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Beyond 50: A CID for All Generations SCIDpda's 50th Anniversary

SCIDpda WRAPPED

About SCIDpda

The Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda) is a community development organization whose mission is to preserve, promote, and develop the Seattle Chinatown International District (CID) as a vibrant community and unique ethnic neighborhood. Formed by the community in 1975, SCIDpda works to revitalize and preserve the neighborhood by providing service in three areas: affordable housing and commercial property management, real estate development, and community economic development and community engagement.

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Beacon Pacific Village ribbon-cutting, photo by Ronn CM

This year, SCIDpda turned 50.

That sentence alone feels both surreal and deeply meaningful. It's not often that a community organization makes it to half a century—but here we are, still rooted in the Chinatown International District, still building, advocating, listening, and learning.

Our 50th anniversary campaign, *Beyond 50: A CID for All Generations*, has not only been a way to honor everything that's come before us, but also an opportunity to look ahead. It's been deeply moving to see how many people still believe in this neighborhood and the value of community-rooted development. Whether it's our tile project at the Bush Hotel, neighborhood tours, or the upcoming gala, these efforts aren't just about marking a milestone—they're ways of reflecting on and continuing the work that has shaped the CID for generations.

This year has also made us think about what it really means to preserve, promote, and

develop the CID in today's world. The same mission still guides us, but the work looks different every year. It means advocating for affordable housing and culturally relevant spaces. It means helping small businesses stay in place. It means preserving stories, listening closely, and adapting when the neighborhood shifts.

SCIDpda Wrapped is our way of sharing a snapshot of this moment with you. It's not everything—but it captures some of the energy, effort, and care that goes into this work every day. Whether you've been part of this journey for years or you're just getting to know us, thank you for being here.

Here's to the past fifty-and for many years to come.

Jamie Lee SCIDpda Co-Executive Director

Jared Jonson SCIDpda Co-Executive Director



SEYOND 50 YEARS

In 2025, the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda) marks its 50th anniversary—a milestone that reflects five decades of community-rooted development, preservation, and advocacy in one of Seattle's most historically and culturally significant neighborhoods.

SCIDpda was founded in 1975, at a time when the Chinatown International District (CID) faced mounting challenges. Disinvestment, infrastructure projects, and a lack of affordable housing threatened to disrupt the community's stability and identity. In response, neighborhood leaders came together to form an organization with a mission: to preserve, promote, and develop the CID as a vibrant community and unique ethnic neighborhood.

Over the past five decades, SCIDpda has grown from a small, community-led initiative into a multifaceted organization engaged in affordable housing and commercial property management, real estate development, and community economic development. It now manages over 500 affordable housing units and more than 250,000 square feet of commercial space, much of it leased to small, locally owned businesses and community organizations. Projects like the Bush Hotel and New Central Hotel rehabilitation, the development of International District Village I & II, and the ongoing management of historic buildings have helped ensure that long-standing community members can continue to live and work in the CID.

SCIDpda's work is not limited to buildings—it is also about relationships and continuity. The CID has been shaped by waves of immigration and migration, each bringing its own contributions, struggles, and traditions. Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and other BIPOC communities have all left their mark on the neighborhood, and the work of preservation includes honoring that diversity while building connections across generations. SCIDpda's programs and partnerships reflect a deep understanding that the neighborhood's strength lies in its cultural richness and social fabric—not just its physical infrastructure.

Throughout its history, the Chinatown International District has faced a series of major disruptions. The construction of I-5 cut through the neighborhood, displacing residents and businesses while increasing traffic, noise, and pollution. Policies like redlining and urban renewal further threatened the area's affordability and long-term viability.

The proposed construction of the Kingdome in the 1970s prompted community members to organize with urgency to demand investments that would preserve the neighborhood. SCIDpda's founding grew out of this era of activism—a lasting example of how grassroots efforts can become institutions that protect and invest in place.

To mark this 50th anniversary year, SCIDpda launched a series of projects and events celebrating the CID's legacy and resilience. Three themed neighborhood walking tours are taking place throughout 2025, each highlighting a different era of development and community change. A commemorative tile installation is currently underway at Bush Hotel, offering community members a chance to mark their connection to the neighborhood in a lasting way. This fall, SCIDpda will host a gala bringing together longtime supporters, partners, and neighbors to honor the people and stories behind five decades of communitybuilding. Together, these efforts reflect a shared commitment to honoring the past while shaping the future.

As part of the campaign, SCIDpda has also partnered with the Seattle-based creative studio Madrona Bureau to document the voices and memories of key figures who have contributed to the organization's work over the years.

Through filmed interviews and video portraits, the project captures reflections on what the CID has meant to each of them—and how SCIDpda's role has evolved since its early days. Paired with recent footage of the neighborhood, this visual storytelling is helping commemorate the organization's history while creating an archive for future generations.

Looking forward, SCIDpda is continuing to plan for the future of the CID while staying anchored in its founding principles. That includes new housing and commercial developments, support for neighborhood recovery and resilience, and sustained investment in leadership from within the community. While the challenges remain complex—rising costs, climate risks, and ongoing displacement pressures—SCIDpda remains committed to the work of holding space for those who have long called the CID home, while welcoming new generations into its fold.

The 50th anniversary is not just a reflection of how far the organization has come—it's also an invitation to imagine what the next 50 years might look like. How can the CID remain a cultural anchor in a rapidly transforming city? How can development center equity and history at the same time? And how can partnerships between community members, nonprofits, and the public sector continue to support a neighborhood that holds so much significance to so many?

As SCIDpda looks beyond its first 50 years, it remains rooted in the belief that strong neighborhoods are built by the people within them. The work continues—grounded in community, shaped by history, and driven by a vision for a CID that serves all generations.



SCIDpda Board and staff at 50th Anniversary Kick-Off Event, photo by Ronn CM





SCIDpda at 50: A Three-Part Look at Our History

In 2025, SCIDpda celebrates 50 years of preserving and strengthening Seattle's Chinatown International District. As part of our anniversary, we're revisiting and sharing our history with the broader public—highlighting the CID's evolution and SCIDpda's role in shaping it. To help tell this story, we've broken the timeline into three eras, each reflecting a unique phase in the neighborhood's development and our efforts to preserve, uplift, and grow it.

Rooted in Preservation (1975–1999)

Growing with Community (1999-2014)

Building for Future Generations (2015–Beyond)

Through these three articles, we explore how SCIDpda has worked alongside residents, businesses, and community organizations to respond to displacement, reinvest in the neighborhood, and build toward a future where all generations can thrive.



Historic photo of Bush Hotel from S Jackson St

Rooted in Preservation (1975-1999)

The Founding of SCIDpda

The history of the Seattle Chinatown International District (CID) is a story of displacement and resistance. The communities that formed today's CID have endured waves of disruption—from the Chinese Exclusion Act to Japanese American incarceration during WWII, the construction of I-5 in 1969, and the Kingdome's development in the 1970s. Through it all, neighborhood residents, workers, small business owners, and advocates have fought to stay rooted, protecting the cultural and economic life of this place.

Seattle's Chinatown moved twice—first from the waterfront after the to the Great Seattle Fire of 1889, then from 2nd Avenue Extension (now home to Smith Tower) due to the Jackson Regrade—before settling near King Street, where it remains today.

The CID encompasses overlapping enclaves— Chinatown, Japantown (Nihonmachi), historic Filipinotown, and Little Saigon—each shaped by immigration policies, labor patterns, and housing exclusion. Once here, immigrants were subject to additional forms of institutional racism, including redlining that restricted where they could live.

To survive in a hostile environment, immigrants formed tight-knit communities, built housing, opened businesses, and established social support systems. Single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels became the backbone of affordable housing in the neighborhood, providing shelter for working-class men with seasonal jobs in railroads, canneries, and construction. During WWII, the U.S. government forcibly removed, relocated, and incarcerated Japanese Americans, devastating the footprint of Seattle's Nihonmachi



neighborhood.

Beginning in the 1970s, Vietnamese immigrants came to the U.S. and built a thriving business district in the part of the CID known as Little Saigon, creating a strong commercial and community presence in the neighborhood.

By the 1970s, building code changes and real estate speculation began threatening the CID's SRO

housing stock, putting thousands of low-income residents—many of them seniors—at risk.

The Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda) was formed in 1975. The organization was founded to stabilize the neighborhood through community-controlled development to own, rehabilitate, and manage property for the benefit of longtime residents and small businesses.

SCIDpda's first major acquisition was the Bush Hotel. Acquired in 1978, the Bush became more than just housing; it became the anchor for neighborhood revitalization. It housed one of the CID's first senior congregate meal programs that served hundreds of residents, as well as a community center and several offices for other non-profits. It also situated SCIDpda's main office—and remains its home today.

Another early project was the Jackson Apartments, preserved in partnership with a longtime family owner. SCIDpda continues to manage the building today, maintaining its affordability for low-income residents.

In the early 1980s, SCIDpda converted the shuttered New Central Hotel—formerly a workingman's hotel—into affordable senior housing. Like many SROs in the CID, it closed after updated fire codes went into effect. SCIDpda's adaptive response—among the neighborhood's earliest tax credit-financed preservation projects—showed how historic buildings could be adaptively reused to meet modern needs.

For many years, SCIDpda also managed the NP Hotel and Eastern Hotel on behalf of InterIm CDA, supporting low-income residents and helping preserve cultural continuity in the neighborhood.

These early efforts demonstrated SCIDpda's belief in long-term stewardship and its commitment to preserving not only buildings, but the relationships and communities within them.

Laying the Groundwork for Preservation

SCIDpda's work was part of a broader movement to protect, preserve, and revitalize the neighborhood. The International Special Review District (ISRD) was created in 1973 to protect the historic and cultural character of the CID, and in 1986, the neighborhood was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Federal initiatives like Model Cities had already planted the seeds for community-based development, but it was local organizing that ensured these tools were used to serve those most at risk of displacement.

SCIDpda emerged as a new kind of community developer—one rooted in cultural preservation, neighborhood self-determination, and the belief that development should benefit residents first. And it did so with guiding principles that still shape its work today: long-term stewardship, cultural competence, and the belief that neighborhoods thrive where the needs of the community matter most above all else.

Leave Your Mark on the CID

SCIDpda's 50th Anniversary Commemorative Installation

Celebrate SCIDpda's 50th anniversary by becoming a permanent part of the Bush Hotel at 409 Maynard Ave South! Your name and tribute will be printed on a beautifully colored, transparent, vinyl tile, installed in the building's windows next to Hing Hay Coworks — just steps away from Hing Hay Park.

This opportunity is for individual donors only. Apply before September 30.



Growing with Community (1999-2014)

From 1999 to 2014, SCIDpda's role in the Chinatown International District expanded dramatically—not just in square footage, but in vision. After decades spent acquiring and preserving existing buildings to protect residents and small businesses from displacement, SCIDpda stepped into a new era—ready to build, connect, and advocate. This period was defined by bold real estate projects, a new wave of community development work, and deeper roots in every corner of the neighborhood—from Little Saigon to Nihonmachi.

Transformative Real Estate Development

This era marked SCIDpda's first groundup construction projects, starting with International District Village Square I (IDVS I) in 1998, and IDVS II in 2004. These mixed-use developments reshaped the southern edge of the neighborhood, turning a once-vacant King County bus lot into a vibrant community anchor. They demonstrated what culturally responsive, community-centered development looks like.

These projects brought together housing, offices, retail, and critical social services under one roof. IDVS I became home to Legacy House, an adult day health and assisted living facility for Asian American elders, which SCIDpda owned and operated until 2019. Nearby, IDVS II included the International District/ Chinatown Community Center, the CID branch of the Seattle Public Library, and the Domingo Viernes Apartments.

The Domingo Viernes Apartments are especially notable. While immigrant families had long lived in the CID's older, naturally affordable buildings, these were the first units intentionally designed for multigenerational households. Featuring larger floor plans, they directly addressed the needs of families—and would go on to shape SCIDpda's future approach to housing design.

Together, IDVS I and II attracted locally-owned businesses and nonprofits, activated the street with new retail, and provided key services—all while redefining what equitable development in the CID could be. But despite their success, SCIDpda was soon outpaced in the real estate market. Facing rising land prices and aggressive competition, it would be 15 years before SCIDpda could take on another project of similar scale.

A New Model: Community Initiatives

As property development became more challenging, SCIDpda found new ways to support the neighborhood. In 2008, it launched IDEA Space—now known as Community Initiatives—a program aimed at bringing community-led design and problem-solving into projects across the neighborhood. Unlike real estate projects that centered on SCIDpda-owned buildings, this work looked outward—revitalizing alleys, redeveloping parks, improving façades, and leading cleanup and safety efforts.

The redevelopment of Donnie Chin International



International District Village Square 1 (IDVS1)

Children's Park is one such example. Located just across from IDVS II, the park was reimagined to better serve the growing population of families and children living in the area. The effort reflected a broader philosophy taking shape within SCIDpda: that housing and the public realm must go hand in hand to sustain an intergenerational, thriving neighborhood.

This program also provided technical assistance and feasibility studies for historic and cultural preservation projects—like the Louisa Hotel and Chong Wa Benevolent Association's unreinforced masonry building. It supported advocacy on infrastructure and transportation issues such as the streetcar, Union Station lid redevelopment, and I-90 impacts.

Supporting Small Businesses and Cultural Identity

Starting in the late 2000s, SCIDpda deepened its efforts to support small businesses—especially long-standing, immigrant-owned storefronts at risk of disappearing amid the economic downturn of the Great Recession. Through IDEA Space, SCIDpda helped secure grants and design services for historic façade improvements at places like Tai Tung, New Century Tea Gallery, Viet Wah (Asian Plaza), and buildings like the Jackson Building, Panama Hotel, and Eastern Hotel.

By 2014, this work had become more formalized. A retail study funded by the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development led to the hiring of SCIDpda's first Business Development Consultant. This marked the start of a more robust, structured program to assist CID businesses—recruiting new tenants, activating empty storefronts through art and events, and connecting entrepreneurs with needed resources.

Partnership and Presence in Little Saigon

This period also saw SCIDpda expand its presence in Little Saigon, a historic hub for Vietnamese American businesses poised for major growth due to zoning changes.. SCIDpda played a key role in supporting the early formation of Friends of Little Sài Gòn (FLS) serving as their fiscal sponsor, offering staffing and strategic guidance, and co-hosting events like Celebrate Little Saigon.

Working together, SCIDpda and FLS helped launch a number of important community projects: securing land for a new park, conducting a feasibility study for the Little Saigon Landmark Project, and advocating for development that included affordable housing and commercial space. Following a 2011 upzone that allowed mid-rise development in the area, SCIDpda and FLS partnered to ensure that future growth reflected the voices and priorities of the community.

The collaboration also brought visible changes to the streetscape. Translated Vietnamese street

signs, decorative crosswalks at 12th & Jackson, and the historic Đồng Sơn drum face installation at Pho Bac Sup Shop all became markers of cultural pride and identity. SCIDpda worked with FLS to respond thoughtfully to the impacts of the upzone through a lens of proactive placekeeping.

Today, Friends of Little Sài Gòn continues this work as the only place-based organization focused on Little Saigon carrying forward the shared vision of cultural preservation, community advocacy, and economic development.



Building for Future Generations (2015-Beyond)

Real Estate and the Return to Building

This era marked SCIDpda's reentry into real estate development and a renewed commitment to supporting the CID's long-term stability. After years of being priced out of Seattle's competitive land market, SCIDpda partnered with Community Roots Housing in 2019 to win the bid for a key development site. The result was 13th & Fir Family Housing, completed in 2023—SCIDpda's first new affordable housing project since 2004.

Designed for working-class, multigenerational families, the building offers 156 income-restricted units—111 of which are two-bedroom units or larger—along with ground-floor retail and a childcare center operated by Denise Louie Education Center. The project reflects a strategy first modeled in International District Village Square II: replacing aging, naturally occurring affordable housing with high-quality, family-



sized homes that help keep the CID livable and inclusive.

This approach was expanded in Beacon Pacific Village, SCIDpda's newest

development opened in 2024 on the historic Pacific Hospital campus. The project includes 160 income-restricted homes—60% of which are large, family-oriented units—along with childcare provided by El Centro de la Raza and a healthy aging and wellness center operated by International Community Health Service (ICHS). Like 13th & Fir, this site promotes intergenerational living and community connection.

Both projects use SCIDpda's Community

Preference Policy, which prioritizes housing applicants with longstanding ties to the CID and surrounding neighborhoods. Partnerships with culturally specific outreach providers ensured that families were reached inlanguage and with support throughout the leasing process.

Looking ahead, SCIDpda is advancing a few transformative housing projects that will further support the community's needs. The first is the Little Saigon Landmark Project, a partnership with Friends of Little Sài Gòn (FLS). Located at 10th & Jackson, this mixed-use development will feature affordable housing managed by SCIDpda and a Vietnamese Cultural and Economic

Little Sài Gòn Landmark Project, rendering by Mithun

Center led by FLS. Construction is expected to begin in 2026.

The second project is the Spic N Span Redevelopment, planned for a former dry cleaner site on South Dearborn Street. This development will bring 86 to 120 affordable homes to the CID and is supported by a Washington State environmental cleanup grant. The project will also include a community-centered ground floor and incorporate the Community Preference Policy to help current residents remain in the neighborhood.

Expanding Community Initiatives and Small Business Support

To directly support entrepreneurs, SCIDpda opened Hing Hay Coworks (HHC) in 2015, a shared workspace in the heart of the CID. HHC has hosted numerous community-based organizations, including FLS, Enterprise Community Partners, CIDBIA, Historic South Downtown, and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). It remains a vital community hub and point of contact for many seeking neighborhood support.

In 2018, the IDEA Space program evolved into Community Initiatives, reflecting a more integrated approach to neighborhood stabilization. The team works on public space improvements, small business assistance, and culturally-rooted economic development. They've supported storefront revitalization, tenant recruitment, and business consulting and during the COVID-19 pandemic, pivoted to emergency repairs, security upgrades, and vaccine coordination.

In partnership with FLS and CIDBIA, SCIDpda helped create the CID Small Business Relief Team, which supported local businesses with grants, food deliveries, technical assistance, and pop-up vaccination sites. As a member of the Washington State Department of Commerce's Small Business Resiliency Network, SCIDpda continues to connect businesses with resources and recovery support.

SCIDpda also contributed to key public space

plans and placemaking efforts such as the CID Lighting Study, Jackson Street Connections, and alleyway concept plans in Maynard, Canton, and Nihonmachi. Through murals, lighting installations, and park evaluations, the team advanced creative placekeeping and helped shape future capital improvements for Hing Hay Park and Donnie Chin International Children's Park.

Navigating Crisis and Advocating for Safety

In 2015, after the tragic murder of Donnie Chin—a longtime volunteer first responder and public safety advocate—SCIDpda co-chaired the CID Public Safety Task Force in response to community outcry. The task force produced a 50-page report with recommendations to improve City coordination, address crime and environmental risks, and invest in a safer, more vibrant neighborhood. These efforts led to the creation of the CID Public Safety Council and the addition of dedicated roles: a CID Public Safety Coordinator, a Department of Neighborhoods liaison, and a civilian SPD coordinator. The role of public safety continues to be a point of advocacy for SCIDpda, especially as it impacts our residents, small businesses, and employees.

SCIDpda is also actively engaged in tracking and advocating around major upcoming events—like the significant construction impacts of the Sound Transit 3 light rail expansion and the neighborhood-wide disruptions of the FIFA World Cup—to minimize harmful impacts on residents and small businesses.

Looking Ahead

As SCIDpda enters its next 50 years, its role as developer, advocate, and cultural steward continues to evolve. Grounded in community ownership and culturally rooted design, the organization remains focused on creating a neighborhood where families, elders, and future generations can thrive—together.



An Oral History of the SCIDpda

In collaboration during SCIDpda's 50th Anniversary, local marketing firm Madrona Bureau gathered SCIDpda leadership of past and present to discuss their experiences in the CID. While the individual interviews are to-bereleased, quotes from each individual give us a glance into the organization's history.

GERRY JOHNSON

SCIDpda founding attorney

"In response to the Kingdome project, the city formed the International Special Review District dedicated toward the preservation of the physical structures in the district. At the same time, the federal government was in the process of urban renewal, pouring money into central cities. The City of Seattle had become much more progressive. Leaders seized the opportunity to preserve important aspects of the city's historic urban architecture. So a public development authority was formed — and one was formed here in the ID."

RON CHEW

Former SCIDpda consultant

"The Bush Hotel had been neglected for years, but we saw potential. We created a plan that brought in small businesses, community services, and even a performance space. It wasn't just a restoration — it was an act of self-determination. The building became a hub. And what was really powerful was that people could live upstairs and work or connect downstairs. It gave the neighborhood new life and purpose. That's what SCIDpda was about — development with people at the center."

MIKE OMURA

Emeritus SCIDpda Board President and Director of Real Estate Development

"A lot of the buildings in the CID were — and some still are — single-room occupancy, which means it's like a dormitory. You had just a room, maybe with a little kitchenette, but that's it. The bathrooms were common. The kitchens were common. To make it into a one-bedroom or even a studio apartment building took a lot of effort, because you had to install bathrooms, kitchens all those kinds of things — in every unit."



Still image of Ron Chew from video interviews conducted by Madrona Bureau

WAYNE LAU

Emeritus SCIDpda Board Secretary

"It was a very exciting time to be part of SCIDpda. With Sue Taoka's leadership and strong political and philanthropic connections, we were able to pursue the acquisition of the Village Square I site [International District Village Square], which at the time was owned by Metro Transit. The site was environmentally contaminated, so a major challenge was negotiating cleanup without spending money we didn't have. But the vision was clear: housing above, a health clinic, and a childcare center below. We had to piece together funding from tax credit financing and early forms of social impact investment. It was truly a labor of grit and commitment. If we didn't do it, who would?"

SUE TAOKA

Emeritus SCIDpda Executive Director

"When we cut the ribbon at International District Village Square I, some of the elders came up to us crying. They said, 'You listened to us.' That's what it was all about. We built what the community told us they needed. It took years. And nobody thought we could do it. But we did."

JAMIE LEE

SCIDpda Co-Executive Director

"IDEA Space was seen as the economic development arm of the PDA. SCIDpda up until that point had been a very operation-based organization. It provided housing, it developed housing, it provided property management. And this was our way to go beyond the buildings. IDEA Space was formed to look at the public spaces. Actually, Donnie Chin International Children's Park was the first project out of IDEA Space — and it was completely community driven."

JARED JONSON

SCIDpda Co-Executive Director

"The neighborhood will never go away or cease to exist. There's just too much tradition and history here. We own and operate property and always will. When I think about the next 50 years, I think about growing exponentially — offering housing at every level, from senior studios to family-sized housing and hopefully homeownership. We'll keep advocating for small businesses and leading in neighborhood planning. If anything, we're leaning more into the future."

MAIKO WINKLER-CHIN

Emeritus SCIDpda Executive Director

"One of the great things I learned while working here is the real value of family housing."

"It was really interesting to me that International District Village Square II — I think it's 57 units, including two- and three-bedroom units — had about 20% of the original residents still living there 20 years later. It showed that the housing we built family housing — was really important. People really needed that type of unit, that unit size."



Still image of Maiko Winkler-Chin from video interviews conducted by Madrona Bureau



\$156M

assets currently managed

\$8.2M

total operating expenses (2023)

278

immigrant-, refugee-, or BIPOCowned small businesses supported through the Small Business Relief Team

70 commercial units managed

15

small businesses, non-profits, and independent contractors working out of Hing Hay Coworks Photo by Ronn CM

7

buildings currently in SCIDpda's real estate development pipeline

4

parks redeveloped or supported

3

alleys improved for public use and cultural preservation

13

buildings currently under active management

18

buildings managed over SCIDpda's 50-year history









39% of SCIDpda residents identify as



31% of SCIDpda residents identify as Black or African-American

66% of SCIDpda residents are at or below 30% Area Median Income

38% of SCIDpda residents are minors

20% of SCIDpda residents are seniors

Asian

61%

SCIDpda tenants are living in a 2-bedroom unit or larger

555

affordable housing units currently managed



Photo by Kyle Igarashi