



# Chinatown



# BOSTON

## Community Action Plan

July 2025



**R4C**  
Identify. Understand. Act.

A collaboration between:



CITIES  
NETWORK



**ZURICH**

Powered by:



**ZURICH** Foundation



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July 2025



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## COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN





## INTRODUCTION



## The Resilience for Communities (R4C) Program

The Resilience for Communities (R4C) program was launched in 2021 as a partnership between The Resilient Cities Network, the Z-Zurich Foundation and Zurich Insurance, to help cities better understand the risks and vulnerabilities of communities in the face of extreme heat and flood events. The program is designed to enhance equitable city, community, and stakeholder engagement by prioritizing community participation; building local capacity through the use of innovative tools and processes; and driving investment into solutions that will increase community-level resilience utilizing the R-Cities' Resilient Community Impact Funds (RCIFunds) Platform.

This focus is timely, as extreme heat and flooding events are among the most deadly and costly climate events that cities are facing today. By 2050, the estimated cost of flooding in cities around the world may total over \$1 trillion USD, while extreme heat is projected to cost the United States \$500 billion in economic losses alone. Understanding climate resilience at the community level is critical for cities as they work to respond to these flood and heat risks. Despite its threats, the climate crisis also represents a significant opportunity for cities to redress long-lasting inequities and to work to improve social and economic conditions for communities while enhancing their ability to withstand and recover from climate-related events.

## Partnership with the Z-Zurich Foundation & UCRP Program

In January 2023, the Z-Zurich Foundation launched the Urban Climate Resilience Program (UCRP), a global initiative across cities in 9 countries to build climate resilience at the local level. Along with the Resilient Cities Network R4C program, this initiative encompasses several similar programs being implemented by organizations including Plan International, IFRC, ICLEI and C40 Cities. These partners and implementing cities have contributed to the development and refinement of R4C program implementation, and are helping to build a larger movement towards community level resilient solutions.



FIGURE 1: Map of R4C cities

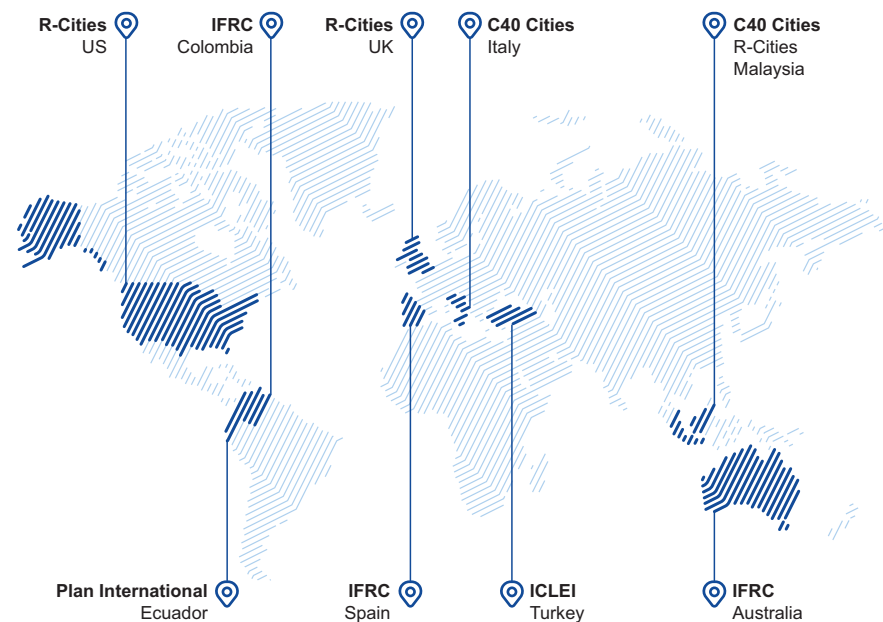


FIGURE 2: Map displaying the five implementing organizations in the UCRP and their respective program cities.



## Resilience for Communities – Chinatown

Resilience for Communities (R4C) is a multi-year program designed to strengthen neighborhood level climate resilience and help address social inequities in communities where existing stresses combined with growing climate shocks, make them ever more vulnerable to a changing climate.

The program works with a specific community on a multi-level engagement to examine the effects of cascading shocks and stresses (focused on flooding and extreme heat) and provides solutions that incorporate holistic resilience from the early stages of engagement through to implementation. R4C puts equity at the center of the work and ensures community voices are a central part of the solutions.

In Chinatown, the R4C program has been jointly implemented with the Boston's Climate Ready Team which focuses on enhancing Boston's preparedness for climate impacts. An existing conditions analysis and community assessment was done as part of the multi-phased implementation approach of the program, including an in-depth community engagement process and project design in partnership with the City of Boston and local partners.



**CITY of BOSTON**





## R4C Key Objectives

Through the R4C program, R-Cities funds and empowers local implementation partners to support and increase community resilience to floods, heatwaves and other extreme weather events.

The key objectives of R4C are to:

- Better understand risks and vulnerabilities and the status of resilience of cities using the Climate Resilience Measurement for Communities (CRMC) tool which measures community perceptions of local shocks and stresses;
- Enhance equitable City, community, and stakeholder engagement through prioritizing community participation, thus fostering the collaborative development of resilience solutions;
- Build local capacity through innovative tools and processes and technical assistance;
- Drive investment and resources towards community resilience solutions developed with, and by, local stakeholders

## Phases of Implementation

The R4C program follows a three-step process in the identified communities in each city.

- PHASE 1**  
**Onboarding and Engagement:** Establishing partnerships with local governments and fostering community involvement.
- PHASE 2**  
**City Diagnostics:** Conducting a comprehensive baseline assessment to identify and analyze the community's specific challenges and opportunities for building community resilience.
- PHASE 3**  
**Project Identification and Preparation:** Selecting local implementation partners and interventions based on the diagnostic findings of resilience assessment and co-design process conducted in earlier stages of the program.

The Community Action Plan represents Phase 3 of the project and beyond, **anticipated impact between September 2024 to July 2025.**



**Boston's Climate Action Plan**, originally launched in 2016 and updated in 2025, outlines specific strategies and approaches to mitigate coastal flooding challenges and heat resilience issues in different neighborhoods across the city. It promotes strategies and plans for green infrastructure, emergency response, zoning modifications, and conservation strategies.

The report directs specific interventions in the Chinatown neighborhood and specifically lays out five focus areas, many of which are addressed in this Community Action Plan.

- Updated Climate Projections
- Prepared Communities
- Protected Shores
- Resilient Infrastructure
- Adapted Buildings



**Resilient Boston:** An Equitable and Connected City is the city's current resilience strategy and was published in 2017 in collaboration with the 100 Resilient Cities. The plan is framed across four visions:

**Vision 1:** Reflective City, Stronger People focused on tackling racism and equitably facing emergencies;

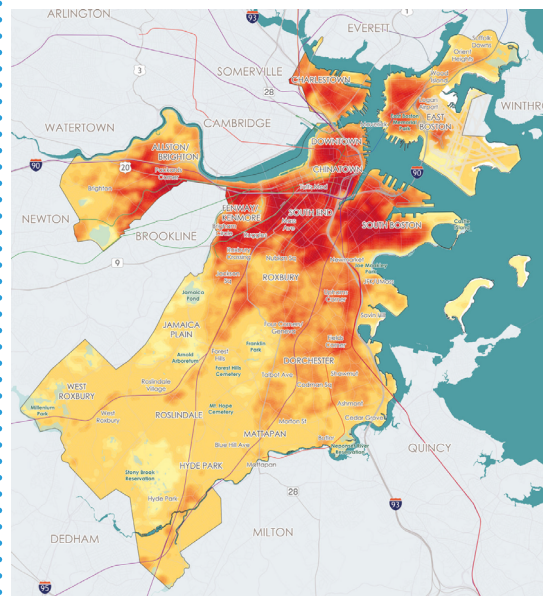
**Vision 2:** Collaborative, Proactive Governance focused on community engagement for better governance and improving diversity in city hiring and promotion;

**Vision 3:** Equitable Economic Opportunity focused on closing the wealth gap in Boston and ensuring equitable access to economic opportunities for residents and;

**Vision 4:** Connected, Adapted City focused on increasing connectivity for communities of color, while preparing for crises such as climate change (including resilient infrastructure).

# Extreme Heat Analysis in Boston

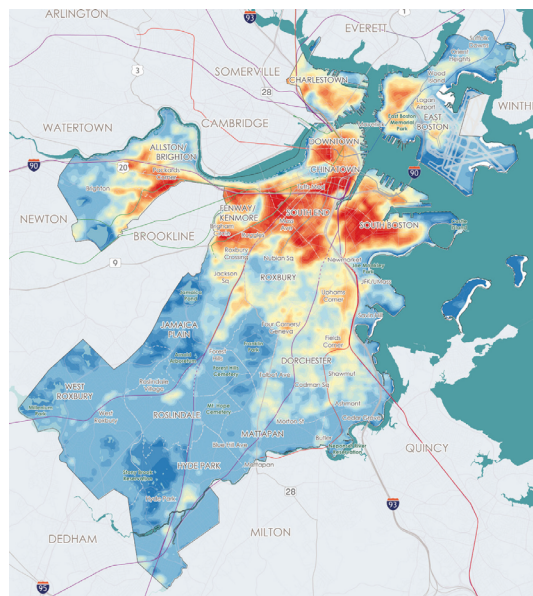
Extreme heat already affects all of Boston.



HEAT EVENT HOURS:

Less than 25 hrs More than 37 hrs

Some places are hot for longer.

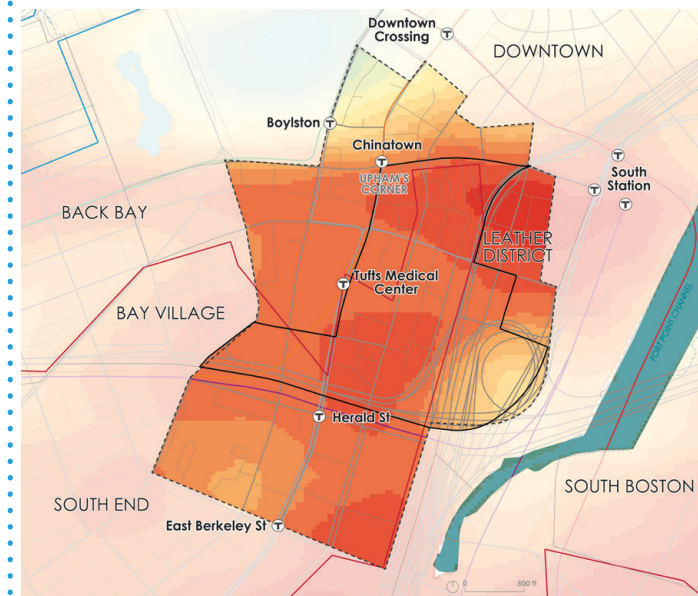


HEAT EVENT HOURS:

Less than 25 hrs More than 37 hrs

**FIGURE 3:** Analysis from the Heat Adaptation Solutions for Boston final report (shown here in Figure 1) utilized a variety of frameworks to determine neighborhoods most impacted by extreme heat. Chinatown and several neighborhoods to the north were shown to be most impacted and are most likely to experience extreme heat events in the future.

Chinatown Daytime Air Temperatures



**FIGURE 4:** Additional neighborhood level analysis in Chinatown identified several contributing factors to extreme heat – such as a lack of green space, wide streets with limited tree canopy, building characteristics such as dark roofing materials, density and other factors.



## Heat Adaptation Solutions for Boston – Final Report

In addition to the Boston Climate Action Plan and Resilience Plan, the city has also spent considerable time and resources to specifically understand community-level heat risk and propose innovative solutions.

Launched in 2022, the Heat Adaptation Solutions for Boston Final Report identifies neighborhoods and groups likely to be most impacted by extreme heat. Chinatown is identified as the most heat impacted neighborhood in the city.





## COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT



# Boston - Chinatown

## City Context

Boston is located in the Northeast of the United States on the Atlantic Ocean. The capital of the commonwealth of Massachusetts, Boston played a historic role in the American Revolutionary War and was also an important site for the Abolitionist movement to end the enslavement of Black Americans in the United States. Today, the city is known for its rich history, as well as the many academic and health-care institutions that make up the driving force of its urban economy. It is also one of the densest cities in the United States.

With a population of about 669,158 as of the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) census, the city is one of the most densely populated in the country and has a metro population of 4.37 million. As of the 2022 ACS Census, Boston, MA had a population with a median age of 32.9 years and a median household income of \$89,212. The largest ethnic groups in Boston are White (Non-Hispanic) at 44.2%, Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) at 21%, Asian (Non-Hispanic) at 9.56%, and Hispanic population at 19.6%.

## Neighborhood Context

Chinatown is the largest center of East Asian cultural life in Boston. One of the largest Chinatowns in the United States, the area first became populated when the City of Boston reclaimed tidal flats in the 1800s to provide more space for residential housing. The area housed a wide variety of immigrant populations throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Chinese workers were brought into the area in the 1870s, though originally prohibited from bringing in their families due to the Exclusion Act of 1882. When this act was overturned in the 1930s, a large Chinese immigrant community was able to flourish across the neighborhood.<sup>1</sup>

Chinatown stretches only about 140 acres but has over 11,000 residents, making it one of the most densely populated areas in the city. The neighborhood borders Downtown Boston to the north, with Boston Common and the South End nearby. It's also close to South Station, one of Boston's main transit and rail hubs, and is bisected by the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90).

### CHINATOWN

**140** ACRES

Area

**11,528**

Population

**3,366**

Households

### BOSTON

**30,976** ACRES

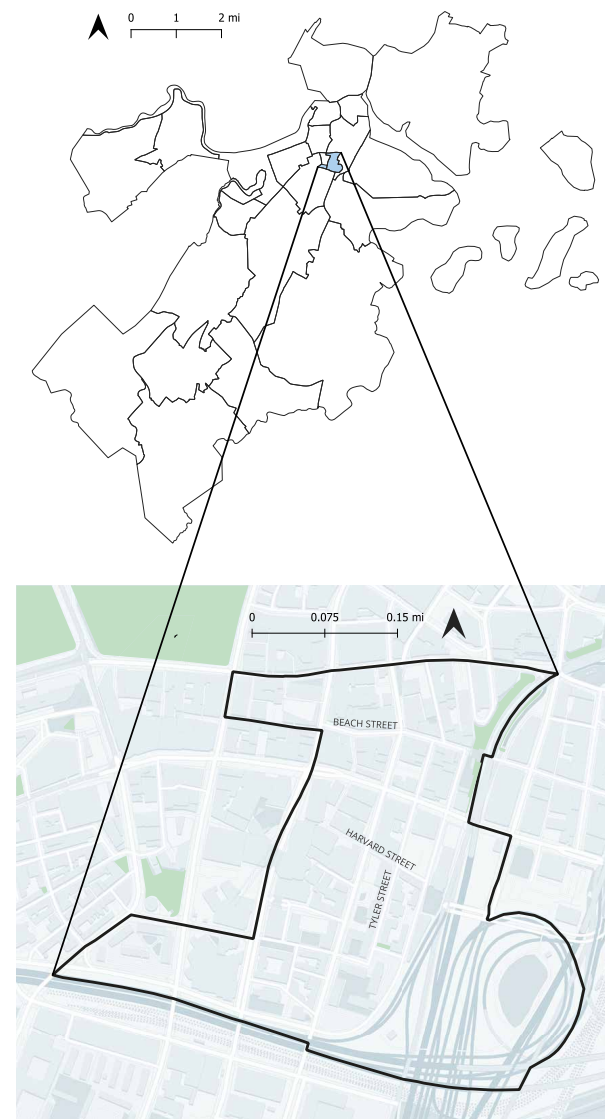
Area

**669,158**

Population

**263,229**

Households



(Photo Source: City of Boston)

**FIGURE 5:** Neighborhood Map of Chinatown as defined by the City of Boston's official neighborhood limits.

# About Chinatown

## Demographics & Economics

Today, Chinatown encompasses a vibrant mix of small businesses that includes restaurants and shops which showcase the neighborhood's East Asian character. Despite shifting demographics in recent years, the neighborhood remains predominantly East Asian, with **48% of the population identifying as Asian** as of the 2020 National Census. The neighborhood is an anchor for Asian American communities in the Boston area, offering essential cultural, social and economic functions. Local NGOs, charities and community organizations play a pivotal role in supporting residents through social services, housing advocacy, environmental health initiatives and cultural preservation efforts.

On average, families in Chinatown tend to be lower income than those in other parts of Boston, with the **Median Household Income falling \$15,000 than the city average** as of the 2020 Census. However, recent demographic shifts have seen more affluent residents moving into the neighborhood due to the many urban assets it has to offer residents.

Chinatown serves as a cultural home for many who live outside the neighborhood, drawing people in for groceries, shopping, cultural activities, after-school programs and church, fostering a strong connection to the community.



(Photo Source: Boston Women's Heritage Trail)

**FIGURE 6:** The Chinatown Gate is a traditional paifang archway and was gifted to the City of Boston by the government of Taiwan in 1982. Today it is one of the neighborhood's main landmarks and marks the entrance to Boston's Chinatown.



**FIGURE 7:** Chinatown is known for its many small businesses and in particular longstanding restaurants that serve traditional East Asian cuisines.

### A DIVERSE COMMUNITY

**57%** Native **43%** Foreign-Born

**59%** Residents Speak English "less than very well" according to the 2020 Census

### HOUSEHOLD ECONOMICS

Median Household Income (2020)

**\$47,779** Chinatown

**\$62,021** Boston

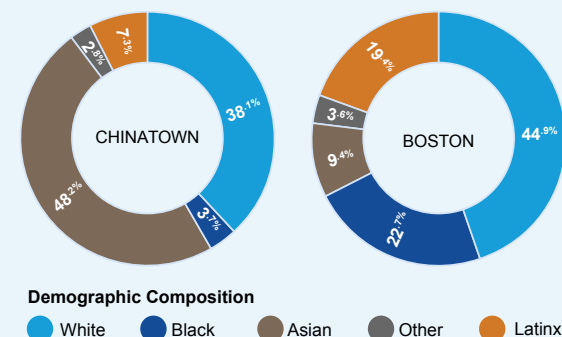
### FAMILY POVERTY RATE

Percentage of Families below the Poverty Line (2020)

**20%** Chinatown

**16%** Boston

### ETHNIC DIVERSITY



# About Chinatown

## The Role of Urban Renewal

A key turning point in Chinatown's history occurred in the 1960s, when the neighborhood was dramatically changed by the construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike. Several of the neighborhood's residential buildings and commercial establishments were demolished, impacting its historic businesses and residents. Though this had very damaging effects on the urban fabric of the neighborhood, it also created a legacy of activism and resistance which remains to this day and contributes to the presence of the many neighborhood led organizations in Chinatown.

Unfortunately, the presence of the highway has created a high-risk environment for Chinatown residents causing a real danger to their health and wellbeing. As a result of the fumes generated by the cars on I-90, **Chinatown regularly reports the highest rates of fine particulate matter air pollution in Massachusetts<sup>ii</sup>**. This is especially damaging for Chinatown's elderly and ill residents, who are more vulnerable to the impacts of fine particulate matter pollution on their cardiovascular health and lung function.



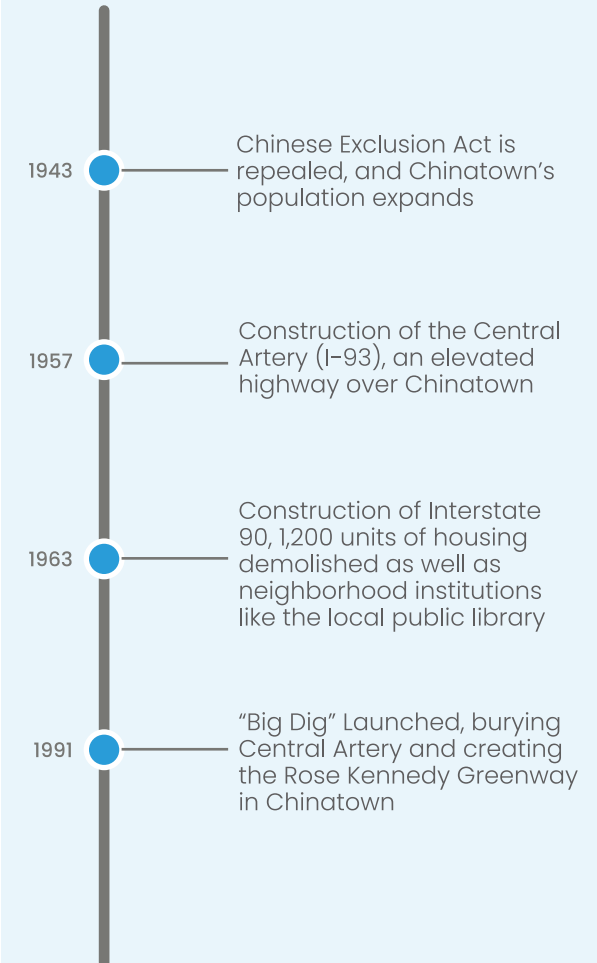
(Photo Source: Boston.com)

**FIGURE 8:** I-90 cut through the original boundaries of Chinatown, dividing the neighborhood from its southern section.



(Photo Source: The Crimson)

**FIGURE 9:** Many Chinatown residents have been displaced by the construction of transportation infrastructure, including I-90, the Massachusetts Turnpike. This has created a legacy of activism in the community which continues to this day.

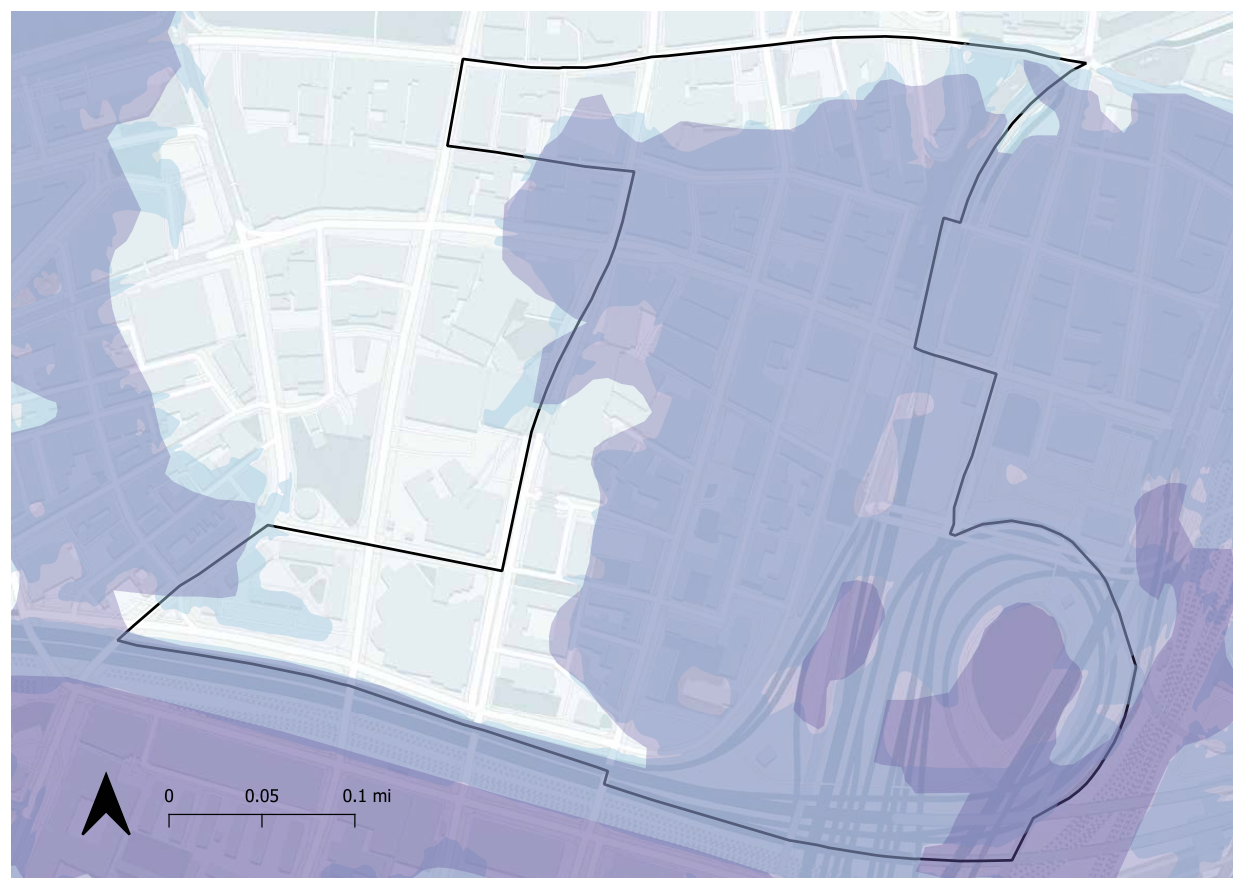




# Flood Risk

Much of Chinatown falls within Boston's larger Coastal Flood Resilience Overlay District, and an **estimated fifth of all properties in Chinatown are at risk of flooding**. Though this risk is primarily tied to the city's broader vulnerability to sea-level rise, the neighborhood is also vulnerable to storm related flooding.

While Chinatown is at risk for flooding, this was generally deprioritized by community members, who preferred to focused on the risk presented by extreme heat.



○ Chinatown    ● Coastal Flood Overlay District    ● 36 Inch Sea Level Rise Inundation Scenario

**FIGURE 10:** Map of FEMA 100 Year and 500 Year Flood Zones, as well as Sea Level Rise Flood Hazard Scenarios in Chinatown (Source: Boston Maps)



## FLOOD RISKS

**20%**

of Properties Projected to Flood in the next 30 Years

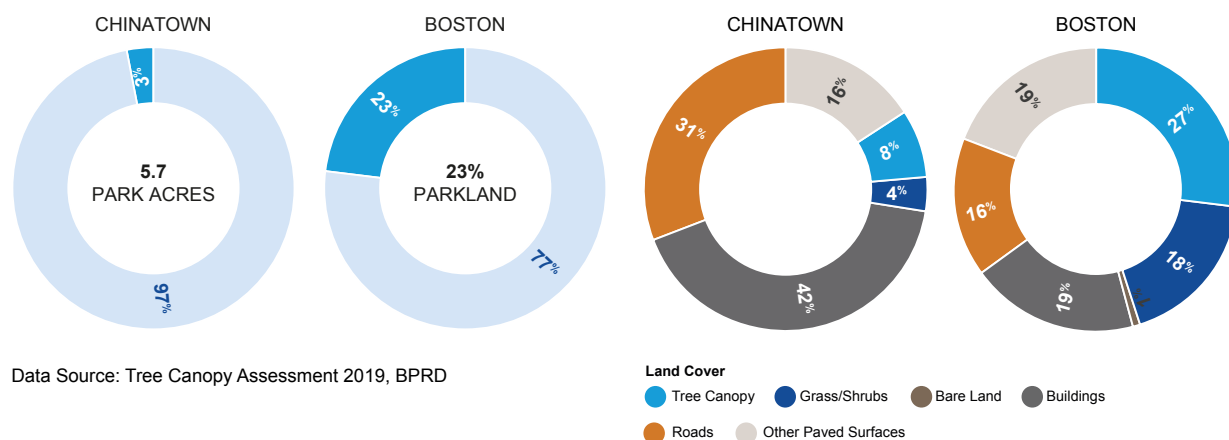
**65%**

of Neighborhood in Floodplain

# Heat Risk

Despite Boston's historically temperate summer temperatures, Chinatown is very vulnerable to extreme heat. The density of the neighborhood traps heat during the day, which is then released at night, offering little relief from high day-time temperatures. The neighborhood also has significantly less green coverage than other parts of the city, with only 3% of the neighborhood's major arteries having street trees.<sup>iii</sup> This heat and lack of vegetation further compounds the impacts of high levels of air pollution, increasing resident's risk of pollution related illnesses.

According to the Heat Adaption Solutions for Boston Report, different areas of Chinatown experience extreme heat in different ways. The many large buildings in the neighborhood with dark roofs tend to absorb heat during the day and release it back into the neighborhood at night, creating hotter temperatures in the areas directly surrounding them. Residential campuses, which can be found around the neighborhood, tend to house more trees and cooling features, though they may also have significant paved areas which can compound the effects of heat. Finally, in the large areas of the neighborhood taken up by transportation infrastructure, temperatures may climb dramatically during the day due to the large swathes of roads and paved areas, but due to the lack of building density, cool down more quickly than other areas at night.<sup>iv</sup>



**FIGURE 11:** Land use in Chinatown in comparison to Boston (Source: City of Boston, Heat Resilience Solutions for Boston Report 2022)

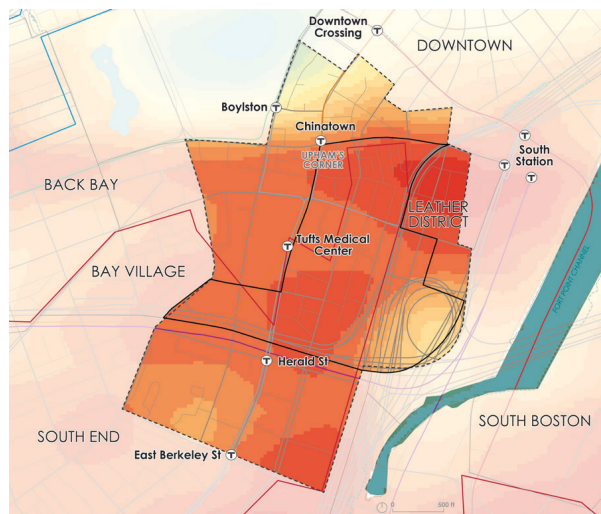


**FIGURE 12:** Oxford Street in Chinatown, which has little to no street trees. (Source: Google Maps)



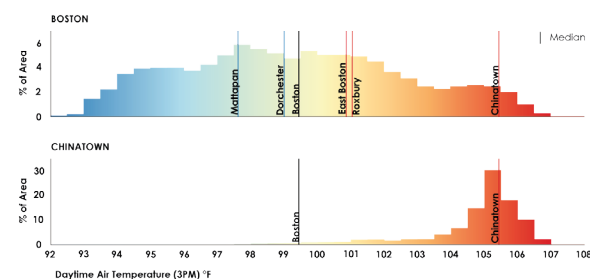
# Heat Risk

**Daytime Air Temperature (3 p.m.):** Air temperatures reflect an average day during a heat wave week in July 2019

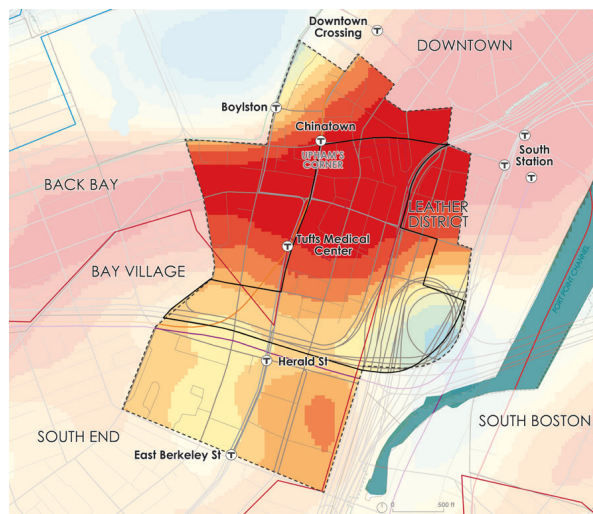


## 3PM: AIR TEMPERATURE

More than 107°F | City median: 99.5°F  
Median: 105.5°F | Less than 92°F

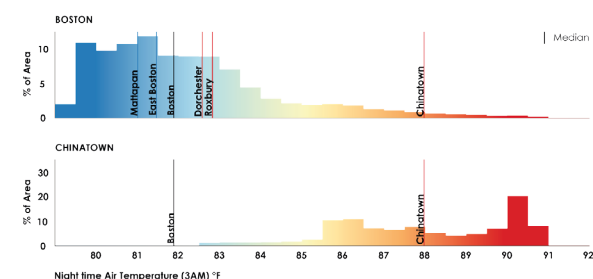


**Nighttime Air Temperature (3 a.m.):** Air temperatures reflect an average night during a heat wave week in July 2019



## 3AM: AIR TEMPERATURE

More than 90°F | City median: 81.9°F  
Median: 87.9°F | Less than 92°F



**FIGURE 13:** Daytime temperature readings as shown in the Heat Adaptation Solutions for Boston (2022) report.



## HEAT RISKS

**3%**

Only 3% of the neighborhood's major arteries have street trees

### TREE CANOPY COVERAGE

Tree Canopy Survey (2020)

**8%** Chinatown

**27%** Boston

### PERMEABILITY

Amount of Permeable Land-Cover

**12%** Chinatown

**46%** Boston

# CRMC Tool and Public Outreach

From 2021-2023, Chinatown residents were engaged through the Climate Resilience Measurement for Communities tool (CRMC) which measures community vulnerability to flood and heat through Household Surveys, Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews.

Survey participants were asked specific questions regarding the impact of both flooding and heat on their lives and livelihoods, including ability to work, property damage and recovery time.

Participants also evaluated their climate hazard related knowledge, including knowledge of areas likely to flood, of evacuation routes in the case of extreme flooding and necessary actions during extreme heat.

## 75 Participants

84% female male 16%

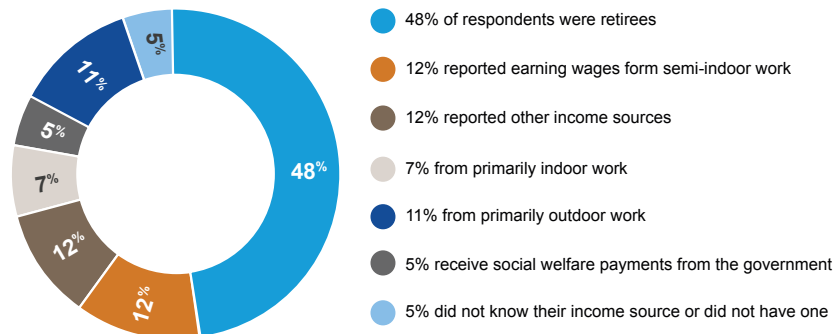
56% cited coming from a female-headed household

52% are over 65 years old

79% of respondents reported not having any first aid training received in the last 5 years

>50%

earn under \$40,000 (USD) annually.





# CRMC Tool and Public Outreach

The CRMC Study revealed strengths and weaknesses in Chinatown across the 5 capitals of community resilience: natural, human, social, physical and financial resilience.



## Human Capital

Refers to the skills, knowledge, health and education of the community's residents.

### + Strengths:

Residents reported high levels of climate and hazard awareness and its impacts on their neighborhoods, high levels of awareness of heat response than flooding and relatively high levels of school attendance in the community.

### — Weaknesses:

Residents reported low levels of food availability, hazard exposure awareness in flooding, vulnerability awareness in heatwaves, evacuation and safety knowledge in flooding and very low worker protection during heatwaves.



## Natural Capital

Refers to the natural environment and resources available to the community for over-all wellbeing, as well as to bugger against extreme weather events.

### + Strengths:

Ecological considerations are integrated into disaster risk reduction for flooding and considerations on the natural environment are included in the purview of city planning. While there are few natural capital assets, they are actively maintained in Chinatown.

### — Weaknesses:

Chinatown has limited natural resources and tree cover, and residents have limited opportunities to drive decision making on resource management.



## Social Capital

Refers to the networks of relationships, trust, and cooperation within a community.

### + Strengths:

According to the respondents, there are robust community networks and community-based organizations that work on climate and social issues in the neighborhood, high levels of stakeholder engagement in risk management and high perceived levels of mutual support and community safety.

### — Weaknesses:

Respondents cited low levels of intra- and inter-community equity in Chinatown, gaps in family violence and response planning in instances of flooding or heatwaves.



## Physical Capital

Refers to the physical infrastructure of the community, including housing transportation systems, communication networks and public buildings.

### + Strengths:

Communication infrastructure in Chinatown is robust, including early warning systems as well as flood forecasting. Community members take multiple types of protective measures to address heat risks.

### — Weaknesses:

Respondents pointed out a need for increased translation in communication systems. While emergency response infrastructure exists, respondents expressed limited trust in this infrastructure or confidence that it would be accessible when needed.



## Financial Capital

Refers to the financial resources available to the community, both public and private.

### + Strengths:

Respondents reported high levels of business continuity in instances of heatwaves, climate change adaptation planning and investment in flooding, and existing policies that integrate climate resilience.

### — Weaknesses:

Respondents cited low financial health for the community of Chinatown, low levels of public infrastructure maintenance and budget in heatwaves, risk reduction investments and energy affordability in heatwaves. Respondents also said that their households had low levels of access to discretionary funds and business continuity in heatwaves or flooding.



## Key Findings:

### FLOOD

**<20%**

of the businesses operating in the community or employing community members have a plan for minimizing losses and continuing operations in the event of a flood.

**34%**

of survey respondents disagree with the statement "I know which areas in the community are likely to flood."

**6.7%**

only 6.7% of respondents reported having flood insurance

### HEAT

**63%**

of respondents agreed that they knew which characteristics and activities make people vulnerable to heat waves



# What's Important to Chinatown?

## Prioritized Resilience Indicators



### HEAT RISK REDUCTION

Heatwave risk reduction funding in Chinatown is inconsistent and the community is unaware of what funding is available.



### HEAT RESPONSE PLANNING

Planning for heatwaves in the community is not regularly updated, there is no community input and existing plans have not been adopted by local communities.



### EMERGENCY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPLIES

Aimed at safeguarding lives and livelihoods, emergency supplies during heatwaves are often limited, poorly maintained or unequally distributed.

# What's Important to Chinatown?

## Community Design Sprints

Residents were invited to produce actions and desired outcomes that could enhance overall community resilience in Chinatown and specifically respond to the indicators they prioritized. The results are a wide range of potential program and project ideas which were used to influence and refine the projects chosen for implementation:

Energy Rebates

Investments in Permeability



Community Micro-Grid

Subsidies for Home Improvements

Financial Assistance Mechanisms for Vulnerable Communities

Community Workshops and Capacity Building for Climate Awareness



Grant programs for portable emergency supplies

Water distribution vehicles

Establishing additional neighborhood cooling centers

Community Choice Electricity

Increasing greenery in public areas

Emergency Response Teams in Buildings

Introducing programs for updating air conditioning units



Translation Services at Medical Centers





## LOCAL PROJECT PROFILE



# COOLDOWN Chinatown!

Compared to other neighborhoods in Boston and statewide, Chinatown has the hottest temperatures, high air pollution levels and high levels of flooding risk. Yet, Chinatown has an active and effective ecosystem of organizations focused on addressing these challenges with and for the community.

Resilient Cities Network has partnered with Chinatown Main Streets, CHIC Community Engagement Consulting, and the City of Boston to implement interventions aimed at building a coordinated effort to adapt to these risks.

Over the course of a year, R-Cities and partners will support the mobilization of a working group to create a Heat Adaptation Action Plan, inclusive of several key deliverables – including a local communications plan for extreme heat incidents, a micro-grant program for small businesses to mitigate the impacts of extreme heat, health-related capacity-building workshops and ideas for public space improvements.



**FIGURE 14:** Chinatown Main Streets and COOLDOWN Chinatown! Team with the Resilient Cities Network

## By the Numbers

**11,000** Chinatown residents

with improved access to Extreme Heat Adaptation through the Neighborhood Heat Adaptation Plan and Extreme Heat Communications Strategy.

**600** Workshop Participants

with increased knowledge of the health effects of extreme heat and mitigation measures through the Heat and Health Workshops.

**25,000** USD

distributed to local businesses to improve indoor heat and air quality across Chinatown.



# Local Partner Profile

## Timeline of Project Deliverables

COOLDOWN Chinatown! by Chinatown Main Street is designed to advance neighborhood resilience by developing a Heat Adaptation Plan, strengthening preparedness for extreme heat incidents, investing in community-led cooling solutions through a microgrant program and enhancing public spaces through tactical urbanism interventions. Quick wins in Summer 2025 will build momentum, engage key partners, and lay the foundation for long-term heat resilience in Chinatown.



### HEAT AND HEALTH WORKSHOPS

Interactive community workshops designed to raise awareness about the health impacts of extreme heat. These sessions will equip residents with practical strategies to prevent heat-related illnesses, reduce health risks and improve preparedness for heatwaves.



### TACTICAL URBANISM PROJECT

Launching tactical urbanism initiatives in collaboration with local partners to provide immediate relief from extreme heat. These projects will introduce creative, community-driven solutions that enhance cooling and livability in public spaces.



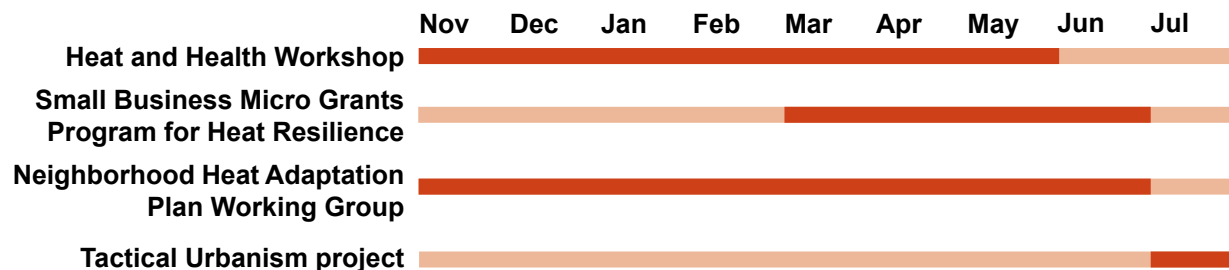
### NEIGHBORHOOD HEAT ADAPTATION PLAN WORKING GROUP

Facilitating eight working group sessions with public agencies, local organizations and community stakeholders to co-develop a heat adaptation action plan. The plan will focus on scalable, actionable solutions that improve preparedness, mitigate heat impacts and integrate resilience strategies into broader urban planning efforts.



### SMALL BUSINESS MICRO GRANTS PROGRAM FOR HEAT RESILIENCE

A microgrant initiative is planned to assist small businesses in making modifications to promote heat adaptation – such as painting white roofs or installing specialized equipment. Additional emergency supplies to help local businesses remain operational during heatwaves and power outages are also proposed. This program strengthens business continuity and enhances community resilience against climate-related disruptions.



## About Chinatown Main Streets

Chinatown Main Street (CMS) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to making Boston's Chinatown district a thriving cultural and commercial center for businesses and people. For visitors and residents alike, they aim to elevate the Chinatown experience by beautifying, promoting, strengthening the community and keeping the streets as clean, safe, and friendly as possible. Chinatown Main Streets is a member of both Boston Main Streets and Main Street America and utilizes the four-point approach to neighborhood and community development.

### Website:

[www.chinatownmainstreet.org](http://www.chinatownmainstreet.org)

### Status:

501 (c)(3) US-Based

### Non-profit Year Incorporated:

1995

### Board of Directors:

Rick Wong, Shelly Liang, Gilbert Ho, Wingkay Leung, Marisa Tse-Bardhyli, Frederick NG, Brian Yun, Iris Tan, Ting Wei-Li, Rich Chin, Shencheng Yuan, Ramond NG

### Executive Director:

Debbie Ho

# Community Impact

COOLDOWN Chinatown! follows a strategic approach of planning, engagement and implementation, designed to empower local stakeholders, enhance community resilience and establish scalable heat adaptation strategies. Extreme heat poses a growing risk to Chinatown, disproportionately impacting residents and small businesses. To address this, COOLDOWN Chinatown! is equipping the neighborhood with tailored heat adaptation solutions.

By Summer 2025, the initiative will have distributed critical heat emergency supplies through a microgrant program, implemented tactical urbanism projects to improve public spaces and strengthened community coordination through targeted workshops and a Heat Response Communications Plan building on collaboration between residents, Chinatown Main Street and public-private partners, this initiative is setting the foundation for long-term heat resilience. The development of a community-led Heat Adaptation Action Plan and a repeatable framework for response will serve as a model for future adaptation efforts across Boston's main street communities, ensuring lasting impact beyond this initial phase.

## Co-Benefits

Co-benefits refer to the additional beneficial impacts that a resilient project can deliver to the community and/or a greater system beyond its basic functions. Addressing resilience challenges in an integrated and holistic way will help the initiative, project, surrounding community and greater system realize multiple benefits across sectors and stakeholders.

Through a combination of a holistic community engagement process and physical interventions, this project thinks about change at the individual, inter-personal, organization/community and systems levels. The approach aims to not only improve well-being in the face of extreme heat but improves community preparedness to respond to shocks and stresses overall. Co-benefits of this project include:

- Improved Public Health
- Increased Energy Saving
- Improved Air Quality
- Increased Economic Activity
- Boosted Property Values
- Increased Social Cohesion
- Reduced Carbon Footprint
- Improved Mental Well-Being







## COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

# Community Action Plan

## Introduction

The Chinatown Community Action Plan outlines a host of specific projects, initiatives and strategies identified and developed with local partners during the R4C engagement and co-design process. Informed by public outreach, data-driven analysis and the alignment of city strategies with identified community needs, the projects presented in the Chinatown Community Action Plan are real-time community resilience projects developed with, and by, key stakeholders actively tackling resilience challenges in the neighborhood.

## How to Use This Section

Use this section to learn more about active projects and initiatives in the Chinatown community, including projects partners behind this important work and different ways you or your organization can get involved. The Chinatown Community Action Plan is the culmination of extensive public outreach and community engagement and is where interested partners and funders can get involved in implementing projects contributing to a holistic neighborhood response to resilience challenges. Projects presented in the Chinatown Community Action Plan have been developed by project partners engaged during the R4C assessment and co-design process.

## Guiding Principles of the R4C Alief Community Action Plan:

### 1 Community Generated Projects and Programs

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### 2 Data-Driven and Responsive to Local Needs

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### 3 A Living Document to be used by community stakeholders, neighborhoods groups, funders and others, to pool resources, understand needs and implement community level projects.

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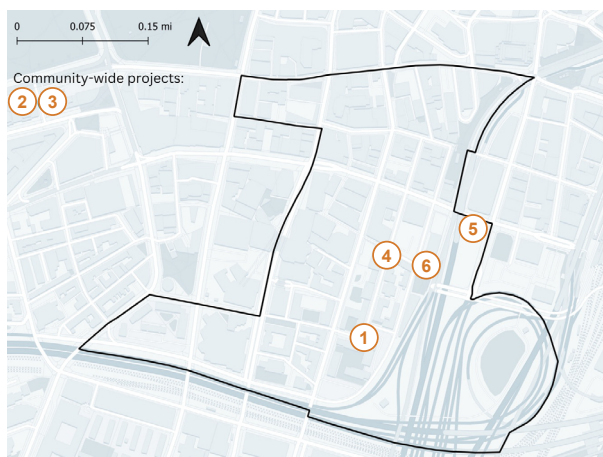
The projects included in this Community Action Plan address heat and flooding risks and provide tangible co-benefits to **11000+** residents of Chinatown.



# Community Resilience Projects

Mapped below are the currently active Chinatown Resilience for Communities (R4C) projects, as well as ongoing community resilience projects being implemented by existing community partners. These projects are addressing identified heat and flooding risks in the community, as well as providing tangible co-benefits, particularly around neighborhood equity and climate justice. Each project identified is actively seeking various forms of support and align with ongoing efforts to build holistic community resilience in Chinatown.

Review the project partners and project descriptions here and on the previous pages to learn more about specific initiatives. Icons below indicate if projects are looking for either funding, technical assistance, skilled/group volunteers or some combination of support.



## 1 Heat and Health Workshops



In partnership with senior researchers from the Tufts Medical Center, experts will lead community workshops to increase knowledge and self-efficacy around heat vulnerability, using interactive and culturally relevant learning activities. The initiative will engage bilingual youth and elders as co-facilitators, ensuring accessibility and fostering a community resilience network.

## 2 Small Business Micro-grants for Heat Resilience



Chinatown Main Streets will implement a micro-grant program to assist business in making heat adaptation modifications and also provide businesses with portable cooling and air quality improvement devices, ensuring readiness for extreme heat. A diverse working group will define eligibility, administer grants by Spring 2025, and assess impact through community feedback.

## 3 Neighborhood Heat Adaptation Plan Working Group



A coalition of community organizations and city agencies will develop Chinatown's Heat Adaptation Action Plan, integrating designated cooling centers, emergency communication strategies and a micro-grants program for cooling supplies. Eight working sessions throughout the year will shape a scalable model for urban heat resilience planning.

## 4 Tactical Urbanism Project



Chinatown Main Streets, in partnership with city agencies, will introduce tactical urbanism strategies such as misters and water trucks at public events to provide immediate cooling solutions, as well as contribute to the redesign of Phillips Square. The project aims to set a precedent for sustainable city-supported heat interventions in Chinatown.

## 5 Resilience and Redesign in Reggie Wong Memorial Park



The Chinatown Community Land Trust and Friends of Reggie Wong Park are leading efforts to transform the park into a climate-resilient space with shade trees, permeable surfaces and cooling infrastructure. Remediation of contaminated soil will be completed before implementing park improvements that enhance flood mitigation and intergenerational use.

## 6 Chinatown Heat Equity & Resilience in Open Spaces



Research teams are mapping pollution and heat levels in Chinatown to assess health risks and develop mitigation strategies, such as reflective materials and green infrastructure. The project integrates environmental health data into medical training and community engagement to foster long-term resilience.



Funding



In-Kind



Volunteers

# Heat and Health Workshops

Community workshops will target residents to increase their knowledge, behaviors and self-efficacy around heat vulnerability. The development of these community workshops and capacity-building work will be led by senior researchers from Tufts Medical Center and work from the Chinatown HEROS project. The team has already piloted these workshops with high-school youths and older Chinese older residents in Chinatown. The facilitation team is composed of other Chinatown stakeholders who will participate in planning and delivering the workshops.

## IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Host listening to sessions, partner with trusted organizations and adapt materials for linguistic and cultural relevance.
- ✓ Recruit bilingual youth and elder leaders to co-facilitate and spread awareness
- ✓ Schedule sessions at accessible locations and use multi-channel outreach (e.g., WeChat, flyers, in-person invites).
- ✓ Encourage preparedness steps, advocate for cooling solutions and establish a community resilience network.



FIGURE 15: Image - credits?

## PROJECT LEAD:

Dr. MyDzung Chu, Tufts Medical Center

## PROJECT PARTNERS:

Tufts Medical Center/ADAPT, Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC), Communities Responding to Extreme Weather (CREW), Northeastern volunteers.

## MITIGATION



## HEAT RISK

Reduction by empowering residents with knowledge, skills, and resources to recognize and respond to heat vulnerability.

## FINANCING SCALE



## TIMEFRAME

Quick Win



## CAPITAL



Human



Social



# Small Business Micro Grants Program for Heat Resilience

The Chinatown Small Business Micro-Grant Program and Emergency Supplies Grants will provide support for businesses to access portable cooling and air quality improvement devices, such as fans and cooling kits, to prepare for extreme heat. A diverse working group including Chinatown residents, community-based organizations (CBOs), researchers, and City of Boston staff—will develop program guidelines, determine eligible supplies and establish an evaluation process. The program will be facilitated by consultants in collaboration with a Project Coordinator, and members from the Chinatown small business community. Grants will be administered in Spring 2025 to ensure community readiness for Summer 2025, with a final reflection session to assess impact and collaboration.

## IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Define grant eligibility, determine the list of approved emergency supplies, and outline the application and distribution process.
- ✓ Establish success metrics and plan an informal focus group to evaluate program impact
- ✓ Make 3-5 Small Business Micro-grants

## PROJECT LEAD:

Chinatown Main Streets

## PROJECT PARTNERS:

City of Boston

## MITIGATION



## HEAT RISK

Reduction through providing access to cooling equipment and air quality enhancement for local small businesses.

## FINANCING SCALE



## TIMEFRAME

Mid-term



## CAPITAL



Financial



Physical

# Neighborhood Heat Adaptation Plan Working Group

The Neighborhood Heat Adaptation Plan Working Group is a community-led initiative designed to strengthen Chinatown's resilience to extreme heat by mobilizing local organizations and city agencies to co-develop and implement effective heat adaptation strategies. Through a year-long collaboration, Resilient Cities Network, Chinatown Main Streets, CHIC Community Engagement Consulting and the City of Boston will facilitate eight working group sessions to create a Heat Adaptation Action Plan and Heat Response Communications Plan. These efforts will provide a scalable model for future heat adaptation planning across other main street communities. Key components include pre-planning with city agencies for designated cooling centers, improving heat emergency communications and establishing and managing a grants program for portable emergency supplies.

## IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Mobilize stakeholders from public agencies, local organizations and CBOs
- ✓ Collaborate with city agencies to create a structured heat response for Summer 2025 and beyond, including designated cooling centers.
- ✓ Support the development of a communications plan and materials to ensure residents receive timely heat emergency information.
- ✓ Support the design and launch of the micro-grants program by establishing criteria, allocating funding and distributing portable emergency cooling supplies to enhance community preparedness.

## PROJECT LEAD:

Chinatown Main Streets

## PROJECT PARTNERS:

Asian Community Development Corporation, The Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy, Tufts University, the Tufts Medical Center, The Boston Transportation Department (BTD), The Office of Neighborhood Services, Boston Main Streets and the Small Business Unit, The Office of Emergency Management (OEM), The Climate Ready Boston Team, Rose Kennedy Greenway, MONUM, Boston Public Health Commission and Boston Children, Youth, and Families

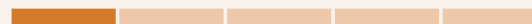
## MITIGATION



## HEAT RISK

Reduction through development of a community-driven heat adaptation and response plan including guidance for cooling centers and extreme heat communications strategy.

## FINANCING SCALE



## TIMEFRAME

Mid-term



## CAPITAL



Social



Physical



Human



# Tactical Urbanism Project

This initiative focuses on tactical urbanism to provide immediate relief from extreme heat in Chinatown's public spaces. In collaboration with local partners and city agencies, creative, community-driven cooling solutions will be introduced to enhance livability during the summer. A key component is integrating water-based solutions such as misters and City water trucks into existing community events like the Chinatown Lantern Festival, Summer Picnic and Block Party. It will also serve as a key gathering space to host heat and health workshops, equipping residents with critical resources to navigate extreme temperatures. By planning ahead, this initiative aims to establish a precedent for ongoing City support, ensuring sustainable cooling interventions for future summers.

## IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Engage city agencies and local partners to plan and coordinate effective cooling interventions.
- ✓ Work with existing stakeholders to evaluate the design and feasibility of essential cooling infrastructure.
- ✓ Identify key community events where tactical urbanism and cooling strategies can have the greatest impact.
- ✓ Implement and evaluate pilot interventions by introducing cooling solutions at Summer 2025 events, gathering community feedback, and assessing effectiveness to refine future efforts.



**FIGURE 16:** Tactical Urban Plaza at Phillips Square Plaza designed by Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture (KZLA)

## PROJECT LEAD:

Chinatown Main Streets

## PROJECT PARTNERS:

Boston Emergency Medical Services (Boston EMS), MONUM, Climate, Boston Health Commission.

## MITIGATION



## HEAT RISK

Reduction through implementation introduction of water-based cooling solutions and shaded gathering spaces; providing immediate cooling relief in extreme heat scenarios

## FINANCING SCALE



## TIMEFRAME

Mid-term



## CAPITAL



Natural



Physical

# Resilience and Redesign in Reggie Wong Memorial Park

The Chinatown Community Land Trust (CCLT) and Friends of Reggie Wong Park have launched a capital campaign to turn Chinatown's only public outdoor recreational space, Reggie Wong Memorial Park, into a climate-resilient, user-friendly, intergenerational park.

When Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) began seeking bids to develop its vacant land next to Chinatown in 2016, CCLT organized neighboring residents and volleyball teams to protect and improve Reggie Wong Park. Since then, the nonprofit Friends of Reggie Wong Park has secured a 15-year lease for control of the park, and MassDOT has completed remediation of all exposed sections of contaminated soil in and around the park site making it suitable for redevelopment and park improvements including new tree plantings.

The new park will contribute to extreme heat and flood mitigation while serving different generations of residents, contributing to community health and wellness. The redesigned park will include cool pavement coatings, permeable play surfaces and pavers, new shade trees, a drinking water fountain, a pollinator rain garden featuring native plants, all of which will contribute to heat and flooding mitigation for the neighborhood. To improve community health outcomes and be more welcoming for intergenerational use, the new park will also include new exercise machines, seating, a children's play structure, interpretive signage and tree buffers to mitigate pollution from the highway.

## IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Identify and apply for additional local and national capital funding opportunities.
- ✓ Plan and execute the Friends of Reggie Wong Park golf tournament to reach the \$100,000 fundraising goal.
- ✓ Work with MassDOT to ensure completion of Phase 2 soil remediation.
- ✓ Collaborate with Sasaki firm to finalize design plans incorporating community feedback.
- ✓ Develop a timeline for procurement and construction post-remediation.
- ✓ Coordinate with academic researchers to collect pre- and post-construction data on heat, flooding, and air pollution.

## PROJECT LEAD:

Chinatown Community Land Trust

## PROJECT PARTNERS:

Friends of Reggie Wong Park

## MITIGATION



## HEAT RISK

Reduction through incorporation of cooling and green infrastructure into a neighborhood park redesign

## FINANCING SCALE



## TIMEFRAME

Long Term



## CAPITAL



Physical



FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
[CHINATOWNCLT.ORG](https://chinatownclt.org)



# Chinatown Heat Equity and Resilience in Open Spaces (HEROS)

Public health data collection in the United States often aggregates Asian immigrant populations into a single category, masking health disparities among subgroups. In Boston's Chinatown, environmental factors such as air pollution and extreme heat contribute to significant health risks. The neighborhood is surrounded by highways and transit stations, creating high pollution levels, while dense concrete and limited green space exacerbate urban heat island effects. Many residents lack air conditioning, increasing their vulnerability to heat-related illnesses.

The Chinatown HEROS project, a collaboration between researchers and community organizations, maps pollution and temperature levels in public spaces to assess climate-related health risks. Data collected in 2023 showed consistently high pollution and heat levels, particularly during peak traffic hours. Community workshops shared these findings and explored mitigation strategies, such as planting shade trees and using reflective materials in park designs. A follow-up project, funded by Tufts Springboard, will test these approaches in the redesign of Reggie Wong Park, a heavily paved space surrounded by highways and industrial sites.

In addition to research, educational initiatives integrate Chinatown's environmental challenges into medical training. A Tufts University course introduces first-year medical students to social determinants of health through site visits and community engagement, fostering awareness and involvement in local health issues. Students collaborate with organizations on topics such as housing, pollution and healthcare access, with some projects leading to ongoing community programs, including music therapy sessions for elderly residents.

These efforts aim to improve environmental health in Chinatown while strengthening community engagement and education around public health challenges.

## IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Popular education/visioning workshop
- ✓ Share back the data
- ✓ Ask residents for recommendations to improve spaces
- ✓ Share recommendations to community and city leaders
- ✓ Pilot for future Climate & Environmental Justice Workshops

## PROJECT LEAD:

Dr. MyDzung Chu, Tufts University

## PROJECT PARTNERS:

Dr. John Durant

Ponnapa Prakkamakul

Asian Community Development Corporation

## MITIGATION



## HEAT RISK

Reduction through collection and monitoring of temperature data and integrating community-driven solutions into public health education

## FINANCING SCALE



## TIMEFRAME

Quick Win



## CAPITAL



Human



Social



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[WWW.CHINATOWNMAINSTREET.ORG](http://WWW.CHINATOWNMAINSTREET.ORG)

# Chinatown - Toward a Resilient Future

The projects and partnerships presented in the Chinatown Community Action Plan outline a specific suite of interventions that will help build a more resilient community ready to respond to the impacts of heat, flood and other acute shocks.

By identifying and implementing these projects as a portfolio of community interventions, the essential conditions of holistic community resilience can begin to take root and set the course for coordinated and bottom-up neighborhood action of years to come.



## Financial Capital

**Increased Resilience for Small Businesses** – With strategic investments in Chinatown's small business, the economic backbone of the neighborhood will become better able to withstand extreme heat without significant financial burden to residents and small business owners.

- Small Business Micro Grants Program for Heat Resilience



## Physical Capital

**Improved infrastructure** – In partnership with local organizations and city agencies, community-focused cooling solutions like misters and water trucks will improve public spaces while small business spaces will be enhanced by heat adaptation measures like white roofs and emergency supplies.

- Small Business Micro Grants Program for Heat Resilience
- Tactical Urbanism project
- Resilience and Redesign in Reggie Wong Memorial Park
- Small Business Micro Grants Program for Heat Resilience



## Natural Capital

**Expanded Green Infrastructure and Cooling solutions** – Through the transformation of Reggie Wong Park, local community groups will enhance the neighborhood's overall natural resilience by increasing climate-adaptive features such as shade trees, permeable surfaces and cooling infrastructure. Resilience and Redesign in Reggie Wong Memorial Park

- Tactical Urbanism project
- Resilience and Redesign in Reggie Wong Memorial Park



## Human Capital

**Engaged and Informed Community Members** – By advancing neighborhood resilience via heat-centered neighborhood planning processes, the creation of targeted resources and guidance materials as well as and workshops targeted towards raising awareness, these projects will increase local capacity to prepare and respond to heat emergencies.

- Neighborhood Heat Adaptation Plan Working Group
- Heat and Health Workshop



## Social Capital






**Coordinated Planning for Future Action** – As envisioned, implementing the proposed projects in the Chinatown Community Action Plan will require continued engagement and collaboration among neighborhood stakeholders and city-led agencies. To help solidify this network of collaborative actors, this plan will facilitate multiple formal and informal partnerships, and opportunities for mutual programming.

- Neighborhood Heat Adaptation Plan Working Group
- Chinatown Heat Equity and Resilience in Open Spaces (HEROS)
- Heat & Health Workshops



# Implementation Guide

Projects in the Chinatown Community Action Plan are listed below along with corresponding sections for funding/financing and an estimated timeline of implementation. Additional sections identify key project partners, next steps and calls to action. These projects are part of a living plan of project implementation to prioritize resilient community solutions as funding, partnerships and other opportunities become available.

PROJECT	PROJECT LEAD	PROJECT PARTNERS	FINANCING (\$ TO \$\$\$\$\$)	QUICK WINS (<1 YEAR)	MID TERM (1-3 YEARS)	LONG TERM (3+ YEARS)
<b>Heat and Health Workshop</b>	Chinatown Main Streets	Tufts Medical Center/ADAPT, ACDC, Communities Responding to Extreme Weather (CREW) and Northeastern volunteers.	\$			
<b>Small Business Micro Grants Program for Heat Resilience</b>	Chinatown Main Streets	City of Boston	\$\$			
<b>Neighborhood Heat Adaptation Plan Working Group</b>	Chinatown Main Streets	ACDC, The Chinatown Residents Association, The Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy, BTM, OEM, Tufts University, the Tufts Medical Center, The Office of Neighborhood Services, Boston Main Streets and the Small Business Unit, the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, The Climate Ready Boston Team	\$			
<b>Tactical Urbanism project</b>	Chinatown Main Streets	Boston EMS, BWSC	\$\$			
<b>Resilience and Redesign in Reggie Wong Memorial Park</b>	The Chinatown Community Land Trust	Friends of Reggie Wong Park	\$\$\$			
<b>Chinatown Heat Equity and Resilience in Open Spaces (HEROS)</b>	Tufts University	Dr. John Durant, Ponnappa Prakkamakul and the Asian Community Development	\$\$			

# Project Funding

Initial seed funding for the R4C program has identified, prioritized and implemented a series of catalytic community resilience projects utilizing the Resilience for Communities Impact Funds (RCI Funds). Additional opportunities also exist to get involved with project funding and leverage already committed resources to drive impact. Listed below are different ways funders can get involved at a variety of scales – all with an overarching goal, to finance and implement community identified, prioritized and owned resilience projects and solutions.

## Option A

Contribute to projects through the RCIFunds investment vehicle to allow for pooled resources from small, medium and large dollar funders. Funding includes individual giving, corporate giving, state/local/federal grants, etc.

### SMALL

- ☐ Individual Giving
- ☐ Corporate

### MEDIUM

- ☐ Local government
- ☐ Foundations
- ☐ Corporate

### LARGE

- ☐ State/Fed government
- ☐ Foundations
- ☐ Corporate

RCIFunds

## Option B

Direct to project funding facilitated by RCN and partners. Includes technical assistance, corporate giving, individual giving, the Benevity platform, state/local/federal grants, etc.

Community Projects  
and Partners



# Additional Support



## Volunteer Opportunities

Opportunities exist with certain community partners and projects to support via volunteering and donation of in-kind services. Check with individual projects to identify who is currently seeking volunteers. The icon to the left of this box signifies projects seeking volunteers to help drive impact.



## In-Kind Donations

Some community projects are seeking in-kind donations of labor, materials or other valuable services. If you have goods or services you would like to donate to community projects, you review the list to identify potential partners. The icon to the left of this box signifies projects seeking in-kind donations of goods and services to drive impact.



## Project Funding

Additional opportunities also exist to get involved with project funding and leverage already committed resources to drive impact. There are different ways funders can get involved at a variety of scales – all with an overarching goal, to finance and implement community identified, prioritized, and owned resilience projects and solutions. See the previous slide to identify options to fund projects.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT PROJECTS, GET UPDATES, AND LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN TO GET INVOLVED!**



## Contact Us

Global Resilient Cities Network

Resilience for Communities/RCI Funds

[rcifunds@resilientcitiesnetwork.com](mailto:rcifunds@resilientcitiesnetwork.com)

[r4c@resilientcitiesnetwork.com](mailto:r4c@resilientcitiesnetwork.com)

# Sources

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