impact her access to affordable Chinese food. Mrs. Wu visits Superstore by bus, which is forty minutes from her home, and brings back a fairly heavy load of produce and meats. Similarly, Mrs. Lum will sometimes ride the bus to get her favorite biscuits and crackers on Commercial Drive, which she takes with her morning medication. As Mrs. Lum showed me the package of biscuits, she described her trip to the store.

Mrs. Lum: "I go to Commercial Drive. There's a place with lots of fruits and vegetables displayed outside. They have cured meats. They have everything. You have to take a number when you buy things."

Sophie: "How do you get to Commercial Drive?"

Mrs. Lum: "I take the number 20 bus."

Sophie: "Does it take you straight there?"

Mrs. Lum: "Yes, number 20 bus does. It takes me to Teng's Market too. There's also Western Lake Restaurant for dim sum I think. I've never been there though."

Sophie: "What do you usually buy from Teng's Market?"

Mrs. Lum: "I go to Teng's Market for coffee. Teng's Market sells coffee for a tin \$5.00 at T&T it's almost \$7.00."

Sophie: "Oh so it's a couple dollars cheaper there?"

Mrs. Lum: "Yes, because I paid for my bus card already and I have time so I go there."

For those who are physically mobile like Mrs. Wu and Mrs. Lum, options for affordable produce and meat are plentiful. This group can carry a number of items back to their home in Chinatown without struggle. As a result, this group is shielded from the changes to food access due to Chinatown's disinvestment and gentrification.

The opposite is true for the group with physical mobility challenges and for those who do not use public transit. Take Mrs. Choi's shopping experience for example. At 91 years old, she is one of the older tenants in the building. When asked where she visits to buy produce, she responded:

Mrs. Choi: "If I go for fruits and vegetables I go to the places on Georgia Street. The place next to the fishmonger called Tin Lee and across the street at Carley Quality Meat. I mostly go to Georgia Street."

Sophie: "Do you go elsewhere to buy groceries?"

Mrs. Choi: "No, I like to be able walk there. I've always shopped on Georgia Street. I don't buy much. I don't take the bus to get groceries. I'm scared of taking the bus alone."

Georgia Street, between Main Street and Gore Avenue, is home to five grocery stores that sell fresh fruits, vegetables and meats. Mrs. Choi told me that staying in the area was especially important when her husband fell ill in 2013. While going through this ordeal, she had to stay close-by in order to quickly get groceries and return home to tend to her husband. In addition, Mrs. Choi lacks the experience of taking the bus alone, revealing that she is highly dependent on nearby grocers for Chinese produce and food.

In addition, Mrs. Huang who is also in her nineties and has lived in the building for more than fifteen years shares a similar experience when accessing food in Chinatown. Unassisted, she is able to buy small amounts of produce, enough for a day or two at most. When talking about some of the major changes she has seen since moving into Chinatown in the late 1990s, she recalls visiting many more grocery stores that are no longer in business. However, due to physical limitations, she now only visits Chinatown Supermarket, the closest grocery store to her home. This group is dependent on markets located within a few blocks of where they live. They tend to have visited these shops for a number of years and have built relationships with storekeepers. As mentioned in the context section, Chinatown Supermarket closed its doors permanently a few months after my last interview with residents. According to those that shopped there, Chinatown Supermarket was more affordable than T&T. The closure likely has had some negative impact for those with mobility challenges and affordability needs.

All of the interviewees, however, expressed outright that they can only eat so much on their own. Mrs. Lum illustrated this point when describing the decline of grocers in the area.

Mrs. Lum: "Yes, there were more. Many have closed now. A couple have closed up the block from here."

Sophie: Does that mean you have fewer places and choices to shop at?

Mrs. Lum: "I have enough. I don't buy much. Maybe it's because my appetite is changing. Now that I live on my own, I don't have to buy too

many items; it's not like when I had to shop for more people like when I lived with my family."

Although there are currently enough grocery stores to meet the needs of this group, Mrs. Lum's comment alludes to the trend of grocers closing in Chinatown. For example, in 1967 Chinatown's Pender Street had 13 supermarkets, 11 grocery stores and more than 13 meat shops (Anderson 215). Today, no grocery stores remain on the block. Should this trend continue, the less mobile group of residents may face difficulties accessing food.

Family members of the elderly residents may buffer the negative impacts of grocery stores closing. For example, Mrs. Huang's son visits often to drop off large bags of rice that she would otherwise struggle to get home. Similarly, Mrs. Wu's son drops off fish, which is her favorite food to eat. She told me that a meal without a side of fish is incomplete. Other residents like Mr. Cho, Mrs. Cho, and Mrs. Li will go on grocery shopping trips with their children who pick them up by car on weekends to go to Superstore or Costco. Family members who bring food to their elderly parents shield them from the disinvestment and gentrification of Chinatown.

On the other hand, not everyone's children or grandchildren live in Metro Vancouver. Mr. and Mrs. Fong's daughter and son migrated back to Hong Kong after struggling to find jobs in Montreal. The elderly couple then relocated to Vancouver but have no family in the area; for them, the closing of affordable grocery stores may have compounding negative impacts. Something else to consider are the challenges that may be faced by those currently in the mobile transit user group as they become less mobile and continue to live and age in Chinatown. Although Mrs. Lum is able to currently take the bus to buy biscuits and coffee from grocery stores far away from the neighbourhood, her physical health has been declining.

Mrs. Lum: "My knees are much weaker now. Sometimes it's hard to get on and off of the bus. Other times it's hard to walk long distances. On the days that my knees hurt I'll stay home. One time I couldn't get out of bed by myself."

The ongoing closures of grocery stores may be putting residents with future mobility challenges at risk. This inevitable shift from being highly mobile to less mobile as

seniors age indicates that a certain number of closely located, affordable grocery stores need to remain in the community. This is especially pertinent because no new low-cost grocers have opened to replace those that have closed. The lack of grocers is not merely an inconvenience. For the group of less mobile residents, this trajectory could mean fewer options for nutritious food, ultimately leading to poor health and well-being. The precise number of grocers required to sustain senior residents is beyond the scope of this research project but further research should be considered as inexpensive options for culturally appropriate foods continue to decline.

Conclusion

Despite Chinatown experiencing waves of commercial disinvestment and gentrification, it persists to be a well-connected neighbourhood. The neighbourhood allows residents to easily get around both inside and outside of Chinatown via public transit and by foot. Low-income, monolingual-Chinese seniors have access to affordable, linguistically and culturally sensitive food and goods. Furthermore, social services provided by non-profit organizations, Chinese associations and the community centre along with gathering spaces in Chinatown and the broader Downtown Eastside allow for residents to feel included and provide them with opportunities to build social connections. Overall, the neighbourhood meets many of the Healthy City Strategy's goals, demonstrating that Chinatown continues to be a good place to live mainly due to pre-gentrified establishments. However, the suitability and benefits of Chinatown for low-income, monolingual Chinese seniors could come to an end if gentrification continues to accelerate without acknowledging the nuanced needs of Chinese-speaking, low-income elders.

Chapter 6.

Discussion

Seniors makeup the fastest growing age group in Canada. Of this cohort, Chinese immigrants with lower socioeconomic statuses and lower levels of acculturation are understudied in the literature. Moreover, their experiences as residents with multiple race, class, and age identities living through gentrification is even less understood. Through qualitative interviews with twelve Chinatown seniors, my project offers some insights into the relationship between commercial disinvestment and gentrification and its impact on the well-being of low-income, monolingual-Chinese seniors. My findings add to the growing gentrification literature through a lens of well-being, race and class.

This study shows that as a result of disinvestment in and around Chinatown, some of my interviewees have modified how and when they move in the neighbourhood and where they live. In addition, the lack of investment in outdoor activities has eliminated a safe space for some of my respondents to gather and socialize. Furthermore, this research demonstrates that the expansion of new boutiques, restaurants and cafes which serve young, affluent English-speaking patrons have negatively impacted the elderly Chinese residents I spoke to. Contemporary gentrification has left many Chinese seniors feeling like Chinatown is no longer for them as they become strangers in their own neighborhood. Yet, despite these harmful effects, this project demonstrates that Chinatown remains a neighbourhood where seniors like my interviewees can meet many of their well-being needs. Chinatown's historic Chinese associations, businesses, services and even some of the revitalization projects of the 1990s that operate in Chinese and sell goods at affordable rates add to the seniors' quality of life. In addition, the opportunity to remain in affordable housing and live among peers who share a similar culture, language, economic experience and age adds feelings of inclusion and belonging. However, these critical attributes of Chinatown may be slipping away. As gentrification ramps up to create more homogenous spaces that cater to young, affluent, English-speaking patrons, Chinatown and its critical benefits becomes increasingly unrecognizable and inaccessible to elderly Chinese residents.

My findings provide an understanding of how the intersection of culture, language and affordability impacts well-being. Aspects of this intersection were overlooked in Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy and in the Chinatown Economic Revitalization Strategy. For example, the Healthy City Strategy does not consider how 'Planning for Thriving Environments' differs depending on a neighbourhood's unique population needs. The broad concept of 'supporting local businesses' can refer to supporting local, upscale shops that potentially hurt low-income residents when historical and socioeconomic contexts are removed (City of Vancouver Healthy City Strategy - Environments to Thrive 7). Likewise, the Chinatown Economic Revitalization Strategy calls for attracting "new technology-based businesses and start-ups that find cultural and even edgy neighbourhoods appealing," yet it makes no effort to retain the neighbourhood's culture itself beyond building preservation (50). Ultimately, the lack of contextual understanding of low-income, Chinese-only speaking seniors has allowed economic goals supersede the well-being of this group.

This study has its limitations. Most importantly, these findings only reflect the voices of twelve low-income, Chinese-only speaking seniors. In addition, the informational survey only revealed demographic information about 196 tenants from six Chinese society buildings. Furthermore, as demonstrated in my findings, this group of seniors are quite heterogeneous; as a result, the intensity of impacts caused by neighbourhood change was dependent on their ability to navigate the transit system and on their level of physical mobility. Additionally, the twelve seniors I interviewed have secure affordable housing. A similar group of seniors but with more precarious housing situations may experience disinvestment and gentrification in this same neighbourhood differently. To mitigate the aforementioned limitations, more studies should be conducted to ensure this vulnerable group is not further marginalized. Future researchers should find out precisely the number of low-income, monolingual-Chinese residents that may be impacted. This is especially important because it has been nearly a decade since the last Canadian Census produced reliable socioeconomic and demographic data.

My findings demonstrate that Vancouver's Chinatown is a critical neighbourhood for the well-being of marginalized Chinese residents; this conclusion is consistent with the existing literature (Ling; Hsu; Ley & Smith). In cities like New York and San Francisco,

historic inner-city Chinatowns continue to be social and economic hubs for disadvantaged Chinese immigrants. Like Chan found in Montreal's Chinatown, Chinese seniors choose to live in Vancouver's Chinatown because of access to peers in a familiar community and to access long-standing social institutions that offer services and goods in Chinese (Chan 71). This project's results are also comparable to literature related to gentrification and ethnic minorities living in other racialized neighbourhoods. Like the African-Americans in Harlem and Clinton Hill, Chinatown's Chinese residents do not feel the changes in the neighbourhood are for them (Freeman 64). The Chinese seniors cannot relate to new boutiques and restaurants in Chinatown due to the language barrier, age gap and financial inaccessibility. Additionally, my interviews echo scholarship suggesting that those with less socioeconomic power are the most negatively impacted by gentrification. Another key finding is the negative impact from the erasure of Chinese identity and culture from Chinatown; this is also consistent with similar findings in Hispanic and African-American communities in the United States (Cahill; Zukin et al.). However, the language barrier that monolingual-Chinese seniors face is a key difference between how gentrification in Vancouver's Chinatown impacts them compared to African-Americans in Harlem or Clinton Hill. Monolingualism adds another dimension through which exclusion is experienced. Ultimately, my findings are in line with researchers examining gentrification and their impacts on ethnic residents in racialized neighbourhoods across North America.

6.1. Policy Recommendations

This research is particularly relevant for policymakers looking to better understand the needs of vulnerable and invisible groups in gentrifying neighbourhoods. The recommendations below offer insights to consider when planning for Chinatowns or other ethnic neighbourhoods that have experienced disinvestment and gentrification. The first section provides recommendations for overarching plans and strategies that currently impact Vancouver's Chinatown. The second part poses possible policy interventions drawn from other communities facing similar challenges.

Integration and Intersections of Local Strategies

My findings indicate that cultural and linguistic needs of low-income immigrant senior residents are largely missing in Vancouver's municipal planning policies and strategies. Specifically, these elements require more consideration in the City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy, the Age-Friendly Plan and the Chinatown Neighbourhood Plan and Economic Revitalization Strategy. Planners and policymakers must take the most vulnerable groups' needs into consideration in meaningful and relevant ways. The findings in this project reveal that when marginalized groups are left out of plans, unforeseen consequences such as alienation occur. Furthermore, by leaving out the voices of the vulnerable or marginalized, municipal plans will only privilege the interests of those who are affluent and socioeconomically powerful.

Future phases of the Healthy City Strategy should adopt a framework that addresses specific economic, age, cultural and language experiences of vulnerable groups to ensure they thrive in the city. As a short term action, language and culture considerations should be added to the existing set of goals.

The Chinatown Economic Revitalization Plan has now reached the end of its three year timeline. A new plan should be drafted to consider the needs of low-income, monolingual-Chinese seniors in light of the negative impacts of gentrification shown in this project. This is especially important because this strategy is incorporated in other plans for the community. As a sub-neighbourhood of the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown is a part of the Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan. This plan calls for an "accelerate[d] implementation of the [Chinatown] Economic Revitalization Strategy" (City of Vancouver - Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan 44). As my findings demonstrate, accelerating the current revitalization policies may further harm the low-income monolingual Chinese seniors.

In addition to a new neighbourhood plan, the city should conduct a social impact assessment of Chinatown. As presented in this research, the neighbourhood is undergoing rapid gentrification. Assets that are crucial to low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents, such as grocers that are conveniently located for older adults, are quickly disappearing. The city and community partners need to take stock of the

existing benefits in Chinatown as they relate to the most vulnerable residents. This can help to prevent marginalized community members from being further harmed as the neighbourhood transforms. The assessment should be followed by stringent policy regulations that ensure economic and social gains are not exclusive to the wealthy and young.

Policy Recommendations

The Chinatown Night Market was an important summer event for local seniors seeking opportunities to walk and connect with neighbours. From the experience of the Chinatown Business Improvement Association's failure to keep the event running, it is clear that such critical community events should not be left to private interests. Other private spaces such as the seating area where seniors gather in International Village is also precarious. The owner may decide to sell should the neighbourhood's real-estate market continue to rise in profitability. As a result, the City should consider activating existing public spaces through city operated programming or via financial support to non-profit organizations or community groups. The municipality should also consider establishing outdoor community space for seniors to gather. Take for example, Portsmouth Square in San Francisco's Chinatown. Portsmouth Square, commonly referred to as the "heart of Chinatown", is a public space that is "dynamic, multicultural, adaptable to diverse uses and events and reflective of local culture and history" (City and County of San Francisco). The square is a gathering space that builds community through daily recreational, cultural and social activities (City and County of San Francisco). These activities include age- and culturally appropriate activities like *tai chi* and Chinese line dancing. This space also supports informal socializing and is activated by residents playing music, card games and board games (personal observation). Furthermore, an activated community space such as Portsmouth Square reaffirms a sense of belonging in the neighbourhood which is shown in the literature to buffer seniors from negative environmental conditions.

To ensure that Vancouver's Chinatown retains its cultural identity and assets that serve marginalized seniors with physical mobility challenges, affordable mom-and-pop shops like Chinese grocers, butchers and fishmongers need to be protected from gentrification. Again, I turn to San Francisco which has experienced rampant gentrification

in neighbourhoods like Chinatown and the Mission District. In 2015, the City of San Francisco created a Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund. The fund aims to protect long-time businesses that make neighbourhoods unique and serve the community from rising commercial rents and gentrification (Dineen). The City of Vancouver should adopt a similar approach to ensure current and future residents can continue accessible culturally appropriate and affordable foods and services.

From my findings, it is clear that Chinatown is a highly beneficial neighbourhood for Chinese-only speaking, low-income seniors. According to the Centre for Urban Economics and Real Estate, about 3,300 elderly Chinese-speaking immigrants would benefit from affordable culturally and linguistically appropriate assisted living options (Sommerville et. al). Given these numbers and the clear advantage of living in Chinatown for seniors, the municipal, provincial and federal governments should work collaboratively to invest in new social housing projects in the community. Furthermore, all levels of government need to support the aging social housing buildings provided by Chinese associations to ensure the more than 600 units of affordable housing are protected in Chinatown. In turn, this will create conditions that will support the small, culturally and linguistically appropriate shops and services in the neighbourhood.

Furthermore, my interviews revealed that Chinatown's identity is being dismantled. Locally-owned upscale bars and restaurants are not the only factor causing this shift. Multinational retail chains have made their way into the Chinatown landscape. For example, international coffee conglomerate Starbucks has set up shop on the ground floor of a new high-rise tower in Chinatown's main thoroughfare. Starbucks does not serve the needs of the community. If Chinatown continues along its current path of gentrification, other large retail chains are likely to set up in neighbourhood in the near future. Provisions to protect Chinatown's unique cultural characteristics must be considered. Multinational corporations like Starbucks will further dilute the neighbourhood's identity while fueling the rising commercial rents and property values which may force out existing businesses.

I again turn to the City of San Francisco for progressive policy initiatives. San Francisco's, 'Formula Retail Policy', first passed in 2006, was designed to protect small local shops from being displaced because of the competitive edge that large, multinational

retailers have over small businesses. The measure also acknowledges that small businesses contribute more to local economies than corporations that circulate earnings outside of the city (San Francisco Racked). The 'Formula Retail Policy' requires retailers to hold public hearings so that neighbours are given a chance to support or object projects being set up in their community (San Francisco Racked). Furthermore, San Francisco has carved out zones within neighbourhoods where no large retail chains are permitted to set up. City of Vancouver policymakers should investigate the possibility of a similar measure within the context of their jurisdictional powers.

Chapter 7.

Conclusion

This study seeks to understand how commercial disinvestment and gentrification has impacted the well-being of low-income, monolingual-Chinese seniors in Vancouver's Chinatown. To answer this question, I conducted in-depth interviews with twelve residents living in one Chinese association owned and operated social housing building in this area. My findings suggest that commercial disinvestment and contemporary gentrification has negatively affected low-income, elderly Chinese residents. My interviewees have lost opportunities for socialization inside the neighbourhood due to a lack of investment in community events such as the Chinatown Night Market. Commercial disinvestment intertwined with increasing property values in the Chinatown has also caused one interviewee to be displaced from her home. As a result of the move, the resident was uprooted from her neighbours and the Chinese benevolent association where she was a member. Moreover, the emptying out of Chinatown led to the relocation of a family doctor of two interviewees. As a result of the move, the elderly couple now travels forty minutes by bus to visit their health physician. Furthermore, there have been harmful impacts on the health of low-income, Chinese seniors. For example, the perception of crime in the area dictates when seniors feel comfortable enough to exercise at the nearby park. Overall, disinvestment has negatively impacted the well-being of low-income, Chinese-only speaking seniors. However, as gentrification follows on the heels disinvestment, the impacts from neighbourhood change have been amplified.

Gentrification in the form of trendy, high-end boutiques, cafés and restaurants have caused Chinese senior residents to feel excluded from their own homes and neighbourhood. The gentrifying retailers have no relevance to the lives of low-income, monolingual-Chinese elderly residents. In addition to the irrelevance of trendy shops to the day-to-day lives of Chinese seniors, the inability to understand the increasingly English signage of storefronts, Western services and products in Chinatown created a sense of alienation for my interviewees. Some residents have even dubbed the neighbourhood as 'Westerntown.' Furthermore, the clash between the young and affluent and the poor and

elderly has prevented a senior from sleeping on the weekend due to the loud music from the street level restaurants and bars.

Despite the many harmful impacts of disinvestment and gentrification on the well-being of low-income monolingual-Chinese senior residents, Chinatown remains a positive neighbourhood for this group. The neighbourhood continues to have culturally appropriate affordable food, services in Chinese and easy access to longstanding social institutions such as Chinese benevolent associations, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre and Carnegie Community Centre. It is also highly walkable which is critical for seniors with limited mobility. Furthermore, three revitalization projects from the 1990s have added value to the day-to-day well-being of my interviewees. The Chinatown Plaza, International Village mall and T&T Supermarket have been positive because they serve to the cultural, socioeconomic and linguistic needs of residents. However, should gentrification in the form of boutiques, cafes and upscale restaurants continue to expand, the aforementioned benefits may disappear. As a result, residents who are economically marginalized and have limited English skills that depend on Chinatown for a high quality of life will be further disenfranchised.

Chinatown has a long history of community resistance against destructive policies. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, the community came together to prevent a freeway from flattening neighbouring Strathcona, which would have further decimated Chinatown's residential population. Vancouver's Chinatown is one of the few North American Chinatowns that managed to fend off a freeway project which would have razed the neighbourhood. This was at a time when redevelopment plans were rampantly demolishing other North American Chinatowns such as Washington D.C., Portland and Montreal. Today, if community leaders, organizations and groups continue to work together with the goal of maintaining Chinatown as a home for Chinese culture, identity and people rather than an exclusive neighbourhood existing solely for consumption by the young and wealthy, Chinatown will remain meaningful for generations of seniors to come.

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Appendix A. Informational Questionnaires

Informational Survey (English Version - Sample)

1. The name of your organization (Benevolent Society/Clan Association):

Name: _____

2. Does your organization have housing units? Please circle one: Yes/ No

If yes, please proceed to the question 3.

If there are no housing units in your organization's building, please mail this survey to the researcher using the prepaid envelop attached to this survey.

3. On average, how much do tenants pay to rent a single unit in your building each month? \$ _____

4. What is the residential capacity of your building? _____ units

5. How many residents currently live in your building? _____ residents

6. Thinking of the residents who live in your building, please complete the chart below. The chart asks about the demographic of your residents. Each line is representative of one resident. Do not include the name of your residents. Please complete it to the best of your knowledge.

	Senior [over 65] (Yes/ No)	Length of residence in this building (years)	Gender (Female/Male)	Chinese-only speaking (Yes or No)	How long has this resident lived in Chinatown? (0-5 years; 5-10 years, 10 or more years)
Resident 1					
Resident 2					
Resident 3					
Resident 4					
Resident 5					
Resident 6					

6. Would you like organization named in the result? Please circle one answer:

Yes No

Informational Survey (Chinese Version – Sample) 問卷調查題目

1. 貴機構名稱（慈善組織 / 總會 / 宗會社名稱）

2. 貴組織提供住宅 / 住屋嗎？請圈答案： 是 Y / 否 N

若是的話請前往第 3 題。

若貴組織建築樓房裡沒有任何供居住的房屋或住宅，請用附上的已付費信封袋將此問卷郵寄還給研究員。

3. 平均來講，租客每月每單位的房租是多少錢？ \$ _____

4. 樓房裡總共有幾間居住單位？ _____ 間

5. 現在貴組織樓房裡總共住有幾位居民？ _____ 位

6. 請將您樓裡居民的人口統計資料填入以下表格欄位中。每一行代表一位居民。請不要寫出居民的姓名。請照您所知道的盡量填寫所需信息。

	耆英 / 年長者 (過 65 歲) 是 Y/否 N	住在此樓 裡幾年了	性別 女 F/男 M	只講中文嗎? (是 Y/否 N)	此人住在華阜 多久了? (0-5 年; 5-10 年 , 10 年或更久)
居民一					
居民二					
居民三					
居民四					

7. 您同意貴機構的名稱公佈在研究結果報告裡嗎？請圈一個答案。

是 Yes / 否 No

Appendix B. In-depth Interview Question Guide

In-depth Interview Question Guide (English Version)

The following questions acted as a guide for the qualitative interviews conducted with low-income, monolingual-Chinese senior residents of Vancouver's Chinatown. The questions were not asked verbatim. Additional probing questions were asked to generate in-depth conversations.

Feeding ourselves well:

1. When you first moved into this building where did you go to buy affordable Chinese food?
2. Where do you go now?
3. Are there the same number of grocery stores and restaurants options as when you first moved in?

Healthy Human Services

1. Did you have a Chinese-speaking doctor and pharmacist when you first moved into the neighbourhood?
2. Do you still have access to one? Can you get to your doctor's office and/or pharmacy easily?
3. Have you ever sought a new doctor or pharmacist because your original physician moved away?

Being and Feeling Safe and Included

Sense of inclusion:

1. Did you feel welcomed when you first moved into the building? Why? Why not? Do you still feel that way?
2. Did you feel welcomed when you first moved into Chinatown? Why? Why not? Do you still feel that way?

Sense of safety:

1. When you first moved into Chinatown did you feel safe in the neighbourhood? Why/ why not?
2. Do you still feel that way? Why?
3. Can you tell me about crime in the area? Have you seen more or less crime since moving into the neighbourhood?

Cultivating Connections

1. When you first moved in, did you have friends or neighbours in Chinatown to turn to when you needed help?
2. Do you still have the same number of people you can turn to in the neighborhood?

Active Living and Getting Outside

1. When you first moved into Chinatown, which park or green spaces would you visit for recreation?
2. What about now?

Environments to Thrive In

1. Where would you go to get your Chinese food and goods (clothing, toiletries, traditional Chinese medicine, etc.) when you first moved into the neighbourhood?
2. Where do you go now?
3. Are there the same number of options?
4. Were they easy to get to by foot?
5. Are there goods you could get easily when you first moved in that are more difficult to find in Chinatown now?

In-depth Interview Question Guide (Chinese Version) - 深入訪談問題指南

吃得好不

1. 您當初搬入這棟樓時，都到哪裡買經濟實惠的中國食品？
2. 現在呢？
3. 您最初搬來這裡的時候和現在比起來，蔬果雜貨店、食品店和餐館的數目還是差不多嗎？

保健服務

1. 您最初搬來這裡的時候，有冇講華語的醫生和藥劑師？
2. 現在呢？到醫生診所和藥房方便嗎？
3. 您有冇因為醫生搬走了而需要找新的醫生和藥劑師？

安全感和歸屬感

歸屬感

1. 您剛搬進樓時有冇歸屬感，有沒被歡迎被接受的感覺？
2. 為什麼，點解？
3. 或為什麼不，點解冇？
4. 您當初剛搬入唐人街時有冇歸屬感，有冇受到歡迎、接受的感覺？
5. 為什麼，點解？
6. 或為什麼不，點解冇？
7. 您現在這感覺還是一樣嗎？

安全感

1. 您當時搬入唐人街時，感覺這裡的鄰舍街坊安全嗎？
2. 為什麼/為什麼不？點解系或唔系？
3. 您現在還是這麼覺得嗎？
4. 為什麼/點解？
5. 可否告訴我一些關於這附近的犯罪或不法活動？
6. 自從您搬到這附近以後，看到較多還是較少犯罪的事件？

培養人脈友誼

1. 您初搬入這裡的時候，附近有沒有朋友或鄰居可以在您需要時幫您嘅？
2. 現在還一樣多人可以幫助您嗎？

休閒生活與戶外活動

1. 您初搬入唐人街時，喜歡去哪一個公園或綠地做休閒活動？
2. 現在呢？

健康發展空間

1. 您初搬入唐人街時，去邊度買嘢食、買日常用品（衣服、盥洗用品、中藥等）。現在是去邊度買這些？
2. 還是一樣多選擇嗎？
3. 很近嗎？
4. 走路容易走得到嗎？
5. 有冇當初在唐人街很容易買到的用品、產品是現在很難買到的？