

A Comparative Study of Design Guidelines for Chinatowns in North America: A
Reference for Façade Design Regulation in Seattle's Chinatown – International
District

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Abstract

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This research is a comparative study of building design guidelines in North American Chinatowns, with specific attention to the exteriors façade design of historically significant buildings. It aims to provide insight as to the effectiveness of building design controls in communicating the concept of community character compatibility and achieving the goal of rehabilitating and maintaining the exteriors of historic buildings. The research includes a brief account of public design control and guidelines for façade alterations in the International District, as well as detailed analysis of approaches to rehabilitating historic buildings adopted by other similar neighborhoods and how these approaches might be applied to the improvement of future design guidelines for the International District. This comparative study should assist policy-makers in drafting design guidelines, and guide further research on the complicated issue of stakeholder participation, financial feasibility and mechanism of implementation. Thus it was mainly informed by a review of secondary source materials and by a comparative study of guidelines for rehabilitating historic buildings in similar neighborhoods.

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

Chinatown – International District, a neighborhood nestled south of the central business district of Seattle, and a cultural hub of the Asian American community, offers a vivid example of the manner in which people of Asian cultures settle together to build and shape the physical aspects of their community inside the context of an American city. Many buildings, in particular early 20th-century brick commercial buildings, illustrate how Asian traditions were combined with Western architecture. An excellent example of this merging appears in the second and third-floor tile-roofed balconies, typical in south China, that were appended to these buildings.¹ The district's building scale, parcel pattern and grid plan were defined by these historically significant buildings, which have become the architectural and cultural anchors of the district's identity, and are essential components of Chinatown character.

Within such grid system, the district's physical composition is characterized by these three- to six-story brick buildings (Figure 1) that feature ground level retail or service businesses with residential units in the upper stories. Several remaining wood frame houses are scattered around the district, as well as some industrial buildings on the perimeter of the district are either old, functionally obsolete or underutilized.² Many recently constructed commercial buildings with decorative tiled roofs and other oriental style features add color to the streetscape and exhibit the area's Asian character.

1. "International District (Seattle Chinatown Historic District)," National Park Service, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/seattle/s32.htm>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIRdxyZK> on June 15, 2015.

2. Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority, *International District, An Inventory of Buildings and Urban Design Resources*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://historicseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/International-District-1.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZITfFWeq> on June 15, 2015.

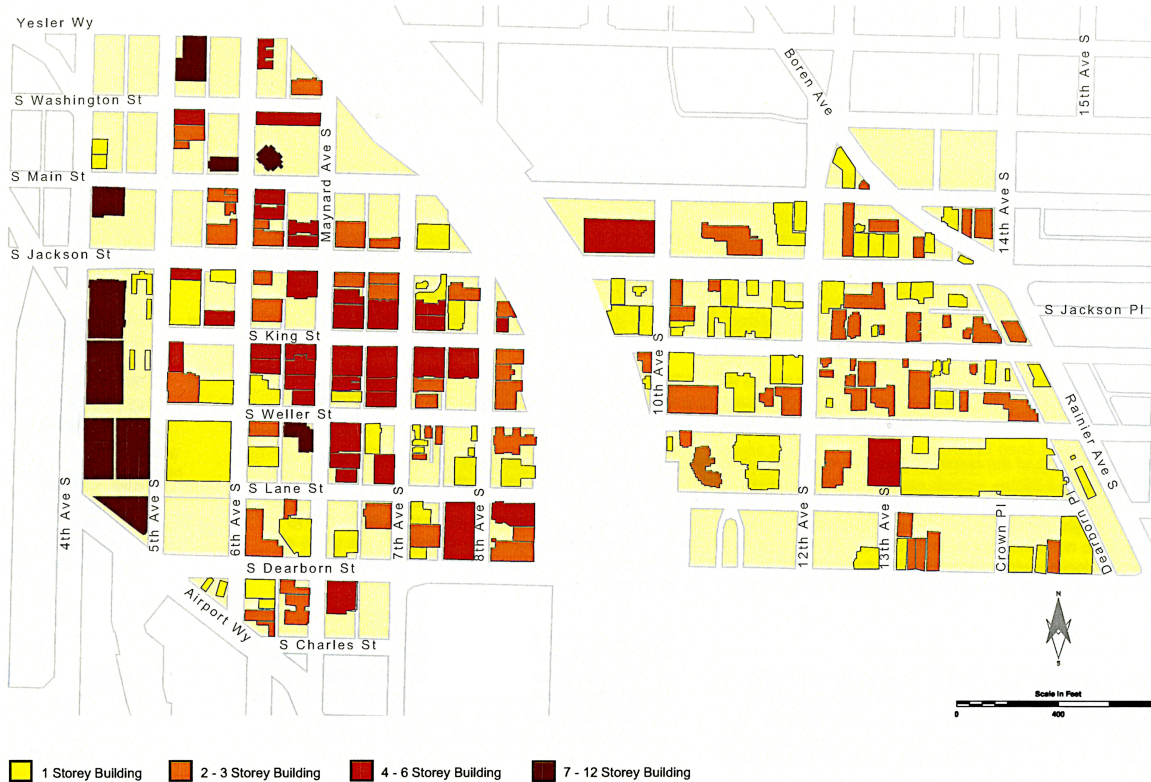


Figure 1. Building Typology

Source: UBC School of Regional and Community Planning, *Chinatown International District Urban Design Plan*.

Related to these visual manifestations of the district's cultural and history background are the neighborhood's multi-ethnic characteristic defined by affordable housing, ethnic-specific social services, specialty groceries and a dense cluster of Asian restaurants. These have been subject to the impact of deterioration and closure of some existing buildings, and the encroachment of surrounding public infrastructure development, such as the construction of Interstate 5 that cuts off a portion of the district and acts as a barrier to the eastern part of the neighborhood. In response to this, the city has designated the International District a landmark district subject to protection by city ordinance; established design guidelines in anticipation of future residential and commercial growth within the neighborhood. For purposes of zoning and land use, the city established International Special Review District (ISRD) through an ordinance in 1973.³ The seven-member ISRD Board applies the design guidelines to proposed projects in order to

3. "International Special Review District," Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, accessed August 11, 2014, <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/preservation/id.htm>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIOKx9kc> on June 15, 2015.

preserve the district's unique Asian American character. Five members of the ISRD Board are elected by the community in annual elections and two are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council. Two of the five elected members are property or business owners in the district or who are employed in the district; two are residents in the district or have demonstrated an interest in the district; one member is elected at large.⁴ The city also encourages support for the neighborhood by guiding the rehabilitation of areas for housing and pedestrian-oriented businesses to retain its significant architectural and cultural qualities. Thus besides ISRD Board, there are several community-based organizations that provide affordable housing, property management assistance, economic revitalization efforts, park renovations and alley activation, and other community services to local residents particularly the low-income elderly and new immigrants as well as to the community at large.

This research is a comparative study of building design guidelines in North American Chinatowns, with specific attention to the exteriors of historically significant buildings, analyzing the results provided by different design standards pertaining to scale, architectural style, and a building's relationship to the public realm and the pedestrian experience.

By regulating the overall built environment and design details of historic buildings, such as materials and color, the International District has made sustained effort to maintain the architectural styles and identifiable image of the neighborhood. Despite all that, there is a distinct lack of clear standards in human scale and pedestrian environment, such as building forms, parcel pattern, and exterior façade design's relationship to pedestrian interest. Readers, particularly local policy-makers, therefore, may gain from this research in analyzing the historically contributing buildings, and in drafting design guidelines to benefit the long-term preservation of a building's significance through the preservation of typologies and architectural features. The ultimate goal is to guide exterior façade design of existing buildings and new construction, which will maintain and strengthen those prevailing building forms that make the International District a unique historic neighborhood.

4. Jeffrey Hou, "Preserving for Multiple Publics: Contesting Views of Urban Conservation in Seattle's International District," *City & Time* 1, no. 1 (2004): 32.

1.1 METHODS

The methods employed to complete the research consist of a literature review of public design control in American communities, studies on the development of North American Chinatowns, as well as existing publications such as legal guidelines and design review from local government; and, a comparative study of guidelines for rehabilitating historic buildings in other neighborhoods. The analysis of each neighborhood's practice will focus on: the extent to which guidelines are underpinned by design philosophy and considerations for scale and pattern, neighborhood context and so on; the extent to which guidelines are based on careful study of community character and architectural components; the extent to which guidelines are visualized for the purpose of better communication with the public. Having established the main criteria (Table 1) for evaluating different neighborhoods' efforts in building design control, it is possible to compare the different ways in which design guidelines are organized and documented to support neighborhood in communicating the concept of community character compatibility and rehabilitating historic buildings.

Table 1. Design Guidelines Checklist

	Washington D.C.	San Francisco	Vancouver
General Design Considerations			
Scale and Pattern			
Pedestrian Interest			
Architectural Components			
Historic Study of Heritage Buildings			
Three-part Facades			
Reader-friendly Document			
User Guide/FAQ/Flowchart...			
Legibility			
Illustrations and Photos			

1.2 TERMS

“Design Review”: design review is a procedure, like zoning, used by cities and towns to control the aesthetics and design of development projects.⁵

“Rehabilitation”: the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.⁶

“Façade”: a façade is the exterior wall and the most notable visual feature of a building.

“Human Scale”: human scale can be characterized by the proportional relationship between physical environment (i.e., buildings, sidewalks, street furniture, etc.) and human dimension.

“Compatibility”: how compatible is the building’s mass, bulk and scale, as well as detailing and surface treatment with those of neighborhood’s existing buildings?

“Sense of Place”: Sense of place is a term that includes a broad range of factors. It is the combination of natural location, created features, and values and feelings that individuals or groups associate with a particular locality, which makes each place on this earth unique. It includes the history of each place, what has happened in the past, and how the place has evolved into what currently can be seen. It is constructed on an individual basis and means different things for different people. The sense of place is going to be different for a long-term resident than it is for someone who recently moved to an area. It is going to be different for a teenager than it is for a senior citizen. It often changes through the years.⁷

5. Brenda Case Scheer and Wolfgang F. E. Preiser, *Design Review: Challenging Urban Aesthetic Control* (New York: Chapman & Hall, 1994), 1.

6. “Rehabilitation as a Treatment,” National Park Service, accessed August 11, 2014, <http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments/treatment-rehabilitation.htm>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIRWOspw> on June 15, 2015.

7. Amy Tirmenstein, “What Is Sense of Place?,” *Shaped by a River – The Quad Cities*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.augustana.edu/academics/geography/departments/river/shapedqc/definition.htm>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIPEzsQF> on June 15, 2015

“Community Character”: Sociology and urban design have dealt the most with this question and each has a different perspective on the answer. Sociologists naturally focus on social characteristics. According to Roland Warren, various criteria, “thought to characterize communities include a specific population living within a specific geographic area, amongst whom there are present shared institutions and values and significant social interaction.” The emphasis is on people, their institutions and their interrelationships. This thesis specifically defines this term in relation to urban design by emphasizing the visual and cultural characteristics. According to Harry Garnham, “Each and every place has some measure of unique expression or quality...[and contains] locally special attributes.” Garnham says these include aspects of...the sensory experience (primarily visual) and cultural expressions such as historical structures.⁸

8. Gary Pivo, “How Do You Define Community Character?,” *Small Town*, (1992): 4-5.

Chapter 2. DESIGN CONTROLS IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

2.1 DESIGN GUIDELINES AND DESIGN REVIEW

Urban design guidelines, a set of design recommendations or standards that is intended to guide development within a city, neighborhood, block or a particular property, are usually adopted to advance the policies, goals and objectives of city's plan and help translate these directions into desired outcomes for the design of the physical environment such as streets, parks, open spaces and buildings. The concept of urban design as public policy was first introduced by Jonathan Barnett back in 1974—created in New York when Barnett worked in Mayor John Lindsay's reform administration, the concept was the result of Barnett's reflection on the instruments he used to manage the redevelopment of New York; it was a strong influence in establishing urban design as a necessary element of local government.⁹ Meanwhile, major cities and metropolitan areas on the West Coast such as San Francisco and Portland had developed their own sophisticated plans and review processes. Through the 1980s design review took root across many American cities.¹⁰ By the mid-1990s, design was consolidated as a major concern in planning, and its development was driven by several new agendas such as public concern with the maintenance of a sense of place and city's unique characteristics, awareness of the need for protecting sustainability of development at the macro and micro scale, a strategic view of urban design as a shaper of urban form citywide as well as the desire to improve the attractiveness of urban settlements as places to live and work.¹¹ In the process of designing and shaping cities, design guidelines by themselves are not able to automatically guarantee good design, and are not intended to achieve minimal design solutions or resolve zoning disputes, they are nonetheless important elements within a regulatory framework to provide a basis for decision making, assist designers, developers and the public in understanding a city's urban design expectation. At their most basic, design guidelines are served as tools that set out design parameters through the process of evaluating proposed development, however:

9. John Punter, "Developing Urban Design As Public Policy: Best Practice Principles for Design Review and Development Management," *Journal of Urban Design* 12, no. 2 (2007): 168.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 169.

Different countries have different traditions and use different forms of guidance to greater and lesser degrees. In France, typo-morphological guidance is commonly used to understand and respond to the character of larger historic areas. In Australia, Victoria's ResCode [design and building code that applies to residential areas across Victoria and covers buildings up to three stories in height] provides a state-level design guide for residential developments, while, in the USA, the New Urbanists' Transect offers a generic design guidance for all types of development along a continuum from city core to countryside.¹²

Reflecting the diversity of forms guidance, there has been a variety of types of design control, among which are local design guides, design strategies, design frameworks, design briefs, etc.¹³ Depending on the resources available for the preparation of design guidance, some cities use flexible site-specific formats, while others use similar checklists for all sites. For development within particular districts like historic neighborhoods, what many American cities do is to customize design guidance "as a measure to overcome what the zoning system has allegedly failed to achieve: . . . to maintain the quality of the environment of an entire community, . . . and to enhance community character and contribute to a heightened image and sense of community."¹⁴ Such guidelines have directed project reviewers and community members to look closely at the neighborhood and its character, and to evaluate the design aspect of proposed development through the design review process. The notion of protecting, strengthening or even creating desirable community character by means of design guidelines and design review process is often considered one of the most important objectives of design control.¹⁵

2.2 THE CONTROL OF THE EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF STRUCTURES

Buildings are typically subject to design control, usually both by the design review boards at the neighborhood level and by cities' urban planning staffs. The design guidelines and design review, in their attempt to achieve maximum efficiency in preserving historic building and creating beautiful community character, tend to be focus on details, as they are easy to define.¹⁶ In late 1980s, Habe's study of design control procedures adopted by 66 local communities throughout

12. Matthew Carmona et al., *Public Places, Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2010), 311.

13. Ibid.

14. Reiko Habe, "Public Design Control in American Communities," *Town Planning Review* 60, no. 2 (1989): 195.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 215.

the United States reported that most communities placed strong emphasis on architectural design details, and criteria or standards included in the design guidelines were mainly related to visual or physical design aspects of community environment.¹⁷ Planners and designers, who worked on drafting design guidelines, when being asked in Habe's survey to rationalize public design control for community character compatibility, responded that aesthetic reasons are not the only reason for public design control. However, the visual aspects of the structures and their surroundings are still most often stated in the published guidelines.¹⁸ Giving attention to street pictures or city images, design guidelines has adequately described the various visual criteria and compositional devices, including building orientation, façade patterns, building's color, shadow play, lighting, sidewalks, storefront, etc.

2.3 CRITICISMS OF DESIGN CONTROL

Design control's focus on dealing with the visual rather than human activities and spatial aspects of the environment is considered "widespread tendency."¹⁹ Madanipour, in *Urban design reader*, argues that "this can be an understandable mistake, as when we want to understand space our first, and the most important, encounter is a visual experience. We first see the objects in front of us and then begin to understand how they relate to each other . . . , [however] if our understanding is limited to a visual understanding, we only concentrate on shapes."²⁰ He says, ". . . policy guidance given to the planners on design in the planning process, . . . appears to treat design as mainly dealing with the appearance of the built environment." Punter also criticizes the design review system for its long history of being conceived as aesthetic control, focused almost entirely on visual appearance and its obsession with the control of elevations.²¹ A more telling criticism against this is that "it is a diversion of political energy from environmental, social and economic problems, and not insignificantly, . . . from the necessity for genuine urban design . . . , as the government is allowed to think that it is 'taking care' of the 'ugly' problem through the institution of design review,"²² says Brenda Case Scheer, "design review is reluctant to acknowledge that there are no rules to create beauty. . . , [and] design excellence is not easily

17. Ibid., 202.

18. Ibid., 199.

19. Matthew Carmona and Steve Tiesdell, *Urban Design Reader* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2007), 15.

20. Ibid.

21. Punter, "Developing Urban Design," 182.

22. Scheer and Preiser, *Design Review*, 9.

defined by hard and fast principles.” A design reviewer must sooner or later face up to the difficulty of deciding what is right and what is wrong—in short, making judgments. Some have argued that design review could simply drop the idea of beauty, since it is too slippery to be legal, and focus instead on “shared values.”²³

When people argue that design control deals with visual aspects of the urban environment, some also contend that the scope of design criteria and standards should be broadened in order to:

include more user-oriented behavioral and functional criteria and shift attention away from aesthetic details to less aesthetically deterministic criteria and standards. In other words, emphasis on broader behavioral criteria, which inevitably imply visual attributes, but do not dictate any specific design details or aesthetic tastes, should help control the level of specificity in criteria and standards. Moreover, such emphasis encourages the exploration of alternative relationships between new and old development, including harmony through contrast.²⁴

In a much broader and less prescriptive approach illustrated by cities like Seattle, Portland and San Francisco, architectural issues are integrated with urbanistic²⁵ and landscape issues in order to achieve a comprehensive approach to urban environmental quality.²⁶ Punter’s examples, in which performance rather than prescriptive guidelines will be encouraged, reveals the importance of “urbanistic” design principles that will be integrated with the more common architectural principles.²⁷ He also indicates that these major West Coast cities seem to rely on a few key objectives each split into a number of design principles, notably Portland’s 1988 Downtown Plan that:

has three objectives and 26 principles that are broad and general—reinforce the pedestrian system, protect the pedestrian, bridge pedestrian obstacles, provide pedestrian stopping places, make open spaces successful—and are barely elaborated in the four sentences which accompany each guideline. They are brought together in a checklist so that planners can determine whether or not the guideline is applicable to the proposed

23. John J. Costonis, "Law and Aesthetics: A Critique and a Reformulation of the Dilemmas," *Michigan Law Review* 80, no. 3 (1982): 418.

24. Habe, "Public Design Control," 215.

25. N. I. Payton, "Corrupting the Masses with Good Taste" in B. C. Lightner and W. Preiser, *op. cit.*, (1992): 238. Urbanistic criteria relate to the relationship of buildings to other buildings (*vis-à-vis* height relative to street width and other buildings), to set back lines, to parks etc. In essence all of those characteristics that determine the walls of the urban room.

26. John Punter, *Design Guidelines in American Cities: A Review of Design Policies and Guidance in Five West Coast Cities* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 203.

27. *Ibid.*, 199.

development or not, and whether it complies or not. A very similar approach has been adopted in Seattle with 27 principles (also called guidelines) for site planning, bulk, architectural treatment, pedestrian relationship and landscaping. These are described as guidelines and the checklist is used to establish which are the priority considerations from the neighborhood's viewpoint. Both checklists provide valuable ways of briefing developers, or articulating community wishes, or of evaluating proposals, because they can identify which broad but widely supported principles, collectively, will be critical to design quality.²⁸

Although the concept of urbanistic and the significance of the relationship between built elements and the environmental context was demonstrated by planners and designers in the early 1960s, design control still tend to be specific about visual aspects, not meaningful at the community scale. Scheer explains the reason for this tendency to increase the use of objective criteria in architectural details, "The arbitrariness of design review is a result of the vagueness of the guidelines, and the inconsistency of the reviewers. The solution would seem to be more definite guidelines, more precise rules, judgment tempered by precedent"²⁹ In an attempt to solve these issues, Payton suggests, "architectural criteria are those that relate to the buildings themselves, or objects within the urban milieu. In an ideal world buildings would be successful urbanistically and architecturally. However, if only one were possible, the greatest effort should be applied to the former, consistently throughout the entire locale."³⁰

2.4 BROAD VS. SPECIFIC

The fact that it is important to broaden the concept of design above architectural styles and visual aspects of environment is beyond doubt. It is becoming almost essential for cities to have design guidance about the concept of urbanistic, and "context that embrace patterns of use, activity and movement in an area."³¹ By "design" in this context we no longer only refer to building's aesthetic concept as expressed through its external appearance and in relation to its context or setting. In fact, the least popular among academics were design standards that were more specifically related to "aesthetic control,"³² for example, encouraging decorative storefront or unique architectural details; and their research indicates a trend towards "design principles which

28. Ibid., 201.

29. Scheer and Preiser, *Design Review*, 7.

30. Payton, "Corrupting the Masses," 238.

31. Punter, *Design Guidelines*, 202.

32. Scheer and Preiser, *Design Review*, 13

have a strong social/activity dimension relating to street life and pedestrian”³³ and a broad design strategy at city level which exemplifies community-based design guidelines for some of the major sites with potential for redevelopment.

However, some planners and designers, according to Habe, feel that lack of specificity in design guidelines has resulted in uncertainty for the developers.³⁴ Scheer makes the point that most design principles being used extensively are extremely general and transferable from one place to another.³⁵ Under the design guidance with “repetition of ‘safe design vocabularies’ ”³⁶ that tend to be universal and abstract, there is lack of clarity and precision in its principles, with the result that the creativity or the expression of architectural styles is not likely to be guided and encouraged and streetscape becomes more monotonous. Traditional neighborhood design tools, which include specific, strong aesthetic and appearance themes has been seen as a solution to deterioration of historic buildings though, some fear that it may not address community context and character because they are tools developed by architects, ideologically and overly prescriptive.

Guidelines with overly aesthetic controls are controlling too much, leaving little room for creativity. They are just as bad as loosely written ones. Good design guidelines for neighborhoods should balance predictable results with flexibility and creativity, with emphasis both on the form of the public realm and architectural design of significant buildings; and they need to be developed under an open participatory process that begins with the meticulous study of the current physical context and community character. Particularly, design guidelines as part of revitalization efforts in historic districts where transmission of shared values and norms exists, should have a more cohesive historic narrative for significant structures and for the entire community, telling us much about heritage buildings and their decorative elements, about the people who built and used them, and about those who preserved these tangible links to our past. In addition, the way to “overcome the fears and prejudices that conventionally hamper communication in the planning process between different cultural groups in a multi-ethnic

33. Punter, *Design Guidelines*, 57.

34. Habe, “Public Design Control,” 215.

35. Scheer and Preiser, *Design Review*, 8

36. Habe, “Public Design Control,” 218.

community like Chinatown should be a greater understanding the various place meanings and socially constructed identities of all parties.”³⁷

37. Dan Abramson, Lynne Manzo, and Jeffrey Hou, “From Ethnic Enclave to Multi-ethnic Translocal Community: Contested Identities and Urban Design in Seattle's Chinatown-International District,” *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 23, no. 4 (2006): 354.

Chapter 3. AMERICAN CHINATOWNS

What distinguishes design review in the historic district from many other situations, according to Beasley, is the setting: there is an existing, established context with determined boundaries to which the community attributes identified cultural values and meanings;³⁸ and it is no doubt that creating design guidelines that reflect the multi-ethnic communities that provide various placing meanings and identities is a tough challenge. Usually, in a historic district, a review board that is appointed to “review proposed alterations, changes to existing buildings and new structures within district boundaries, consist of five to nine members with representatives from design, preservation, legal, real estate profession, and the district property owners.”³⁹ This picture becomes more complicated across ethnic communities like Chinatowns in United States, where are not exclusively Chinese anymore, but more of pan-Asian neighborhoods that reflect the diversity of Asian communities, including Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Filipinos, Japanese, and others. In short, individuals or groups may change their stance on projects being reviewed based on what may be seen as the best interest of their ethnic identity.

Besides, Kamikawa’s study raises the issue that “a community may assume that advocacy for historic preservation will lead to political or economic empowerment; ... , and continuous emphasis on these differences [how an ethnic community’s social customs, values and architectural traditions are distinct from others] can reinforce stereotypes and perpetuate societal expectations regarding an ethnic community, regardless of whether or not these stereotypes or expectations are accurate.”⁴⁰ In fact, Chinatowns no longer fit the stereotype of tourist destinations and immigrant reception areas. They become an much more important realm for ethnic groups to engage in political and social mobilization to address shared concerns and negotiate differences, both of which involve a conscious reconstruction of identities and boundaries.⁴¹

38. Ellen Beasley, “Reviewing New Design in Historic Districts,” in *Design Review: Challenging Urban Aesthetic Control*, ed. Brenda Case Scheer and Wolfgang F. E. Preiser (New York: Chapman & Hall, 1994), 20.

39. Ibid.

40. Manami Kamikawa, “Historic Preservation in Urban Ethnic Enclaves: Four Chinatown Case Studies” (master’s thesis, Columbia University, 2006), 1.

41. Abramson et al., “Contested Identities,” 354.

Therefore when reviewing a project or working for historic preservation in an ethnic neighborhood, which usually was not what was expected, those questions are crystallized:

1. How the complex social and political history has influenced the neighborhood growth?
2. How do individuals or groups associate their values or feelings with this unique locality?
3. How the multiethnic character of the community has been defined?
4. Whether or not this character can be preserved?

The following sections will progress from social history of North American Chinatowns and then to more tangible aspects of neighborhood's physical character such as architecture, morphologies and urbanism.

3.1 HISTORY

Chinatowns existed initially as enclaves that ease transition for immigrants from Asia into the American Culture. The Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos were the first Asians to arrive in the United States in large numbers. The Korean and Vietnam wars, the liberalization of U.S. immigration policy in 1965, and the desire for more highly skilled workers all promoted more immigration from Asian countries,⁴² and provided opportunity for American Chinatowns to become family-centered communities.⁴³ The earliest Chinatowns tended to be on the west coast while the newer ones are being built in lesser profile cities as opportunities shift. The bigger difference is that on the west coast, many urban neighborhoods and other settlements were originally built by Chinese (and then other Asian) immigrants, while on the east coast the immigrants tended to settle into neighborhoods originally built by immigrants from Europe. D.C.'s Chinatown, for instance, was formerly populated by German immigrants.

Most of the early Chinese immigrants were rather inclined to stay in the United States for a short period of time, making their fortunes and sending money to families back home, instead of

42. David Johnson, "Chinatowns and Other Asian-American Enclaves," Infoplease, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/chinatowns1.html>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIRmd9vS> on June 15, 2015.

43. Jan Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclaves and Global Change* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 23.

wanting to build a new life there. This is one of the reasons that they show a tendency toward isolation and little interest in assimilation or settling down in their new country. In the public imagination, Chinatown may be an inner city neighborhood, a tourist attraction, or a skid row district;⁴⁴ as Lin discussed in the preface of his *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclaves and Global Change*:

Chinatown has historically been inscribed as an over crowded, dilapidated place, plagued with social wretchedness and vice.... Though many people comfortably tour the district for its visual exoticism and culinary delights, this voyeurism is often backgrounded by the persisting suspicion and insinuation of a mysterious clannish quarter. This conception implicates Chinatown as a place beset with social problems such as sweatshops and undocumented immigrants, and urban pathologies such as ill sanitation, poverty, and organized criminal syndicates.⁴⁵

“Less attention is paid to the bright face of these dynamic and unique communities,” says Zhou, “there are signs of prosperity, hope, and solidarity everywhere. Businesses are growing and thriving.... A cohesive ethnic culture—a work ethic, persistence, self-esteem, a spirit of self-sacrifice and family commitment—helps them unfold their American dream.”⁴⁶ The success and survival of Chinatown greatly depended on the family and district benevolent associations that served as political and social support systems to newcomers. Today, many urban Chinatowns in the United States are becoming visitor centers rather than serving as the ethnic enclaves they once were. Young people have moved out of crowded core Chinatowns, since they are limited by their capacity to grow and they can no longer serve as major residential areas over the course of several generations. Smaller Chinatowns like the one in Washington, D.C. have been fading for years. Probably only the commonly seen ornate welcome gates and some signs in Chinese could remind you that these are “nothing more than an immigrant ghetto—a rundown residential neighborhood or, at best, a culturally distinctive enclave.”⁴⁷ Now the Chinatowns in San Francisco and New York are depopulating, becoming less residential and more service-oriented. The initial 2010 U.S. census results revealed drops in core areas of San Francisco’s Chinatown. In Manhattan, the census showed a decline in Chinatown’s population for the first time in recent

44. David Chuenyan Lai, “The Visual Character of Chinatowns,” in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 81.

45. Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown*, ix.

46. Min Zhou, *Chinatown the socioeconomic potential of an urban enclave* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 8-9.

47. *Ibid.*, 91.

memory—almost 9 percent overall, and a 14 percent decline in the Asian population. This kind of departure portends the loss of places once so integral to Chinese Americans.⁴⁸ The same thing happen to the Chinatown – International District in Seattle, where Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos settle and grew together. This district is consistently confronting dramatic changes and trying to maintain its identify in the shadow of urban developments like stadiums and new office complexes. Many business owners and merchants do not actually live in the International District, as the goal for many has been to move out of the neighborhood once a certain amount of financial security had been reached.⁴⁹

3.2 SENSE OF PLACE

Many of those early immigrants who came across the Pacific to the United States were young men, mostly married men who left their wives behind in their native villages to bring up their children and care for the elderly in their extended families. They came merely as laborers, not as settlers. They were able to penetrate into marginal economic activities, which might not interest local workers. Many found employment in laundry services, or as servants and cooks in substantial households; other were able to set up gift shops or other small businesses. Restaurants emerged in Chinatowns primarily to meet the needs of the bachelors who had to spend most of the time working everyday and hardly had time to cook. These restaurants and teahouses, with small space, that were originally set up to satisfy the immediate needs of Chinese laborers, sprang up as the number of bachelors became larger. When the general population gradually accepted Chinese food, the restaurant business was extended to cater for a much broader clientele. Besides the small business, Chinatowns functioned as social centers of support that gave the workers in the foreign land the feeling of home. The eating places or pieces of small open spaces near their crowded housing were especially important for these hardworking men without any knowledge of English or of American culture, who needed a place to hang out, to play cards, and to chat over things happening at home and around them.⁵⁰

48. Bonnie Tsui, “The End of Chinatown,” *The Atlantic*, December, 2011, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/12/the-end-of-chinatown/308732/>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIOvEuct> on June 15, 2015.

49. Brian P. Kalthoff, “An Analysis of Historic Preservation and Affordable Housing Incentives in Seattle’s Chinatown – International District” (master’s thesis, University of Washington, 2012), 18.

50. Zhou, *Chinatown*, 35.

This initial sojourning tradition defined the immigrants' life in early Chinatowns and profoundly shaped the social and cultural structure of Chinatowns in the future. Because of the need for social and cultural support from fellow sojourners and the need to maintain ethnic identity and kinship ties with China, immigrants chose their own way of life in Chinatowns that reminded them of home.⁵¹ What has happened in the past influenced how Chinatowns have physically evolved into what currently can be seen. The man-made physical environment, such as the Chinese restaurants, the small retails, and the commercial and residential buildings of that uniform architectural ugliness prevalent in the last generation, gave people a sense of history, a sense of identity, and a sense of place. Things that represent the characteristics of these ethnic enclaves and make up this unique quality of Chinatown life need to be identified, enhanced and protected. Moreover, the value of these "inner cities" is not merely determined or limited by its appearance or aesthetic qualities but also by its potential for affording different activities, the social interaction and processes that distinguish Chinatowns from any other communities in the United States.

3.3 COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Understanding how sense of place develops and changes is relevant to considering how people interact with their inner multiethnic environment and relevant factors outside of the community boundaries. Thought to characterize such surroundings includes the "measure of unique expression or quality such as aspects of the sensory experience (primarily visual) and cultural expressions such as historical structures."⁵² Fletcher caught the expression of the old Chinatown in San Francisco in *Ten Drawings in Chinatown*:

It is a place of novel sensations of sight, of sound and of smell.... these houses were residences and hotels built by the early settlers of San Francisco.... Since their white owners have abandoned them to the Chinese, the latter have wrought a marvelous change on the straight, colorless lines and surfaces; not intentionally in the interests of art, but unwittingly by the gradual process of living in them. These American dwellings have become so saturated with Chinese life that it may be said to ooze out the surface. Picket fences bristle above the roofs, domestic defenses against the police and neighborhood feuds and forays; little balconies have budded forth from the flat walls; closed wooden constructions project from the windows, connected by aerial stairways and ladders;

51. Ibid., 40.

52. Pivo, "Define Community Character?," 4-5.

partitions have been raised wherever space permitted and frequently where it did not. The result is surprising but picturesque medley of angles, nooks and corners. Simultaneously the color instinct painted the balconies a bright green or yellow, put potted plants on the ledges, hung gaudy lanterns on every projection, pasted red and black hieroglyphics on the walls, ornamented the shop signs with crimson rosettes and streamers, and in fine, turned the commonplace American streets into a show of barbaric gorgeousness.⁵³

Nowadays, the expression of Chinatowns was altered by the substantial new construction (Figure 2), including luxury condominiums, boutique hotels, trendy restaurants, and modern office complexes, which are usually on or out the borders of Chinatowns. Through this sort of process of absorption, the new development is leading to the displacement of low-income residents as well as small businesses. The physical proximity of Chinatowns to luxury neighborhoods, stadiums, or city centers makes them attractive for the development of decent housing and high-end commercial spaces, thus jeopardizing the existence of Chinatowns and threatening the character of these areas as economically, culturally, and socially diverse neighborhoods. Outsiders, typical visitors who come to the United States for the first time, having no chance to witness the combined forces of residential and commercial gentrification that have begun to rapidly change the character and composition of Chinatowns, can only wonder “how Chinatown, in a supposedly modern America, could seem even older than the oldest parts of Hong Kong’s historic Kowloon district.”⁵⁴ Ornamented with the kind of Chinese flourishes that hadn’t been used in China for decades, the Chinatown looked run-down, crowded, and dirty in their eyes.⁵⁵ “Chinatown is both horrid and pleasing, appallingly dirty and strikingly colorful, ridden with social vice and packed with aesthetic virtue,”⁵⁶ says Lee in his *Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco*. There is, in fact, the “promise of unfamiliar — the exotic, and adventurous”⁵⁷ as far as outsiders are concerned. However, isn’t it the meaningful, intriguing and even bizarre things there, whether visual or non-visual characteristics, that play a critical role in communicating the “Chinese” identity, and differentiating the neighborhood from others? Non-visual sensory elements, such as smells of ethnic foods or sounds of culture-specific activities,

53. Robert Howe Fletcher and Ernest Peixotto, *Ten Drawings in Chinatown* (San Francisco: A. M. Robertson, 1898), 3.

54. Bonnie Tsui, *American Chinatown: A People's History of Five Neighborhoods* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 16.

55. *Ibid.*

56. Lee, Anthony W. *Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 61.

57. Tsui, *American Chinatown*, 6.

contribute largely to the perception and evaluation of the ambience of Chinatowns. These features create a high level of environmental complexity and particular ambiances in this certain cultural contexts.⁵⁸ The Erhu music played by a street performer, the sounds of Cantonese or Mandarin Chinese, or types of food aromas, clearly distinguish the streets of Chinatowns and represent its identity through the physical environment.

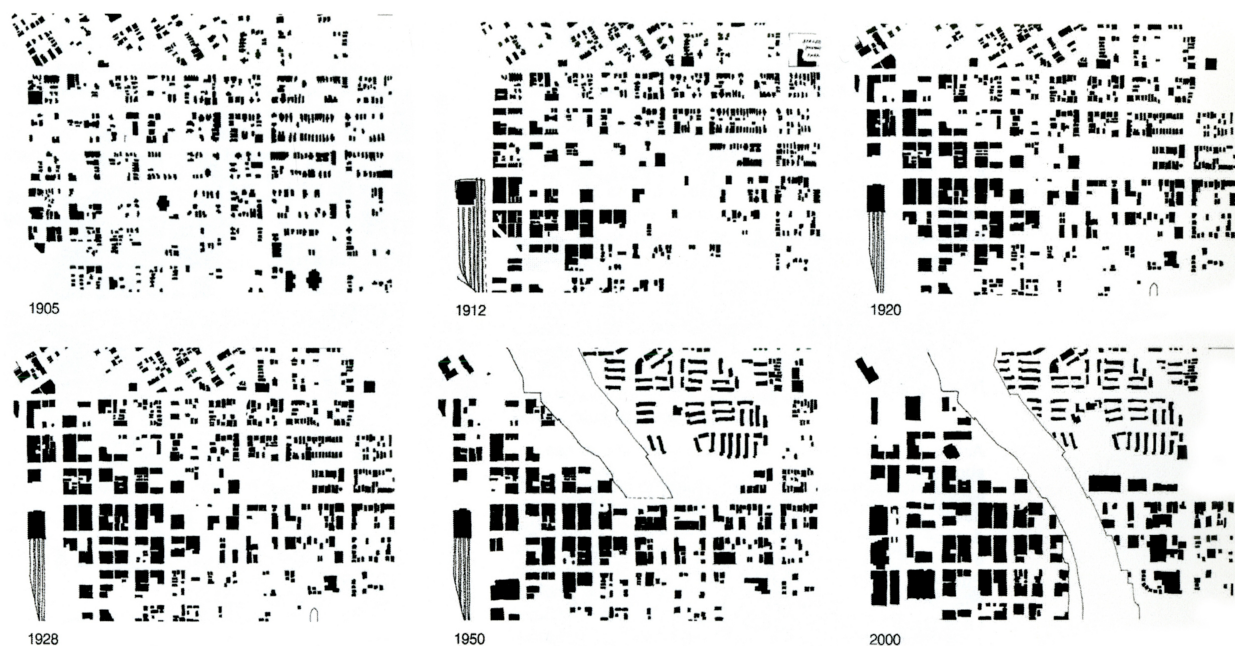


Figure 2. Structural Changes in the International District
 Source: Gail Lee Dubrow, *Restoring a Sense of Place in Seattle's Nihonmachi*.

3.3.1 *The Visual Character of Chinatown*

As much as non-visual sensory characteristics, visual features contribute to this message of identity. Most of the modifications to the physical environment of Chinatowns include Chinese-specific character such as architectural forms, signboards, and physical features that represent symbolic aspects of the Chinese culture.⁵⁹ Among these features, it is the façades of the buildings in Chinatown that constitute the most striking visual component of place character.⁶⁰

Most of the old Chinatown buildings, according to Lai, were built by Western architects or contractor who intended to create “chinoiserie” or “exotica” by modifying or manipulating

58. Nisha A. Fernando, “Culture and Identity in Urban Streets: A Case Study of Chinatown, New York City” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2007), 49.

59. *Ibid.*, 192.

60. Lai, “Character,” 29.

standard Western architectural forms. There are three-story brick buildings throughout the core areas of Chinatowns in San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver and Montreal, exhibiting both Western façades and Chinese decorative details like tile-roofed balconies or doorway cornices. “Although a homogenous style of Chinatown architecture has never developed, Chinatown structures usually contain several architectural features rarely found on other downtown buildings;” says Lai, “the most common elements are recessed or projecting balconies that dominated the upper stories of many Chinatown buildings. These features are common in south China because they help keep building interiors cool in the summer and warm in the winter.”⁶¹

The façades of buildings in Chinatowns usually consist of striking visual component of cultural characteristics. With a bright color palette, which consists predominantly of gold and yellow colors that mixed together with green or red colors, these buildings are featuring animal or plant motifs, and calligraphic signs denoting the location of prominent families, organizations, or businesses and advertising local sales or public events. Besides the balconies and façades, there is a variety of other building details that makes Chinatowns sharply distinguished from other city neighborhoods: such as lanterns, tiled canopies, and lattice work designs used in ceramic tiles. Some of these details appear quite authentic, while others are less convincing in their attempt to give an Asian quality to their business.⁶² Indeed, Chinatowns are rapidly losing not only the people who have built and maintained their communities for decades, as the overcrowded feel or the high rent spur residents to leave once they can afford it, but also these authentic design elements that reflect “Chinese” buildings that stand out among other buildings in cities.

61. *Ibid.*, 29-30.

62. Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority, *Inventory*.

Chapter 4. CHINATOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES BY THREE NORTH AMERICAN CITIES

One of the best ways for practitioners to learn how to propose improvements to the guidelines is to look directly at examples of some good design guidelines and design review system. Each case study will be approached in a similar way, briefly reviewing the history of the place and its main characteristics before presenting account of key features of the design guidelines such as its purpose and intent, design review process, general design principles and the approaches used to maintain characteristics of historic buildings. A summary evaluation will then be attempted. Throughout the analysis and evaluation the focus will be primarily on how the guidance have been structured and presented to achieve the goal of rehabilitating and maintaining the exteriors of historic buildings, and how the visualization of design guidelines assist in communicating to readers the concept of community character compatibility. This type of documentary review will be based on secondary sources.

4.1 CHINATOWN DESIGN GUIDE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

4.1.1 *Introduction*

Historically, the Chinatown area in Washington, D.C. was home for the German merchants and craftsmen who settled there and built a mixed residential and commercial community in 1820s and 1830s. Chinese immigrants having been displaced from the original Chinatown because of impending government construction in the Federal Triangle, relocated to this area in 1930s. African Americans began moving to the area in the 1950s and 1960s and many of the synagogues were converted to Baptist churches to support the now dominant population. Many Chinese residents left for suburban areas.⁶³ District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan Act of 1984 became D.C. Law 5-76 in April 1984, emphasizing Chinatown's role as a major regional and tourist attraction. The plan was intended to strengthen Chinatown's character through clear linkages to public transit and adjacent areas, by developing a stronger Chinese image in its

63. D.C. Office of Planning, *Chinatown Design Guide: A Handbook for Designing a Cultural Epicenter*, accessed August 11, 2014, <http://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/CDG%25205-1%2520FINAL-Web%2520Devices.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIUVOjDP> on June 15, 2015.

building façades and street improvements, and by attracting new development to reinforce its economic viability (Title 9 Section 900.27). The design standards for Chinatown were developed in 1987 by the local government and published as the Chinatown Design Guidelines. In the past 10 years, like many other American Chinatowns, this neighborhood has been significantly impacted by large-scale projects such as Verizon Center, Gallery Place, the Wah Luk House, and other high-rise office buildings, which drove real estate prices up and made it difficult for small businesses to survive. The District in 2004 spent \$200 million on renovations to transform the area into a scene for nightlife and entertainment. Today, the Chinese population number's fewer than six hundreds. The remaining small historic buildings for commercial and residential use, the Friendship Archway, and the continuing tradition of using Chinese characters on signage for all types of businesses are limited elements that reflect the area's Chinese-American character and distinguish its history.

4.1.2 *Purpose and Intent*

To ensure that future development is not merely an extension of the existing downtown and to create the necessary balance between Chinese character and non-Chinese historic values, design guidelines and mandatory design review are essential.⁶⁴ The Chinatown Design Guide is aimed at continuing the cultural richness of Chinatown in both traditional and contemporary ways, by providing guidance and clarity to business owners, designers, and reviewers participating in Chinatown Design Review process. It offers guidance on the design review process by answering questions such as how the design review process works and what application submission requirements are. Besides, being inspirational, it assists all applicants in integration of Chinese cultural elements and signage into their projects, through illustrations of visual characteristics that make Chinatown unique and authentic. The updated guidelines are a result of collaboration between the D.C. Office of planning and the Chinatown Steering Committee, a group advises the government on physical, economical and social impacts in Chinatown.⁶⁵

64. AEPA Architects Engineers, *Chinatown Design Guidelines Study: Chinatown Urban Design Study*, Washington, D.C. (Washington, D.C.: Government of the District of Columbia, 1988), 3.

65. D.C. Office of Planning, *Chinatown Design Guide*.

4.1.3 *Design Review Process*

A flowchart (Figure 3) that represents Chinatown design review procedures has been included at the beginning of Chinatown Design Guide in order to assist readers to understand the Municipal Regulation and how the design review process works. Once an application for new signage, awning, new construction or substantial renovation project within the Chinatown boundary is reviewed for completeness at Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), the Agency within the government that issues building permits, the Plan Review Coordinator will refer the project to the design review staff for Chinatown Design Review. The design review staff together with the Chinatown Steering Committee will provide input to the Office of Planning.⁶⁶ To provide assistance to users who are not familiar with design review process, the guide also adds a list of questions and answers to some of the most commonly asked questions pertaining to the Chinatown design review procedures.

66. Ibid.

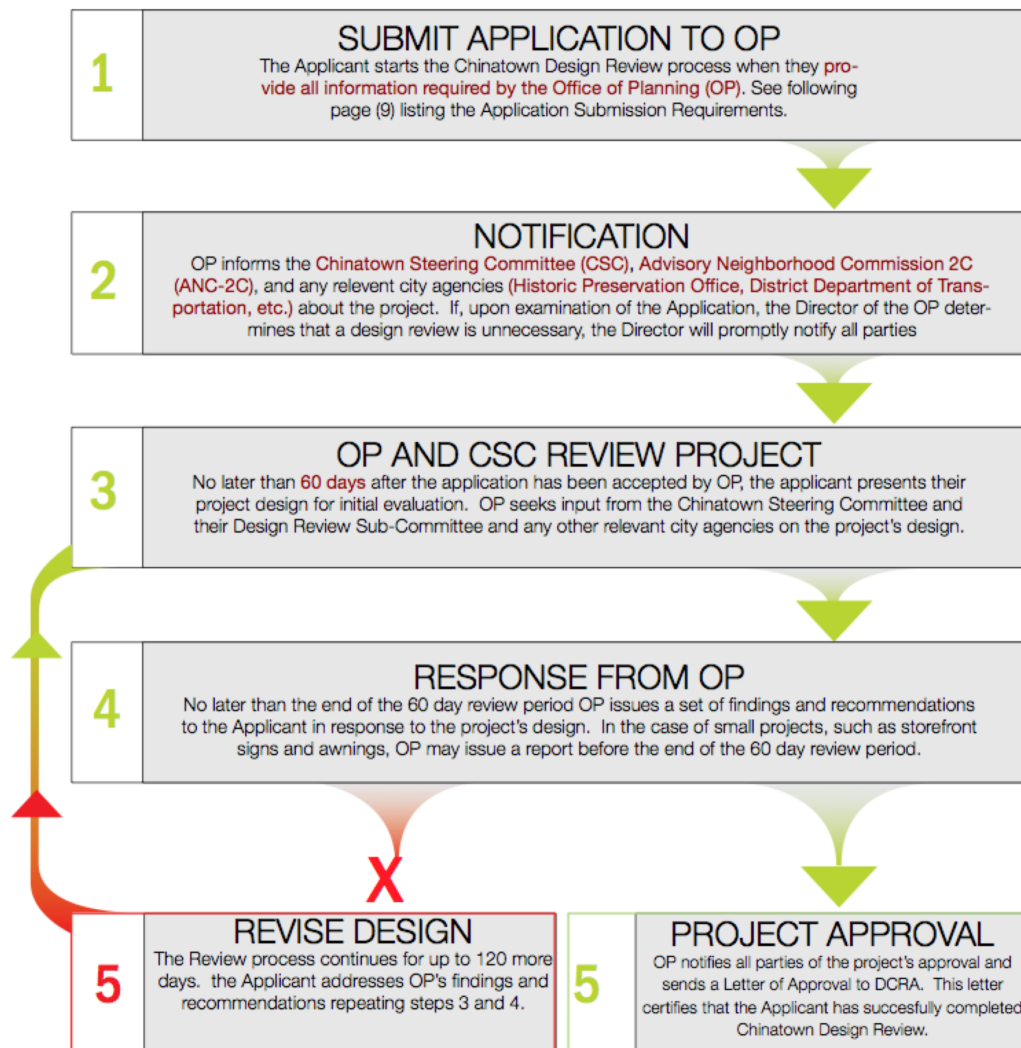


Figure 3. A Flowchart of D.C.'s Chinatown Design Review Process
Source: D.C. Office of Planning, Chinatown Design Guide.

One of the major objectives of the design review process is to contribute to the Chinese-themed neighborhood through building façades, awnings, and signage design. The effort is also directed to retain consistency with policies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and guidelines established for Chinatown in Downtown Streetscape Regulations, both of which give a clear focus on the visual elements of streets, such as street lights, trees and landscaping, and street furniture.

4.1.4 Fundamentals of Chinese Cultural Elements

The design guide then recognizes the importance of adding Chinese cultural elements to the building design as a way to the enhancement of Chinatown. To promote variety and innovative design, and not to be prescriptive, the guide provides some basic fundamentals of Chinese character and style as design inspiration—from the structural principles of Chinese architecture to the decorative details such as motif and traditional Chinese colors (Figure 4); and for the purposes of developing meaningful signage in Chinatown, the guide introduces the basic concepts of Chinese characters (i.e., the traditional and the simplified).

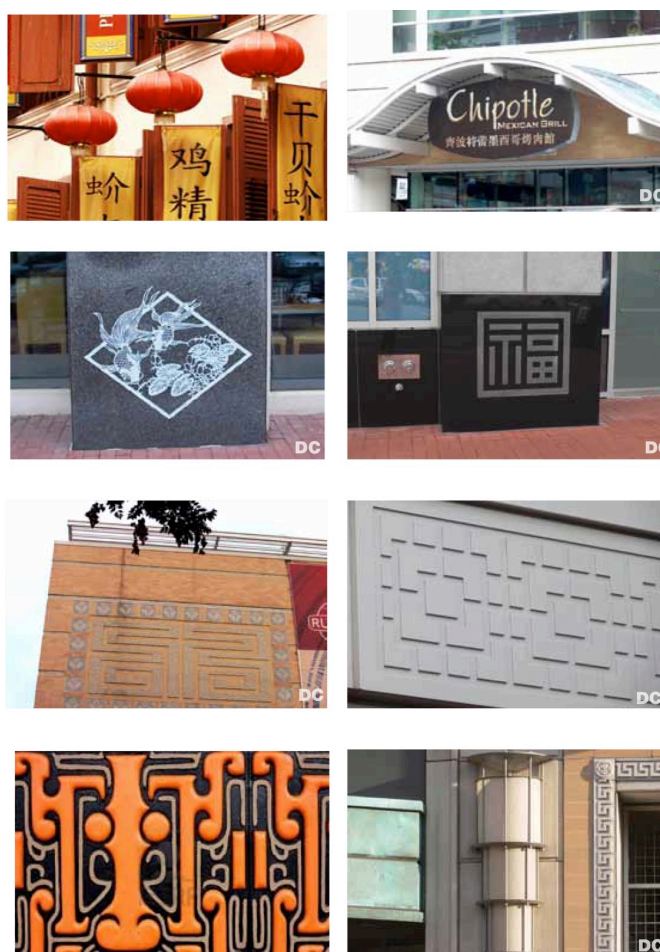


Figure 4. Chinese Decorative Motif

Source: D.C. Office of Planning, *Chinatown Design Guide*.

The repetitive use of interlocking wooden brackets in traditional Chinese buildings for ornamental and structural purpose has been specifically mentioned. Other principles such as the

use of gabled roofs and the emphasis on bilateral symmetry in Chinese architecture have been illustrated through concrete examples. The guide brings up the social and activity dimension by emphasizing the spatial and sensory intensity—the intense activity at a pedestrian-friendly street level, as well as a wealth of sensory experience from the smells, sights, and sounds, though it gives its meticulous attention to architectural details.

Chinese decorative motifs, as important design elements that contribute to the unique cultural identity of Chinatown, are required to be “part of every project in Chinatown, including both renovations and new constructions.”⁶⁷ The guide also encourages understanding the symbolism of traditional Chinese colors and properly introducing standard colors (i.e., black, red, blue-green, white and yellow) in proposed projects. It asks architects and designers to exercise sensitivity to the conventions of traditional Chinese color placement and make an attempt to extend these traditions to the present, even in highly contemporary applications. For example, red is not used for roofs, nor sky-blue for columns.⁶⁸

As non-Chinese stores and restaurants have marched into this historic neighborhood, the Chinatown Steering Committee, facing the threat of Chinatown’s disappearance from the urban landscape, implement a mandate for all businesses within the neighborhood boundary to incorporate Chinese characters and elements into signage design. The guide therefore informs the two systems of characters commonly used in the Chinese language, and underlines the importance of not misrepresenting a business because of a semantic failure.

4.1.5 *Building Façades Guidelines*

The basics of Chinese cultural elements are followed by the architectural guidelines for proposed projects. This ranges over a number of design elements, such as signage, lighting, fences and railings, awnings and canopies, windows, etc. Notably, the design guidelines for building façades offer detailed guidance on three parts of façade, since the original design of historic buildings in Chinatown followed traditional late 19th century American architectural practices that included a distinct ground floor, upper level, and roofline. The vertical orientation of double-hung wood

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

windows, signs, and bay projections used in historic late-19th century and early 20th-century buildings, as stated in the design principles, establishes the building form of residential and commercial buildings in D.C.'s Chinatown.⁶⁹

On the ground floor, the carefully design at street level and storefront is encouraged—adding Chinese decorative details to the recessed entryways, fitting storefront with large plate glass windows, and using compatible building materials that reflect the late 19th century American architectural practices, such as brick, stone, wood, and metal. In an attempt to ensure the good design at pedestrian scale, the guide suggests using Asian-inspired figurative or abstract elements to bring the sensory delight of Chinatown. The “invisible” security elements are recommended, for the purpose of allowing potential customers to view window displays and creating a pedestrian-friendly street environment.

According to the guide, the upper levels of buildings façades are excellent locations for Chinese decorative elements such as medallions, panels, banners, figurative elements, balconies, and lattice work; these elements play a significant role in drawing visual attention upward and placing vertical emphasis as part of the image of Chinatown.⁷⁰ The guide thus recommends adding layers of decorative details and designing upper façade windows in a manner that differentiates sections of the building and maintains a balance between the storefront and the upper level. The guide encourages artwork such as murals, mosaic, and pattern work on large blank upper façade walls, with intention to reduce the visual impact of large plain walls.

The guidelines for building top specify ways for buildings to “meet the sky”. The strong contrast between brilliantly colored tile, highlighted cornice and the blue sky is emphasized as a mean of visual expression that distinguishes Chinatown. The rooflines of historical and contemporary buildings display rich variety. Towers, sculptural elements and other ancient Chinese roofline forms are some examples that could bring this sort of visual intensity.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

Project within the Chinatown area of the Downtown Historic District is required to submit additional documents that describe “how preservation constraints affect Chinese design character and how this character can be accommodated within those constraints.”⁷¹ Original façade elements (e.g., storefront window, recessed entrance, sign bands, pilasters, etc.) found on buildings in Historic District, contributing to the overall historic character of the neighborhood, should be carefully preserved or restored as stated in the guide. Hence adding new elements with elaborate ornamentation that alter the original character of the building is discouraged.

4.1.6 *Conclusion*

The Chinatown Design Guide explains the District regulation in detail and assists users in preparing for their projects in design review process. It tends to concentrate on architectural details. What it calls for is a stronger Chinese image in building facades and street improvements. It provides a good example of formatting an inspirational and reader-friendly guide to guideline writing, encouraging architects and designers to fully analyze the fundamentals of Chinese cultural elements and develop sensitivity towards the expression of ancient Chinese architectural features. Again, the guidelines are not prescriptive. With language that is fully accessible to a lay audience, the guide offers encouragement to those who seek variety and innovative design and want to bring new infusions of Chinese culture into this neighborhood.

The listed frequently asked questions about the Chinatown design review process gives users assistance in getting familiar with the regulatory environment. This question and answer format helps readers to scan the question list and find the information they want. It also increases the chances that they will see a question that they didn't have, but need to know the answer to.

Other related plans such as Chinatown Public Realm Plan, Chinatown Cultural Development Small Area Plan, as mentioned in the Chinatown Design Guide, work together to shape D.C.'s Chinatown. These documents complements the design guide by offering design principles which have a much stronger social aspects relating to public space, walkability, and residential living

71. Ibid.

rather than architectural concepts, and which applies to developing Chinatown's streets and public spaces into a stage for experiencing Chinese and Asian culture and attractions.

4.2 CHINATOWN AREA PLAN, SAN FRANCISCO

4.2.1 *Introduction*

Established in the mid-19th century, San Francisco's Chinatown was the port of entry for early immigrants, mostly from China's Guangdong Province, who worked in mining and railroad construction. The area was the one geographical region deeded by the city government and private property owners that allowed these immigrants to inherit and inhabit dwellings within the city. By the end of the 19th century, however, due to the unemployment after Civil War and the depletion of the gold mines, racial tensions in San Francisco started to grow and the U.S. government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, greatly reducing the number of Chinese allowed into the country, which impacted the population of the Chinatown area and restricted Chinese businesses there. In 1906, the neighborhood was completely destroyed in the earthquake and resulting fire. When the city rebuilt afterwards, the plans to move Chinatown to the edge of the city failed as the Chinese convinced the local government to relent. Chinatown then was rebuilt in the newer, modern, Western form that exists today.

There were certain important differences between the architecture of pre- and post-1960 Chinatown.⁷² Euro-American architects and builders were hired to be responsible for the design, construction and remodeling of buildings in the neighborhood. Knowing very little about traditional Chinese architecture, they used standard North American building materials, including tiles, iron railings, light bulbs, glass, and pressed-metal ceilings and walls to create "Oriental" designs. These were generally applied as surface treatments to the standard wood or brick commercial buildings.⁷³ The original Sing Chong was constructed in 1905 in an entirely Western design with cornice, corner turret, and witch's cap roof. The building that replaced this structure in 1907 was very different in design and intent. It had a Chinese-American style with

72. The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage, "Chinatown," *Heritage Newsletter*, no. 1 (1986): III, <http://sfheritage.org/Chinatown.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIPPfPpD> on June 15, 2015.

73. Christopher L. Yip, "California Chinatowns: Built Environments Expressing the Hybridized Culture of Chinese Americans," in *Hybrid Urbanism: On the Identity Discourse and the Built Environment*, ed. Nezar AlSayyad (Westport: Praeger, 2001), 78-79.

tiered corner pagoda roofs, Mission-style fringe tile roofs, curving eaves and trigram and dragon decoration. It was entirely self-conscious and designed by Western professional architects rather than being an organic expression of the Chinese occupants.⁷⁴

During the 1920s more and more buildings were decorated with Chinese roof details, pagoda style towers and balconies with Chinese motifs. After World War II the racial law was retracted and in the 1950s Chinatown started to grow quickly. While recent immigrants and the elderly choose to live there because of the availability of affordable housing and their familiarity with the culture,⁷⁵ the neighborhood remains a major tourist attraction, purportedly attracting more visitors annually than the Golden Gate Bridge.

The San Francisco General Plan is adopted by the Planning Commission and approved by the Board of Supervisors, the legislative branch of the City and County of San Francisco. In November 1995, the Charter approved by the voters requires that the Planning Commission recommend amendments to the General Plan to the Board of Supervisors for approval. This approval changes the Plan's status from an advisory to a mandatory document and underscores the importance of Referrals establishing consistency with the General Plan prior to actions by the Board of Supervisors on a variety of actions. Chinatown Area Plan, together with several other sub-region plans that cover their respective geographic areas of the city, comprises the complete General Plan.⁷⁶ The site of Chinatown Area Plan includes 30 blocks in whole or in part on the eastern slopes of Nob Hill as well as portions of Russian Hill. The financial district lies to the east of Chinatown and just south is the Union Square retail area. Grant Avenue, Stockton Street and the hillside blocks that intersect them comprise the core of Chinatown. The district is one to three blocks in width and about ten blocks in length.⁷⁷

74. The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage, "Chinatown," III.

75. Estella Habal, *San Francisco's International Hotel: Mobilizing the Filipino American Community in the Anti-eviction Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 80.

76. "San Francisco General Plan – Introduction," San Francisco Planning Department, accessed April 1, 2015, http://www.sf-planning.org/ftp/General_Plan/index.htm, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIRCpjaa> on June 15, 2015.

77. "San Francisco General Plan – Chinatown Area Plan," San Francisco Planning Department, accessed April 1, 2015, http://www.sf-planning.org/ftp/general_plan/Chinatown.htm, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIQyu3dx> on June 15, 2015.

4.2.2 Purpose and Intent

The General Plan as a whole is intended to be an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of objectives and policies and its objectives, and policies are to be construed in a manner which achieves that intent.⁷⁸ Sec. 101.1(b) of the Planning Code, which was added by Proposition M, November 4, 1986, provides as follows:

The following Priority Policies are hereby established. They shall be included in the preamble to the General Plan and shall be the basis upon which inconsistencies in the General Plan are resolved:

- 1) That existing neighborhood-serving retail uses be preserved and enhanced and future opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of such businesses enhanced;
- 2) That existing housing and neighborhood character be conserved and protected in order to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our neighborhoods;
- 3) That the City's supply of affordable housing be preserved and enhanced;
- 4) That commuter traffic not impede Muni transit services or overburden our streets or neighborhood parking;
- 5) That a diverse economic base be maintained by protecting our industrial and service sectors from displacement due to commercial office development, and that future opportunities for resident employment and ownership in these sectors be enhanced;
- 6) That the City achieve the greatest possible preparedness to protect against injury and the loss of life in an earthquake.
- 7) That landmarks and historic buildings be preserved; and
- 8) That our parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas be protected from development.⁷⁹

Based on the Priority Policies, the manner in which the general goals of the Chinatown Area Plan are to be attained is set forth through a consistent statement of objectives and policies in a series of elements, such as preservation and conservation, housing and open space, commerce, and transportation. For instance, one of the key objectives in the Chinatown Area Plan is to “preserve the distinctive urban character, physical environment and cultural heritage of Chinatown,”⁸⁰ which is fully consistent with the priority policy that clearly underlines the importance of conserving and protecting the existing housing and neighborhood character.

78. “Introduction.”

79. San Francisco (Calif.), *City and County of San Francisco Municipal Code* (Cincinnati: American Legal Pub. Corp., 2000).

80. “Chinatown Area Plan.”

4.2.3 *The Preservation of Physical Environment*

As basic tools that underlie all planning and strategic activities, these objectives serve as the basis for creating detailed policies. In order to preserve the physical environment, policies have been developed on maintaining the current overall scale and density of Chinatown area primarily composed of low-rise buildings; there are, however, no separate design standards for rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction of historic buildings in this neighborhood:

- POLICY 1.1 Maintain the low-rise scale of Chinatown's buildings.
- POLICY 1.2 Promote a building form that harmonizes with the scale of existing buildings and width of Chinatown's streets.
- POLICY 1.3 Retain Chinatown's sunny, wind-free environment.
- POLICY 1.4 Protect the historic and aesthetic resources of Chinatown.⁸¹

In general, proposed projects under policies are required to be compatible with the size, scale, and material of the existing building. The Generalized Height Plan (Figure 5) included in this section provides a basis for establishing height districts in the Planning Code (Table 2), the purpose of which is to insure consideration of sun access on adjacent public sidewalk having a high volume of pedestrian use.

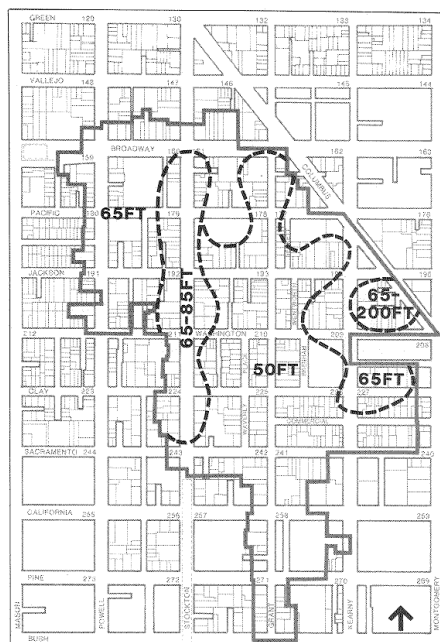


Figure 5. Generalized Height Plan
 Source: San Francisco Planning Department, *Chinatown Area Plan*.

81. Ibid.

Table 2. Setback Requirements

15-FOOT SUN ACCESS SETBACKS FOR 50-FOOT AND 65-FOOT HEIGHT DISTRICTS IN CHINATOWN						
Street Name	Street Width	Height District	Profile Angle	Height at which Setback Begins	Hours of Sun March - Sept. a.m. p.m. Sides of Street	
Grant	44'	50'	66°	35'	10:00 E	3:30 W
Stockton	65'	65'	42°	51'	8:45 E	3:45 W
Kearny	75'	50'	33°	40'	9:00 E	3:45 W
Kearny	75'	65'	35°	52'	8:45 E	3:45 W
Vallejo	69'	65'	43°	51'	9:15 S	sunset S
Broadway	81'	65'	38°	54'	7:45 S	sunset S
Pacific	50'	65'	49°	47'	9:45 S	2:30 S
Washington	50'	65'	49°	47'	9:45 S	2:30 S
Clay	50'	65'	49°	47'	9:45 S	2:30 S
Sacramento	50'	65'	49°	47'	9:45 S	2:30 S

Source: San Francisco (Calif.), San Francisco Planning Code.

By further detailed criteria, a proposed new building is acceptable when its height to width ratio is 2.5 to 1, and where the width is similar to that of smaller neighbors. Project with more than 50 feet width of street frontage should be divided in a manner that every separate division appears as an independent building and reflects the small scale of existing buildings in Chinatown area. These criteria have been established based on the fact that most of the structures in this neighborhood are small-scaled, and are three stories or less in height (Figure 6). Typically the ground floor is commercial, the second is to be furnished as a reception room, and the third contains a number of comfortable rooms for members of the association and the stairs to the building top land on a balcony which has a tile floor, brick balustrade with granite copings, heavy columns, etc.⁸²

82. The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage, "Chinatown," IV.

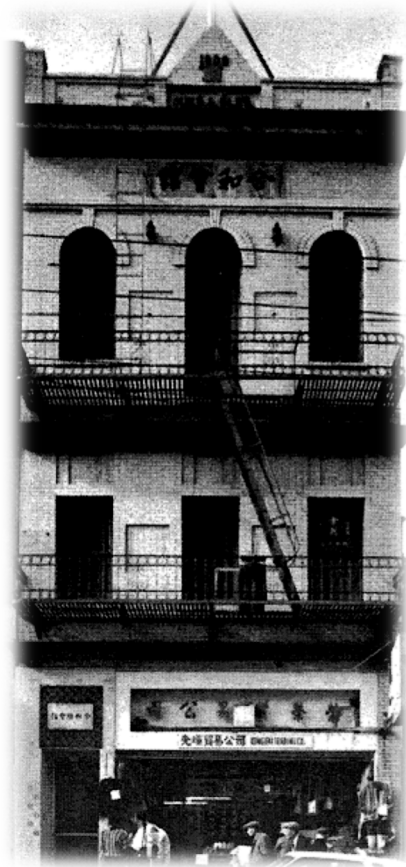


Figure 6. Hop Wo Benevolent Association Building
 Source: *The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage, "Chinatown."*

In addition, the plan requires independent entrances to shops at ground level to differentiate facades of adjacent buildings. Other architectural treatments, such as using different stringcourses to make the horizontal line of the sills visually different, and changing the window size, proportion and placement, are also recommended. In order to highlight the Chinese architectural elements like corner towers, the plan notes in particular that “height limits, setbacks and limits on horizontal dimensions should not apply to decorative pavilions, pagodas or sculptural features not exceeding 150 squares feet in area.”⁸³

Design controls, as discussed in the plan, are presented as guidelines rather than rigid rules.⁸⁴ In fact, there can be several different types of design guidelines that planners and designers apply to

83. “Chinatown Area Plan.”

84. *Ibid.*

a development project; and the neighborhood is allowed to independently develop its own design guidelines which are not enforced by the Planning Department but are used for reference.⁸⁵ The ones applied to projects in Chinatown are required to fulfill the central aim of maintaining the unifying rhythm of façade widths and the general scale of street walls as viewed from the streets (Figure 7).

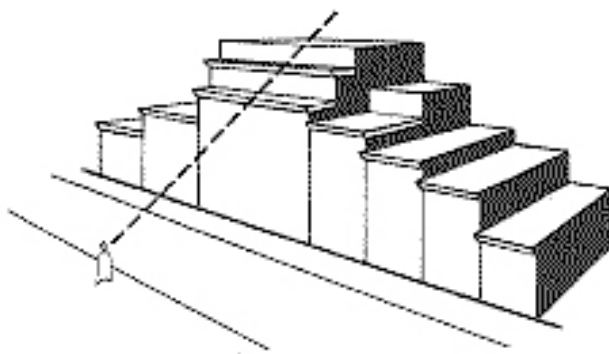


Figure 7. Design Criteria for Bulk and Massing
 Source: San Francisco Planning Department, *Chinatown Area Plan*.

4.2.4 *The Residential Design Guidelines*

The Chinatown Area Plan, though, don't have a specific set of design guidelines, the residential projects in RH (Residential House) and RM (Residential Mixed) zoning districts of this neighborhood must refer to the Residential Design Guidelines, which are primarily used during the review of residential Building Permit Application. Application of the guidelines is a mandatory step in the permit review process and all residential building permit applications must comply with both the Planning Code and the Residential Design Guidelines. These guidelines mark another attempt to systematize design control into a set of clear citywide criteria. The innovation in developing the guidelines as checklists for project assessment has been complemented by various community initiatives to write their own design guidelines.⁸⁶

Being consistent with the General Plan, the guidelines also require that building's scale is compatible with height and depth of surrounding buildings in order to preserve the neighborhood's existing pattern. It suggests making the large building look smaller by façade

85. "Permits & Zoning Staff," San Francisco Planning Department, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.sf-planning.org/index.aspx?page=2874>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIKeTNob> on June 15, 2015.

86. Punter, *Design Guidelines*, 130.

articulations, through setbacks to upper floors, or by reducing the height or depth of the building.⁸⁷ Plus the document gives special guidelines for alterations to buildings of potential historic or architectural merit, which are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. According to the guidelines, there are some structures in the city that are not regulated by the Planning Code. Projects on these structures are required to respect original orientation of buildings, overall building forms and decorative details, and treat relationships to adjacent buildings carefully. The guide suggests analyzing the character-defining features of a building before making addition or alteration. It highlights the importance of remaining at appropriate levels of maintenance and making buildings capable of conveying a sense of time and place; and the special guidelines have been formulated as a list of basic do's and don'ts when proposing to alter or add to historic building:

Do's:

- Preserve the historic building form
- Design the materials, detailing and form of an addition to be compatible with the historic building.
- Maintain the historic finishes of exterior materials.
- Repair damaged and deteriorated building components whenever possible.
- If an element is missing, replace it based on physical documentation or photographic evidence, if available.

Don'ts:

- Do not alter a building in such a way that implies an inappropriate historic period.
- Do not add materials or features that were not historically found on the building.⁸⁸

At the end of the guidelines, users will find a list of common architectural terms, sorted alphabetically. This one page appendix (Table 3) contains explanations of concepts relevant to the building design, such as articulation, block face, building envelope, and compatibility, etc. Together with some illustrations of architectural features in the following page, the glossary helps the readers to get familiar with uncommon architectural jargon.

87. San Francisco Planning Department, *Residential Design Guidelines*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.sf-planning.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=5356>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIQjSEnf> on June 15, 2015.

88. Ibid.

Table 3. Glossary of Architectural Terms

APPENDIX B – GLOSSARY OF TERMS
Architectural Features: Prominent or significant parts or elements of a building or structure.
Articulation: Minor variation in the massing, setback, or height of a building, such as bay windows, porches, entrances or eaves that defines the structure.
Bay Window: A window or set of windows, which projects out from a wall, forming an alcove or small space in a room.
Block: Land or a group of lots, surrounded by streets or other rights-of-way.
Block Face: The row of front facades, facing the street, for the length of one block.
Building, Adjacent: A building on a lot adjoining the subject lot along a common side lot line.
Building Envelope: The exterior dimensions and elements of a building.
Compatibility: The size and character of a building element relative to other elements around it.
Context: The characteristics of the buildings, streetscape, and landscape that support or surround a given building, site, or area.
Cornice: The horizontal projecting part crowning the wall of a building.
Dormer: A gabled extension of an attic room through a sloping roof to allow for a vertical window opening into the room.
Facade: Exterior wall of a building.
Fenestration: The arrangement and design of windows and other openings on a building's facade.
Frontage: The width of a lot measured at the front property line.
Roof: The top covering of a building. Following are some roof types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Gable roof has a pitched roof with ridge and vertical end. ▪ A Gambrel roof is a variation of a gable roof, each side of which has a shallower slope above a steeper one, often referred to as a “barn” roof. ▪ A Hip roof has slope ends instead of vertical ends. ▪ A Mansard roof is a roof with a double slope; the lower slope is steeper and longer than the upper; the upper pitch is typically shallow or flat. ▪ A Shed roof has one slope only and is sometimes built against a higher wall.
Scale: The relationship between the height, width and depth of a building.
Streetscape: The visual character of a street as determined by elements such as structures, access, greenery, open space, view, etc.

Source: San Francisco Planning Department, Residential Design Guidelines.

4.2.5 Conclusion

The clear expression of objectives and policies in the Chinatown Area Plan provides a good example of their kind. It is valuable for their broad yet concise coverage of issues in the development of this unique neighborhood—an area with supportive functions as a residential neighborhood and visitor attraction. Punter concludes his study of San Francisco with the statement that “it still has much to offer progressive design control. It has a highly disciplined and well-conceived approach to expressing citywide design goals, objectives and policies, ... [and] a set of residential design guidelines that have proved to be flexible framework which communities can tailor to their local circumstances.”⁸⁹ Much controversy surrounds the detailed and precise controls over scale and pattern. However, given the wide range of sites and situations in which a project in Chinatown area may be proposed, a relatively high level of design conformity with the visual character and scale created by existing buildings are required.

Unlike the D.C.’s Chinatown Design Guide that focus upon architectural elements, the Chinatown Area Plan contains detailed prescriptions for bulk and massing to conserve the comfortable human scale of the streets. In other words, the plan is quite strict in requiring unified overall neighborhood context, considering a project’s compatibility at different levels—how it relates to the adjacent buildings, to other buildings in the general vicinity, and or to buildings on both streets near the intersection.⁹⁰ While admitting that each building will have its own unique features based on the common rhythms and elements of architectural expression found in the neighborhood, it points out that it may be appropriate to consider a larger context, where the building could properly proportional fit the neighborhood as a whole. Despite the fact that the plan’s broad coverage of the urban issues in Chinatown may not be applicable to cities with different development climate, its detailed lot size, setback and bulk requirements inspire us to give greater emphasis to relationships among buildings, the public space and pedestrian environment. This thought makes a useful contribution to developing design control tools for evaluating proposed new projects.

89. Punter, *Design Guidelines*, 141.

90. San Francisco Planning Department, *Guidelines*.

4.3 CHINATOWN HA-1 AND HA-1A DESIGN GUIDELINES, VANCOUVER

4.3.1 *Introduction*

Vancouver has one of the largest Chinatowns in North America, only second to San Francisco. In 1886, a budding Chinatown, with about ninety Chinese residents who moved to Vancouver to work as industrial laborers, emerged on Carrall Street and Dupont Street (named East Pender Street after 1904). By the 1890s, Vancouver's Chinatown had more than one thousand Chinese residents, clustered on Dupont Street between Carrall and Columbia streets. In 1896, six prominent merchants, namely Yip Sang, Shum Moon, Wong Soon King, Lee Kee, Chow Tong and Leong Suey, founded the Chinese Benevolent Association, and erected a building in 1910 to serve as its office as well as a Chinese Hospital. From their earliest days, Benevolent Societies and Family Associations have played a significant role in Chinatown, contributing to its economic, social and cultural development. These associations functioned as spokesman for the Chinese community in Vancouver, filling a void in services and support that mainstream society failed to provide during that time. In its prime, during the early 1920s, Chinatown was virtually self-contained. Its townscape was dominated by both Chinese and non-Chinese institutional buildings such as City Hall, Vancouver Public Library, bank buildings and white-operated hotels. After the 1923 Exclusion Act, Chinatown entered the withering stage, as its Chinese population began to decline steadily from 13,011 in 1931 until it reached 7,174 in 1941. The act was repealed on May 14, 1947 due to recognition of the contribution of Chinese Canadians to Canada during World War II. Throughout the 1950s, an increasing number of Chinese moved into the Strathcona District, and residential neighborhood to the east, as the white residents began relocating to better residential districts. Strathcona was attractive to the new Chinese residents because housing was affordable and the area was adjacent to Chinatown. By 1957, nearly half the residents in Strathcona District were of Chinese origin making it a de facto residential extension of Chinatown. In July 1971, the Strathcona Rehabilitation Program was launched and 229 properties there were rehabilitated. Various neighborhood improvement projects and

installation of bilingual English and Chinese street signs were carried out. In the same year, the Province of British Columbia designated Vancouver's Chinatown a historic district.⁹¹

In the last 30 years, residential and commercial settlement of the Chinese-Canadian community in Greater Vancouver gradually decentralized and spread out across the Lower Mainland.

Chinatown no longer has the advantage as the only place providing Asian goods and services.⁹²

To ensure the long-term viability of Chinatown, a number of policies were established prior to 2000. Since then, Chinatown has received more intensive planning efforts:

- In 2002, City Council approved the Chinatown Vision that identified protecting the area's heritage and culture while focusing on bringing in new energy and investment to the neighborhood.
- In February 2008, City Council approved the Society Heritage Buildings Rehabilitation Strategy, which recognized that the heritage buildings in Chinatown owned by the Societies were of critical importance to the long-term revitalization of Chinatown. Council also approved the Chinatown Society Buildings Planning Grant Program, which provided funding to the Societies for the preparation of feasibility studies for heritage building rehabilitation.
- On July 25, 2012, Council approved the Chinatown Neighborhood Plan and Economic Revitalization Strategy, which identified the Societies as significant community cultural assets, and identified as a priority the restoration of the Chinatown Society heritage buildings.
- On March 12, 2013, Council directed staff to develop a new fund to assist the Chinatown Society Heritage Building Association with the critical rehabilitation of their buildings using the Community Amenity Contribution (CAC).
- On March 15, 2014, Council adopted the Downtown Eastside Plan that includes a policy to pursue the rehabilitation of the heritage buildings owned by Chinatown Societies. The Plan also includes a quick-start action that requires the development of a framework and business plan for a new Chinatown Society Buildings Grants Program.⁹³

91. "Vancouver Chinatown 1886 ~ 2011," David See Chai Lam Centre for International Communication, accessed April 1, 2015, http://www.sfu.ca/chinese-canadian-history/vancouver_chinatown_en.html, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZITzKVOI> on June 15, 2015.

92. City of Vancouver, *Council Report: Chinatown Community Plan: Society Buildings Rehabilitation Strategy*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.samsullivan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/pe1.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIW0C8WV> on June 15, 2015.

93. City of Vancouver, *Council Report: Chinese Family Clan and Benevolent Societies in the Downtown Eastside: A New Grant Program and Strategic Support for Buildings with Heritage, Affordable Housing, or Cultural Assets*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://former.vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20140708/documents/a1.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIV0gtPc> on June 15, 2015.

Chinatown's Design Guidelines were developed as a tool for a more design-based, contextual approach to neighborhood regeneration and improved livability. In 2011, the Historic Area-1 (HA-1) and Historic Area-1A (HA-1A) design guidelines were updated with a new section on design philosophy and principles, changes to the height criteria, and adequate illustrations that better convey contemporary architectural response—to reflect the Council approved increased heights, while reinforcing the importance of Chinatown's sense of place, character, and scale by encouraging heritage rehabilitation, re-use of existing buildings, and high-quality new development.⁹⁴

4.3.2 Purpose and Intent

The city revised Chinatown's zoning in 1994, responding to the community's desire to provide opportunities for growth while protecting the historic core. The neighborhood was split into two zoning districts: HA-1 for the Pender Street historic core and HA-1A for the remainder of Chinatown (Figure 8).

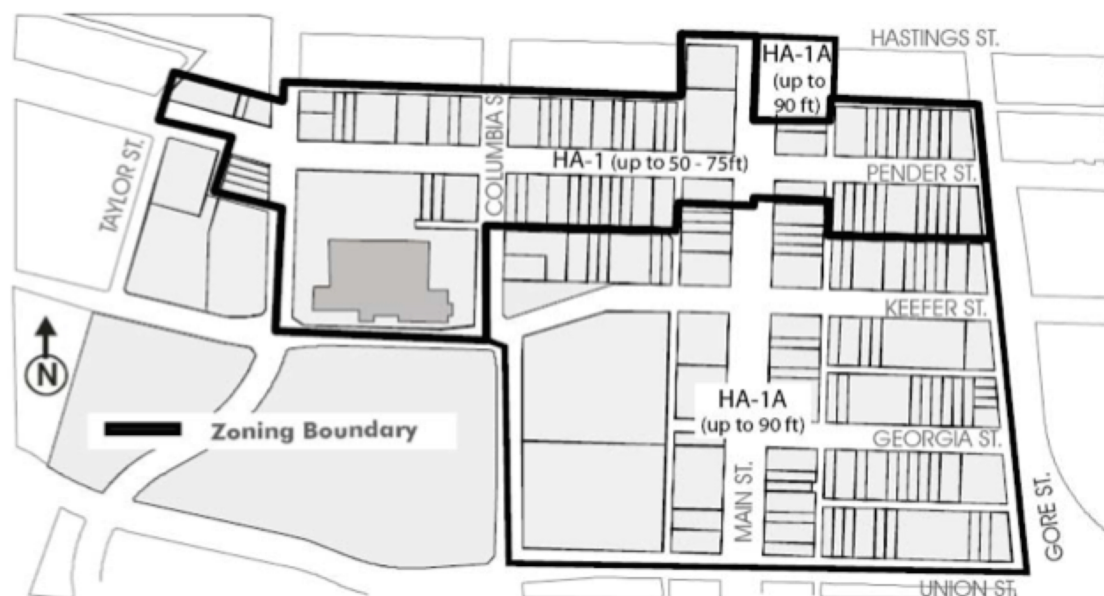


Figure 8. Building Heights for HA-1 and HA-1A
 Source: City of Vancouver, *Chinatown Neighborhood Plan*.

94. City of Vancouver, *Chinatown Neighborhood Plan*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/chinatown-neighbourhood-plan.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIVrucck> on June 15, 2015.

Compared to HA-1A, where more new building construction is anticipated, developments in HA-1 are expected to include a balanced mix of heritage building conservation (including rehabilitation), additions to existing buildings, as well as compatible new development. Therefore its design guidelines are intended to protect the historic character of Chinatown through conservation; to cover compatible, contextual addition where acceptable; and to encourage the adaptive re-use of non-heritage buildings.⁹⁵ The HA-1A design guidelines, on the other hand, aim to encourage contemporary new development that is responsive to the community's established cultural and historic identity. It's a reference tool used with sensitivity to sites with special circumstances, including small frontage lots and development with affordable housing.⁹⁶

In terms of overall façade composition and detailed façade designs (i.e., lower street façade, upper level façade, and lane façade designs), both HA-1 and HA-1A design guidelines have formulated clear objectives. Detailed requirements for achieving each objective have been set to help readers understand façade elements and make good design decisions.

4.3.3 *Guidelines for Overall Façade Composition*

The two design guidelines require new building to be consistent with the prevailing façade composition (Figure 9) as established by heritage buildings, through a similar level of complexity and an engaging architectural expression. Design priority is given to the storefront configuration, fenestration patterns, transoms, and cornice lines. Replicating or mimicking heritage facades, however, is firmly discouraged. The recommended approaches to new projects on large sites is similar to that of San Francisco's Chinatown Area Plan, as the façades are broken up with a regular rhythm of projections, changes in massing, or variegated street-wall and roof lines. While both guidelines has established criteria for new buildings, in terms of dividing facades into vertical units with relatively small widths, the HA-1 guidelines especially ask for retaining the design elements of historic building facades such as columns, pilasters and multiple

95. City of Vancouver, *Chinatown HA-1 Design Guidelines*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/Chinatown-HA1-Design-Guidelines.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIVXV4R0> on June 15, 2015.

96. City of Vancouver, *Chinatown HA-1A Design Guidelines*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/Chinatown-HA1A-Design-Guidelines.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIVjbBag> on June 15, 2015.

storefronts, and keeping the width of storefronts in its original seven-meter range. Also, like D.C.'s Chinatown Design Guide, the two guidelines focus on dealing with vertical emphasis, by saying that “new buildings should have a clearly defined street wall massing with distinctive lower and upper street façades. The upper street façade should be clearly distinguished from the lower street façade and articulated with windows, projections, and/or balconies. The roof, cornice, or parapet area should be well integrated with the building’s overall composition, visually distinctive, and include elements that create skyline interest.”⁹⁷

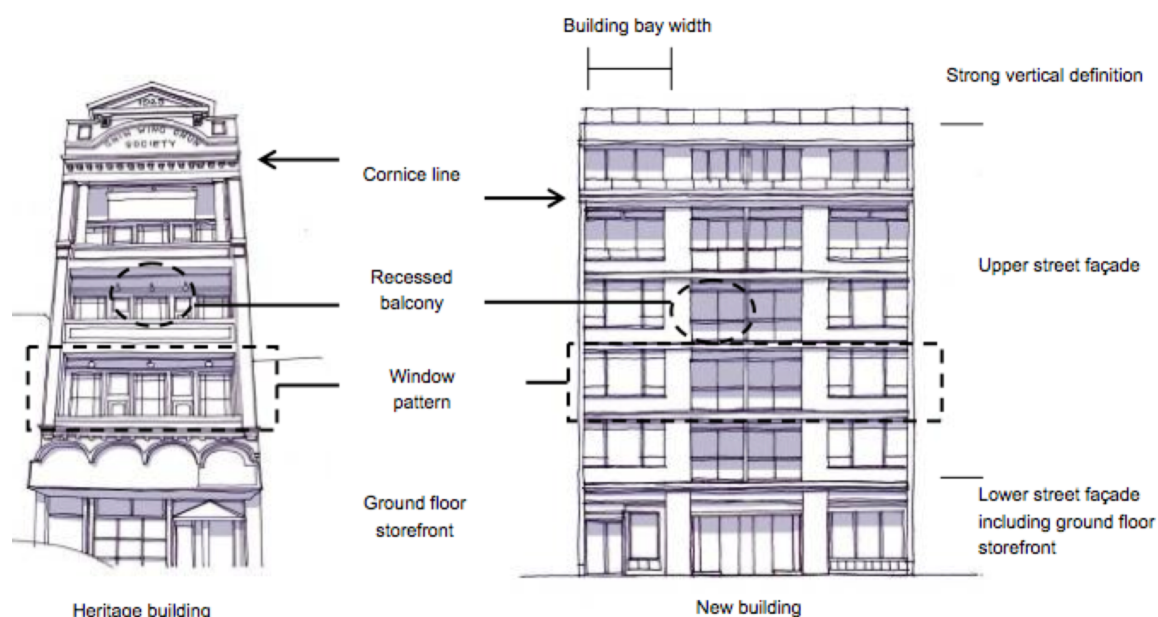


Figure 9. Façade Composition

Source: City of Vancouver, *Chinatown HA-1 Design Guidelines*.

Differing from the fenestration patterns on buildings in HA-1A, where the convertible windows allowing merchandise to spill onto the sidewalk are combined with contemporary use of colorful canopies and retractable awnings,⁹⁸ windows openings of historic buildings in HA-1 are often grouped into two or more bays, separated by pilasters or other vertical dividing elements.⁹⁹ Accordingly, fenestration patterns are required to respect the prominent characteristics of architecture in each district.

97. Ibid.

98. City of Vancouver, *HA-1A Guidelines*.

99. City of Vancouver, *HA-1 Guidelines*.

4.3.4 *Guidelines for Detailed Façade Designs*

The HA-1 and HA-1A design guidelines set similar standards for lower façades of new constructions. That is, defining lower facades by continuous cornice or similar decorative elements, increasing visibility of commercial frontages to help keep street active, and detailing of the floor surface in the entries and passageways to provide noticeable transition space between public sidewalk and the interior of private properties. Since the buildings of the pre 1929 era typically had ground floor façades with high ceilings, a high degree of transparency from large areas of glazing, and recessed entries, and were embellished with decorative tiles and panels, the HA-1 design guidelines encourage a high degree expression of architectural features. More importantly, the HA-1 guidelines include some unique features that need to be incorporated into the design of rehabilitated or restored storefronts:

- (a) restoration of cast iron elements where evident in existing buildings;
- (b) a high percentage of glazing, both in the display window area, transom windows, and in the door(s);
- (c) a recessed entry with either a trapezoidal or rectangular plan;
- (d) transom windows above the entry(s);
- (e) base plates rich in detail;
- (f) detailing of the floor surface in the entry recess with tiles (especially small mosaic tiles), terrazzo, or other similar decorative materials; and
- (g) a storefront cornice which is generally a variation or reduced section of the main building cornice.¹⁰⁰

Such effective storefront configuration contributes to the positive pedestrian experience of the neighborhood through visual and spatial transparency, providing the area's fine-grained retail interest.

At upper level, it is recommended reflecting the proportions of the upper façades of early Chinatown buildings, such as strong vertical elements segmenting the façade, vertical windows and recessed balconies. Both HA-1 and HA-1A guidelines call for a clear distinction between the upper levels and the street levels, which has been widely found in heritage buildings. They also require a level of wall surface texture and architectural detailing inspired by the richness of details commonly found on Chinatown heritage buildings. The appearance of heritage buildings'

100. Ibid.

upper façades, as well as decorative elements such as pilasters, columns and projecting bays, according to the HA-1 design guidelines, should be restored based on historic photographs and drawings. It has been repeatedly mentioned in HA-1 guidelines that the intent is not to replicate or mimic heritage façades but to ensure that new buildings are harmonious and neighborly.¹⁰¹

In HA-1A, rooftop equipment on new buildings is asked to set back far enough from the front side so that it won't be visible to pedestrians, whereas the retention of existing rooftop features, such as mechanical penthouses and water towers, is encouraged in HA-1. This is based on the fact that rooftop structures for mechanical services are authentic elements of early Chinatown buildings, and considered to be one of the important character defining elements in the neighborhood.¹⁰²

4.3.5 Society Heritage Building Preservation

In Chinatown, there are twelve Society-owned heritage buildings. The elaborately decorated meeting halls inside the buildings are full of historic documents and artifacts documenting the stories of Chinatown and the early Chinese-Canadian pioneers. The unique building typology, which has led to the pedestrian and community oriented urban development pattern of Chinatown, is also considered to be of great value.¹⁰³ These three-story buildings typically include some unique Chinatown features such as the “cheater floor,” an untaxed story between the main and second floor, deeply recessed balcony, and long steep staircases to upper floors. This resulting “Chinatown Architecture” combined 19th century building patterns from Guangdong Province—which themselves were influenced by early contact with European, primarily Portuguese and Italian, cultures—with the local adaptations of Victorian forms.¹⁰⁴ Being nearly 100 years old, most of these historic buildings are in significant need of major building upgrades or they could be lost forever. Finding a way to rehabilitate these buildings poses challenges similar to those of other Chinatowns to both the associations and the broader community:

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid.

103. City of Vancouver, *Council Report: Strategy*.

104. City of Vancouver, *HA-1 and HA-1A Districts Schedule*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://former.vancouver.ca/commsvcs/BYLAWS/zoning/ha-1&1a.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIUm9nqb> on June 15, 2015.

- 1) Limited financial resources and complex decision-making processes.
- 2) Physical and architectural constraints of their aging buildings.
- 3) Limited development experience.¹⁰⁵

In terms of the physical constraints, the city fully recognizes the need of a delicate and strategic approach for introducing new development, since most association buildings lacks infrastructure improvements are built on narrow and deep lots, which makes rehabilitation challenging to achieve. In response, a series of actions have been taken in the past few years. Several research studies, notably the Historic Study of the Society Buildings in Chinatown and Urban Acupuncture Study, has been carried out.

The Historic Study of the Society Buildings in Chinatown examines the rich cultural, social, architectural and historic significance of five society buildings. It is hoped that the project will allow historically significant buildings in Chinatown to be restored or architecturally upgraded from their current condition. Through an outreach to the clan associations and benevolent societies for the discussions of visions for the aging buildings, and story telling by members of the associations, the study presents a rich historical context of the association buildings, as well as the history of these buildings' principal and current owners and users. The outcome (Figure 10) helps stimulate interests to restore or upgrade these historically significant buildings.¹⁰⁶

105. City of Vancouver, *Council Report: Strategy*.

106. Chinese Canadian Historical Society, *Historic Study of the Society Buildings in Chinatown*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/historic-study-of-the-society-buildings-in-chinatown.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIVFkeDF> on June 15, 2015.

林西河總堂九牧公所

Address: 525-531 Carrall St

Year Built: 1903; acquired and renovated by the Lim Association in 1945

Present Uses: commercial at grade / residential / society meeting room

Heritage Status: category C, municipally protected



The Lim Sai Hor Association building was constructed in 1903 for the Chinese Empire Reform Association, one of the most influential societies in early Chinatown. The four storey building fronts both Carrall Street and Shanghai Alley. The Reform members were the elite of early Chinatown, with links to politics in China and to Chinatowns around the world. From this building they published a newspaper, ran a school, and even a small clinic.

The surname "Lim" or "Lam" means "forest" in Chinese, so green was chosen as an accent colour for both interior and exterior of the building. The picture above shows storefronts and bay windows facing Shanghai Alley.

When revolution - not reform - came to China in 1911, the Reform Association faded, though they owned the building until 1945, when they sold it to the Lim Sai Hor Kow Mook Association. Established in 1923, this association became the headquarters for Canada's Lim Sai Hor associations in 1926 and, after selling shares and purchasing this building, rented rooms to members. The building recently has operated a part time school and established a clan member ancestral altar.



Each tablet represents an individual ancestor. On special festival days, such as Chinese New Year, fruits and incense will be prepared for the ancestors.

Figure 10. Lim Sai Hor Association

Source: *Chinese Canadian Historical Society, Historic Study of the Society Buildings in Chinatown.*

The Urban Acupuncture Study recognizes challenge faced by the area, especially the high pressure for redevelopment of an aging building stock. It focuses on the selective redevelopment of appropriate sites within the historic fabric, removing what isn't working and inserts a contemporary, appropriate intervention to stimulate urban regeneration. More importantly, it encourages the coexistence of a contemporary layer, allowing new ideas to evolve that are relevant to contemporary needs, which has been summarized as a problem-solving approach to the conflict between the unique neighborhood character and the potential development of the community.¹⁰⁷ The Shon Yee Benevolent Association project in this study, gives an example of the potential of a contemporary single-room typology. Built on a large lot, it has an even denser building typology compared to other narrow association buildings. Thus the study proposes

107. Inge Roecker and Keltly McKinnon, *Urban Acupuncture: A Methodology for the Sustainable Rehabilitation of Society Buildings in Vancouver's Chinatown into Contemporary Housing: CMHC ERP Report* (Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2007), 5-7.

joining one, two and three rooms into single larger units, and providing these units with carved out outdoor spaces that face the lightwells (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Shon Yee Benevolent Association

Source: Inge Roecker and Kelty McKinnon, *Urban Acupuncture*.

The plan is recommended since it improves the living conditions and makes a unique spatial condition visible and accessible. Specifically, a multi-functional room will connect common activities to the street level, and on the second floor a glass tube punches perpendicularly to the hallways. Garden terraces will occupy the third floor.¹⁰⁸

As for the financial support for the community's efforts, the City Council in 2014 has approved a new grant program called Chinese Society Buildings Matching Grant Program. It will provide matching grants for maintenance and upgrades to buildings owned by the societies. Heritage buildings and those with affordable and social housing units will get priority consideration. This three-year matching grant program will have a budget of \$2.5 million, with \$1.2 million of funding from a developer community amenity contribution in Chinatown, and the remaining funds from the City's capital budget.¹⁰⁹

108. *Ibid.*, 11.

109. "New Grant Program Helps Preserve and Protect Heritage and Housing in Chinese Society Buildings," City of Vancouver, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://vancouver.ca/news-calendar/new-grant-program-helps-preserve-and-protect-heritage-and-housing-in-chinese-society-buildings.aspx>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIV0aQmZ> on June 15, 2015.

4.3.6 Conclusion

Vancouver's Chinatown planning and revitalization process has worked to address complex community issues through immediate, community based action-oriented efforts since 2000.¹¹⁰ The historic significance of the neighborhood has been recognized by the city through its development by-laws. The two major zoning districts, HA-1 and HA-1A, each has been given specific sets of related regulations and guidelines to assist the continued heritage management effort. The two districts possess some of the clearest and best-presented design principles of any North American Chinatown. The emphasis on the compatibility of new development while avoiding simply replicating heritage facades represents an important reconciliation of the renewal framework for historic district called for by designers and planners. Livability and neighborliness, according to these two design guidelines, is also a major concern; and the idea of making new buildings and conservation projects actively contribute to the visual interest of the public realm and to a vibrant environment accentuates the "urbanistic" concept discussed earlier. Examining the HA-1 and HA-1A guidelines' achievements against some of criteria a good design guide should have, it can be seen that they balance the density, public activities, architectural character, and pedestrian interest, based on intensive research of the current physical context and community's cultural and social significance. To some extent, Vancouver's Chinatown design guidelines are a valuable model to some extent, as it combines merits of D.C.'s and San Francisco's approaches—they require an appropriate storefront width to maintain the scale and pattern in new construction, in order to complement the retention, conservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings; plus, they encourage the use of distinctive architectural features based on historic photographs and the study of heritage buildings. The design goals and objectives are clearly stated. Being less prescriptive than those of San Francisco's Chinatown Area Plan, they are still sufficiently precise to establish criteria with which proposed projects can be evaluated. Furthermore, a substantial number of incentive programs and reports, plans and studies approved by the city have played a prominent role in facilitating rehabilitation of individual association buildings, as well as the greater community's revitalization project. In all these respects Vancouver remains the model for Chinatown design guidelines to which other cities can aspire (Table 4).

110. City of Vancouver, *Chinatown Neighborhood Plan*.

Table 4. Design Guidelines Checklist (Completed)

	Washington D.C.	San Francisco	Vancouver
General Design Considerations			
Scale and Pattern		✓	✓
Pedestrian Interest	✓	✓	✓
Architectural Components			
Historic Study of Heritage Buildings	✓		✓
Three-part Facades	✓		✓
Reader-friendly Document			
User Guide/FAQ/Flowchart...	✓		✓
Legibility	✓	✓	✓
Illustrations and Photos	✓	✓	✓

Chapter 5. THE INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT AND ITS DESIGN GUIDELINES

5.1 A BRIEF BACKGROUND

Chinese settlement in Seattle dates back to 1860, with hundreds of laborers coming in subsequent decades to work on building railroads, in lumber and fishing and in other industries. Their first buildings were in today's Pioneer Square near 3rd Avenue S. and S. Jackson Street, the only place they were allowed to build. During the 1880s, anti-Asian sentiment due to fears of immigrants taking scarce jobs resulted in the National Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The original Chinatown was abandoned, as the town's 500 Chinese residents were driven by an angry mob onto ships bound for San Francisco. Later, it was destroyed in the 1889 fire. However, after the fire, the need for labor was so great that Chinese workers returned and built new structures near 2nd Avenue S. and S. Washington Street. Chinatown expanded rapidly to the east, to its present location, after the 1908 Jackson and Dearborn regrades.¹¹¹ Between 1910 and 1925, a number of buildings were purchased or developed by Chinese investors and family associations in the vicinity of King Street. Key buildings included the Kong Yick buildings, the first Chinese owned building in the new Chinatown, which housed the original location of the Gee How Oak Tin Family Association, and a number of businesses that became the first Chinese businesses on King Street. The Kong Yick buildings were followed by others in the immediate vicinity, such as the Milwaukee Hotel built by Goon Dip in 1911, the Eastern Hotel in 1911, Bing Kung Tong in 1916 and the Republic Hotel in 1920.¹¹²

Japanese workers had begun arriving in the 1870s and continued to come until the Immigration Act of 1924. They formed the city's largest ethnic group at the beginning of the twentieth century. Japanese laborers and families developed a community known as Nihonmachi (Japantown) on the eastern edge of Chinatown, with apartment buildings, residences, commercial buildings and

111. Mimi Sheridan, *First Hill Streetcar Historic Resources Technical Report*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.seattlestreetcar.com/about/docs/sepa/Appendix%20E%20-%20Historic%20Resources%20Technical%20Report.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIPqM2in> on June 15, 2015.

112. Doug Chin, *Seattle's International District: the Making of a Pan-Asian American Community* (Seattle, Wash: International Examiner Press, 2001), 43.

the Nippon Kan Theater.¹¹³ The community used to be around the Yesler Terrace area before World War II and a block south of Jackson Street; it shrunk to the area bordering north of Jackson Street and south of Yesler Way, west of the I-5 freeway and east of 4th Avenue.

A third Asian immigrant group, Filipinos, began arriving about 1910, following the United States' annexation of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War. Although they did not settle in a specific area, many Filipino families and single men lived in or near the district, working primarily in fish canneries and agriculture. They formed strong labor unions (with local union halls) whose influence on the fishing industry is apparent even today.¹¹⁴

This thriving neighborhood of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino families and their American-born descendants was threatened with urban renewal schemes such as the construction of I-5 freeway and Kingdome. In the area immediately east of I-5, a growing Vietnamese business area called Little Saigon has replaced a formerly abandoned industrial area of the district; many Vietnamese businesses moved into former warehouses, or occupy 1960s style strip retail centers. As a result, the community has not been as embroiled in the controversies surrounding historic preservation in the International District, but often struggles to be recognized as members of the larger neighborhood.¹¹⁵

5.2 BUILDING TYPOLOGY AND FAÇADE

The mixed-use blocks are typically made up of narrow and deep lots, creating a uniform building pattern, with a pedestrian scale. This attribute is prevalent in North American Chinatowns. Historically, many buildings had internal courtyards and passageways for access to light and air, forming intricate intra-block pedestrian routes that connected streets and alleys.¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, differing greatly than those in San Francisco and Vancouver, the prevailing urban pattern of Seattle's International District consists low to medium-rise brick buildings (Table 5) that occupy half block with a typical lot area exceeding 7,200 square feet, and are not restrained in the use of

113. Sheridan, *Report*.

114. *Ibid*.

115. Hou, "Preserving for Multiple Publics," 17.

116. City of Vancouver, *HA-1 Guidelines*.

street frontage.¹¹⁷ Some large blocks are bisected by mid-block alleys, where service functions that detract from the public pedestrian environment are located, such as garage entries, trash collection, and utilities. Usually arranged in groups, the consistent architectural massing and proportions are the key space-defining elements of the district.¹¹⁸

Table 5. Building Types in the International District

<p>Hotels</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3 to 6 story blocks 2. Ground floors used as retail space 3. Upper floors used for hotel rooms 4. Built from early 1900s to 1930s 5. Some converted to residential housing 	<p>One-story Commercial Buildings</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commercial use only 2. One-story blocks 3. Some have only one business, some have multiple businesses 4. Buildings may be joined to form a plaza and parking lot in front
<p>Mixed-use Residential Development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commercial use on ground floor 2. Residential use on upper floors 3. 3 to 5 stories generally 4. Footprint is relatively large 	<p>Commercial Complex</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commercial use only 2. 2 to 3 stories 3. Some are office space for one company, some subdivided among different small businesses
<p>Single/Multi-family Houses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Small footprints 2. Pitched roofs 3. 2 stories maximum generally 4. Masses are relatively small 	<p>Industrial Buildings</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Industrial use only 2. 1 to 2 stories 3. Factory or warehouse uses 4. High ceiling heights 5. Some of very large footprints
<p>Residential Towers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Residential 2. 7 to 12 stories 3. Subdivided into living units 4. Retail space on ground floor of some towers 	<p>Community Services Buildings</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community use only 2. 2 to 3 stories generally

Source: UW Community Design Studio, *Community Building and Placemaking*.

Most building widths are related to the lot width, typically around 120 feet in the International District. Some historic commercial buildings have recessed balconies (Figure 12) on top floor, which is considered a hybrid architectural style that blends aspects of Southern China's common architecture with western styles and building approaches. Other distinctive architectural features include large glazed storefronts with recessed entrances, glazed transoms, oriental lattice work, and the use of Chinese design elements such as calligraphic signs, painted doors, terra-cotta ornament, decorative tiles and panels. There are many newer buildings in Chinatown that have been added with pseudo-oriental style false fronts. Although far from authentic, they provide variety through their strong color and decoration. Also, a number of buildings, typically in the eastern and southern sections of the district, have been abandoned or renovated for auto-oriented

117. Kalthoff, "Analysis", 26.

118. Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority, *International District, An Inventory of Buildings and Urban Design Resources*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://historicseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/International-District-2.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZITLoMKq> on June 15, 2015.

and industrial-oriented business establishments, reinforcing the sub-areas' utilitarian and mixed-use characteristics.



Figure 12. Recessed Balcony
Source: Author photo, April 2015.

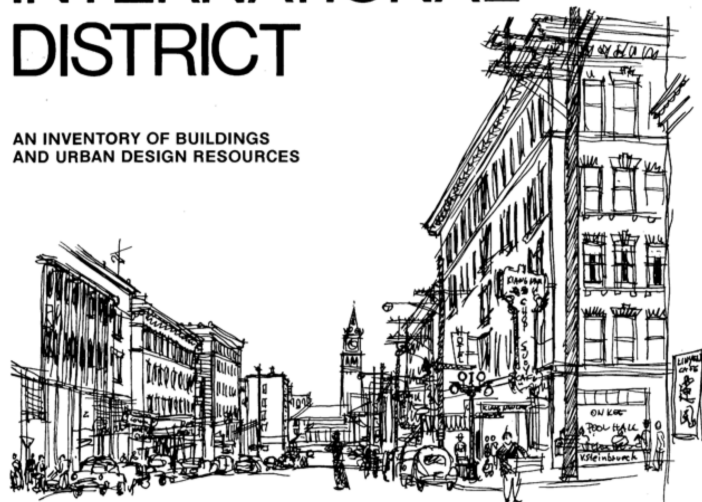
5.3 THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Planning and preservation efforts began in the International District, as early as 1960s. In 1968, the Planning Report for Seattle's International District, summarizing threats the district met, such as high vacancy rate and the lack of housing diversity, suggested formulating new zoning code. An Action Program for Physical Development in 1973 contained similar concerns and recommendations as the 1968 report. It focused on issues of new urban development related to stadiums, were intended to guide the revitalization of the district. In 1976, the Design Reports and Development Regulations established design standards for the International Special Review District, requiring retaining the historic core of the neighborhood. In the same year, the Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority completed an inventory of historic buildings and urban design resources in the International District (Figure 13). It included photographs and brief descriptions of Chinese cultural characteristics, significant buildings, and urban design elements, each keyed to the map. In 1998, Chinatown/International District Strategic Plan was presented to be a reference of public opinion and planning efforts for this neighborhood to guide all city departments and the Seattle Comprehensive Plan.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ InterIm Community Development Association, *The International District Urban Design Streetscape and Open Space Master Plan*, [Seattle, Wash.?]: [Nakano Associates?], 2004.

INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

AN INVENTORY OF BUILDINGS
AND URBAN DESIGN RESOURCES



HISTORIC SEATTLE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Figure 13. Cover of the International District Inventory

Source: Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority, International District, An Inventory of Buildings and Urban Design Resources.

Since its establishment in 1973, preservation under ISRD, the only district in the United States settled by a mixture of Asian immigrants in close proximity, follows a model similar to the city's other historic districts. In order to preserve the district's unique Asian American character and response to the deterioration of historic buildings, a set of design guidelines were established that specifies permitted and prohibited elements in awnings, canopies, façade alterations, security systems, and signs. All property within the ISRD, are subject to the design guidelines. The ISRD Board reviews all applications for use or development, such as new construction, changes in use, changes in public right of way or alteration of building appearances, which require a Certificate of Approval.¹²⁰ The Board then makes a written recommendation based upon the extent to which the proposed project is consistent with the goals and objectives of the International Special Review District and the design guidelines.

120. Kalthoff, "Analysis", 41.

The guidelines for façade alterations, specifically, will be used by the ISRD Board “in the evaluation of requests for storefront and building design approval.”¹²¹ Businesses that submit façade design proposals within the district conform to the following requirements:

- A. Any exterior facade alteration shall respect the original architectural integrity of the storefront.
- B. Earthen materials such as brick, wood, concrete and tile shall be used for entry doors, windows and the main facade. The painting of brick shall be discouraged.
- C. Recessed entryways and/or alcoves shall be maintained for existing street level storefronts.
- D. Original storefront fenestration shall be preserved (i.e., bay windows, transom areas and door design).
- E. Anodized aluminum or other metal materials shall be reviewed by the board and permitted when:
 - 1. The historic appearance of the building and district is preserved by replicating visual building details.
 - 2. The aluminum or metal material is painted of a compatible color.
 - 3. The building is a non-contributing historically or architecturally significant building.
 - 4. The appearance does not impact a primary facade.
- F. All glass and window areas shall be clear. Mirrored glass is not permitted in the district.
- G. Physical elements that exhibit the district's Asian character shall be encouraged, preserved and restored. Such items include calligraphic signs, lattice work, and tiled canopies.¹²²

These design regulations, seen as a restriction on land use to varying degrees, make the Board’s mission more difficult than equivalent review boards in the city. This is, according to Kalthoff’s study, due to the complex social and political factors to consider in the neighborhood.¹²³ The organizational structure of family associations in the district, with large boards and shared ownership of the building, makes the decision-making process time-consuming and difficult, thus further discouraging building rehabilitation projects. This picture could change through a more effective public engagement, an increase in staff and budget. However, this research avoids placing extra emphasis on addressing the complicated issue of stakeholder participation, the

121. Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, *International Special Review District Design Guidelines*, accessed August 11, 2014, <http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/HistoricPreservation/HistoricDistricts/InternationalDistrict/ID-Guidelines.pdf>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIQM0c12> on June 15, 2015.

122. Ibid.

123. Kalthoff, “Analysis”, 41-42.

financial feasibility and the implementation mechanism. Rather, it mainly focuses upon how design approaches by other Chinatowns can be applied to the improvement of International District's design guidelines. It believes that a strengthening of planning tools as surveys, plans, historic studies, and design guidelines, if not fully, could largely contribute to the effectiveness of design review process.

Hence getting back to the guidelines themselves, the lack of requirements for compatibility with the size, scale of historic building and for balancing the public activities between architectural characters can be noticed. They aims to achieve minimal design solutions or resolve zoning disputes, giving little attention to how the façade design can work to promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation. The guidelines were developed to be conceptual and broad, to provide some flexibility based on the ultimate uses and type of development on-site. With this intent, qualitative attributes of façade treatment are described, but there are no illustrations helping express design ideas. Trying to be less prescriptive, the guidelines rarely provide the analysis of prevailing scale, building forms and parcel patterns, but focus merely on the exterior qualities. In addition, with few requirements for new constructions, the guidelines fail to avoid the replication of historic styles, which consequently distorts the understanding of the district's new development, and hence the significance of the historic core. All these made it difficult to evaluating a building design proposal during the design review process where consensus can hardly be reached. Also, the non-designer members are in the majority in the ISRD Board. They may need a solid support from a new and close study of heritage buildings, since it is an important element within a regulatory framework to provide a valuable data for updating the guidelines, and assists the public in understanding the district's architectural components.

5.4 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN DESIGN

In the face of urban renewal as mentioned above, and the need for historic preservation-based community revitalization, constant efforts have been made by the City as well as local non-profit groups to develop design guidelines and urban design master plan for the district. Several abandoned hotel buildings have been restored for housing low- and moderate-income residents. However, these guidance documents still have room for improvement, since the planning and design needs to involve a considerable degree of flexibility and discretion. The urban design

project or design review in the district will repeatedly face issues of cultural expression and representation. The project to paint the columns of the I-5 overpass highlights the contestation of identity and space as a result of new immigration and demographic changes. Not being consulted, many Vietnamese businesses protested the red color scheme proposed for the freeway columns. A compromise was later reached with the columns painted red and yellow, representing both the Chinese and Vietnamese presence in the district. The different ways in which various cultural characteristics are expressed and represented through a design project could rouse controversy. The point that a design project in the district would inevitably touch on issues of cultural expression can be illustrated with another example—the traditional Chinese-style gate on the main thoroughfare of the core Chinatown area has been installed to address the area's lack of Chinese identity and character. However, some worried that such structure could overshadow the multiethnic characteristics in a community settled by a mixture of Asian immigrants.¹²⁴ Such ongoing process in the neighborhood presents important implications for the practice of urban design. Namely, the intervention in a historic urban environment requires a thorough understanding of history, culture and architecture of the place (i.e. urbanism), in addition to understanding the historic building itself. Thus any architectural alteration needs to be informed by the neighborhood's urbanism, typologies, and morphologies.¹²⁵

While there are challenges and weaknesses apparent in terms of complicated review process, housing condition, new development typology and access to affordable housing. There are also opportunities that must be considered as reinvestment and neighborhood planning occurs. Though the neighborhood's sense of place is threatened due to the deterioration of many of the community's buildings, careful design could assist in preserving and restoring this urban fabric. The historical district designation, heritage buildings (Figure 14) within it and the rich histories of ethnic groups are valuable assets to the community as a whole. The historic built environment creates a unifying design character that could guide future development style and typology mixture.¹²⁶

124. Jeffrey Hou and Amy Tanner, "Constructed Identities and Contested Space in Seattle's Chinatown-International District" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture, Syracuse, New York, September 25-28, 2002).

125. City of Vancouver, *HA-1 Guidelines*.

126. School of Regional and Community Planning, *Chinatown International District Urban Design Plan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2004), 27.

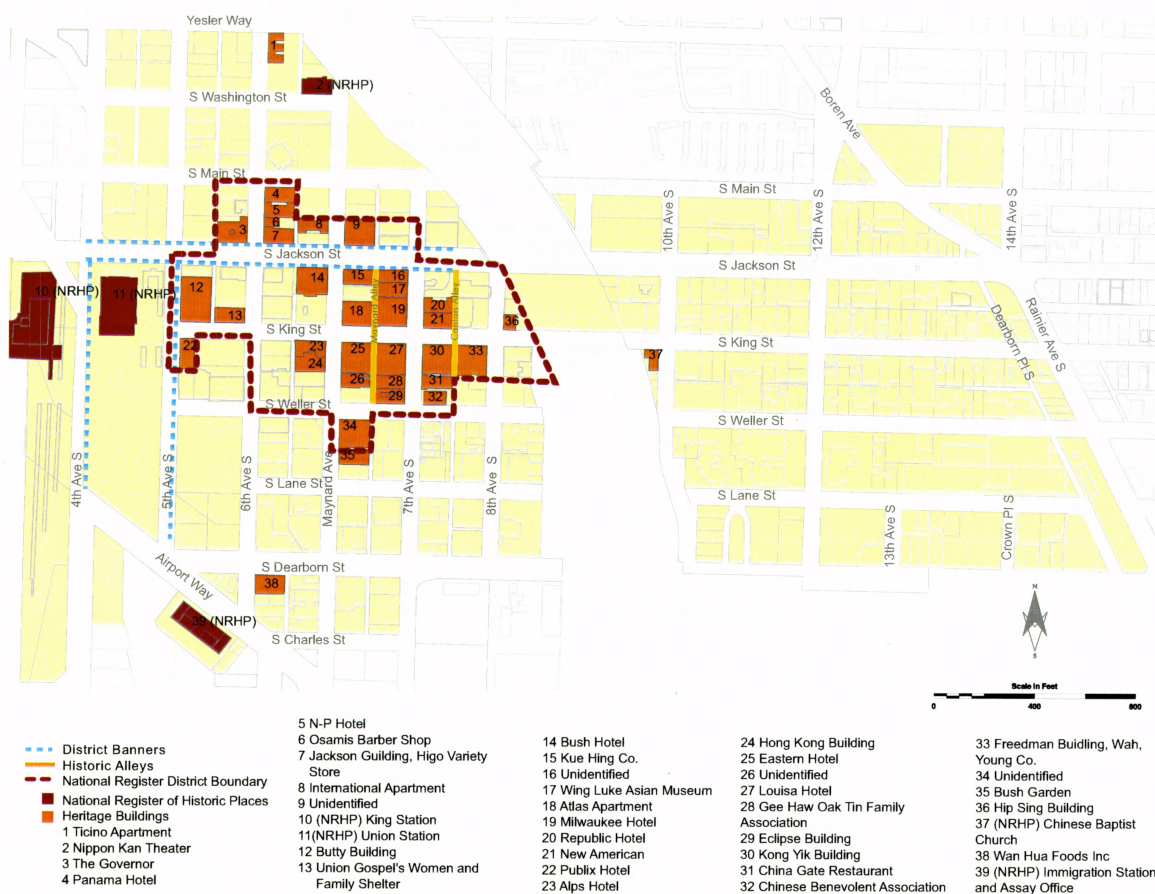


Figure 14. Historic Buildings in the International District
 Source: UBC School of Regional and Community Planning, Chinatown International District Urban Design Plan.

Chapter 6. MAKING IMPROVEMENTS TO DESIGN GUIDELINES

Those proposing and implementing urban design controls or guidelines need a clear idea of the intended outcomes, otherwise the policies and guidelines will operate in a vacuum. This requires either a vision of what good urban form/urban design is or the means to recognize it when it is presented.¹²⁷ It is recommend, based upon the research, that the design guidelines for the International District should be improved in three major respects:

1. In general design considerations, the emphasis should be moved towards the pedestrian activities, as well as the district's unique scale, and urban pattern.
2. For architectural components, a building form needs to be analyzed in three distinct parts (i.e., ground floor, upper level, and rooftop). The high degree of architectural detailing should also be encouraged.
3. Third, the guidelines should be visualized to be reader-friendly in order to communicate goals and objectives clearly, and to meet the applicants' needs.

These strategies ranging from the general design philosophy, to specific façade elements, and to writing in a visually appealing style, provide the basic framework to undertake the successful improvements of design guidelines.

6.1 GENERAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Although different in physical form, the historic buildings, especially those commercial buildings within the historic core, should be supportive of a human and pedestrian scale by directly fronting onto the street and welcoming pedestrians through an engaging architectural expression as well as clear and distinct entries to their front doors. The façade, being consistent with its neighbor's, could create a sense of enclosure to the street to form an outdoor space for pedestrians. It should be well proportioned oriented to sidewalks to support activities such as window shopping and walking.

The historic commercial buildings (Figure 15) along the King Street define the district's unique building scale and urban pattern. Maintaining the continuity of such pattern is essential to retaining a consistent human scale along the street. The criteria of maintaining the existing scale

127. Carmona et al., *Public Places*, 239.

and pattern should also be applied to new constructions. On blocks out of the historic core, buildings forms and scale are more varied; the buildings however still have a unified character. Still, these buildings should be designed to be compatible with the scale, pattern of surrounding buildings. Like San Francisco's Residential Design Guidelines, here an appropriate level of prescription is needed. The guidelines could articulate some detailed design principles required in achieving compatibility, and how these might be applied, with key questions that the applicants and design reviewers can ask themselves.¹²⁸

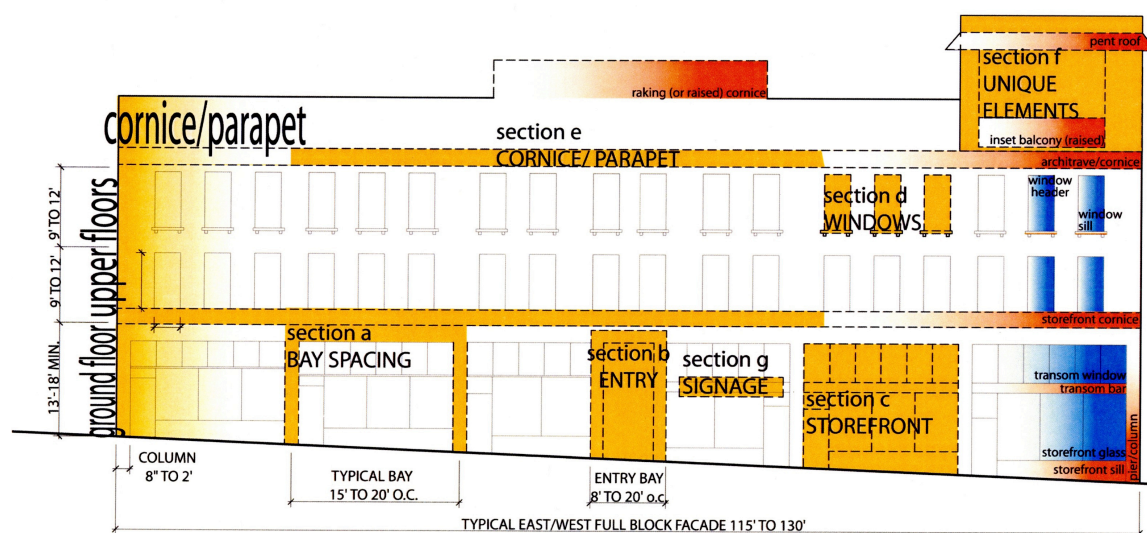


Figure 15. Façade Organization

Source: UW Dept. of Urban Design and Planning, *Design Guidelines for a Historic Asian Immigrant Neighborhood: the Chinatown Core of Seattle's Chinatown-Japantown-Little Saigon/International District*.

There is varied nature of the different sub-areas in the International District. There are several vacant or underused parcels in the area between Jackson Street and Yesler Way (Japantown), as well as within the historic core (National Register Historic District). The area east of Interstate 5 (Little Saigon) has developed under commercial zoning, and consists of industrial-oriented business establishments. Each of these sub-areas has different topography, different relationships to existing building patterns, and different prospects for future development.¹²⁹ Guidelines for

128. Punter, *Design Guidelines*, 202.

129. Seattle Department of Planning and Development, *Livable South Downtown*, accessed August 11, 2014. http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/vault/cs/groups/pan/@pan/documents/web_informational/s048363.pdf, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZIQ2IpWj> on June 15, 2015.

development in each of these sub-areas should recognize their individual character and the prevailing scale of each.

6.1 ARCHITECTURAL COMPONENTS

There is an increasing interest in revitalizing historic communities through arts and culture. The design controls and appearance standards for buildings that work best are those that are based on the historical context of the affected structures. The standards are based on an inventory of the features and elements of the area or neighborhood in which the regulated property is located that provide its character. Design controls and appearance standards allow new development to fit into those existing areas that give the standards and elements context. The suitability of regulatory standards must, then, reflect both a prior identification of visual themes for the area and be consistent with future plans for the area.¹³⁰ Therefore before establishing criteria for architectural components, it is recommend that the city could conduct a detailed study on the cultural, social, architectural and historical significance of the heritage buildings. This action could involve the participation of family associations, government officials, academics and the community at large. The study's outcome could be a new neighborhood inventory that provides helpful sociological, architectural and historical data for the development of building design guidelines.

At ground floor that are primarily occupied by retail business, high degree of transparency, both in the display window area, transom windows, and in doors could enhance pedestrian environment and establish visual continuity along the street. New window and door openings need to maintain a similar horizontal and vertical relationship with the existing buildings. Exterior building signage should be visually compatible with the surrounding architectural character of the historic buildings in the district. A variety in signage is encouraged, incorporating excellence in graphic design and characters, careful color coordination with the building, materials, and street furniture, all of which are compatible with and sensitive to the character of the building. Decorative lighting, as a relatively inexpensive way to accentuate

130. Richard Ducker, "A Few Thoughts on Community Appearance and Design Controls," UNC School of Government, accessed August 11, 2014, <http://canons.sog.unc.edu/?p=7122>, archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZITpSsV1> on June 15, 2015.

distinct design elements of buildings, may also be permissible in a manner that complements neighboring buildings and diverse uses. Awnings should be designed to fit within the dominant structuring elements of the lower façade. In particular, they should be contained within pilasters or columns and should not block the decorative details such as the transom windows, the minor cornice, and signage. More importantly, lower facades should be defined by continuous cornice or similar decorative elements. Such continuity between one building to the others could increase visibility of commercial frontages along the street and help keep street active. Detailing of the floor surface in the entries and passageways is also necessary, as it could provide pedestrians with noticeable transition space between public sidewalk and the interior of private properties.

The upper floors of some commercial buildings were deteriorated and left unoccupied while the ground floor are still occupied by retail businesses. To maintain this upper façade, fenestration pattern and other architectural elements are needed. The size, regular spacing and decorative details of the upper level windows are a major contribution to both the unity of the street and the individual character of façades. A repetitive pattern of the symmetrically arranged elements, horizontally and vertically, from bay to bay and also from floor to floor, is encouraged.¹³¹ Also, adding continuous cornice or similar architectural elements could define the upper façades. These additions to historic building are generally needed to assure its continued use, but it is most important that such additions do not radically change, obscure, or destroy character-defining spaces, materials, features, or finishes.¹³² Recessed balconies dominate the upper facades of many buildings in the International District. Their interiors have heritage and cultural value and thus the conservation of the interiors should be encouraged during the rehabilitation process.

Replicating the ancient Chinese decorative details on rooftop such as towers, sculptural elements, brilliantly colored tile should be avoided when rehabilitating the brick commercial buildings, based on the premise that any additions made should be compatible and contextual with original attributes. The existing rooftop features, if removed in the future will leave the authentic

131. City of Vancouver, *HA-IA Guidelines*.

132. W. Brown Morton et al., *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Preservation Assistance Division, 1992), xi.

elements of historic buildings impaired, hence should be retained. Mechanical additions on rooftop of new buildings should be compatible with adjacent properties. The equipment needs to be set back from the street-edge parapets so that it will not be seen by pedestrians on the opposite side of the street.

6.2 THE VISUALIZATION OF DESIGN GUIDELINES

Clear and cohesive guidelines can be sensitive to social context as well as physical characteristics of the district. To engage readers, the document could use a question-and answer format at the beginning, trying to ask the questions the readers would ask and then answer them immediately. It should be organized to respond to major concerns in a logical order, such as the procedure of the urban design application, key design review principles, or more specifically the design elements that are encouraged to use. It is also recommend that the goals and objectives could be organized into a comprehensive table of contents that will be an outline of the document. Well-organized, detailed tables of contents make it easy for the reader to identify all elements in the document. Importantly, in the introduction section of the document, an informative user guide that describes the layout of the document could give assistance to those involved in the review of applications (Figure 16).

How To Use This Document

Each guideline addresses a single issue and has the same structural components:

Where a River District Design Guideline has not been identified, the Fundamental Design guideline will serve as the approval criteria.

The Central City Fundamental Design Guideline states the broad objective.

The River District Guideline builds on the fundamental guideline.

Guideline may be accomplished by: Examples of some of the various methods that can be used to address the intent of each guideline.

Heading identifies the guideline within the page

BS-1 RECOGNIZE THE ROLES OF THE TANNER CREEK PARKS

B2 PROTECT THE PEDESTRIAN

B3 BRIDGE PEDESTRIAN OBSTACLES

B4 PROVIDE STOPPING & VIEWING PLACES

B5 MAKE PLAZAS, PARKS & OPEN SPACE SUCCESSFUL

BS-1 RECOGNIZE THE ROLES OF THE TANNER CREEK PARKS

Background

In 2001, an Urban Design Framework Study was developed for the park system centered around Tanner Creek. The framework plan creates a strong and poetic metaphor of historic Tanner Creek, addressing the relationship between water and land and the natural and social life that they support. It provides a variety of spaces in size and scale, promotes a strong relationship between civic and private uses, and sets on simple elements both common and unique to the city to establish a special sense of place.

The framework describes design concepts that promote neighborhood identity and form, efficient active uses, a venue for the arts community, and flexibility of use. Jackson Square, Tanner Springs Park, and the future public plaza will be linked together by a boardwalk along 15th Avenue, to bridge Jackson Park and the railroad tracks to the Centennial Mills development site.

The Tanner Creek Parks function as both a neighborhood park system and as one of Portland's primary promenades, extending the North Park Blocks northward to the Willamette River. Adjacent private development to the parks should support and enhance these roles.

Where private development is directly adjacent to or faces a park across the street, ground floors should include building entrances, windows, and outdoor seating to activate the park edges and contribute to "eyes on the street." Private development across the street should also create a sense of enclosure facing the park to strengthen the public amenity. Ground floor retail or history that highlights or focus on the park will ensure that the significance of the public amenity is reflected in the building.

Private development that directly abuts public space should incorporate semi-private transition zones. Landscaped areas, seating areas, artwork, or movement areas create a physical and visual separation between the private development and the public amenity. Transition zones enhance the quality of the public amenity while also drawing upon its ambience and character. Substantial transition zones help to differentiate public from private spaces while blending characteristics of both.

The character of development along the Tanner Creek Parks must strike a balance between fostering a district identity and strengthening a sense of continuity with the North Park Blocks character. Some design features could repeat or refer to elements in the North Park Blocks. These might include paving materials, tree species, lighting fixtures and benches. Other features should be unique to the Tanner Creek Parks system.

Guideline

Strengthen and enhance the Tanner Creek Parks as both a neighborhood park system and an extension of the North Park Blocks.

BS-1 RECOGNIZE THE ROLES OF THE TANNER CREEK PARKS

Guideline BS-1 may be accomplished by:

1. Providing an "eyes on the street" approach with active ground floors where private development faces public open space.
2. Creating a semi-private transition zone where private development directly abuts public open space. Seating areas, landscaping, artwork, or movement areas can be used within the transition zone to create a physical and visual separation between public and private spaces.

Background: The background statement describes the design problem or issue necessitating the design guideline.

Images which support the background statement

Guideline: The design guideline language serves as the approval criteria. It is the only part of the design guideline that is adopted by ordinance.

Graphic and written descriptions of the examples. The images provided are intended to illustrate a possible solution for each example, but should not be seen as the only solution.

Figure 16. A User Guide in Portland's River District Design Guidelines
 Source: Portland Bureau of Planning, River District Design Guidelines.

A jargon-laden, legalistic style that does not clearly convey important information are discouraged. The guidelines should be fully accessible to multiple audiences, some highly knowledgeable, some less so. Design ideas of each objective should be expressed one by one in short sentences. Long, complicated sentences should be avoided. Shorter sentences are also better for conveying complicated design concepts; they break the information up into smaller, easier-to-process units. Using the glossary of common architectural terms that have been used in the text of the document could help reduce confusion or misinterpretation for all readers.

In order to convey the contemporary architectural response to the International District, and to help readers get information and comply with design requirements, a visually appealing document is needed. It could be far easier to understand than more traditional styles. Blocks of text could be replaced with headings, tables, and more white space. Together with some illustrations (Figure 17) of bad and good designs, or from before and after the façade improvements, the clear text could inform the readers, giving clarification on what is encouraged and what is not. In the Secretary of the Interior's guidelines for rehabilitating historic buildings,

the guidance that is basic to the treatment of all historic buildings—identifying, retaining, and preserving the form and detailing of those architectural materials and features that are important in defining the historic character—is always listed first in the “Recommended” column. The parallel “Not Recommended” column lists the types of actions that are most apt to cause the diminution or even loss of the building's historic character (Table 6).¹³³ This helps readers by making the judgments readily apparent and grouping related examples together. In turn, the applicants and designers will be more likely to follow the guidelines in their dealings with the design review board.



Figure 17. Typical Lower Façade of Heritage Building in Vancouver
Source: City of Vancouver, *Chinatown HA-1 Design Guidelines*.

Table 6. The Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Storefront

	Recommended	Not Recommended
<p>Building Exterior: Storefront</p> <p><i>Identify, retain, and preserve</i></p>	<p>Identifying, retaining, and preserving storefronts—and their functional and decorative features—that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as display windows, signs, doors, transoms, kick plates, corner posts, and entablatures. The removal of inappropriate, nonhistoric cladding, false mansard roofs, and other later alterations can help reveal the historic character of a storefront.</p>	<p>Removing or radically changing storefronts—and their features—which are important in defining the overall historic character of the building so that, as a result, the character is diminished.</p> <p>Changing the storefront so that it appears residential rather than commercial in character.</p> <p>Removing historic material from the storefront to create a recessed arcade.</p> <p>Introducing coach lanterns, mansard designs, wood shakes, nonoperable shutters, and small-paned windows if they cannot be documented historically.</p> <p>Changing the location of a storefront's main entrance.</p>

Source: W. Brown Morton et al., *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*.

133. W. Brown Morton et al., *Standards*, ix.

Chapter 7. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION FOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

The major implication of the research indicates the diversity assets of Seattle's Chinatown – International District are in large part physically defined by the character and quality of facades of historically significant buildings. Over time, however, many of these buildings have fallen into disrepair and vacancy rates have risen substantially. Additionally, inappropriate infill development has occurred, producing a largely unharmonious mixture of building types. Central to this research is an attempt to be one of the supportive elements throughout the design review process of the International District. The key lessons of the three case studies aims to establish a framework to improve the existing design guidelines, providing a set of principles, policies and guidelines that haven't been taken in to account in the past. The best example among the three design guidelines is provided by Vancouver, where specific sets of related regulations and guidelines greatly assist the city's continued heritage management effort. Its emphasis on compatibility, scale, building forms, as well as detailed façade components, is certainly a contributory factor to the effectiveness of design guidelines. The consideration of livability, pedestrian environment, and neighborliness in the guidelines, introduces new approaches to the physical design of historic district. Moreover, the city provides a model for other Chinatowns, in terms of carrying out a citywide cooperative research of historic district's architectural, cultural and social significance. It is the coming together of all these aspects and related preservation programs that makes the unique sense of place of Vancouver's Chinatown is well maintained. The International District can draw from the three cities' experience, while make sure to understand that the improvements of the design guidelines will be a series of many small actions phased over a number of years. In terms of the overall design review process, there should be a general agreement that it needs to be part of a comprehensive coordinated effort; participation by family associations, residents, the City of Seattle, and other stakeholders is essential.

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