

Historic Alley Reactivation in Seattle's Chinatown International District

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Abstract

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Alley reactivation – to activate underutilized alleys by bringing people, businesses, residences, and positive activities back into these right of ways – has been building up momentum in Seattle's urban centers since 2007. More recently, the City has been progressive in gradually adopting programs and streamlined permitting processes for street vendors, sidewalk cafes, and parklets – all of which are programs that help activate streets and public spaces and enhance the pedestrian experience. A handful of alleys in Seattle have launched their reactivation campaign in recent years, including Canton Alley project. This is a good time for the City to evaluate its current regulations around the city's alley network and reimagine the potential of alleys as vibrant public spaces.

This thesis is a documentation of the Canton Alley project development, a grassroots effort to reactivate a historic alley in Seattle's Chinatown International District through physical improvements. This historic alley reactivation project is a case study that examines the challenges and opportunities of Seattle's urban alleys and a community's quest to revert the current utilitarian uses of the alley to its historic community-centric uses. What are the current

parameters around alleys through Seattle Department of Transportation? What resources are accessible to grassroots community groups? What are the roles that local authorities could play to help facilitate and encourage reactivation of alley spaces in Seattle's urban centers?

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an understanding and context of the public processes to reactivate an alley rich in history and culture from conception to preconstruction stage, lending first hand experience in working with a multi-ethnic community, the Seattle Department of Transportation, and local partners. It discusses challenges faced by Chinatown Historic Alley Partnership as well the incremental successes of the project. The significance of this research and alley reactivation project is organizing and working with the Chinatown International District community to find common ground, collaborate, take ownership of the underutilized public space, and fully develop the project amidst the challenges of securing funding and navigating the Seattle Department of Transportation's system. A list of recommendations was developed, from the results and lessons learned from these processes, for community groups interested in reactivating their neighborhood alleys.

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community within the alley have inspired me to ensure that both the stories and the spaces continue to live on and be shared with future generations.

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

Like most major cities, Seattle has many alleys throughout its downtown and nearby urban neighborhoods. Until recent years, most of these alleys have prioritized automobile and utilitarian uses such as dumpster storage and truck loading and unloading. Downtown Seattle neighborhoods such as Pioneer Square and the Chinatown International District have started an alley reactivation movement over the last five years, shifting the focal use of alleys to pedestrian access and (re)introducing businesses into alley storefronts, reclaiming these public spaces. This movement has started picking up momentum throughout the city and these efforts have already raised ideas to change the existing right of way policies and ordinances at the City level (Fialko & Hampton, 2011). This study focuses on the public processes, community engagement, programming, complex funding matrix, and lessons learned from the reactivation of Canton Alley, a pilot project to restore historic alleys in Seattle's Chinatown International District. It aims to provide a general guideline as well as design and programming recommendations for activating alleys in the historic and urban neighborhoods in Seattle.

The Canton Alley project is a unique case study in a number of ways – namely its location, history, typology, and its reactivation process spearheaded by IDEA Space, a program of the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda). Its location in the heart of Seattle's Chinatown International District – the only Pan-Asian neighborhood in all of contiguous North America, makes for a challenging task to organize the community with different ethnic groups, histories and cultures, and politics to find common ground. This neighborhood has experienced struggles in politics, powers, and geography between the different ethnic communities, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Filipino for decades. Though these struggles and conflicts between ethnic communities and organizations continue to impede the neighborhood's overall revitalization efforts, the condition has improved significantly since the planning process of the Chinatown, Japantown, Little Saigon – International District Urban Design Streetscape and Open Space Master Plan that

took place in 2003, in which various ethnic and community groups unanimously agreed on not just the inclusiveness of the plan's title, but the fact that the plan focused on the collective network of cultural landmarks and anchors rather than defining the boundaries of each ethnic community (Abramson, Manzo, & Hou, January 1, 2006). In recent years, neighborhood wide projects such as the King Street Visioning project have intentionally focused on inclusive participatory process, ensuring all community groups are properly represented and recognized.

The scale of the alley is another unique feature of Canton Alley as well as the 13 other alleys in the Chinatown International District. Its narrow width of 16 feet provides for a more intimate space with human scaled storefronts compared to main arterials. It is worth noting that not all alleys were born equal – there is a range of different alley typologies. The widths, lengths, heights and uses of adjacent buildings, and building facades facing the alley all contribute to its typology. Different alley typologies may suit different uses and level of activities. San Francisco's Chinatown alleys exemplify two main typologies: larger alleys that serve as secondary streets and smaller, more intimate, non-vehicular alleys that are mostly used by local residents as an extension to their living units. For instance, wider alleys like Waverly Place and Ross Alley allow for vehicular access and house larger businesses and local institutions such as the famous Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Factory and the Tin How Taoist Temple that anchor and sustain foot traffic into the alley. Other San Francisco Chinatown alleys including Old Chinatown Lane and Spofford Alley are much narrower, with smaller shops, more residences, and are for pedestrian access only (Adopt-an-Alleyway, 2007). Canton Alley is a hybrid of these two typologies, in which it is wide enough for one lane vehicular access, but narrow enough to retain a sense of intimate ambience. Similar to the wider alleys in San Francisco, Canton Alley also abuts the Wing Luke Museum, a Smithsonian Institute affiliate and a destination for over 45,000 visitors a year (data provided by Wing Luke Museum). Both the Wing Luke Museum and its sister building the West Kong Yick across the alley have human scaled storefronts and residential entrances that open up into the alley, of which one remains occupied. The unique

elements and physicality of Canton Alley yield great potential and make it an ideal pilot reactivation project.

Alley reactivation is a great way to reclaim underutilized public spaces in urban neighborhoods for pedestrian, retail, and arts and cultural uses. However, it could be difficult to navigate and find funding for the public processes involved in enhancing the physical environment of these right-of-ways. This study examines the progress of reactivating Canton Alley in Seattle's Chinatown International District and aims to provide recommendations and guidance through some of its successes and shortcomings. More specifically, this research will look at what are the current parameters around alleys through Seattle Department of Transportation, accessible resources to grassroots community groups, and the roles that local authorities including the Department of Transportation could play to help facilitate and encourage reactivation of alley spaces in Seattle's urban centers. Building on research and successful case studies in various cities across the country, the Canton Alley Project is a pilot that tests out how physical improvements and programming could be implemented in a historic urban alley in Seattle's Chinatown International District and explore creative strategies and partnerships that could be replicated in other urban alleys in Seattle. The significance of this research and alley reactivation project is organizing and working with the Chinatown International District community to find common ground, collaborate, take ownership of the underutilized public space, and fully develop the project amidst the challenges of securing funding and navigating the Seattle Department of Transportation's system.

1.1 APPROACH/METHODS

This study documents the various aspects of the Canton Alley Project from its inception in 2008 to its current stage. Most information and data pertaining to this project have already been collected and in public records. This study will examine more closely the chronological

order of how this project came about and the public processes involved, and attempt to create a situational road map to help facilitate and streamline future alley reactivation efforts.

I began my work in alley reactivation in early 2009 as a facilitator, helping coordinate outreach work as well as organize community to establish a Chinatown Historic Alley Partnership (CHAP) neighborhood group. By 2012, I assumed the role of project manager, working directly with the design team, community members and Seattle Department of Transportation staff. Although CHAP was established, it was a volunteer based committee and most members did not have the capacity to handle the administrative work, write grants, manage grants, and coordinate regular meetings with the design team and SDOT to ensure the progress of the project. As the project manager, my responsibilities included all of the abovementioned tasks, in addition to navigating SDOT's processes as well as its organizational structure to better understand its right-of-ways policies and more importantly, find a SDOT representatives who can champion the Canton Alley Project and the greater alley revitalization movement.

The participant observations in this project were collected through a series of public meetings, community charrettes, alley events, and oral histories from 2010 to 2014. The framework of the oral history was around the activities, physical environment, and sense of community that was developed as part of life in the alley prior to 1980s. A total of over 75 community members attended public meetings and community charrettes and over 8 individuals have participated in the oral history collection in 2013, most of whom used to live in Canton Alley. In addition to the oral history collected, a map (figure 1.1.1 – 1.1.2) that includes a chronological order of residents and businesses located in Canton Alley was created through a memory mapping process. The memory mapping exercise took place at the Canton Alley Family Reunion in May 2013 – a public event that brought over 25 former residents and businesses of the alley to return to the alley to celebrate its history. Additional data collected from oral history also contributed to the memory mapping. The information and feedback

collected from community members at the series of charrettes and public meetings were around their top concerns and priorities for the alley, activities they would like to see in these spaces, and business types they believe would fit well in the alley storefronts.



1 Canton Alley

1925-1944 Chinn (Banjo Chinn)
 1943-1944 Chinn Ben Tone
 1949 Chinn, Harry
 1949 Chinn, Shu Num
 2002 (Door)

3 Canton Alley

2002 (Door)

5 Canton Alley

1912-1915 Quong On Wo Company
 Jan-1918 Quong On Wo Company
 Feb-1918 Quong On Wo Company
 Dec-1919 Quong On Woo
 1925-1944 Eva Lukus and Tun
 1943-1944 Chinn Shong
 1949 Chinn, Howard
 2002 International District Emergency Center

Figure 1.1.1. Memory map showing storefronts and apartments #1, 3, and 5 in Canton Alley and their respective tenants chronologically. Map by Jennifer Tippins.



2 Canton Alley

Jan-1918 Ah Sing
 Jan-1918 Chin Fee
 Feb-1918 Ah Sing
 Feb-1918 Chin Fee
 Dec-1919 Ah Sing
 Dec-1919 Chin Fee
 1925-1944 Jennie Dong Family (now Jennie Mar)
 1943-1944 Sing Lee (Carpentry)
 1949 Chin, Fook Juey
 2002 (Door)

4 Canton Alley

Jan-1918 J. C. Chin
 Feb-1918 J. C. Chin
 Dec-1919 J. C. Chin
 1925-1944 Louie Family (James Louie)
 1943-1944 Shee, Louie Leong Mrs.
 2002 (Door)

Canton Alley #6

1925-1944 Chinn Family (3 sons Andrew, Ming and #3)
 1943-1944 Dong Toy
 1949 Dong Toy
 1949 Dong Toy
 2002 (Door)

Figure 1.1.2. Memory map showing storefronts and apartments #2, 4, and 6 in Canton Alley and their respective tenants chronologically. Map by Jennifer Tippins.

This project was a first pilot alley reactivation project in Seattle's Chinatown International District. Though a number of alleys are historic, including those in Chinatowns of San Francisco and Victoria, BC, Canton Alley is the first historic alley in Seattle to have been reactivated by a community group. This study fully documents the Canton Alley reactivation project from conception to its current preconstruction phase. It discusses the challenges faced by CHAP and community stakeholders, but more importantly, it outlines the public process to program, fundraise, design, and implement physical improvements in an alley located within a historic district. The lessons learned and recommendations provided in this study aim to set the framework for alley guidelines that the City of Seattle could consider incorporating in its right-of-

way manual. Lastly, it is my hope that this pilot not only serves to help other community groups with reactivating their alleys, that it also leads the City to reevaluate its current alley system and bestow authority to the Public Space Management Program to facilitate and manage alley reactivation work, similar to how this program has helped successfully develop the pilot Parklet program which has grown significantly in the last year (Seattle Department of Transportation, April 21, 2015).

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Alleys have been an integral part of many cities and urban fabric for centuries. From the famous narrow and winding alleys of European towns to the bustling and crowded alleys in Asian cities, alleys are intimate spaces for small shops, cafes, and restaurants shielded from the main arterials (Fialko & Hampton, 2011). In the hierarchy of right-of-ways, alleys are often perceived as secondary to streets. Formed by a combination of paths – channels of movements, and edges – linear boundaries of adjacent building walls, alleys are in fact more fine-grained versions of streets – with less cars and traffic, and more pedestrian activities and interests on a more intimate scale (Lynch, 1960). Naturally, alleys help break down larger city blocks, while providing a network of shortcuts and connections throughout an urban center, accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists, and often times vehicles (Fialko & Hampton, 2011).

In many ways, alleys offer a sense of mystery and enigma to pedestrians due to it being tucked away and hidden from the main streets. The urban environmental quality of these spaces is in direct relationship with the amount and types of social activities that occur within (Gehl, 1987). Successful alleys have high quality environments that are pedestrian friendly and comfortable and naturally draw people into its space to explore without planned programming. However, these public open spaces need to be much more than merely serving as access mechanisms, which lack the qualities required to provide pedestrians a pleasant stay and linger (Alexander, 1977). Like any public spaces, alleys need to have constant flow of foot traffic and activities in addition to the basic infrastructure and a clean and safe environment to be successful. Small businesses that fit with the scale of alleys are a great tool to sustain non-programmed activities on streets and alleys alike. As a phenomenon discussed by many prominent planners and academia, vendors and people are the main draw and attraction to more people in public spaces (Jacobs, 1961). This has been proven over time in many dynamic and bustling parks, plazas, streets and other open spaces including alleys. It also shows that

activation of alleys could go hand in hand with community economic development, along with the public health and environmental benefits of an improved pedestrian network.

Unlike the thriving alleys in most other parts of the world, however, alleys in North America seemed to be deserted places used mostly for utility purposes and often times deter pedestrians from access. Post Alley in Seattle (1970s), Fan Tan and Dragon Alleys (1960s) in Victoria, BC, Chinatown Alleys in San Francisco (1920s) are some of the most notable and successfully revitalized alleys, while many urban American alleys remain underutilized and not activated to their full potential. In addition to the lack of public space design that are intuitive with users in mind, the overall increase in privatization, commercialization, and securitization of the public realm across the country has taken its toll in the decline and disinterest of urban public spaces throughout the 1990s (Nemeth, 2009). The public space reclamation movement has been mobilizing many American communities to take back public spaces for pedestrians and social uses in 2000s, mostly with focuses on parks, plazas and sidewalks. It is only in the recent years that alley reactivation and revitalization effort has picked up momentum from this greater movement, which helped to highlight and reclaim these residual utilitarian spaces for pedestrian and bicyclist uses.

A number of grassroots efforts have emerged around the country in the last 10-15 years to reclaim alley spaces that were taken over by dumpsters, garbage, and illicit activities. Public safety, sanitation, and environmental concerns have been the main drivers for neighborhood groups to revitalize these public spaces and convert them into intimate pathways that encourage small business development, neighborhood gatherings, and pedestrian activities. The Green Alleys Project, a pilot project that is turning a number of urban alleys in Los Angeles is setting the bar for reclaiming alley spaces and turning them into parks and community green spaces for public use (Cassidy, et al., 2008). To take it a step further, the Green Alleys Project

aims to replace some of these alleys' pavement with green infrastructure that will improve rainwater drainage and reduce runoffs.

Many community groups organized alley clean up parties as a first step in reclaiming public spaces, educating community members on the history of these alleys, and most importantly, allow them to experience the alley as a public space for fun community activities. Some of Denver's alleyways have seen dramatic changes in recent years – from the fenced off space full of junkyard remnants and empty beer bottles to the newly repaved and cleaned up pathway along with improved building facades (Michigan Municipal League, 2004). Community groups did not just stop there, with the newly reclaimed spaces, community groups saw great potential in partnering with local businesses such as the locally renowned breweries to host a series of neighborhood alley events to celebrate the new spaces as well as promote local businesses (Peterson, 2014). Family friendly games also made their way to the alley as a way to extend children play space into the alley.

Although most alley revitalization projects tend to be grassroots effort, some are encouraged by local governments as a means to boost economic development. The Downtown Commission of Austin took a great leap forward by adopting and implementing a comprehensive ten-year strategy to revitalize five to ten of Austin's downtown alleys as vibrant, activated public spaces (City of Austin Downtown Commission, 2013). The Commission further reinforced the importance of sustaining these alleys' vibrancy in the future through developing a template for design standards to facilitate the installation of physical improvements in alleys across downtown to enhance safety and create more pedestrian oriented experiences. In addition, the City also created an alley event handbook to highlight how to navigate the City's permitting process and put on an alley activation event.

Dragon Alley is another great example of how the City of Victoria allowed redevelopment of two historic buildings that flanked the alley into live-work townhouses. To reactivate the historic Dragon Alley, the City worked with local property owners and developers proactively to

find solutions to the block of abandoned buildings and deserted alley. By registering two of the buildings on the block as historic properties, the City was able to preserve and restore these two buildings while the remaining of the block redeveloped into live-work townhouses aimed to keep the alley activated with retail spaces on the ground floor (Lai, 1991). Moreover, the City of Victoria also provided tax incentives to attract homebuyers to move into these newly renovated townhouses and open their businesses below to help draw in pedestrian activities. Similarly, Fan Tan Alley, also located in Victoria's Chinatown was revitalized by the City's initiative to offer low rent of these alley storefronts and apartments to local artists and allow these artists to help improve the physical environment of the alley while bringing life back to the then vacant storefronts. In the case of Fan Tan Alley, the reactivation process was led by Chinatown community activists in the 1980s. Desperate for economic development, community members approached the City for help and resources (Lai, 1991). This strategy proved a success as Fan Tan Alley has been one of the biggest attractions in Victoria's Chinatown and has been sustaining its dynamicity with a number of unique small businesses, mostly arts related. Local governments and authorities could play a much bigger role in redeveloping or reactivating alleys with a little bit of creativity and working in partnership with community groups, that are assets to the neighborhood. Although the City owns these right-of-ways and are responsible for the maintenance and safety in these spaces, they should think beyond the utilitarian functions of the alley and engage local stakeholders to share the governance, responsibilities, and programming of these alleys. Unlike streets and parks, alleys are public spaces that are not regularly maintained, invested, and are not recognized as important spaces thus most cities do not have specifically designated plans, permits and regulations for alleys. In order to sustain long-term activation of alleys, the City needs to bestow a greater degree of citizen power – through building partnerships, delegating power, and allow citizens to take control of these spaces (Arnstein, 1969). Developing such mutually advantageous framework and partnerships between public, private, and community are critical in the success of alley reactivation efforts.

The inspiration for revitalizing alleyways in Seattle's Chinatown International District comes from the precedence set by other Chinatowns, including those in Victoria, B.C. and San Francisco. In San Francisco, a local youth program developed the 'Adopt An Alley' Campaign, by which they engaged local businesses to help conduct clean ups on a regular basis, and implemented wayfinding markers throughout their maze of alleys. This youth program was launched by the San Francisco Chinatown Community Development Center in the 1991 to engage high school youth in beautifying the 41 alleys in San Francisco's Chinatown (Adopt-an-Alleyway, 2007). Because alleys are not considered streets in City of San Francisco, the local transportation authority does not maintain them properly. This led local youth to assume the role of stewards for the alleys. These youth develop leadership skills through organizing alley clean ups, tenant services (youth lead interactive games and activities with seniors living in single room occupancy or SRO units), and Super Sunday (youth provide childcare for families living in SRO's so the parents could attend tenants' rights workshops). This program offers an opportunity to bestow unto local youth the rich history and knowledge of Chinatown alleys, history of early Chinese immigrants in San Francisco, and encourages intergenerational activities. The most impressive part is the regular award-winning tours these youths give of the alleys, the businesses and their histories were all organized and led by youth. This is a great model for Seattle's Chinatown International District, as the historic neighborhood had been suffering from the lack of local Asian Pacific American (API) youth engagement in preserving its unique history and culture. Alley stewardship provides a great opportunity for youth from within and outside the neighborhood to learn and appreciate the roots, culture and life of early API immigrants in Seattle. This could help cultivate the next generation of community leaders and activists before the older generations step down.

Chapter 3: CANTON ALLEY PROJECT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The public space reactivation movement in Seattle has picked up traction in the last decade, including successful implementation of green streets, sidewalk cafes, parklets, and alleys. However, most of these public space reactivation projects took place in more affluent and mainstream neighborhoods where their respective stakeholders, residents, businesses and property owners have access to resources, education and information, and most importantly, time to lead and support such efforts. As a low income and marginalized neighborhood with a large population of limited English speakers and low income, Chinatown International District have been in disadvantage and suffered from the having fewer active community members taking leadership roles in neighborhood revitalization. Because of this, my role as the project manager is to ensure we go beyond informing and educating CHAP and other community members to empower them and guide them throughout the development of the Canton Alley project. With this approach, not only are members showing up at public meetings, they participate in the fundraising, outreach, advocacy, planning and design, and programming processes.

The Canton Alley Project is a pilot conceived in late 2009, sparked by the King Street Visioning Project, as one of three streetscape improvement projects prioritized by Chinatown International District stakeholders. This alley embodies both the historical and cultural characteristics of early Chinese immigrants in Seattle and remains the only alley in the neighborhood that still has an operating business in its storefront. Flanked by Wing Luke Museum on the east, West Kong Yick Building on the west offering two vacant storefronts and Chong Wa Benevolent Association (the most prominent family association in the neighborhood), Canton Alley is full of potential. It was the ideal candidate pilot as it is surrounded by highly invested property owners and is full of untold stories.

3.2 HISTORY

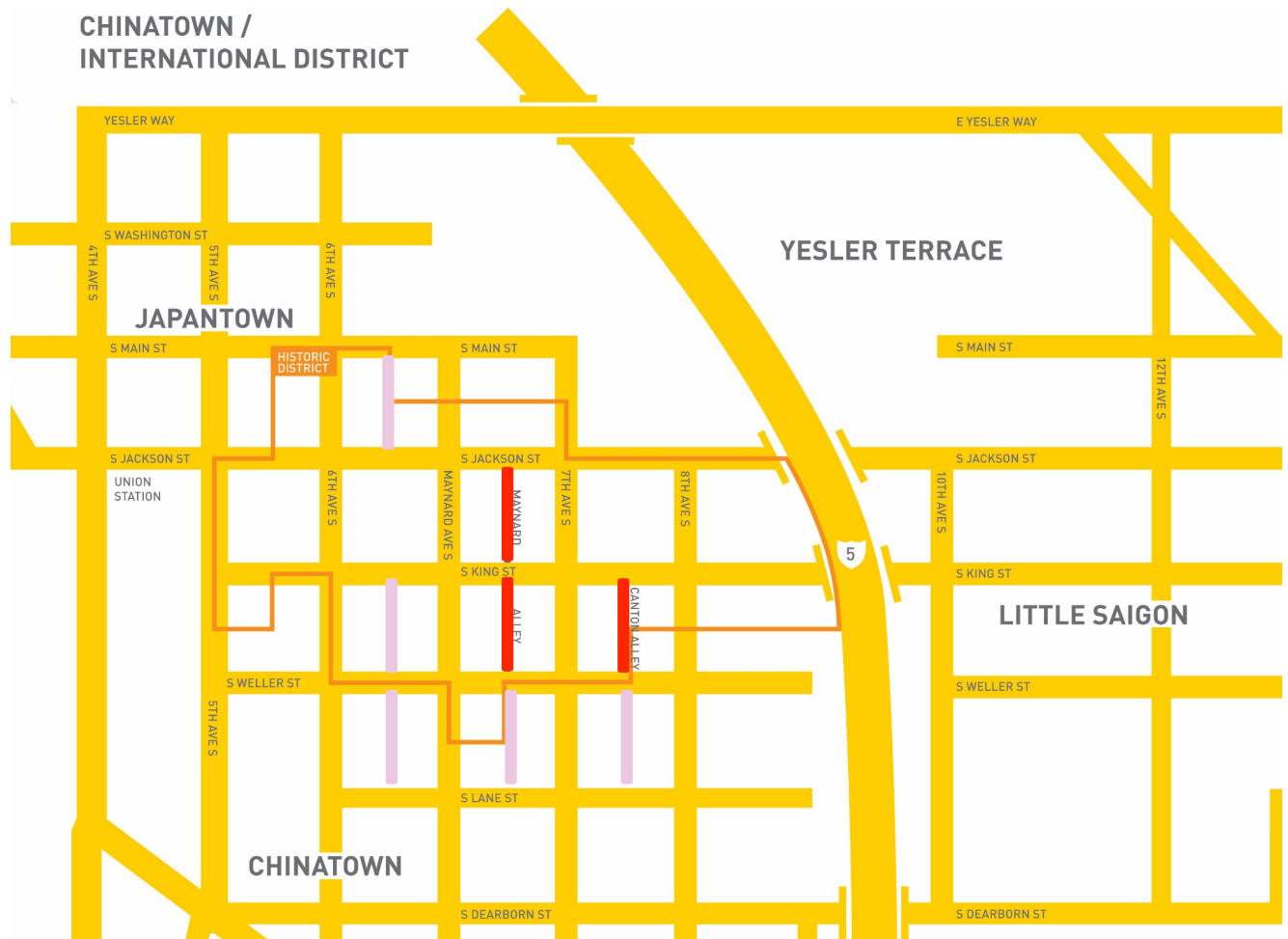


Figure 3.2.1. Map of Chinatown International District showing Canton and Maynard Alleys in red and other alleys in the neighborhood in pink. Map by IDEA Space.

Canton Alley is one of three historic alleys in Seattle, which include Maynard and Post Alley (figure 3.2.1). Located in the heart of the Chinatown International District, it has two main sections, spanning from S Jackson St to S Weller St, between 7th Ave S and 8th Ave S (figure 3.2.2). It was established in the early 1900s when two adjacent buildings were constructed, the East (now the Wing Luke Museum) and West Kong Yick Buildings. Canton Alley was once a bustling hub with residential apartments on the upper floors of adjacent buildings and small

shops that line either side of the alley, providing services and goods that catered to the early Chinese immigrants that lived and worked in the neighborhood.



Figure 3.2.2. Site map of Canton Alley – showing both sections between S Jackson and S King and S King and S Weller.

These early Asian Pacific immigrant laborers, primarily Chinese, Japanese and Filipino, have been settling in the area of the current Chinatown International District while working in mining, railroad construction, canneries as early as the mid-1800s. However, the strict immigration laws and segregation-driven housing policies at the time prohibited these laborers from gaining US citizenship and until 1970s, prohibited Asian Americans and other ethnic minorities from purchasing or renting homes in most of Seattle proper (Chin, 2001). Thus, early API immigrant laborers, known as the sojourners, congregated and resided in the then less desirable area of Pioneer Square and Chinatown International District. Since most of these sojourners are bachelors or married men who came to Seattle simply to make money to send back home, their only requirement for housing is a bed and a functional bathroom. The many hotels built in the neighborhood around the early 1900s provided the perfect housing option for these sojourners.



Figure 3.2.3. Historic Photo of Canton Alley showing local kids playing in the space in 1983. Photo credit: City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods.

Due to limited living spaces in the small apartments and single room occupancy (SRO) hotel units that most early Chinese immigrants lived in at the time, the alley became a great amenity for these residents. The alley evolved into a communal space both for public use and served as a spillover living space for nearby residents. The alley was a high traffic area shared by patrons of the storefronts, residents drying vegetables and other foods, community members socializing, and parents watching over their kids playing in the open space offered in the alley (figure 3.2.3 – 3.2.4) (Ing, 2010). The space was not only used and accessed by those who owned small shops in the storefronts and those who lived in the apartment spaces above. Many community members, including those who lived as far as Beacon Hill area, patronized businesses in the alley on a regular basis. It was a very intimate place and within it was a tightly knit community. In many ways, the alley served as a common space for local residents to socialize and network with other immigrants whom share similar backgrounds and culture.

However, with the introduction of large commercial dumpsters to serve neighboring restaurant businesses and an increase in automobiles in the 1980s, Canton Alley became less pleasant and safe for pedestrians and children to play in. In addition to the foul odor from these large dumpsters, the lack of lighting created hot spots for crimes and illicit activities, which further deterred pedestrians and community members from patronizing the small shops. Most, with the exception of one, of these businesses were not able to survive



Figure 3.2.4. Historic photo of Canton Alley looking onto S King St, showing a local carpenter shop in the alley (circa 1970s). Photo credit: Wing Luke Museum Archives.

and gradually closed down due to the declined foot traffic. Since then, Canton Alley, along with other alleys in the neighborhood, has been abandoned by pedestrians and shifted its use to prioritize dumpsters, truck load and unload, and vehicular use. Today, only one business remains in operation.

Perhaps the greatest inspiration for rehabilitating the alleys comes not from other places, but from the stories shared by elders and historians of the neighborhood. The late Ray Chinn, owner of the Rex Hotel, once shared about the garden that grew adjacent to Canton Alley (figure 3.2.5) – where the current Chong Wa parking lot is located, a community gathering space and a place for families to grow their vegetables. Walk into Sun May Company, located in Canton Alley and owner Donnie Chin can tell you about growing up in Chinatown’s alleys – or simply looking through his fascinating collection of historical items and trinkets will provide an idea of what used to be. The stories of local historians evoke images of alleys filled with children playing and families bustling in and out of small businesses. Certainly, this may be glorifying life on the alleys, but it also inspires something even greater than what is there today.

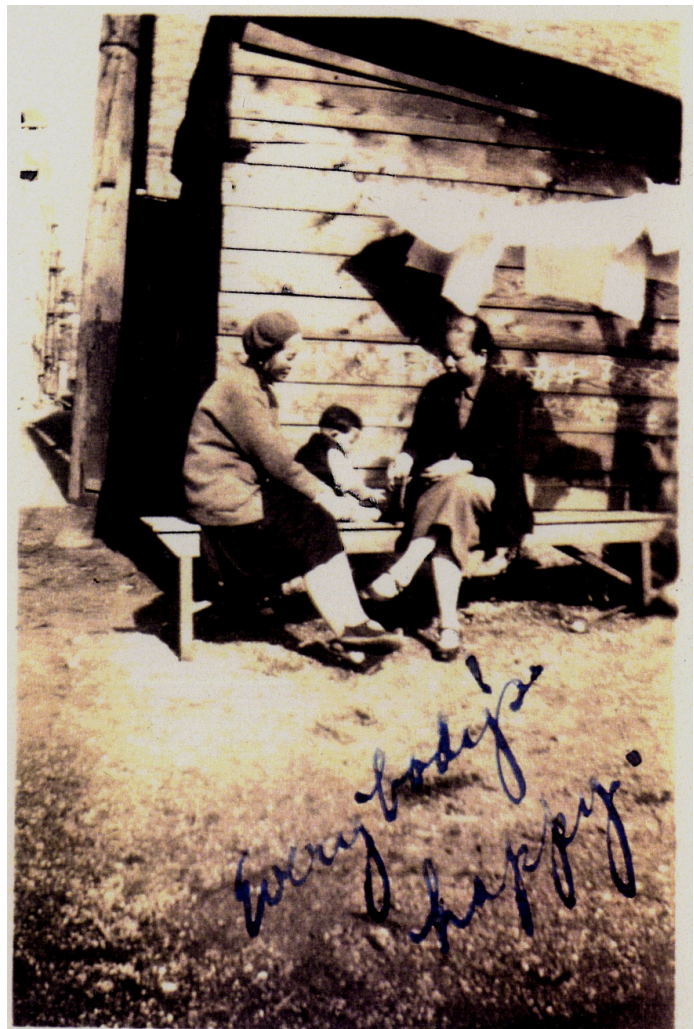


Figure 3.2.5. Historic photo of Canton Alley showing vegetable garden in the foreground, with local residents socializing (circa 1950s). Photo credit: Wing Luke Museum Archives.

As a public space that was historically used as informal gathering and social space for local residents and community members, Canton Alley was an accessible amenity that brought people together. It was a place that was meaningful to the community, primarily the older generations who knew the history of the once thriving space. To many of these community members, Canton Alley was part of their community-based public history – history defined by the community’s collective pasts (Hayden, 1995). Together, the community has prioritized the preservation of this cultural landscape and its history as part of the Canton Alley reactivation project, for the history is what makes this space meaningful and unique.

3.3 PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Alley revitalization and improvement has been a prioritized action item on numerous community and neighborhood plans in the Chinatown International District for over 15 years.

“Develop active yet safe public spaces including parks, sidewalks, streets, alleyways, and parking lots.” – Chinatown International District Strategic Neighborhood Plan (1998);

“Streetscapes and open spaces should facilitate community building – the healthy interaction of people in a neighborhood – which includes incorporating community events in these spaces and getting the community involved in the planning of these public spaces.” – Chinatown/Japantown/Little Saigon – International District: Urban Design Streetscape and Open Space Master Plan (2003);

“Develop a pedestrian environment that sustains healthy communities and supports a vibrant economy.” Seattle Pedestrian Master Plan (2009);

“Connections: Improve the real and perceived safety of potential pedestrian connectors, including the alley network and the area under I-5.” – King Street Visioning Project (2009).

In addition, the City of Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan aims to maintain and enhance Seattle’s character while promoting increased density, mixed-use areas, and transportation improvements. To accomplish this, it focuses on urban villages: dense mixed-use neighborhoods that provide housing, jobs, services, and cultural/environmental access in pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented areas.

These plans for alley revitalization strategies were never implemented nor followed up on until recent years mainly due to the lack of resources available to help fund this type of work. Alley reactivation was foreign to the City of Seattle and only until recent years did it become a popular idea. A handful of alleys throughout the city have been reclaimed by community groups working together to bring life back to these spaces. The most successful one being Post Alley, located near the waterfront, stretching from Pioneer Square through Pike Place into Belltown. It is home to many retail businesses and office and serves as a great model for other alley reactivation efforts.

More recently, in early 2009, a community group known as the King Street Task Force was formed by local constituents, business and property owners, residents, and professionals. The Task Force was modeled after the popular Main Street Program, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, to revitalize King Street – the main corridor of the Chinatown International District. Having learned that the Main Street Program was not a one size fits all strategy and does not respond to the problems, issues, and cultural needs of the Chinatown International District, the community came together and founded the King Street Task Force aimed at solving some of these long standing problems in the neighborhood holistically, through a community visioning process.

The SCIDpda spearheaded the Task Force's effort and facilitated this King Street visioning process that included historical use analysis, community mapping of current uses, and development of a strategic plan for revitalization. Through this process, the Task Force identified areas of focus that set the stage for future neighborhood revitalization work, including economic development, business mix and diversification, streetscape improvement, neighborhood marketing, and public safety. Subcommittees were formed within the Task Force to tackle each of these focus areas. Through an asset-based community development approach, community leaders and representatives worked together to overcome challenges and applied for various grants to help fund their initial work. The Task Force transitioned into the existing 'Only In Seattle' committee in 2012 in response to Seattle Office of Economic Development's new competitive funding program known as 'Only In Seattle,' targeted to help community economic development in Seattle neighborhoods through a wide array of improvements. The improvements include retail recruitment, public safety programs, cultural placemaking, small business technical assistance, and streetscape enhancements such as building facade improvement and alley reactivation.

Thanks to the effort and organizing work of the King Street Task Force, alley reactivation regained priority in the overall community vision. In 2009, a group of students from the University of Washington Landscape Architecture studio course, taught by Jeff Hou, worked with community members and developed preliminary ideas, all of which deserved further exploration from design professionals whom will be able to identify feasibility of green elements, as well as develop a cost estimate and understand the parameters and capacity of local transportation entities to implement the project. With these designs and recommendations crafted by the students, SCIDpda was awarded the first grant from Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), designated to improve alleys in the Chinatown International District in 2011.

In addition to hiring a design team to create a schematic design plan for Canton Alley, this Transportation Enhancement Program grant from WSDOT enabled SCIDpda to bring community stakeholders together, organize, and found the Chinatown Historic Alley Partnership (CHAP) in 2012. This group consists of property owners, family associations, and staff from local agencies who have the common goals to clean, beautify and activate alleys in the neighborhood. As the steering committee of the pilot alley project, CHAP held monthly meetings with the hired design team, Nakano Associates and Weinstein AU, providing guidance and feedback as experts of the community. CHAP later subdivided into four subcommittees focusing on design, marketing, fundraising, and Clear Alley, which held more frequent meetings.

Nakano Associates is a Landscape Architecture firm that provides a multitude of services ranging from master planning and concept development to planting and irrigation design and graphic design and public involvement. Sustainability is also an integral part of Nakano's design principle. Similarly, Weinstein's unique focus on the integration of Architecture and Urban Design has consistently produced complex urban projects that contribute positively to their respective neighborhoods. Both firms have extensive experience designing public sector projects and in facilitating community involvement. The design team held two design charrettes and three public meeting, with CHAP's coordination, to engage community members in the design development phase. Through this robust process, the team concluded that the community's priorities for a safe and clean alley were: proper and consistent lighting, even pavement for ADA access and proper drainage of rainwater, dignifying signage, public art, and free of dumpsters and garbage.

Moreover, Clear Alley Program was a City initiative that required all downtown alleys to go dumpster-free beginning in 2008. This initiative provided two options for property owners, businesses and residents: 1. transition to the bag system where users would place garbage in marked bags and be brought out to a designated area in the alley for pick up at least twice a day or 2. store existing dumpsters on private property and keep them off of the right-of-way. The

idea behind this initiative was to help keep alleyways clean and clear and to allow for better vehicular, bike, and pedestrian access.

However, while the rest of downtown and south downtown alleys were required to implement this program by the end of 2008, the Chinatown International District was exempt from this requirement because the City did not have enough funding at the time to provide community outreach and education in Chinese and Vietnamese – the two languages that most local property owners and businesses spoke. In 2012, with the help of the Chinatown International District Business Improvement Area (BIA) and the generosity of the Chong Wa Benevolent Association, both are members of CHAP, the BIA built a dumpster enclosure from two parking spaces of the Chong Wa parking lot located off of Canton Alley. The fenced off area allowed enough space to contain all of the dumpsters in Canton Alley and was easily accessible to residents and businesses. This was a tremendous step forward and made a world of difference in the space. It is also a great example of how engaging community members and groups to participate in neighborhood wide projects could help them take ownership and pride in their effort.

CHAP continued to hold its monthly meetings to keep members up to date with efforts and status of each of the four subcommittees. Through a series of hard work, the schematic design plan and cost estimates were completed in June 2012. The design plan provided recommendations for physical improvements including lighting, pavement, light landscaping, signage, and storefront maintenance. With this design plan in hand, CHAP's fundraising committee applied for a Large Project Grant through Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods' Matching Fund Program. In December 2012, CHAP was awarded the full amount of \$93,800 requested from the Large Project grant. This was a great boost of encouragement and confidence to members of CHAP and the entire community that they are one step closer to a reactivated alley. It also showed the power of grassroots efforts to bring positive changes to this historic neighborhood.

3.4 PROGRAMMING AND ACTIVITIES

Alley revitalization really can be as easy as getting together a critical mass of people for the purposes of having fun. Beginning in the summer of 2008, a series of neighborhood events and celebrations have been held in both Canton and Maynard Alleys. These events were mostly held during the summer and fall months, due to weather restraints. The earlier events took form of a neighborhood artwalk (formerly known as the CID Artwalk), programmed by the Wing Luke Museum. The first CID Artwalk was held on the third Thursday of June 2008 and included art displays and exhibits from various sites throughout the neighborhood, including Canton Alley. The launch of the CID Artwalk proved success with a high turnout of attendees from both within and outside of the community. The Wing Luke Museum continued with the artwalk effort until 2010, when the Artwalk was rebranded to JamFest. In lieu of adding yet another artwalk to the downtown district, which would compete with the well-established artwalk in Pioneer Square, JamFest took a shift and focused on music and performance arts to highlight local talents.

In the summer of 2011, the CHAP partnered with the Wing Luke Museum for the first time in programming Canton Alley in collaboration with JamFest, which took place on the first Thursday in June, July and August. In addition to the vocal artists, bands, musicians, and DJ's performing in Canton Alley, CHAP (with the help of staff and interns from SCIDpda) brought two pop-up shops into the vacant alley storefronts. These two storefronts, having been vacant and inactive for decades, were brought back to life by a group of volunteers that repainted the exterior into bright, vibrant colors through the Chinatown International District Spring Clean event in May 2009. The alley facade of the West Kong Yick Building was repainted to complement those of its neighbor, the Wing Luke Museum. The goal of these efforts was to make the alleys cleaner and more dynamic places that encourage people to explore and play.

Moreover, the SCIDpda's staff and volunteers also spent long hours cleaning, refurbishing and repainting the interiors of these storefronts in preparation for the pop-up shops. With a very limited budget, CHAP and SCIDpda were able to fill one storefront with outdoor gear

borrowed from staff and community members to stage a shop (figures 3.4.1 & 3.4.2). The second storefront was stocked with all sorts of candies and knick knacks purchased at local mom and pop shops (figures 3.4.3 & 3.4.4). Both pop-up shops were highly successful and attracted over 100 attendees to the JamFest/Alley Party on July 2011.



Figure 3.4.1. Pop-up outdoor gear shop storefront (JamFest 2012). Photo by IDEA Space.



Figure 3.4.2. Pop-up outdoor gear shop interior (JamFest 2012). Photo by IDEA Space.



Figure 3.4.3. Pop-up candy shop storefront (JamFest 2012). Photo by IDEA Space.



Figure 3.4.4. Pop-up candy shop interior (JamFest 2012). Photo by IDEA Space.

All these could not have happened without the help of volunteers, staff, interns, and neighborhood partners – Wing Luke Museum for marketing and coordinating the event, Theater off Jackson for borrowing staging equipment and furniture, local businesses for decorations and discounted merchandises, Department of Parks and Recreation for borrowing bistro tables and chairs, and owners of adjacent properties for their support and logistics.



Figure 3.4.5. Balance beam in Canton Alley as part of children’s activities (Dragon Fest 2013). Photo by IDEA Space.

In addition to JamFest and Alley Parties, CHAP also worked with the Chinatown International District Business Improvement Area to market and program the alley during Dragon Fest, an annual weekend-long summer festival that celebrates the different cultures of the neighborhood. With the financial assistance from local sponsors, CHAP has transformed Canton and Maynard Alleys into family friendly play space during Dragon Fest since 2012 (figures 3.4.5 – 3.4.7). Each year, SCIDpda staff, interns, CHAP volunteers and sponsors would scrub down the alley and create a play space that focused on fun exercises and activities that encouraged social interaction between children, youth, and parents and grandparents. In the



Figure 3.4.6. Hopscotch and chalk art with children in Canton Alley (Dragon Fest 2013). Photo by IDEA Space.

In the spring of 2012, CHAP held a Canton Alley Family Reunion in the alley as a mean to capture and celebrate the rich history of the neighborhood's alleys. CHAP reached out to their members' personal connections and networks and invited over 50 elderly who used to live in or around the alleys in the Chinatown International District. Nearly half of these invited guests to the event, some brought their children and grandchildren along to show them where their early lives in America started. Many personal

last three years of Dragon Fest, CHAP has brought a number of events to the alleys including a mini children's Olympics (balancing beams, jump ropes, kids crawling tunnels, hopscotch, and ladder ball), summer sports alley (badminton, croquet, horseshoe toss, and bocce ball), and World Cup in the Alley (semi-final and final game viewings in alley, with mini soccer field).



Figure 3.4.7. Ladder ball as part of children's activities in Canton Alley (Dragon Fest 2013). Photo by IDEA Space.

stories were shared during the event. The most interesting part of the reunion was mapping out which family lived in which apartment and who owned which storefront and how folks were related through our special guests' collective memory (figures 1.1.1 - 1.1.2). It was a remarkable opportunity to learn from these folks and be able to inform and engage them in our current effort to revitalize the space.

A "Mahjong Madness" game night was held by CHAP on October 2013. Canton Alley was lined with 5 Mahjong tables and chairs in the middle with a side table serving hot tea. Event posters and flyers were distributed throughout the neighborhood, community email lists, residential buildings, and social media to attract mahjong masters as well as beginnings interested in learning how to play to gather in the alley for a fun filled game night. The turnout was not as high as anticipated, mostly due to the chilly weather. However, about 12-15 local seniors showed up and were able to enjoy several hours of mahjong playing with their friends and neighbors while activating the alley. This was a great way to engage local seniors and residents, a user group that has not been heavily involved in our revitalizing effort but could benefit from more accessible public open spaces in the neighborhood.

All of the above-mentioned activities have brought much life and foot traffic back to the once deserted Canton Alley. Although the temporary beautification and reactivation programming efforts could be difficult and discouraging at times – including the heavy duty cleaning of the ally and its storefronts required prior to each alley event due to the garbage compilation in the dumpster enclosure, challenges in installing temporary ambience lighting and lanterns across the alley without any hardware on the adjacent buildings to attach to, and lastly the occasional unpredictable rain that dampers an alley event entirely. Nonetheless, staff and volunteers from both the Wing Luke Museum and SCIDpda have learned from the many alley events experiences and have learned to become resilient to last minute changes. Through staging the vacant storefronts as pop-up shops, gallery spaces, information booths, and showroom to exhibit local antiques and collection items, CHAP was able to excite the

community and visitors to re-imagine the potential of these spaces as well as the alley itself. These community events and programming provided attendees a glimpse of Canton Alley's liveliness in the past and opportunities to bring this culture back in the future. Although the alley remains in need of physical improvements to support future growth, these events prove the physical condition of this public open space could be overcome with proper logistics coordination and elbow grease to create an intimate and inviting ambience as well as accommodate different user groups.

3.5 DESIGN

Canton Alley is blessed with celebrated history, community stories, and functional historic storefronts. However, these elements alone are not sufficient to reactivate the right of way. Public safety and sanitation of the alleys were identified as the utmost concerns of the neighborhood, thus the new design and improvements will ultimately have to address and hopefully resolve these problems. In addition, preservation of the cultural landscape of the alley was also of importance to the community, and so new design will have to be compatible with the historic character of the space.

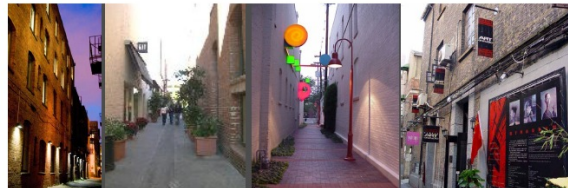
In the earliest stage of this project, a group of graduate level Landscape Architecture students from the University of Washington worked closely with community members and stakeholders to create design ideas and recommendations to improve the physical environment of Canton Alley as part of the King Street Visioning Project (figure 3.5.1). Through a number of community charrettes at King Street Task Force public meetings, residents meeting, seniors meal program, and public meeting at the International District Chinatown Community Center. The students filled a number of large posters with colorful graphics and photographs that showed different types of activities, street furniture, lighting styles, and other streetscape features. These posters helped generate dialogues and discussions between community members and the students. While the students had the opportunity to introduce innovative and

successful designs from other public open spaces to the community at these public meetings, they were also able get community input and better understand the reasoning for their preferences. By the last public meeting, the students presented their findings that led to their final conceptual designs and recommendations of different range to allow for incremental and organic growth of alley spaces. The design recommendations included ‘low hanging fruit’ action items that could be implemented immediately – i.e. remove dumpsters, organize chalk art events, install public art to activate vacant storefronts, etc., as well as larger scopes that required long-range planning and fundraising effort – i.e. develop the Chong Wa parking lot adjacent to the alley into a community garden, integrating green infrastructure, organize weekly night market/bazaar in the alley, etc. Although all of the design ideas and recommendations were very well received, there were no resources available at the time for implementation.

GREENING

Install permeable paving to mitigate stormwater impacts. Alleys with permeable paving can serve as demonstration projects to study whether a program similar to “Green Alley” programs in other cities would also be appropriate in Seattle.

Install green walls where structurally appropriate, to provide additional environmental benefits.



LIGHTING

Provide additional lighting and remove dumpsters to improve visibility and safety.

Additional lighting can be accomplished with architectural fixtures as in these examples shown above, can be supplemented by utility lighting, right.



ACTIVATION

Allow flexibility in the use of open spaces, such as play areas, fold-down seating, art installations and vendor carts

Empty storefronts can be converted into a visual gallery reminiscent of a Chinese curio box. Images may be pre-printed, or painted directly.



Figure 3.5.1. Alley activation design recommendations provided by UW Landscape Architecture students as part of King Street Visioning Project in 2009.



Figure 3.5.2. First public meeting for Canton Alley project held in Wing Luke Museum overlooking Canton Alley. Photo by IDEA Space.

All was not lost. The design and renderings generated by the UW students helped CHAP leverage its first grant of \$40,000 from Washington State Department of Transportation's Transportation Enhancement Program in 2011. This grant enabled CHAP to hire a professional design team to further explore and fine-tune the ideas and recommendations provided by the UW students and draft a schematic design plan with cost estimate. Through an open request for qualifications process, our design team consisting of Nakano Associates and Weinstein Architecture and Urban Design (Lesley Bain) was hired to work directly with CHAP and the greater Chinatown International District community. The design team used a similar approach of using a variety of graphics to generate discussions with community members. However, after the first public meeting, which was held in the theater space at the Wing Luke Museum overlooking Canton Alley, the design team realized it would be much more effective to hold future public meetings in the alley from then on (figure 3.5.2). It made the most sense to bring people into the alley to actually experience the space and its scale in thinking about design improvements for the space. This approach provided for a more participatory design process,

one that is directed by the intuitive needs and everyday life and operation (Alexander, 1979). Through these alley parties and public meetings in the alley, the design team was able to observe how people used and responded to the space. They were also able to take note of the natural movement of people in and through the space and discover what made people comfortable and uncomfortable in alley.

The schematic design plan was completed in spring 2012 and included recommendations for improvement in six areas: lighting, pavement, signage, public art, landscape and storefronts. With this design plan and cost estimates in hand, CHAP applied for the Neighborhood Matching



Figure 3.5.3. Previous condition of Canton Alley in 2009, with large dumpsters and used oil containers lining the adjacent building. Photo by IDEA Space.

Fund's Large Project Grant and was awarded the full amount of \$93,800 requested in late 2012. This grant allowed CHAP and the design team to continue their work with the community to finalize proposed design details for all six areas, install lighting, re-pave a small portion of the alley, hire design professional to design and install signage, and continue to program and activate the alley. Through a number of meetings with CHAP, the historic review board and the greater community to discuss the design of the proposed lantern lighting, the design was finalized (figures 3.5.3 – 3.5.4). These long and ongoing discussions were common in the design process and were critical for the design team to understand the context and politics of



Figure 3.5.4. Rendering produced by Nakano Associates showing Canton Alley with new proposed lighting, pavement, and planters.

the neighborhood. Similar to most capital improvement projects on the public realm in the neighborhood, the concern about whether the design will look too Chinese, too Japanese, etc. came up fairly often. These conversations were important to be had in an inclusive fashion, as it helped bring people together to deliberate and find common ground.

3.6 PARTNERSHIP WITH PIONEER SQUARE

Pioneer Square, neighborhood located northwest of the Chinatown International District, had also been working to program and activate their alleys – Nord Alley and Pioneer Passage. The Alley Network is the community group responsible for incorporating alley festivities with the local monthly artwalk, rotating innovative art installations in the alley, beautifying the space with pallet planters, and hosting a number of fun and family friendly events in Nord Alley, including ‘World Cup in the Alley.’ The Alley Network began their alley reactivation strategies in 2008 and have been a great ally and partner for CHAP. Similar to Chinatown International District, Pioneer Square is also a historic district, thus CHAP learned quite a bit from the Alley Network’s

experiences in terms of navigating and work with the City, historic review process, and event planning logistics for alley parties.

A more formal partnership was formed in 2013, when CHAP and the Alley Network co-applied for a \$10,000 grant through 4Culture to help market the vacant storefront spaces through the historic lens. The grant was awarded and was administered by SCIDpda, which serves as the fiscal sponsor for CHAP. The grant deliverables included to identify and create an inventory of existing as well as past residents and business owners in Canton, Maynard, Pioneer Passage, and Nord Alleys, conduct interviews and collect oral history from those whom are willing and able, photo document the people as well as alley spaces, curate a photo exhibit from photos taken, create marketing materials that highlight the history and the present uses of said storefronts, and plan for distribution of marketing material. The final product from this grant was a brochure that splits in half – showing CHAP alleys and history on one side and the Alley Network on the other. It was a very interesting project, as it aligns with the ultimate goal of both neighborhoods, to bring businesses back into the vacant alley storefronts. In this case, the historic aspect of these spaces was served as the main attraction for prospective retail tenants. The grant was fully executed in early 2015. The brochures are now included in local retail recruitment and neighborhood welcoming packets in both neighborhoods.

In addition to the brochure project, CHAP and the Alley Network partnered once again and co-applied for a Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant through Washington State Department of Transportation, administered by Puget Sound Regional Council. TAP is essentially the same funding program as the Transportation Enhancement Program, which CHAP had received its seed money in 2011. TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and improved mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental remediation; recreational trail program projects; and federally funded safe routes to school projects. Funding from this grant

could go towards planning, design, and construction of the abovementioned projects. This was the ideal grant for repaving Canton and Nord Alleys and could potentially add to other alley beautification effort such as lighting, signage, public art, etc. However, with the new changes made to the eligibility and requirements of the grant, neither SCIDpda (fiscal sponsor for CHAP) nor International Sustainability Institute (fiscal sponsor for Alley Network) was eligible to apply. The only entities eligible to apply for the TAP grant are local governments, regional transportation authorities, transit agencies, national resources or public land agencies, school districts, and tribal governments. With this in mind, CHAP approached Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to partner on this grant; the grant would go towards improving SDOT's right-of-way after all. SDOT agreed to serve as the main applicant of the grant and both CHAP and Alley Network co-applied as local agencies/consultants.

The award was announced in late 2013 and the Canton and Nord Alley Repaving Project, ranked the second on the priority projects list, was awarded the full amount of \$851,018 requested. The grant is divided between the two alleys - \$318,326 goes towards repaving the northern half of Canton Alley while the remaining \$532,692 goes towards repaving the full block of Nord Alley.

3.7 FUNDING

The intricate funding mechanism adds yet another level of complexity to the overall project (figure 3.7.1). Though CHAP was established in 2011, it remained a community group and is not a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. CHAP also does not have the capacity for accounting, bookkeeping, or auditing. This restricted CHAP's eligibility for most grants, including public funding. Fortunately, as a community development corporation and spearhead of the alley revitalization effort, SCIDpda was an ideal candidate to serve as a fiscal agent for CHAP. With a proper accounting department and over thirty years of grantwriting and management experience, SCIDpda (including CIDpda, a 501(c)3 registered arm of SCIDpda) was exposed to

and eligible for far more grants and resources. This partnership allowed for flexibility in the application and executing of funding both from grant writing and from donations.

| Grant | Funding source | Program | Design/ Planning | Construction | Staff Time | Area of focus |
|---|----------------|---------|------------------|--------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| WSDOT Transportation Enhancement Program Grant (2011) \$40,000 | Public | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | ROW improvements |
| DON Large Matching Grant (2012) \$93,800 | Public | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Community engagement |
| OED City Infrastructure Grant (2012) \$90,000 | Public | No | Yes | Yes | No | ROW improvements |
| 4Culture Heritage Project Grant (2013) \$10,000 | Public | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Historic/Cultural preservation |
| National Trust for Historic Preservation Grant (2013) \$3,000 | Private | No | Yes | No | No | Historic preservation |
| WSDOT Transportation Alternative Program Grant (2014) \$318,326 | Public | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | ROW improvements |
| OED City Infrastructure Grant (2014) \$86,000 | Public | No | Yes | Yes | No | ROW improvements |

Figure 3.7.1. Canton Alley project funding sources table showing the amount, restrictions, and areas of focus for each source.

Funding is an essential part of our alley revitalization work. As with most community development and capital improvement projects, fundraising and development is a priority and a first step to launching the project. The Canton Alley Project first picked up momentum upon receiving a \$40,000 Transportation Enhancement Program grant from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) in 2011. Due to the complex nature of the project, as a public right of way with multiple privately owned properties adjacent on either side, the initial \$40,000 grant served merely as seed money to kick start the project and gain public interest. A much greater amount of funding, likely from various sources is required to implement the project in full. However, this grant helped hire a professional design team, consisted of Nakano Associates and Lesley Bain from Weinstein Architecture and Urban Planning, to build from design ideas and work previously completed by University of Washington Landscape Architecture students, through a studio taught by Jeff Hou in Winter 2009.

The schematic design plan crafted by the hired design team was used to leverage additional dollars from a Large Matching Fund through the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods for the next phase of the project. CHAP's application for the Large Project Matching Fund was much more competitive with a schematic design plan on hand and an active and engaged steering committee and was awarded the full amount of \$79,800 requested for finalizing design plan and implementing recommended improvements. These improvements included permanent lighting fixtures, re-pavement, public art and signage installation in Canton Alley. Because this was a matching grant, it required a one-to-one match from CHAP. The match may be a combination of cash and volunteered time (volunteered time converted as \$15/hour) and it could be in-kind donation, cash donation, sponsorship, and other non-City grants. This encouraged CHAP to engage more volunteers in the reactivation effort

It should be mentioned in addition to the complexity of the funding structure, each grant CHAP was awarded had its own set of requirements for execution, timeline, invoicing, reporting and evaluation methods. This was especially difficult with grants from public dollars – Federal,

State, County, and City regulations are all different. This meant grant management became very time consuming and grant execution required higher level of creativity and close communication with grantors to ensure grant deliverables are carried out appropriately, timely, while remaining meaningful for the community and the project.

3.8 NEXT STEPS

As of May 2015, CHAP has raised enough funding to fully execute the project, including to repave the northern half of Canton Alley, install permanent lantern lights, and fabricate and install gateway signage. However, there is still plenty of work left to bring the project to completion. At its current stage, the first order of business is for CHAP's fiscal sponsor, SCIDpda, sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with SDOT. This MOA clearly states each party's respective roles and responsibilities, estimated project schedule, and terms of partnership. As a consulting local agency, SCIDpda's role is to serve as project outreach coordinator and facilitator for ISRD application for Certificate of Approval. SDOT is thus responsible for bringing the pavement design to 100% construction document, acquire all necessary permits, conduct bidding process to hire contractor, and manage the construction as well as budget for the remaining of the project. Once the MOA is in place, SDOT can pick up from where the design was left off, as it could then begin charging its staff time to the grant. With the current timeline, construction is scheduled for spring of 2016 and hopefully be completed by summer, ready for JamFests and Alley Parties.

Simultaneously, CHAP's design team (Nakano and Framework Cultural Placemaking) has been working on submitting an application to the Department of Planning and Development for a construction permit to install the proposed lights. Since the proposed lighting plan is to anchor a metal beam across the alley into adjacent buildings on either side, from which the lanterns will hang from, DPD requires a permit from both buildings. An electrical permit is also required by DPD for the electrical work. In addition to the construction and electrical permits,

SDOT also requires an annual street use permit for installing elements that encroach into the right-of-way. Once these permits have been issued, the lanterns may go into production and then installed.

Frances Nelson, designer hired to design and fabricate a gateway signage, has been working on fine-tuning the design with community's input and feedback. Similar to the lighting, the signage will also require the same permits when design is complete, with the exception of the electrical permit. The design of the signage is intended to compliment the lanterns as well as the two buildings it will be anchored to on either side of the alley to create a harmonious ambiance. The height of the signage will require extra attention as the signage design needs to balance its prominence and size with its height as to be mindful not to hinder pedestrians' sight of the lanterns within the alley from the street level.

Because all elements of the project have been shown to the ISRD Board in earlier briefings and the board members were unanimously supportive of the design direction proposed, our design team has been working on finalizing their respective design plans. Each element is still required to apply for a Certificate of Approval from the ISRD Board through a formal application process. There are two options for this process: 1. submit overall design, inclusive of pavement, lighting, and signage design as one application and request for a one time approval or 2. submit these various elements of the project separately, in the order of readiness. While the first option may seemingly save time, it is contingent on all designs being completed near the same time. The latter option may work better for a project of this nature so that each element will not interfere or affect the timing of other elements.

CHAP's work is not considered complete when the pavement construction begins. The toughest part will be to keep the community interested and excited about the project when it is fenced off and not accessible. Ongoing outreach, community meetings, project updates, and additional promotional activities will be key in keeping community stakeholders engaged.

Chapter 4: NAVIGATING THE SDOT SYSTEM

4.1 PROGRESSIVE CHANGES WITHIN SDOT

Like most cities in the US, Seattle's comprehensive plan does not include a lengthy chapter on revitalizing alleyways nor does it focus on strategies to improve and increase uses of these underutilized public spaces. The alley revitalization movement is a relatively new phenomenon in the US and has been picking up momentum only in the last decade. It is not surprising to learn that alley maintenance and improvement is not a priority of Seattle Department of Transportation and that the department still has not adopted any alley plans or programs to help simplify and streamline alley related permitting. However, thanks to the many forward thinking individuals in various Seattle neighborhoods who have been tirelessly pushing the SDOT's boundaries with creative uses of alleys and other public open spaces, the City has become gradually more receptive to these ideas. In response to the alley and parklet movement in the city, the Public Space Management Program was formed within SDOT in 2013.

Seattle Public Space Management Program, a new SDOT division launched in 2013 that aims to promote and regulate a vibrant, safe, accessible, and attractive shared right-of-way. A Public Space Management Task Force, consisted of planning and design professionals and representatives from each Seattle neighborhood, was formed in mid 2012 to help provide areas of concerns, questions about existing SDOT's right-of-way policies, creative programming ideas, and neighborhood priorities for right-of-ways and sidewalks. Several CHAP members and representatives from Pioneer Square's Alley Network were invited to be on this Task Force. Topics brought up by this Task Force included updating SDOT's regulations to allow for and streamline permitting process for Park(ing) Day, Parklets, sidewalk cafe, street vending, A-frame usage, green streets, consistent lighting, and alley reactivation (Seattle Department of Transportation, 2015). Within the first year of its launch, the program had implemented a Seattle Parklet Pilot program to encourage converting one or more on-street parking spots into public open spaces for pedestrian use. A number of neighborhoods have been very active in

fundraising to realize their Parklet design. The year this Parklet Pilot program was implemented, two Parklets (Capitol Hill and Chinatown International District) were permitted and constructed. Since then, over a dozen of Parklet applications have been reviewed and Seattle is now home to six Parklets, with eight more underway. Although the Public Space Management Program has seen some success, SDOT's next step should be to focus on simplifying the permitting and review processes for neighborhood groups to improve existing right-of-ways that are underutilized.

CHAP has been working closely with Seattle's Department of Transportation in the last four years on all alley related work – anything from implementation of Clear Alley Program to permitting for alley parties and events. As a neighborhood group with fair understanding of right-of-way regulations and requirements, CHAP did find it quite challenging to navigate the City's information and resources for alley improvement guidance. Because alleys in Seattle have been mostly used for utility, load/unload, and shortcuts for vehicular traffic purposes, SDOT does not have clear rules and regulations for alleys. Most of SDOT's right-of-ways ordinances and Client Assistance Memos (CAMs) do not differentiate between streets and alleys, thus leaving clients such as CHAP confused on whether the same is applicable to alleys.

4.2 EXISTING SDOT POLICIES AND ORDINANCES RELATED TO ALLEYS

From CHAP's experience, SDOT provides a series of permits for the various types of alley reactivation work. These include Street Use permit, Festival Street permit, and Street Improvement permit. Street Use permits are annual permits required for anything attached to buildings that encroach more than three inches into the right-of-way. Festival Street permits were originally intended for street fairs and block parties. With a preapproved events calendar submitted, a Festival Street permit allows for street closure on set times and dates to accommodate said events. Both Street Use and Festival Street permits are annual permits, which require community groups to pay a permit fee to renew it each year. However, in addition

to the annual fee, Festival Street permits also require submission of updated events calendar each year. Street Improvement permit is required for major improvements such as street paving, curbs, or sidewalks in conjunction with development on private property. Although this is a one-time permit, the application is much more complex, as it warrants an extensive SDOT review and sometimes may need to apply for additional permits from Department of Planning and Development. Fortunately, Canton Alley's pavement design was turned over to SDOT's Capital Improvement team when the hired design team has completed the schematic phase. Since SDOT took over the pavement design and engineering, from 30% to 100% construction document, Canton Alley was exempt from the Street Improvement permit.

Prior to the launch of Festival Street permit, neighborhood street festivals and block parties only had the option of acquiring an Events permit, which is a one-time permit specific to a large event. This was very time consuming and costly since a permit and permit fee was required per event. With a rising number of alleys being activated and interests in hosting community events in alleys, SDOT expanded the applicability of the Festival Street permit to include alleys. Because Festival Street permit aims at streamlining the permitting process for large events from the conventional Events permit (required for each event), SDOT will provide more flexibility in accepting proposed non-standard elements in the alley if a Festival Street permit were acquired. Non-standard in this case would mean any design or installation that does not fall within SDOT's standard designs. With this in mind, CHAP applied and was granted a Festival Street permit in 2012. The permitting process was fairly long and rigorous. The full application included a site map for proposed event, site plan that shows any adjacent building entrances and evacuation route, letter of support from property and business owners from all adjacent buildings with signatures, calendar of events – time, date, and activities, and photos from former events. Before the application could be submitted to SDOT, it first needed to be presented to the Downtown District Council for their approval. It then had to be submitted and

presented to the International Special Review District Board (historic review) for their approval before finally submitting it to SDOT.

In addition to SDOT's standardized rules, alleyways also fall under the jurisdiction of Fire Department regulations. Because fire trucks and other emergency vehicles need to access alleys in case of emergency, the Fire Department has its own set of guidelines for alleys. For instance, CHAP spent at least two years, speaking to more than five different SDOT and Fire Department personnel to confirm the minimal height clearance required by both City departments in order to complete lighting design. Another example of the lack of coordination between various departments was the repaving of Canton Alley. While SDOT obtains plans and drawings that showed Seattle City Light conduits and ductwork under project area, SDOT did not initiate any communication with SCL to inquire about their plans or to inform SCL of the repaving project. The thought of involving SCL in the project planning did not come about until much later in the design process, thus compromised early opportunities to partner with SCL and further delayed the project.

4.3 BREAKING DOWN THE SILOS WITHIN CITY DEPARTMENTS

It is true that most City departments, even divisions within City departments, have a highly bureaucratic culture and work in silos within their team. They are not proactive in connecting with other staff, teams, and departments on projects that may benefit such connections. Moving forward, as more and more alleys will be brought back to life, it will be tremendously helpful for SDOT to coordinate with any other City department that has a stake in alleyways, including Seattle City Light, Fire Department, and Seattle Public Utilities, in updating ordinances and CAMs for alleys. It should be mentioned that one's experience with the City is also highly dependent on the City staff they work with. CHAP was fortunate that it had the opportunity to work with some of the City's more responsive and proactive staff who sincerely

cared about the alley movement in Seattle. Relationship development is also a key component in working with City staff and finding a City representative to champion the cause or project.

CHAP was assigned three different project managers at SDOT since the project began in 2011, due to SDOT staff turnovers. Though these turnovers were outside of SDOT's control, there were precautionary protocols that SDOT could've implemented to alleviate the challenges and impact it had on the overall Canton Alley project. Proper succession planning or clear project documentation, general understanding of SDOT ordinances and rules, and increased transparent communication with community partners and within City Departments would all have been helpful to keep the project rolling forward as opposed to stall and regress previous efforts. SDOT has since worked more collaboratively and proactively with both communities, Chinatown International District and Pioneer Square, large utility players (Comcast, Centurylink, etc.) and various City Departments (Fire Department, Seattle City Light, Seattle Public Utilities, Department of Planning and Development) on alley related work. The progress in bringing all stakeholders to the table as part of the brainstorming, planning, and decision making process is critical in sustaining momentum, trust and relationship between each party, that are all essential to completing the project.

Chapter 5: LESSONS LEARNED

Over the last four years, the Chinatown Historic Alley Partnership has worked with a number of community partners, local agencies, City departments, volunteers, and grantors and sponsors. While most experiences were positive and reassuring of CHAP's mission and work, there were plenty of lessons learned along the way. Most of CHAP's lessons learned could be grouped into three categories: working relationship with SDOT, funding, and fostering community leadership. It is important to note that Canton Alley's conditions are unique and that these lessons learned may not be applicable to other alleys in Seattle. Nonetheless, I want to document and share these experiences to help future alley re-activists better navigate the public process and become more strategic in their effort.

Like other City departments, SDOT functions as a bureaucratic organization and has its own hierarchy system that while it is public information, can be hard for an average community member to understand and navigate. CHAP's first began its work with SDOT's Street Use division, briefing our corresponding SDOT staff our proposed design. The challenging piece came about when the project was assigned a project manager at SDOT, when CHAP first received the \$90,000 grant from the Office of Economic Development. The major lesson learned from working with the various direct project managers is to break the bureaucratic culture and reach out to upper management at the first sign that the direct project manager failed to follow through on their obligations. At times when Canton Alley design required immediate attention or had project related questions that were time sensitive, the direct manager was unable to deliver their tasks. SDOT as well as other City departments have not had much experience in alley improvement work aside from the occasional cold asphalt patching, digging to put in new infrastructure. Alley improvement and reactivation design and programming are unconventional to SDOT, thus their staff often didn't have answers to our questions and when they did, the information was not consistent since SDOT does not have an alley guideline. Because of this, CHAP found it much more efficient to reach out directly to higher positions who can answer our

questions and make those decisions and have the experience to exercise creative problem solving. Also, these upper management personnel often have much better connection with other departments and are very knowledgeable about SDOT's limits and restrictions. CHAP could have saved well over a year's worth of time and money had they discovered this earlier.

While CHAP has been very fortunate to have secured most of the funding required to implement the entirety of the project, the timing of grant applications and fundraisers could have been better coordinated. Most of the grants CHAP had received are matching grants, meaning the local agency, CHAP in this case, is required to match what was granted. Some required one-to-one match and others require a percentage of the overall project budget. Moreover, grants such as the Department of Neighborhood's Large Project grant accept both cash and in-kind donations as well as volunteer time as match. However, it was difficult to balance between expending part of the accrued funds (DON's Large Project grant) in order to keep project moving and holding off part of said funds so that it could be used towards cash match for the next grant. As the project manager, I often found myself juggling the various grants to keep the funding stream clean and clear. In a perfect world, CHAP should have fully expended the Large Project grant in a timely manner and fundraise additional dollars to meet the match required by the next grant. That would have helped keep invoicing and grant management simple, clean and clear. Being able to fully execute a grant with tangible or measurable results, even if it's not a project's entirety, could help leverage additional funding more easily and also provide a great impression on the funder to keep this project in mind with future funding opportunities.

Some of the most challenging parts of grassroots project are organizing community, fostering leadership within the community to assume bigger roles in the project, and maintaining community's interest and excitement about the project through downtimes. Particularly in mid-scale to large-scale capital improvement projects such as the Canton Alley project, there are sometimes months of waiting when working with the City on design and historic review, and especially so when working with Federal funding that requires various levels of communication

to ensure all parties fully understand and are able to comply with the restrictions that come with the grant. Finding a couple of CHAP members to champion the alley project has shown success in both boosting attendance to alley parties and events and getting more people from inside and outside the neighborhood interested about the project. However, it is critical to guide these champions to take on more leadership roles so that community members really own the project and more importantly, will have experience and better understanding on how to organize a grassroots project, navigate City departments for assistance and resources, and how to build alliances with community partners to strengthen CHAP. Ultimately, one of CHAP's goals is to cultivate at least a handful of CHAP members to take on the future maintenance and programming of Canton Alley and potentially to reactivate other alleys in the Chinatown International District.

It should be noted that SCIDpda's involvement in the Canton Alley project has been instrumental. This project would not be where it is today, fully funded for all proposed improvements, without SCIDpda's leadership and guidance. As a program of SCIDpda, IDEA Space spearheaded the project from the very beginning and stayed committed and invested in the alley reactivation work by relentlessly supporting the project financially and donating a significant amount of staff time to lead the work as my time as the project manager is not covered by most of the grants received. IDEA Space's experience with public space activation work include the International Children's Park Redevelopment – a grassroots project to redevelop a small pocket park that was the only designated children's play space in the neighborhood, and phase 2 of the Maynard Green Street project. Having IDEA Space as the lead and manager of this project was very appropriate. IDEA Space has only been around for seven years and thus was regarded as a neutral party compared to the other longstanding organizations in the neighborhood that have contributed to the local politics. It also instilled confidence in community members because of IDEA Space's good track record. In addition,

SCIDpda also serves as the fiscal agent for the Canton Alley project since it is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, which greatly increased the pool of grants for which CHAP was eligible.

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Canton Alley project has been an immense learning process and professional growth for both CHAP and me. Although I have previously worked on the redevelopment of International Children's Park, a small pocket park designated as children play space in the neighborhood, and phase 2 of the Maynard Green Street project, between S King St and S Weller St, Canton Alley was the first right of way project I have managed with over 5 sources of funding including Federal funds. It is my goal with this research that I could document all of the processes of the project development and provide useful recommendations, based on the successes and lessons learned from the Canton Alley project, to community groups and organizations interested in reactivating and improving the physical environment of their local alleys. These recommendations include:

- Prioritize alleys in neighborhood based on their potential for long-term reactivation;
 - Are owners of adjacent properties invested in their property and its vicinity?
Do they share the same vision of a reactivated alley?
 - Are there operating storefronts in the alley or vacant storefronts that could be brought back to life?
 - Who live or work in or near the alley? Could they be your champions for the alley?
- Began community engagement process early;
 - Form a steering committee to help guide the project – be as inclusive as possible and invite everyone to the table; this will help reduce political conflicts between different interest groups going forward. Keep in mind that

not everyone will stay committed to the project from beginning to end so do not worry if you start with a large group of committee members.

- Identify prospective partners and allies in the community and neighboring communities that are doing similar work or work that could help strengthen your committee. Capitalize on the assets of your committee whenever possible.
- Develop a good work relationship with your local Department of Transportation as early in the project as possible;
 - Do your homework – research and request meetings with your local Department of Transportation early on to get a good understanding of the City’s regulations and plans for alleys – what’s permitted? How does the permitting process look like?
 - Try to find a team or a staff member from the City who is interested in alley or public space reactivation work and get this person to be a champion for your project, this can be very helpful in the future when need to navigate various departments within the City.
- Start by implementing tactical urbanism approach;
 - As you start the project with little to no budget, work with your steering committee and community partners and think about what are some ways to activate the alley in a guerilla manner (short-term, low cost and small changes) – be creative!
 - Engage local residents and stakeholders in this process – this is a fun part of the project and can really help get people excited about your project and build momentum. This is also a great opportunity to invite City employees you have been working with and local newspapers to attend and help you document and reach a wider audience.

- Work with local colleges, universities, or design firms that offer pro-bono services to get started before your committee has funding to hire a professional design team.
 - Students are a great resource for help with exploring design ideas and options. It is mutually beneficial, the students could learn more first hand experience of working with a community and your committee could get some exploratory design work that could be used in meetings to get community excited.
 - Often times, some of these students and pro-bono designers stay on the project to serve as committee member, advisor or project intern, strengthening your project.
 - These exploratory designs could be used to leverage seed money that helps carry your project to the next phase.
- Whether it is physical improvements, bringing businesses back into vacant storefronts, or programming, make sure you incorporate placemaking elements.
 - This is very important in retaining the authenticity of your alley and is what makes your alley unique from other alleys. Successful placemaking is achieved when people see a picture of your alley and immediately know its located in your neighborhood.
 - Placemaking is a celebration of history and culture of your alley and/or neighborhood. It is often the best way to tell the story of your alley.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The Canton Alley project's mission to reactivate the alley and its vacant storefronts is near completion. It has been over four years since this project started and with all of the funding required for proposed improvements secured, the only steps remaining are to implement these improvements and conduct a post occupancy evaluation to measure the success of the alley

design and the overall pilot. Many lessons and experiences were learned through the development of this project. From building community capacity to fundraising, to working with SDOT, this was truly a robust grassroots project. In addition to these processes, there were layers of complex funding mechanism, SDOT's alley regulations, and community politics. It is with great hopes that the Chinatown Historic Alley Partnership could replicate this pilot, hopefully through a more streamlined process, in reactivating Maynard and other alleys in the neighborhood. I have been working with CHAP's members to help develop their capacity and pass on my knowledge about the project so that they can take on leadership roles and spearhead the next pilot alley project. IDEA Space will continue to manage Canton Alley project.

One of the most valuable pieces of this project was our success in bringing the community together – different ethnic groups, age, professions, and those who lived or worked in the neighborhood throughout the different eras, to work towards reverting the uses of Canton Alley from its utilitarian uses in recent years back to its historic community uses. The high turnout and positive feedback received from community members about series of alley parties and events verified that the physical impediments of the alley could be trumped by the use of creative decorations and ample amount of volunteer hours to create an inviting ambience.

The recommendations included in this research are meant to help provide some guidance and direction to neighborhood groups in launching their alley reactivation effort. With an increasing number of alley and other residual public space reactivation projects sprouting across the country, I am optimistic that their great work and advocacy will lead to more Department of Transportation's in cities and urban centers to adopt alley plans, guidelines, and programs that are user friendly and can allow for more creative uses of these right of ways.

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