

Assessment Supplement

Appendix to 'CSHBA – Stewardship of Chinatown Society Buildings'

A Project By
CSHBA

Chinatown Society Heritage Buildings Association

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Introduction

About This Document

This supplement to the Project Report ‘CSHBA – Stewardship of Chinatown Society Buildings’ presents **detailed assessment observations** gathered during the 2024–2025 pilot project to advance asset stewardship among participating societies.

Selected Heritage Assets

Four society buildings were included in the assessment:

1. Hon Hsing Building, 27 E Pender St
2. Chin Wing Chun Tong Society, 160 E Pender St
3. Chinese Benevolent Association, 104 E Pender St
4. Wongs’ Benevolent Association, 121 E Pender St

Assessment Approach

We conducted a high-level analysis across the following topics:

- **Building Conditions:** what are the technical conditions of the buildings, and what needs attention going forward?
- **Space Utilization:** how is each floor used today, and what new uses and tenants would be welcome additions?
- **Cultural Stewardship:** do the societies have a long-term vision and purpose, and how can their work and legacies be sustained?
- **Financial Sustainability:** how are the societies doing financially, and what improvements would give them more security?*

*Due to confidentiality, only broad observations are included in the Project Report

Exclusions

Please note that the assessment **excludes**:

- Seismic and foundation (load bearing) evaluation
- Hazardous materials assessment
- Code compliance review
- Systems performance testing
- Plumbing inspection
- Intrusive or destructive investigation

Disclaimer

The findings, recommendations and cost estimates in the Project Report and Assessment Supplement are based on site visits conducted between November 2024 and April 2025. They reflect the best judgment possible based on visual review and listening to commentary from each society’s representatives at the time. No intrusive or destructive investigations were conducted.

These reports should not be considered a comprehensive audit of the buildings, including their structure, envelope or services. Its intent is to support participating member societies in identifying priorities and determining next steps. When planning building improvements, asset holders, contractors, tenants, professionals and other parties should always rely on their own (or their consultants’) primary assessments and investigations.

Hon Hsing Building

Assessment Findings



27 E Pender St

Year Built 1910

Heritage Category A



Building Conditions

Here are the main issues with the building's technical condition:

Life & Safety

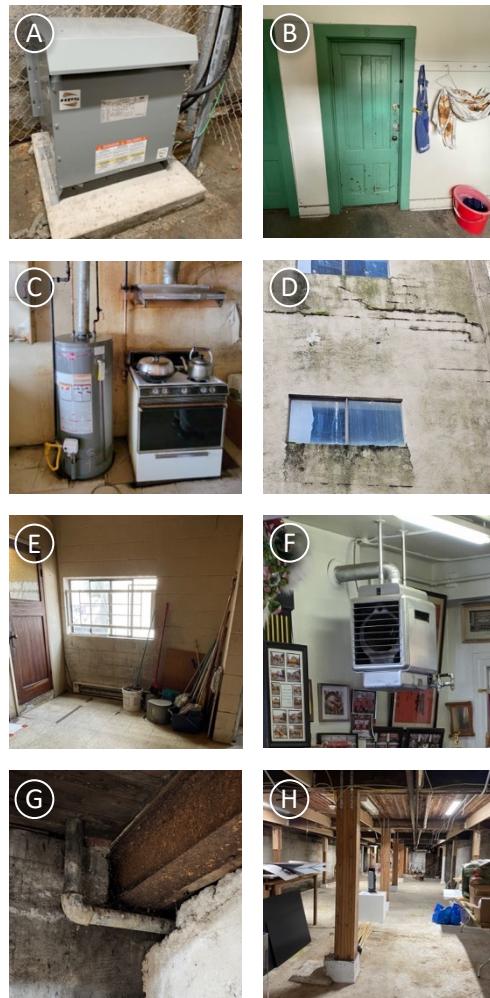
Critical issues that pose immediate risks to occupants or the public, and require urgent action to ensure health and safety:

- Basement **50kVA transformer** is positioned where it's at risk of flooding and moisture (A)
- **Carbon monoxide detectors** must be installed where gas-fired heating is used
- **Grandfathered SRAs** on second floor are non-compliant and need to be phased out (B)
- **Gas-fired equipment** for cooking and hot water is very old and needs to be replaced (C)

Asset Protection

Repairs and upgrades needed within 12 months to prevent further deterioration and ensure the integrity of the built assets:

- **Fluorescent fixtures** are outdated, present a potential fire risk, and need replacement



- **Rear wall** has open grout joints, risking partial collapse into the laneway (D), and some downpipe mounts have failed
- **Cinder blocks** of rear wall contain asbestos-contaminated vermiculite, and should be monitored for leaks and can only be disturbed by a qualified professional (E)
- **Heating system** needs to be inspected, and repaired or replaced, to allow the society to regulate interior conditions, prolonging the lifespan of the building (F)
- **Plumbing leaks** have previously caused rot on the superstructure, and a kitchen and bathroom plumbing inspection is needed (G)

Tenantability

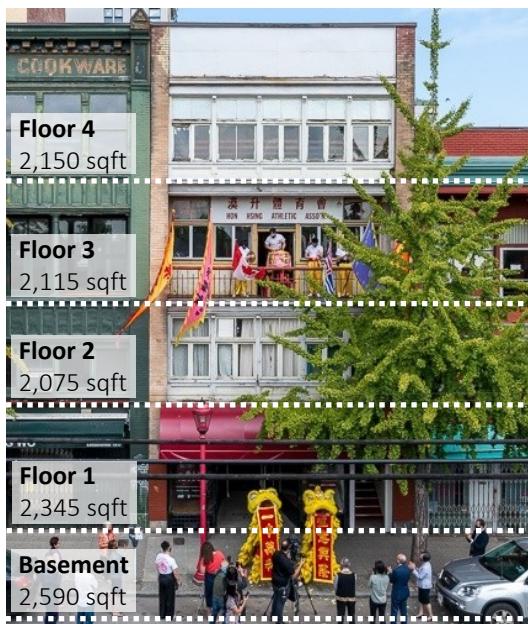
Enhancements that improve comfort, usability, and appeal for current and future tenants or users, supporting long-term activation:

- **Basement** is unfinished and lacks protection from flooding (e.g. back-up pump or alarm system) and moisture ingress—it could be upgraded to add usability to the space (H)
- **Second floor** could be improved with minor repairs, repainting where needed, life and safety improvements and accessibility features, all in support of its future use

Hon Hsing Building

Space Utilization

This is how each floor is used today, and what new uses and tenants would be welcome additions to the space:



Today

4 Fourth floor is 50% leased (3 years) by **Tan Academy of Balance**; the lease expires Q2 2028.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

3 Third floor is in use by **Hon Hsing Athletic Association** for Chinese martial arts, lion and dragon dance. They do not pay rent.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

2 Second floor is partially in use as **grandfathered SRAs**, which are gradually phased out as tenants leave the premises.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

1 Ground floor is leased (5 years) to **Modernize Tailors**. The lease expires Q3 2028, with a 5-year renewal option.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

B Basement is included in the lease to **Modernize Tailors**, and in use as storage.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

Improvements

- Attract 1-2 more tenant(s) that fit with the society's mandate, with a focus on cultural, services or office uses

- Help the club mature their business model, increasing their ability to generate revenues and pay rent

- End remaining SRAs when appropriate
- Expand a historically accurate bachelors exhibit (with ticketed tours), modelled after New York's Tenement Museum

- Improve usability of the basement in collaboration with current tenant, resulting in additional lease revenues

Cultural Stewardship

Anchored by Hon Hsing Athletic Club, the building becomes a beacon for community-serving tenants and cultural uses that reflect a living heritage.

Cultural Mission

Extending their mandate for culture and education across both their buildings, the Wongs' Benevolent Association gives attention to **culturally-aligned uses** that complement the activities of Hon Hsing Athletic Club and the wider community.

They have a vision to leverage the building as a **"living museum"**. A tangible goal is to continue to convert the second floor boarding rooms into a bachelors exhibit—making it visitor-friendly, and an opportunity for **storytelling and experiential learning**.

Being driven by their mission and values has enabled decisions and activations that contribute to a vibrant community—culturally, socially and economically.



Membership

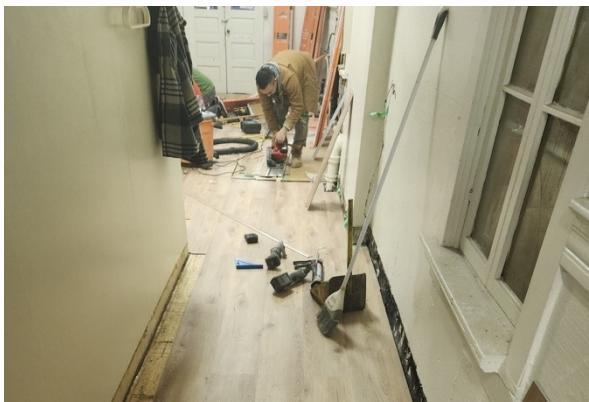
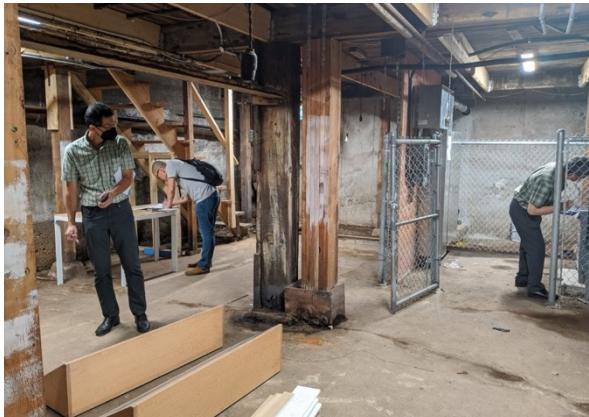
The martial arts club engages youth in lion dancing and kung fu traditions, and creates space for them to be an **active part of the community** during annual celebrations and festivals. This presents an **accessible entry for young people** to build connections and develop a sense of belonging in Chinatown.

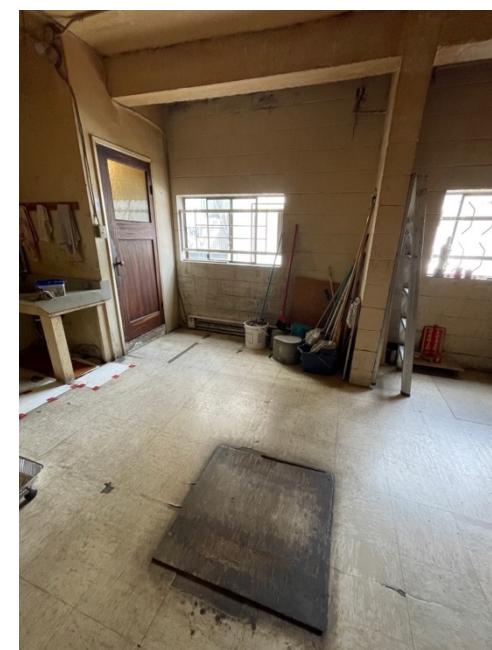
It becomes notable that membership and participation in society activities can multiply the positive impact on neighbourhood wellbeing.

Heritage Conservation

The conception of the "living museum" and bachelors exhibit **gives new life to history**, and allows a space for people to bear witness to poignant stories of the past.

Centering legacy, cultural business and education at the Hon Hsing Building reflects the Wongs' ongoing commitment to heritage conservation, and inspires future generations to **embrace their heritage with pride**, while tapping into the roots of the Chinatown community.



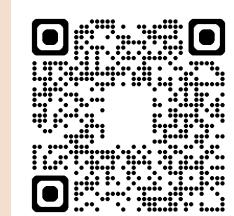


Chin Wing Chun Tong Society

Assessment Findings



160 E Pender St
Year Built 1925
Heritage Category A



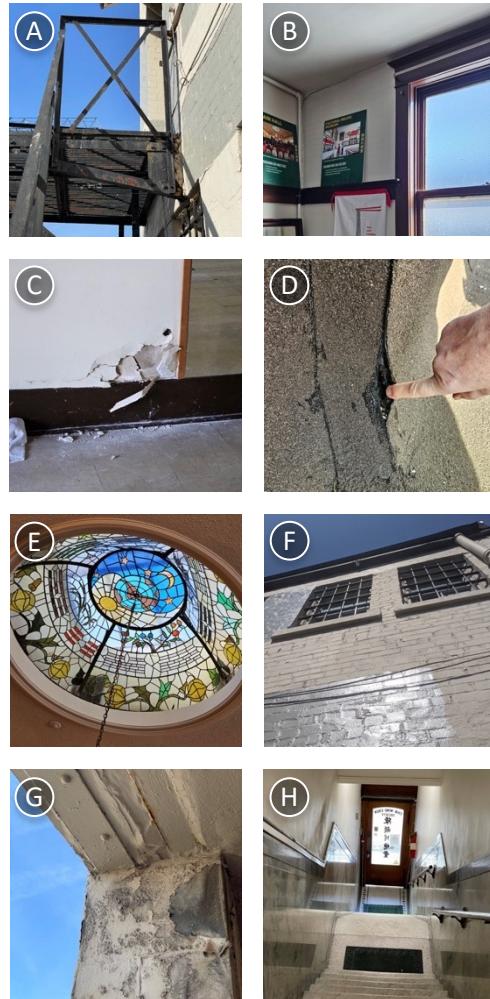
Building Conditions

Here are the main issues with the building's technical condition:

Life & Safety

Critical issues that pose immediate risks to occupants or the public, and require urgent action to ensure health and safety:

- Lane **exterior fire escape** is in poor condition and needs repairs to ensure safety (A)
- **East wall** is out of plumb and bulging on the inside, with unknown conditions that are concealed, including by recent paint (B)
- Same wall shows signs of **moisture ingress** and other conditions that may be related (or contributing) to the structural threat (C)
- **Roof membrane** appears to be new but was improperly installed and seams are failing (D)
- The **glass dome** is close to collapse, and must be removed urgently and rebuilt later (E)
- The rear wall's **masonry veneer** is leaning outward and needs to be repaired and stabilized before it collapses (F)
- **Carbon monoxide detectors** must be installed where gas-fired heating is used



Asset Protection

Repairs and upgrades needed within 12 months to prevent further deterioration and ensure the integrity of the built assets:

- **Structural integrity** requires full assessment to understand source of various conditions
- **Heating system** needs to be inspected, and repaired or replaced, to control interior conditions and prolong building lifespan
- **Electrical distribution system** on upper floors has been upgraded, while older parts need retrofit during tenant improvements
- Inner **balcony walls** (east side) show signs of moisture ingress and unusual growth (G)
- **Fluorescent fixtures** are outdated, present a potential fire risk, and need replacement

Tenantability

Enhancements that improve comfort, usability, and appeal for current and future tenants or users, supporting long-term activation:

- A **commercial stairlift** could be installed that works in the tight stairwell of the building (H)
- The **kitchen area** would benefit from more ventilation and separate washroom access

Space Utilization

This is how each floor is used today, and what new uses and tenants would be welcome additions to the space:



Today

4 Fourth floor features the **library, cultural relics museum and main hall**, where key ceremonies and worships takes place.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

3 Third floor is the athletics room, but is **mostly underused today**. There is storage and space for member activities.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

2 Second floor is used for **seniors programs**, such as games, meal service, meetings and events. There is an office and kitchen.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

1 Ground floor is leased (5 years) to **a sit-down restaurant**. The lease expires Q2 2029, with a 5-year renewal option.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

B Basement is included in the lease to **the restaurant**, and in use as storage.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

Improvements

- Increase visitation of cultural relics museum and offer this as a ticketed visitor experience
- Introduce an archival room

- Attract a reliable tenant or user group for the front-of-house space that fits with the society's mandate
- Improve usability with tea bar and more storage space

- Improve accessibility for seniors by installing elevator or stairlift
- Outfit the kitchen with fume hoods, more workspace and coolers

Cultural Stewardship

Guided by passionate volunteer directors, the society is working towards a future that continues the legacy of social and cultural member activities.

Cultural Mission

The building is open daily for **regular activities and cultural programming** such as mahjong, karaoke, dancing, ping-pong and group cookouts. As a surname society, this provides ongoing opportunities for members to socialize and connect with each other, cultivating a **sense of community belonging**.

Despite the challenge in imagining beyond each year, the society hopes to **safeguard the space** so that future members can continue to participate in cultural heritage together for generations to come.

By taking a long-range view to set goals and make plans, the society can step forward with better clarity and confidence.



Membership

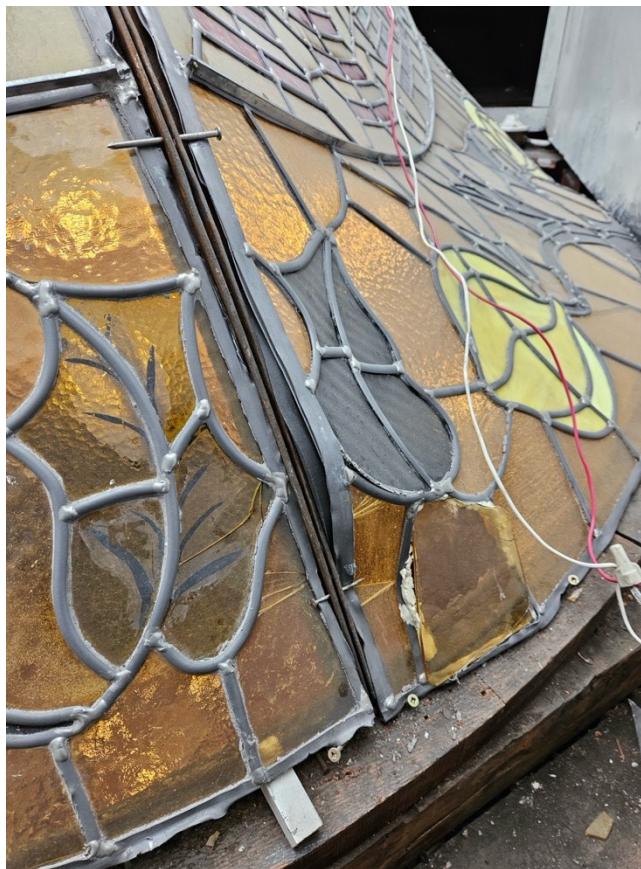
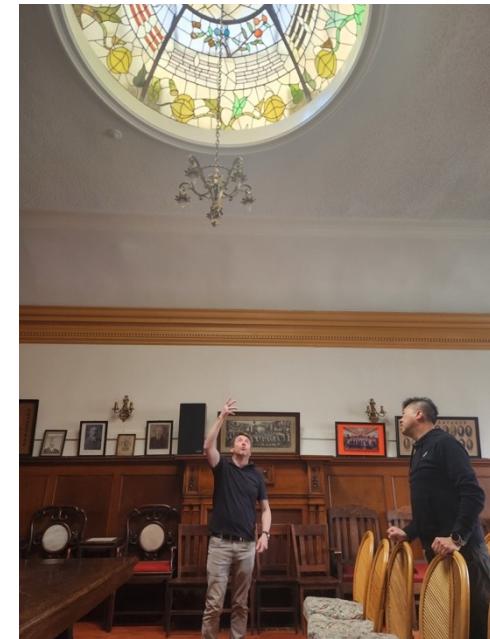
A large membership of seniors uses the space vibrantly, bringing a special energy to the organization. Although very active, they are also aging and eager to **find ways to involve youth more deliberately** in the stewardship of the society.

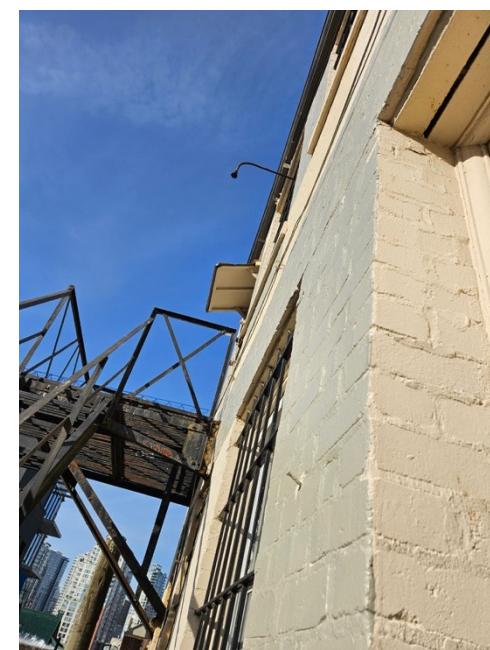
Their outreach ideas are worth exploring: evaluating different membership types, offering youth-centered and intergenerational events and courses, and collaborating with other societies.

Heritage Conservation

The **dedicated artifacts room and museum** displays historical documents, clan relics, records and archives. These are organized for members and visitors to view, revealing stories from the past, and connections to ancestral people and places.

This is complemented by a social media presence that consistently documents in real-time the activities and news of the society. There are opportunities to **leverage this digital repository** to augment their ongoing heritage conservation efforts.





Chinese Benevolent Association

Assessment Findings



104 E Pender St

Year Built 1910

Heritage Category A



Building Conditions

Here are the main issues with the building's technical condition:

Life & Safety

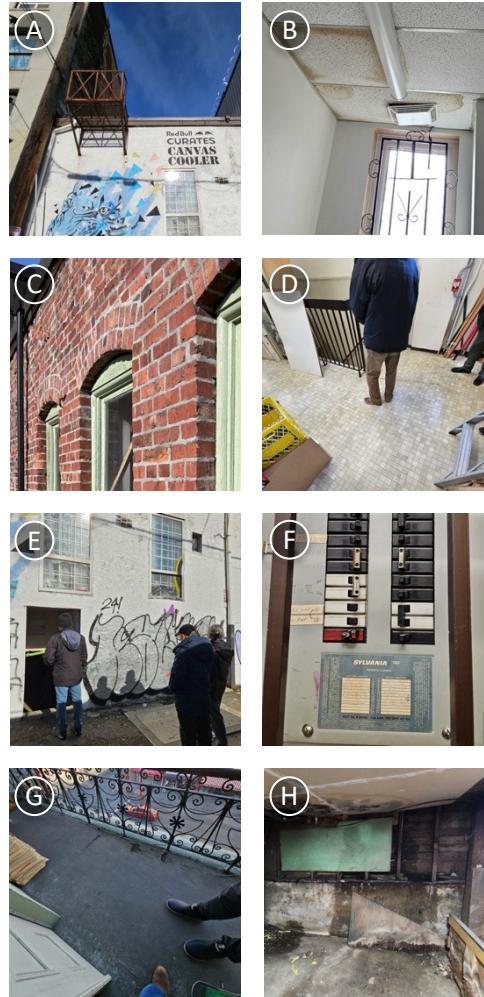
Critical issues that pose immediate risks to occupants or the public, and require urgent action to ensure health and safety:

- Lane **exterior fire escape** misses the low-rise segment and no longer allows safe exiting (A)
- **Roof membrane** is a stack of old layers, and leaks, soft spots and rotting need repairs (B)
- A single **roof drain** is inadequate and water is spilling over the roof lip during heavy rain (C)
- **Carbon monoxide detectors** must be installed where gas-fired heating is used

Asset Protection

Repairs and upgrades needed within 12 months to prevent further deterioration and ensure the integrity of the built assets:

- Floors near stair landings are **deflecting and sagging**, and require structural review (D)



- **Rear wall** (at ground level, 1-story portion) appears to be bulging out, and needs closer inspection to confirm its stability (E)
- **Heating system** needs to be inspected, and repaired or replaced, to regulate interior conditions and prolong building lifespan
- **Electrical distribution system** is very old, and needs closer inspection and retrofit (F)
- **Fluorescent fixtures** are outdated, present a potential fire risk, and need replacement
- All **covered balconies** have built-up decks that conceal failed (rotten) assemblies (G)
- **Flooding and leaks** affect the basement and and retail store, causing mold and rot

Tenantability

Enhancements that improve comfort, usability, and appeal for current and future tenants or users, supporting long-term activation:

- A **stairlift or elevator** could be installed that works in the stairwell, or at the rear of the building outside the upper floor envelope
- **Basement** is unfinished—this could be upgraded to prepare it as storage space (H)
- The current **main switch** (100A 347/600W 3PH 4W) has very limited capacity, and may restrict future occupancy without upgrades

Space Utilization

This is how each floor is used today, and what new uses and tenants would be welcome additions to the space:



Today

4 Fourth floor is used as **storage space** for cultural artifacts, lion and dragon dance costumes and props, and society archives.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

3 Third floor is in use as **meeting hall**, with a small office as well. This floor is where cultural gifts and artifacts are displayed.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

2 Second floor is vacant after the previous office tenant left. It has good potential for **office, services and cultural use**.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

1 Ground floor is leased to consignment furniture store **The Carriage House** on a month-to-month basis.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

B Basement (half) is included in the lease to **Carriage House** for storage. The other half (on lane) is mostly empty.

Optimal Vacancy Underuse Misaligned

Improvements

- Move all storage items to basement
- Attract a cultural tenant that fits with the society's mandate, or activate it with a (ticketed) museum exhibition

- Expand the cultural exhibits into a visitor experience that tells the story of Chinatown's benevolent associations

- Attract 1-2 tenant(s) that fit with the society's mandate, and negotiate a mutually beneficial 3+ year lease term

- Encourage existing tenant to recommit to mutually beneficial 3+ year terms

- Improve usability of the basement for the storage of cultural artifacts and props; this would require moisture and mold-proofing, and pest control

Cultural Stewardship

In the distinctive role as the umbrella organization for Chinatown's associations, the society takes a lead in community-wide advocacy.

Cultural Mission

The association has a long history of **championing the Chinese community's interests** in Vancouver. Over time, their role has evolved with community needs, and they continue to **steward a collective voice** in Chinatown. They work toward a clean, vibrant neighbourhood where history and culture are celebrated.

Recognizing the **need to bolster capacity**, the society recently formed three committees: one to attract youth participation and innovation in cultural activities, another to promote economic opportunities, and a third to support community care efforts. **Empowering leadership within these committees** helps sustain their work over the long term.



Membership

With board membership consisting of representatives from Chinese associations and other stakeholders, the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) is in a unique position to build broad awareness of shared issues, and to coordinate activities and information community-wide.

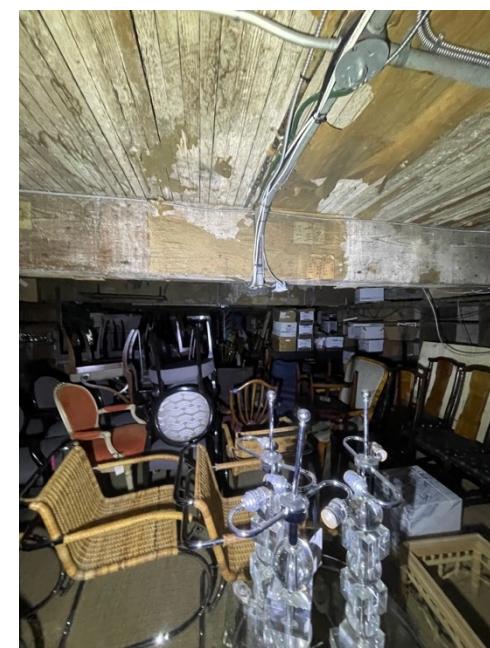
As an umbrella organization, a key part of the vision is to raise up the **next generation of community leaders** by engaging youth, and creating opportunities for their meaningful **participation and mentorship**.

Heritage Conservation

The many documents and artifacts at the CBA—including paper records, storied antiques, and exhibits celebrating historic events—are today collected in storage. The society aspires to secure support to **digitize and preserve the materials**, and **designate a museum space** to share the stories of Chinatown's associations with future generations, scholars and researchers.

Heritage conservation projects such as these are also good opportunities to inspire young energy and engage new talent.





Wongs' Benevolent Association

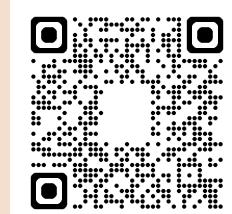
Assessment Findings



121 E Pender St

Year Built 1921

Heritage Category A



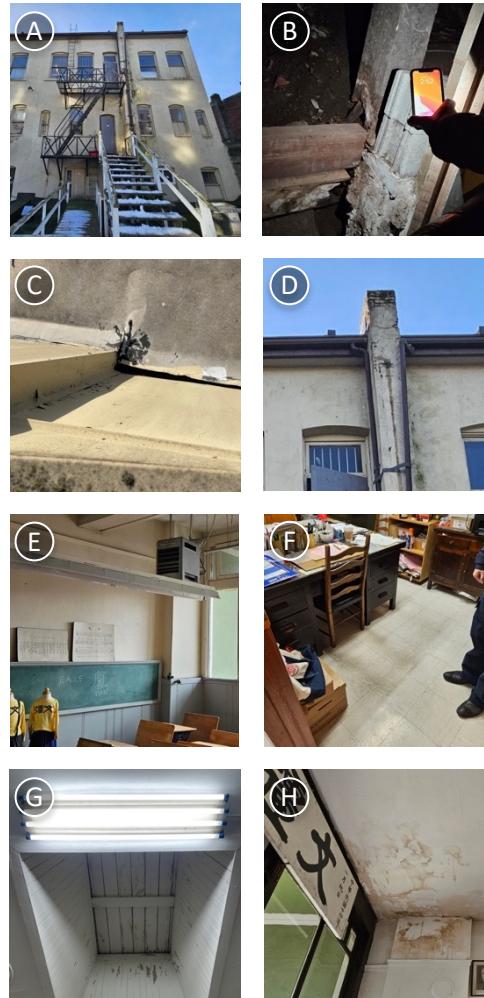
Building Conditions

Here are the main issues with the building's technical condition:

Life & Safety

Critical issues that pose immediate risks to occupants or the public, and require urgent action to ensure health and safety:

- Lane **exterior fire escape** sits on framing that is at risk of collapsing and needs urgent repairs, including wall envelope, ground floor landings, and door hardware (A)
- **Foundation** exhibits structural distress and damage, and requires full review for repairs to joists, beams and columns in the basement, extending up to the first floor (B)
- **Roof damage** and holes need repairs, including chimney caps, cornice flashings and covered skylights, to protect the building from further water damage (C)
- **Roof draining** is insufficient and additional drainage must be retrofitted to reduce risk of clogs, damage, spillage, etc. (D)
- **Carbon monoxide detectors** must be installed where gas-fired heating is used (E)



Asset Protection

Repairs and upgrades needed within 12 months to prevent further deterioration and ensure the integrity of the built assets:

- Floors are **deflecting and sagging**, most noticeably at the 2nd floor, and require structural review, monitoring and repairs (F)
- **Fluorescent fixtures** are outdated, present a potential fire risk, and need replacement (G)
- **HVAC system** needs to be installed to control conditions in the archive for artifacts
- **Wall conditions** must be inspected and repaired to improve weather resistance (H)

Tenantability

Enhancements that improve comfort, usability, and appeal for current and future tenants or users, supporting long-term activation:

- **Windows and trim** could be repaired to address air and moisture leaks to improve comfort and restore heritage value
- A **commercial stairlift** could be economically sourced and installed that works in the tighter stairwell of the building

Wong's Benevolent Association

Space Utilization

This is how each floor is used today, and what new uses and tenants would be welcome additions to the space:



	Today	Improvements
4	<p>Fourth floor is in use as main hall and society archives. It is where cultural ceremonies and worships take place.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/>Optimal <input type="checkbox"/>Vacancy <input type="checkbox"/>Underuse <input type="checkbox"/>Misaligned</p>	
3	<p>Third floor is in use by Mon Keang School for Cantonese lessons and cultural learning. The school does not pay rent.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/>Optimal <input type="checkbox"/>Vacancy <input type="checkbox"/>Underuse <input type="checkbox"/>Misaligned</p>	
2	<p>Second floor features the social rooms. It is used for small and casual gatherings. There is an office and kitchenette.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Optimal <input type="checkbox"/>Vacancy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>Underuse <input type="checkbox"/>Misaligned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidate social functions to the large space on the westside of the building Attract a reliable tenant or user group for the (to be vacated) social room space on the eastside of the building
1	<p>Ground floor units are leased to OCHI Trading and Good Luck Entertainment on a month-to-month basis.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/>Optimal <input type="checkbox"/>Vacancy <input type="checkbox"/>Underuse <input type="checkbox"/>Misaligned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage existing tenants to recommit to mutually beneficial 3+ year terms
B	<p>Basement is currently vacant and not in a tenantable state.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Optimal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>Vacancy <input type="checkbox"/>Underuse <input type="checkbox"/>Misaligned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve usability of the basement in collaboration with current tenant(s), resulting in additional lease revenues

Cultural Stewardship

Youth leadership fosters a supportive, hands-on working group where individual skills and interests can shine and contribute to the society's vision.

Cultural Mission

The Wongs are motivated by a strong sense of purpose: **conservation and education** of history and culture. Having successfully modernized Mon Keang School with a **place-based approach**, they advance their mandate, and envision future growth and sophistication of their programs.

By leaning into the society's strengths, the youth working group also sees exciting possibilities in **expanding the use of their spaces** to encourage broader community participation in a variety of social and cultural experiences.

Nurturing capacity and protecting against burnout can help to sustain the work needed to realize these worthwhile dreams.



Membership

The youth members are good at working together, and find opportunities to **invite others to join in**. They honour the stories of the elders, while the elders help maintain a strong link to the society's ancestral roots.

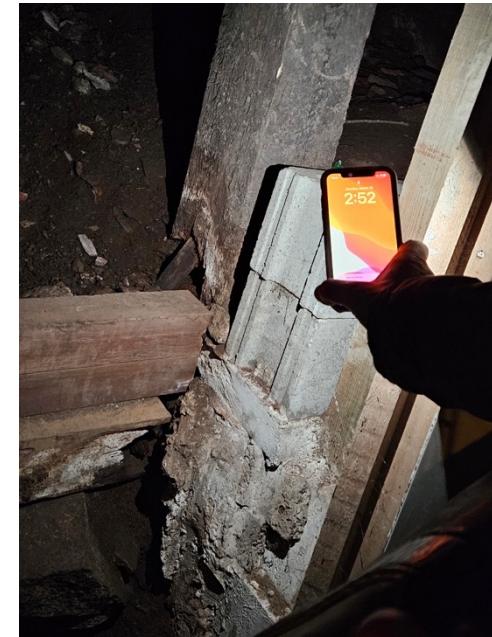
Embracing the many reasons why people want to get involved—whether to reconnect with cultural heritage, to build shared experiences together, or to follow curiosity and personal interests—allows the society to engage with community members on different levels.

Heritage Conservation

The reactivation of their historic Chinese language school is an inspiring example of the society's efforts to **safeguard cultural continuity**. It also recognizes that intangible cultural heritage is alive and organic, and transmits through practice in daily life.

The popularity of the classes at Mon Keang is a testament to the richness of Chinatown's history and its value in building a **community of resilience**.







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