

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS



1. Who is Chinatown for? How has the Chinese American community shaped and continue to shape Chicago?



2. What happens to a historic immigrant neighborhood when new developments rise nearby, and how do communities respond to preserve their identity and belonging?



3. In what ways can young people and educators engage with or support Chinatown as it navigates change and redevelopment?

4. Why is Chicago's Chinatown expanding? What role does the community play in its growth?



5. What can we learn about what it means to be American through the lens of Chinese immigrant history?

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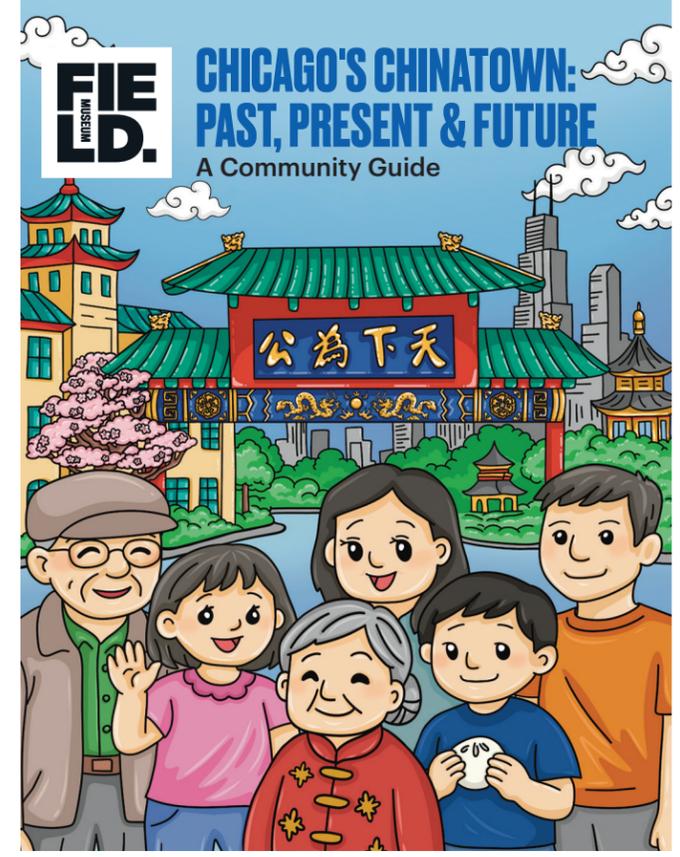
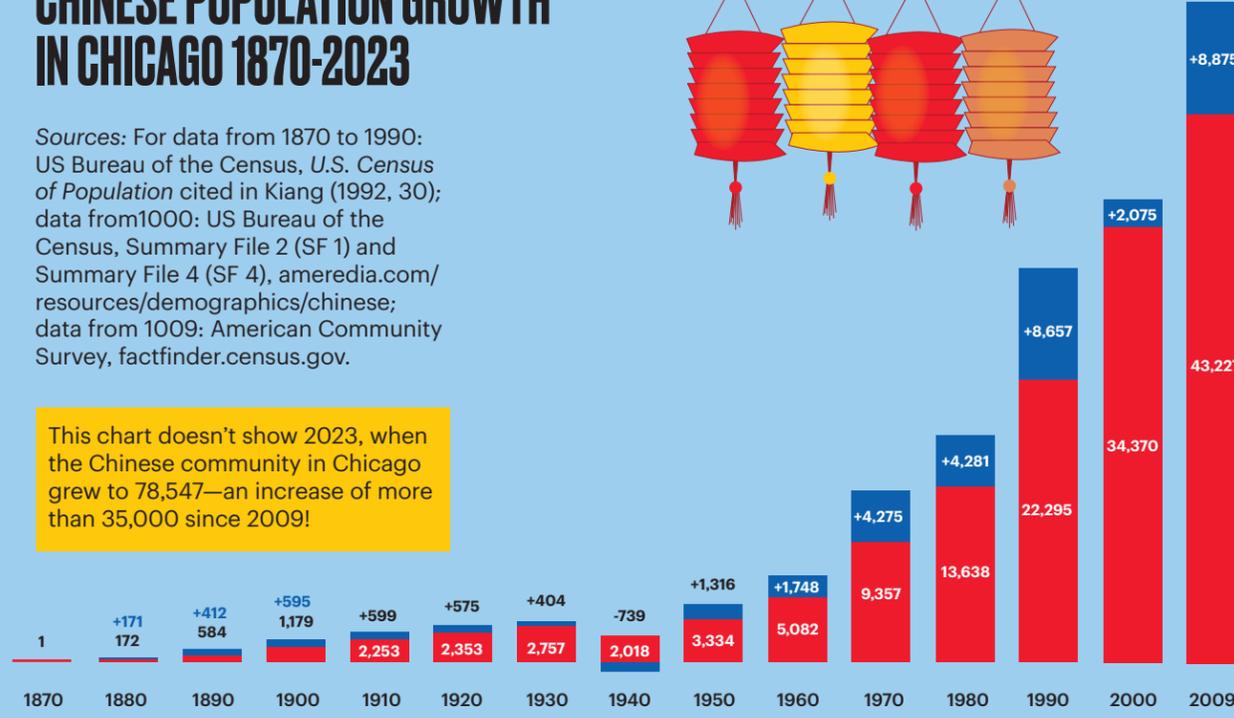
Scan for more info on the AANHPI program



## CHINESE POPULATION GROWTH IN CHICAGO 1870-2023

Sources: For data from 1870 to 1990: US Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population* cited in Kiang (1992, 30); data from 1000: US Bureau of the Census, Summary File 2 (SF 1) and Summary File 4 (SF 4), ameredia.com/resources/demographics/chinese; data from 1009: American Community Survey, factfinder.census.gov.

This chart doesn't show 2023, when the Chinese community in Chicago grew to 78,547—an increase of more than 35,000 since 2009!



Sources: [1] taste.org [2] Wikipedia [3] Chicago History Encyclopedia CAMOC [4] Global HeresCity Bureau

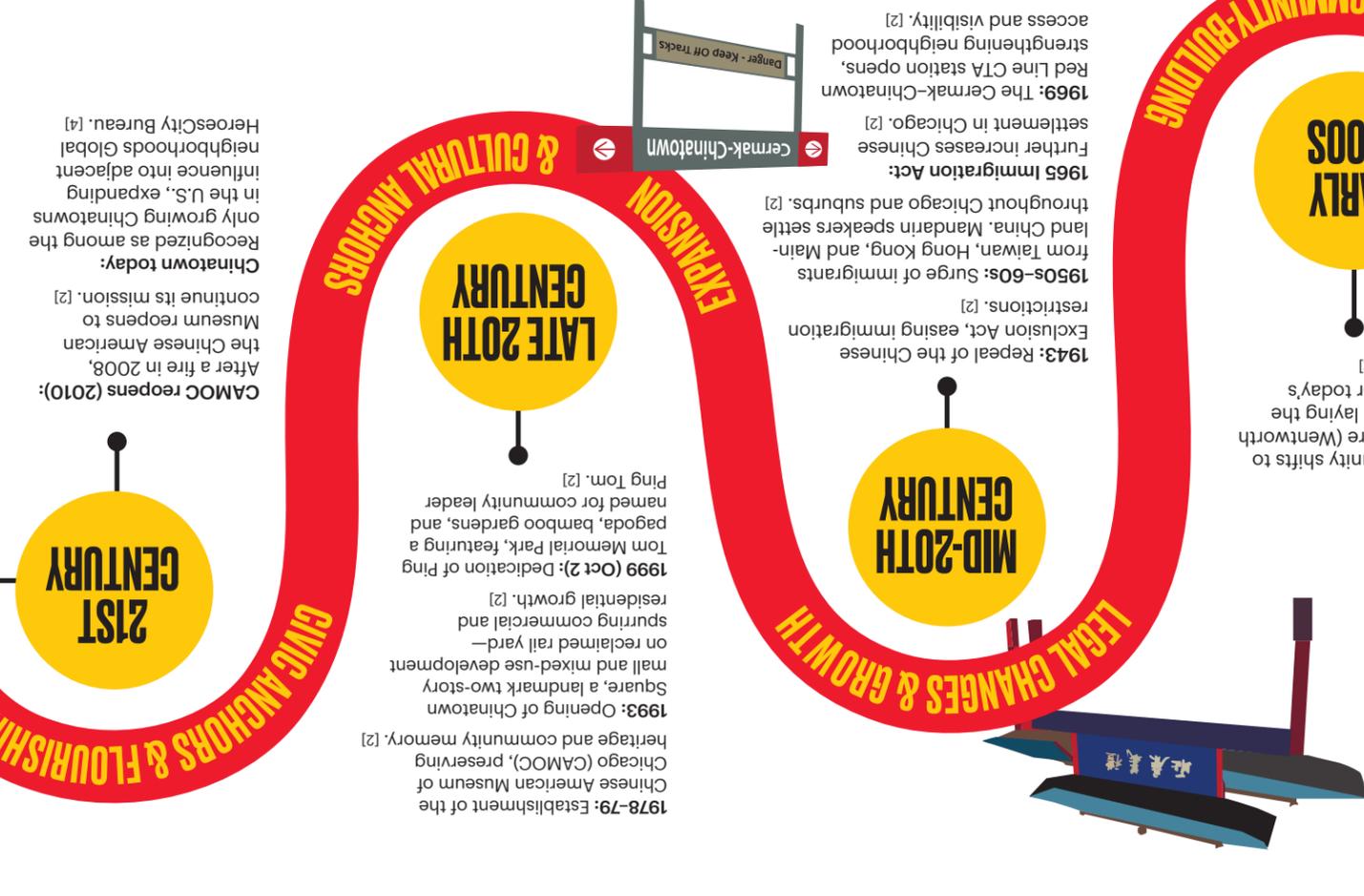
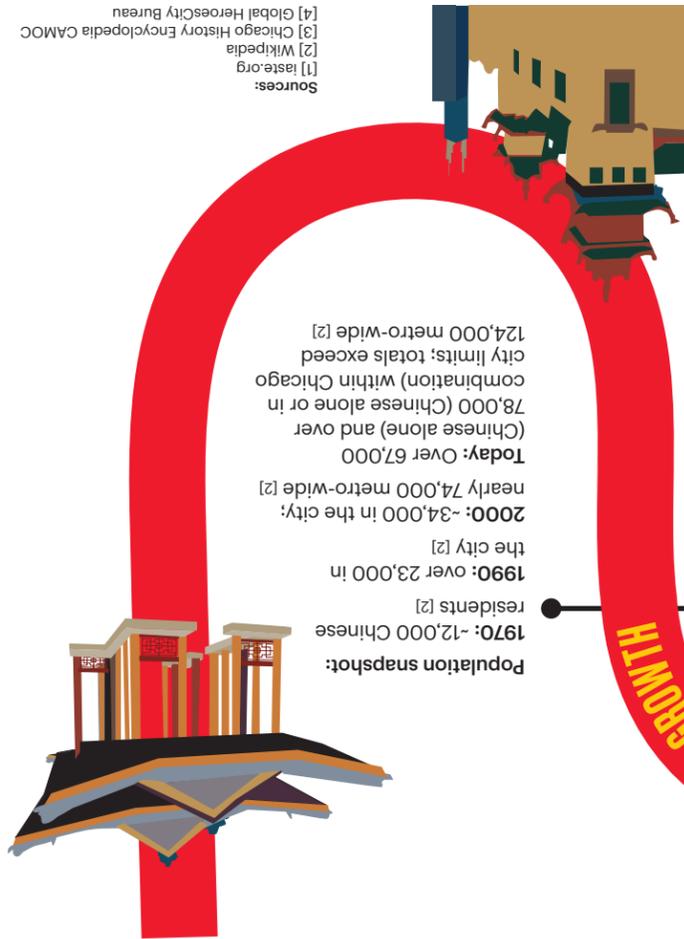
**Population snapshot:**  
 1970: ~12,000 Chinese residents [2]  
 1990: over 23,000 in the city [2]  
 2000: ~34,000 in the city; nearly 74,000 metro-wide [2]  
 Today: Over 67,000 (Chinese alone) and over 78,000 (Chinese alone or in combination) within Chicago city limits; totals exceed 124,000 metro-wide [2]

**21ST CENTURY**  
 CAMOC reopens (2010): After a fire in 2008, the Chinese American Museum reopens to continue its mission. [2]  
 Chinatown today: Recognized as among the only growing Chinatowns in the U.S., expanding influence into adjacent neighborhoods Global HeresCity Bureau. [4]

**1978-79:** Establishment of the Chinese American Museum of Chicago (CAMOC), preserving heritage and community memory. [2]  
 1993: Opening of Chinatown Square, a landmark two-story mall and mixed-use development on reclaimed rail yard—spurring commercial and residential growth. [2]  
 1999 (Oct 2): Dedication of Ping Tom Memorial Park, featuring a pagoda, bamboo gardens, and named for community leader Ping Tom. [2]  
**LATE 20TH CENTURY**  
 1943: Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, easing immigration restrictions. [2]  
 1950s-60s: Surge of immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mainland China. Mandarin speakers settle throughout Chicago and suburbs. [2]  
 1965 Immigration Act: Further increases Chinese settlement in Chicago. [2]  
 1969: The Cermak-Chinatown Red Line CTA station opens, strengthening neighborhood access and visibility. [2]

**MID-20TH CENTURY**  
 1912: Community shifts to Armour Square (Wentworth and Cermak), laying the foundation for today's Chinatown. [2]  
**EARLY 1900S**  
 1874: Chinese-run businesses—1 tea shop and 18 laundries—establish near Clark Street between Van Buren & Harrison in the South Loop. [2]  
 By 1890: 600 Chinese residents in Chicago; about 25% lived around Clark Street enclave. [2]

**LATE 1800S**  
 Mid-1870s: Earliest Chinese immigrants arrive in Chicago, drawn by work opportunities post-Transcontinental Railroad and escaping West Coast anti-Chinese violence. [1]  
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 By 1890: 600 Chinese residents in Chicago; about 25% lived around Clark Street enclave. [2]  
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## TIMELINE OF CHINESE IMMIGRATION IN CHICAGO (1870-PRESENT)

# CHINATOWN CHICAGO



## GET TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

From a handful of laundries to a vibrant and expanding community, Chicago's Chinatown continues to grow and thrive.



- |                          |                                      |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Chinatown Gate         | 5 Ping Tom Park                      |
| 2 Pui Tak Center         | 6 Chinatown Public Library           |
| 3 Nine Dragon Wall       | 7 Chinese American Museum            |
| 4 Chinatown Square Plaza | 8 Chinese American Veterans Memorial |



### CHINATOWN GATE

Built in 1975, this gate is an iconic landmark of Chicago. Designed by Chinese American architect Peter Fung, it represents the culture and power of Chicago's Chinatown, as one of the only growing Chinatowns in the US. The characters read "天下為公" or "the world belongs to the people."



### PING TOM PARK

Nestled along the south end of the Chicago River, the park is named after Chicago Civic leader, Ping Tom. In 1962, after Chinatown lost its green space due to the construction of the expressway, the community advocated for parks in Chinatown. The park was dedicated in 1999.



### PUI TAK CENTER

Constructed in the 1920s, the building has served as a school, space for events, and more for the community. Originally under On Leong Merchant's Association, it's a symbolic feature of Chinatown after their displacement. It was selected as 1 of 25 historical sites in the Chicagoland area.



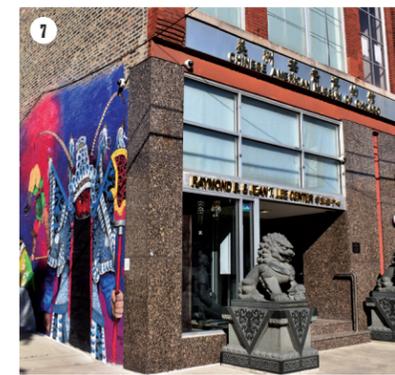
### CHINATOWN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Opened in 2015 as the third and largest version of the Chinatown Chicago Public Library, this award-winning building reflects traditional Chinese courtyard design. Its creation is evidence of strong community advocacy, and its high attendance and circulation demonstrate the library's vital role as Chinatown's cultural gateway.



### NINE DRAGON WALL

According to traditional Chinese culture, the dragon is a symbol of power and fortune and the number 9 is considered to represent longevity. The 9 large dragons, along with over 500+ smaller, emphasize this symbolism. It's 1 of 3 existing replicas in the world of the Beijing original.



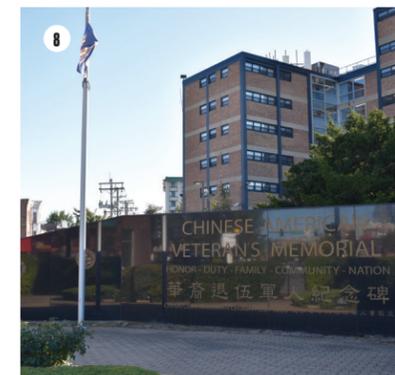
### CHINESE AMERICAN MUSEUM

The CAMoC aims to tell the story of Chinese American culture through exhibitions, research, and education initiatives. The museum holds a permanent collection that preserves history and the future of Chinese Americans in the Midwest. The Field Museum continues to be proud partners with CAMoC.



### CHINATOWN SQUARE PLAZA

This outdoor two-story mall houses restaurants, shops, and more that serve the Chinatown community. Developed in 1993 as an extension of Chinatown, it represents the continuous expansion of Chinatown. It houses 12 Chinese zodiac statues, and a "Chinese in America" mural, showcasing the Chinese American presence in Chicago.



### CHINESE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL

This memorial honors Chinese Americans who served in the U.S. armed forces. About 20,000 fought in WWII despite being denied citizenship until 1952, when restrictive immigration laws were lifted. Dedicated in 2005, it stands as a lasting tribute to AANHPI contributions to American history.