



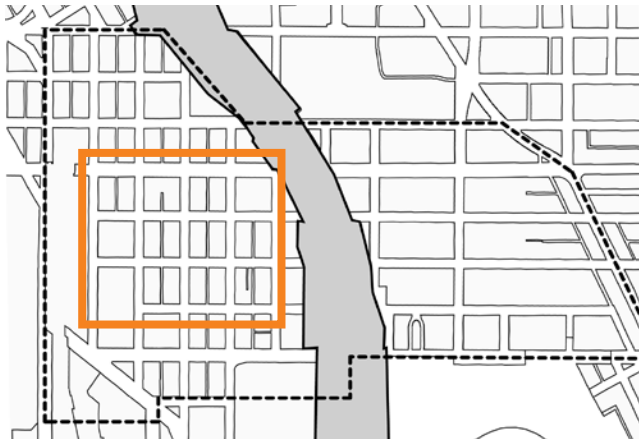
[Chinatown Core]

Community Open Space Initiatives

Community Design Studio Report 2005

Department of Landscape Architecture / University of Washington





Executive Summary

Chinatown is one of the most varied and dynamic 16 square blocks in Seattle. Its unique history and proximity to downtown combine to provide an unusual suite of resources and amenities that are not available anywhere else in Seattle. The latent vibrancy and distinct character of the Chinatown core has recently been discovered by developers, residents of other Seattle neighborhoods and newcomers to the city. As a result, Chinatown is rapidly becoming one of the fastest growing neighborhoods of Seattle. However, the open space needs of its ethnically, culturally and economically diverse resident and visiting populations far exceed those provided by the limited park acreage currently available in the neighborhood. Further, the perception of the neighborhood as unsafe makes the limited existing open spaces even less accessible to the majority of the population. Interviews and workshops designed to gather the perspectives of diverse community groups revealed consistent views on the assets and issues within the neighborhood. Many members of the community feel that although the challenges and issues identified by neighborhood residents are longstanding and have been raised numerous times with city government, little has been done to address them. The designs and plans presented in this report seek to address the issues of safety and inaccessibility while using the opportunity provided by a new design and planning effort to enhance, highlight and celebrate the unique aspects of the Chinatown Core.

Assets include

- Community Members
- Location
- Wide Sidewalks and Quiet Streets

Issues include

- Safety
- Perceived Safety
- Broken Sidewalks and Trash
- Mobility/Lack of Places to Pause
- Lack of Kid Friendly Spaces
- Lack of Cohesion and Connection

1. Study Area

The group focused on the core of the Chinatown/International District. Geographically, this area was defined as extending from Jackson Street, south to Lane Street, and From 5th Avenue S., west to I-5. The heart of Chinatown was identified as Hing Hay Park at the intersection of Maynard and King St. Jackson Street and 5th Avenue have the heaviest automobile traffic, while King, Weller, and 5th Avenue see a large number of pedestrians. Many bicyclists were also observed on King St. and 5th Avenue.

The study area was divided up into four sub-areas: Hing Hay Park and Children's Park, which are key open spaces, and two neighborhood-wide areas. One looked at streets as a comprehensive system, while the other looked at modular interventions that could be implemented throughout the neighborhood.



Hing Hay Park



Jackson Street



Architectural Character



Alley Ways



International Children's Park

2. Neighborhood Assets & Issues

Assets

People--Chinatown's greatest asset is its people. Community members explained to us that, unlike most Seattle neighborhoods, Chinatown's community is not limited to people who actually live within its borders. Many of the elders with whom we spoke have vivid memories from their childhoods in Chinatown. Even though they now live elsewhere in Seattle, they still consider themselves part of Chinatown's community. The same is true for the younger generation. Families send their children to the Chinese Benevolence Society for Chinese school from all over the city. All of the children with whom we spoke both at the school and at WILD told us they regularly come to Chinatown to hang out with their friends.

Location--While Chinatown's location might be considered a mixed blessing given that the International District is cut by freeways, we consider Chinatown's location to be an asset. Chinatown sits at the South edge of downtown, in between the Central Business District and the South of Dearborn area, an area currently being targeted for dense residential growth. Chinatown also connects the Waterfront and historic Pioneer Square district with the thriving market area of Little Saigon. Little Saigon has also been targeted for dense residential growth. Chinatown itself is a historic district, containing unique architecture, fascinating local businesses and wonderful places to eat. Thus, Chinatown connects many elements of the city and has the potential to become even more of a vibrant neighborhood for locals and a destination for Seattle residents and tourists alike.



Intergenerational Design Workshop conducted with the WILD Program of International District Housing Alliance



Wide Sidewalks and Quiet Streets--Although Chinatown's sidewalks are in need of repair, they are unusually wide. This width provides the opportunity for businesses to spill out their front doors to create a vibrant quasi-public space. The sidewalks' width also provides greater flexibility for right of way improvements which can bring greater visual and physical coherence to the neighborhood and allow for small, pleasant "places to pause." Once one ventures away from King and Jackson, Chinatown's streets are not heavily trafficked. This again affords the opportunity to create a human scaled coherence in the neighborhood which can provide a refuge from the bustle of King and Jackson.

Issues



Safety--The single most frequently repeated community concern is a lack of safety. Many homeless from the shelters and areas around Chinatown spend significant time in the neighborhood, particularly within the neighborhood's two parks. One member of our class group witnessed people openly smoking crack in Hing Hay Park, as well as a drug dealer making frequent use of the pay phone on the corner. Both policemen and community members noted that the presence of the public toilet within Hing Hey Park creates a magnet for illegal activity.

Perceived Safety--Community members repeatedly complained about the large number of homeless people who spend time in the neighborhood. They feel that regardless of whether most of the homeless are actually engaged in criminal behavior, their presence sends a message to Seattle residents that Chinatown is unsafe and discourages visitors from coming to the neighborhood. Many community members stated that both Hing Hay and Childrens' Park are unsafe because the parks' designs include areas in which people can hide. Community members also expressed concern about the lack of upkeep of historic buildings' facades which makes the neighborhood appear rundown and unsafe.



Broken Sidewalks and Trash--Community members complained about the safety issues arising from disrepair in the physical environment. Many of the sidewalks are uneven and cracked, a particular hazard for the many elderly who live in the neighborhood. There is often a build up of trash and boxes in the alleys and on the sidewalks that residents find visually unattractive and that can be difficult to maneuver.

Lack of Greenery--At present, Chinatown has little greenspace and greenery. Even the parks are largely paved. Where there are green areas, such as in Children's Park, the plants are unkempt and overgrown, contributing to the perceived lack of safety.





Mobility/Places to Pause--Chinatown is a hilly neighborhood. The hills are even steeper in Japantown where many of the elderly live. The steep streets create a challenge for elderly residents who generally walk to shops and must carry their purchases home. Community members expressed a desire for “places to pause” – small places along the streets with greenery and benches where the elderly can pleasantly rest on their walks. Residents also felt having such places would make socializing easier. At the moment, when people greet each other on the street, there are no places to sit and chat comfortably.



Lack of Kid Friendly Spaces--The only open space for children in Chinatown is Children's Park which, because of safety issues, is not a place where children go except as part of an organized group. Community members are hoping to draw more families will move to Chinatown, so they would like to see Children's Park redesigned and the neighborhood in general made more kid friendly.



Lack of Cohesion and Connection--Although the area around King St and Maynard has a strong identity, this sense of neighborhood identity peters out the further one moves away from the core. Similarly, the neighborhood presently feels cut off from its surroundings. When one is standing on 5th St. there are no visual cues to suggest that Chinatown is just up the street.



4. Planning and Design Strategies

To address the issues and concerns raised by the Chinatown community, we took two different approaches to revitalizing Chinatown's core: a site-specific approach and a comprehensive, neighborhood-wide approach. The first two projects aim to increase safety, begin developing a cohesive language for neighborhood open space and energize the outdoor environment through the reactivation of two core neighborhood landscapes, Hing Hay Park and International Children's Park. The second set of projects, "Growing Chinatown's Streetscapes" and "Places to Pause: An Urban Garden Experience" provide two alternatives to a neighborhood-wide approach to enhancing the pedestrian experience of the neighborhood through a comprehensive treatment of the streetscapes.

1. Revitalizing Hing Hay Park

This design seeks to reestablish Hing Hay Park as a vibrant center for the neighborhood, replacing current blockages with an open design that allows multiple layers of activities and interactions.

- remove structures which block sightlines into park
- provide varied seating options for a variety of uses
- program park with weekly markets, events and other community-based activities

2. International Children's Park

This design creates a fun and safe play place for the community and its children while contributing to the identity of the neighborhood through the establishment of a memorable, destination park.

- provide fun, safe unique play spaces for children
- open sightlines to improve safety
- address the increasing number of families moving into the neighborhood

3. Growing Chinatown's Streetscapes

The goal of this design is to improve the safety, character and cohesion of Chinatown's streets through a regular grid of trees and three street typologies with sculptural elements abstracted from the forms of trees.

- street-specific tree plantings draw attention through the neighborhood with a progression of seasonal floral and foliage interest
- street furniture and paving patterns reflect the diversity of forms found in the street plantings

4. Places to Pause - An Urban Garden Experience

Design guidelines for the treatment of Chinatown's streetscape seek to enhance the pedestrian experience of the neighborhood and highlight existing neighborhood elements by shaping patterns of movement and views within each garden block in the tradition of the Chinese garden.

- small, block-specific interventions encourage a slow, meandering pedestrian pace
- streetscape interventions incorporate patterns and forms derived from block architecture and landscape elements
- subtly framed views draw attention to neighborhood features and amenities
- garden-block community stewardship groups design, install and maintain each garden block



1. Revitalizing Hing Hay Park



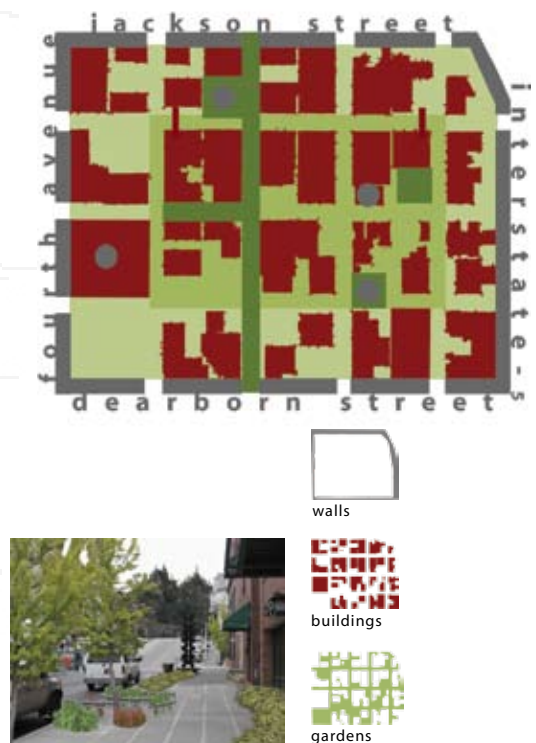
2. International Children's Park



3. Growing Chinatown's Streetscapes



4. Places to Pause- An Urban Garden Experience



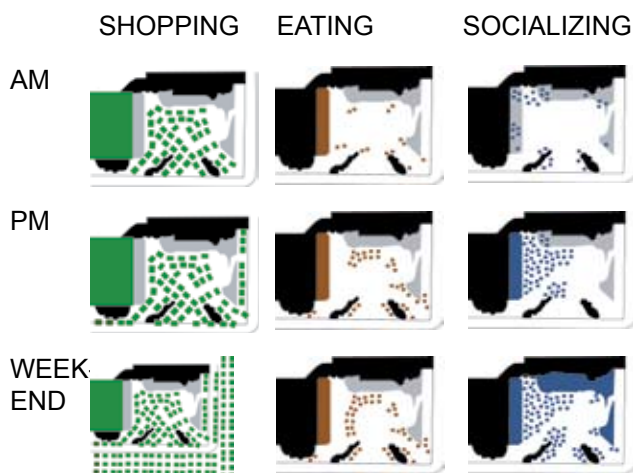
5. Projects

1. Reactivating Hing Hay Park
2. International Children's Park
3. Growing Chinatown's Streetscapes
4. Places to Pause: An Urban Garden Experience

Project 1. Reactivating Hing Hay Park

Sarah Preisler

The design seeks to revitalize the heart of Chinatown by reactivating Hing Hey Park. Structures which currently obstruct views into the park are removed. Rock gardens are added to provide greenspace. Multiple seating options allow flexible use of the park by individuals and groups. Traditional Chinatown design elements create a strong visual and cultural identity for the park, while markets and events draw residents, tourists and visitors from around Seattle.



Activity Diagrams showing how the park can be used in different scenarios

Overview of Existing Site Conditions

Hing Hey Park is located in the heart of Chinatown. Like a heart, the park should function as a source of life and energy for the entire neighborhood, mixing people and activities from all over Seattle and circulating them throughout Chinatown and beyond. Unfortunately, the park's current design has created blockages which prevent the park from functioning properly.

As one can see from the Current Activities map, the location of the pagoda and the public toilet obstruct views into the park, creating areas for illegal activity. The homeless, most of whom are not involved in criminal activity, also congregate in these sheltered areas. As a result, the public perceives the park as unsafe. Pedestrians generally stay along the park's edges. A lack of seating options also contributes to the park's disuse. Benches are fixed in place and located along the park's outer edges or in the unsafe areas. Because there are no activities in the park and nothing of visual interest, there is currently no reason to venture into the park, except to take a photo of the pagoda.

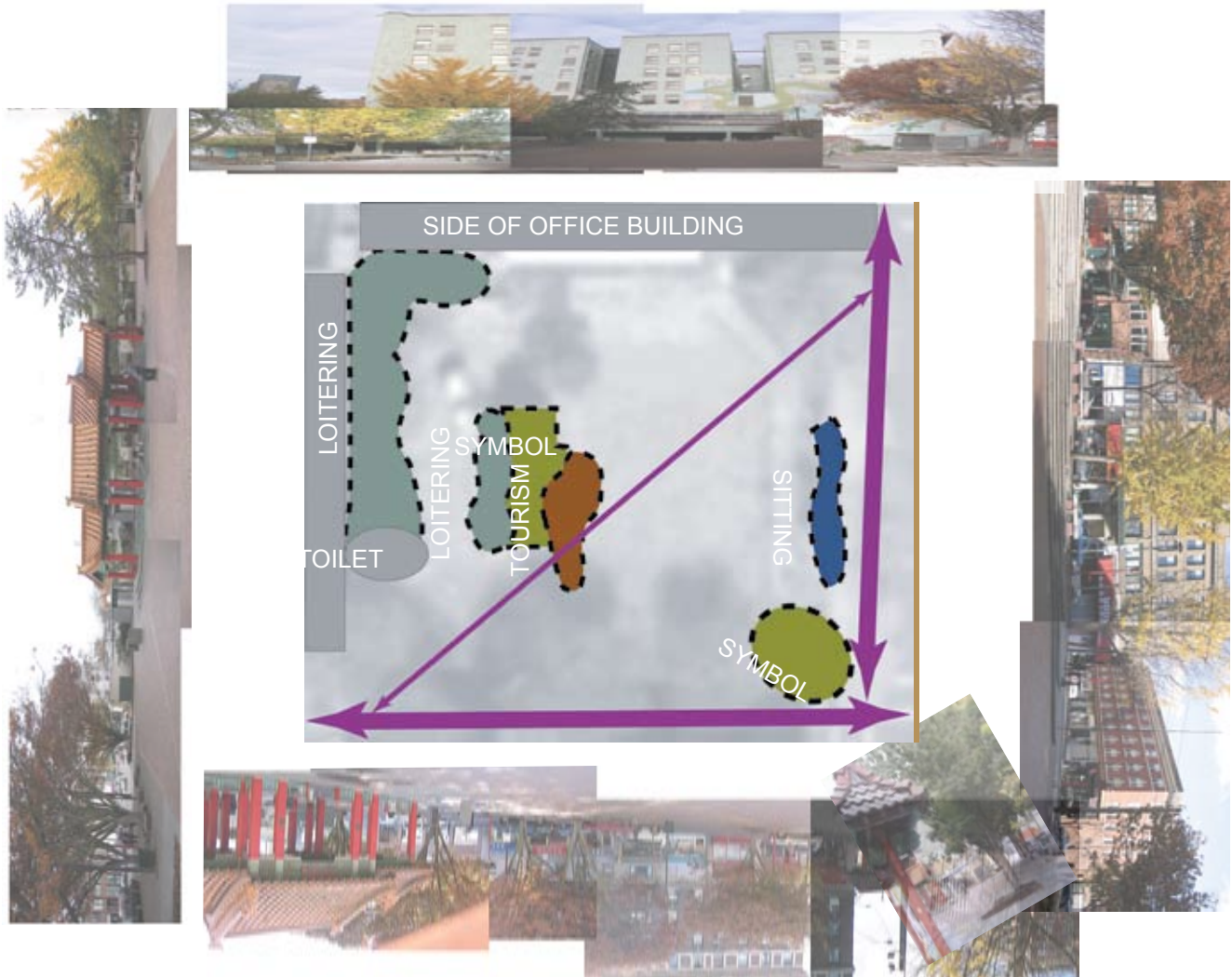
The New Park Design

The new park design removes current impediments to the park's function and incorporates new structures and activities designed to reactivate the park. The new design assumes that the current post office building will be converted into a mixed retail and office space. The new building's height has been limited to two stories as a taller building will cut off afternoon sun in the park. Given Seattle's short winter days, sunlight within the park must be maximized in order to ensure the park remains active year round.

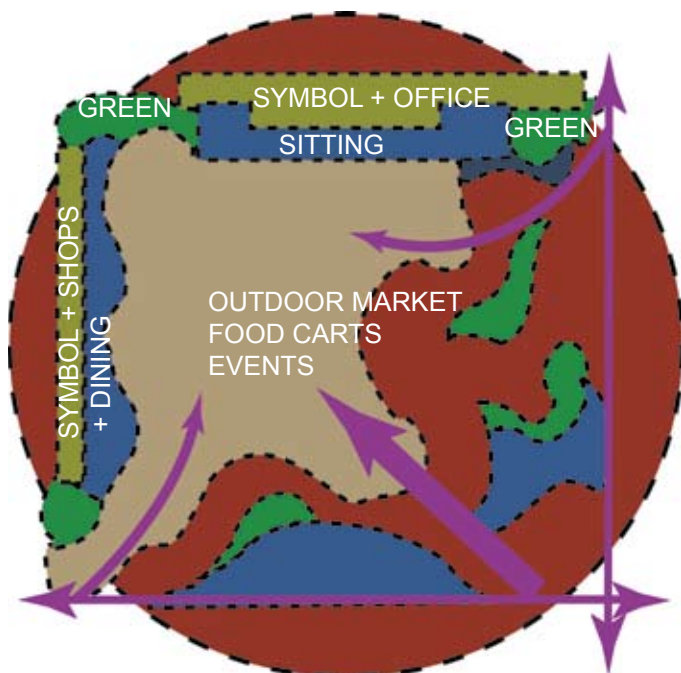
The primary purpose of all new design elements is to open the park to the community and activate the park with both formally programmed and informal activities. Primary design elements include:



- **Remove the public toilet and community message board. Move the pagoda.** All of these elements block views into the park and break up the central square. Opening up sight lines and the physical space will enable the park to be used more effectively.
- **Emphasize Chinatown Identity.** The design uses traditional North American Chinatown iconography to enhance the neighborhood's identity and create a tourist destination. The entrance to the Bush Hotel has been moved to the building's second floor. A grand staircase



Current Activities






Proposed Activities





- 


Moveable chairs, comfortable steps, an outdoor restaurant. Many options to encourage many uses
- 


Food carts during the work week and an outdoor market on weekends and some evenings will make Hing Hey Park a destination.
- 


Distinctive Chinese inspired building facades will create a strong neighborhood character
- 


Community designed rock gardens and a waterfall will create a place to linger and relax
- 


The now opened central area will allow for more events. The sidewalk and street will serve as additional space for big events

leads from the park to the building's entrance-the pagoda that had previously been in the center of the park. The new post office building has been designed in a Chinese architectural style and includes an open air dining area facing into the park. Sinuous paving patterns in colored stone suggest the forms of dragons leading one into and across the park.

- **Add numerous seating options.** The design incorporates a combination of moveable chairs, wide steps which can serve as informal seating, and the outdoor restaurant in the new post office building. These numerous and varied seating options will welcome people of all income levels.
- **Add water and green space.** Chinese garden inspired rock gardens and a waterfall have been added along the park's perimeters to provide some welcome relief from the concrete urban environment. The gardens along the street edge are kept low so as to not obstruct views into the park, while still providing several subareas within the park.
- **Activate the park on a daily basis.** Food carts during the week will attract people to the park for a quick bite. The new seating and greenspace will draw people into the park to eat rather than taking their food back to their offices. The new restaurant and shops will bring in more affluent shoppers.
- **Activate the park with markets and events.** Night markets are a key activity in most Asian cities. Farmers markets are already an integral part of Seattle life. The park will have a weekend farmer's market as well as a night market. Until South Downtown achieves sufficient residential density, the night market may be a monthly event. The intention is that it will become a weekly event over time. Opening up the park will also allow the park to be better used for outdoor music, movies, festivals and other events.

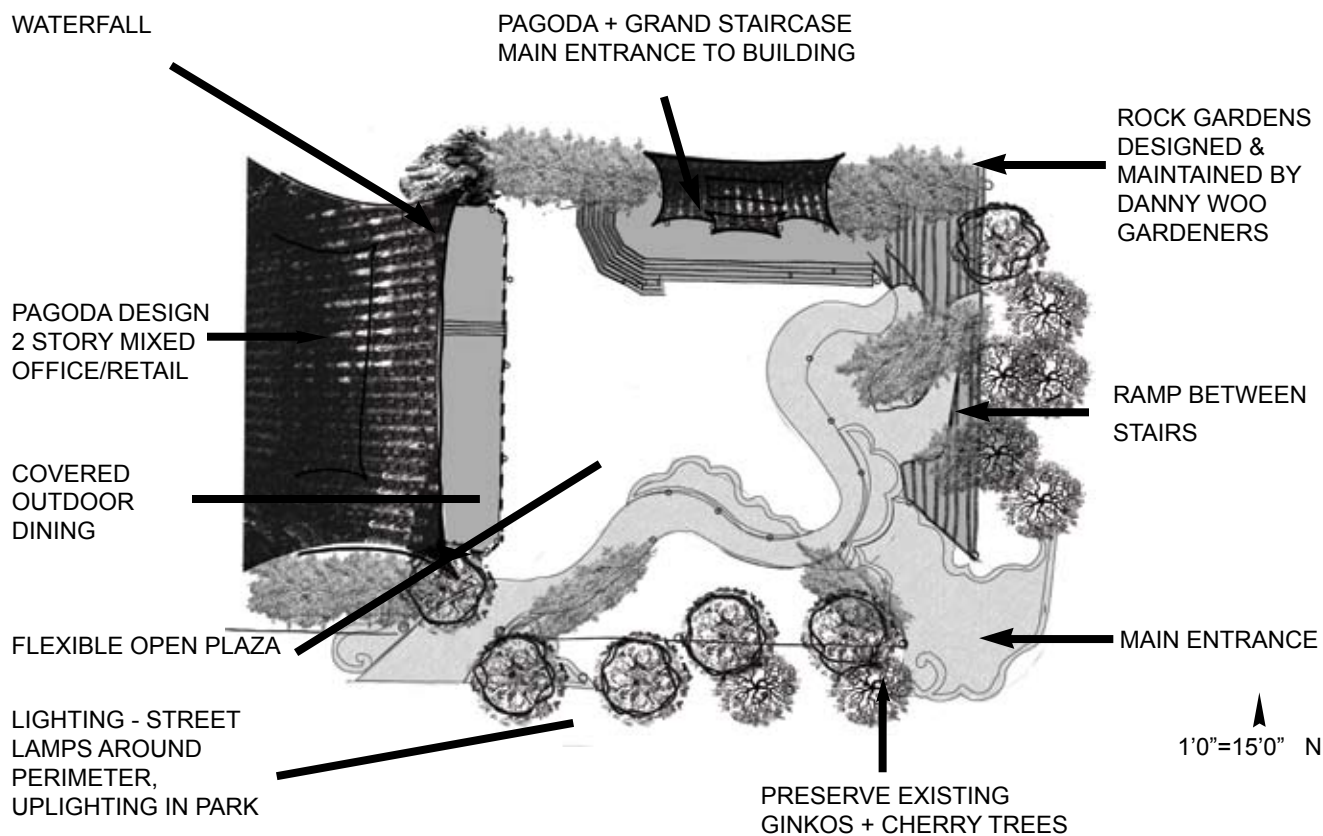
Implementation Strategies and Mechanisms

The proposed design mixes public and private elements in order to broadly engage the community in the park's revitalization and ultimate success. In all cases, implementing the proposed design will build on Chinatown's greatest asset – its community members. Community activism will be required to lobby city government, work with private developers, and design and steward the park. Assuming a strong community based coalition, responsibility for implementing and maintaining the design could break down as follows:

- **Building Facades.** DPD and other city agencies will have to work with the owners of the Post Office building and the Bush Hotel in order to enable the proposed façade designs and uses to be implemented.
- **Overall Redesign.** The Parks Department will need to spearhead the park's overall redesign. It is absolutely crucial that the public toilet and message board be removed and the pagoda moved from its current location. The police officers with whom we spoke confirmed that both the public toilet and the pagoda are currently magnets for drug dealing, drug use and prostitution. Simply removing those structures is the first step to rehabilitating the park.

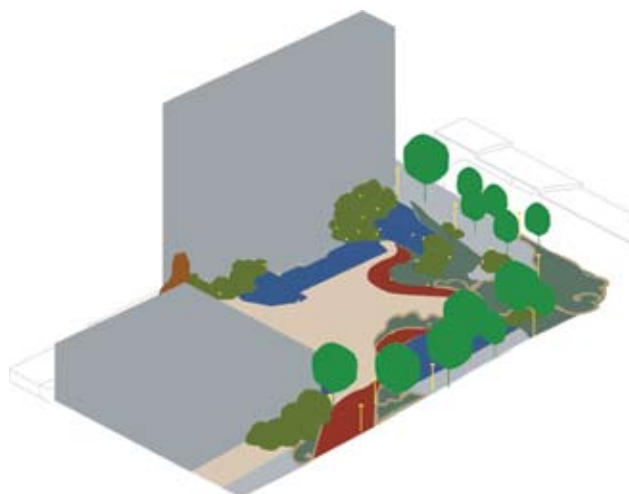
The Parks Department must also consider relaxing its moratorium on the use of portions of park property for private enterprises such as the proposed outdoor café. While using public lands for private purposes is an understandable concern, in cases where a public space has been completely abandoned due to long use of the park by undesirable elements, new measures are required to reactivate the space. Adding dining options has proven to be extremely successful in parks all over the world, including Bryant Park in New York City.

- **Rock gardens and waterfall.** The design anticipates that gardeners from the Danny Woo gardens will take charge of designing and maintaining the rock gardens and waterfall. The city will provide the planting materials and maintenance supplies. This arrangement will encourage community ownership and involvement in the park while also addressing the Parks Department's current crisis in funding for operations and maintenance.
- **Moveable Chairs and Food Carts.** These items would be the responsibility of local businesses. The food carts would be operated by local restaurants and cafes. The chairs would be set out and taken away each day by the businesses who flank the park, as well as the food cart owners.
- **Programming.** Markets and events would be programmed, funded and operated by both the city and local community groups.



Top: View from King St. into park

Bottom: View from park up to Maynard Ave.



Axonometric view of redesigned park

Project 2. International Children's Park

Noelle Higgins

The site is the current location of the International Children's Park, on the corner of Seventh Ave South and South Lane Street in Chinatown. It is in a prime location because of its proximity to the International District/Chinatown Community Center, the new family housing at Village Square One and Two and several of the new condo developments. Attention to this park and its improvement would address the needs of much of the community who live in the neighborhood of Chinatown/International District. In addition to addressing the needs of the immediate neighborhood this site is located in walking distance to a citywide transit hub, if it could become a destination within the neighborhood it is perceivable that it could attract users from other city center neighborhoods and across the city.



Generally speaking this park is currently difficult to find, (in spite of the fact that it is close to the Chinatown core) and views into it are obscured. Other projects in this report have addresses issues of wayfinding that could also be modified and utilized for this site. Its entrances on are not very visible or welcoming (for reasons I will discuss) and it is perceived as unsafe for individual users. There is a history of illicit activity on this street corner (some of which I witnessed in my observations) and from interviews there is anecdotal evidence that the homeless community use it to sleep and sit in.

Site Conditions--Toward the corner of Seventh and Lane Street, the park has a ten foot grade change from the west to east. On this corner there is an approx four foot retaining wall, topped by dense, overgrown trees and shrubs which block views through the park. The two entrances to the park are (poorly) located on either side of this corner and are also obscured by this impenetrable foliage. The edge of the park is densely planted on all sides. The playground portion of the park is poorly maintained, the little play equipment that exists is in poor repair. The 'climbing gym' is broken, the spinning 'roundabout' is functioning but off center, there is a newer 'toddler size' slide and playhouse which seems to be functioning but I did not observed being used. Centrally located is a stationary dragon sculpture which children can climb on, it is nicely crafted and stable but is limited in play possibilities. Sur-

rounding this is a good-sized expanse of graveland grass for un-programmed play. The back corner of the playground is a rip-rap wall which addresses the grade change and can be used for climbing on. From my interviews and observations, I discovered that although the park is not widely used by individuals or families, it is used by organized groups, (schools and community) in the summer months.

Design Aims

- Make a fun/safe playground for kids, with views through, into and out of the space.
- Make a great community park which individual's community members will want to use.
- Make a destination park, using memorable art work, which people will want to travel to.
- Make a park with intergeneration spaces for adult rest, interaction and observation.
- Create a large enough space to be used for small community size gatherings.

Strategies

Design motif--The design is centered on the cultural and imaginary motif of the dragon. The design incorporates a Shot-Crete dragon head which would be large enough to be used as a playhouse for children. Within the park itself, to utilize the elevation change, the space to be built up in a series of landforms to create a ridge of dragon's humps. Following this spinal ridge, is a climbing form, (jungle gym) for children to use for hanging, balance and climbing activities. The end of his tail swoops up to create a structural form tall enough for swings to hang from. With the change in elevation from the landforms to the ground plane there are opportunities for inclusion of slides, climbing structures and ladders. The ability to gauge and manipulate tunnels and depressions to create quiet seating and smaller play areas within the landforms are abundant. The main landforms of the dragon are located in the back of the park (northeastern and southeastern corners) and the head and tail wrap around to the sides in a crescent shape allowing the main area behind the entrance to be an open un-programmed play area and large enough area for small community gatherings. Along the edge of the park both stationary and movable seating are located in various social arrangements. This creates seating for adults that have views of the playground and the children. Proximity of seating to the edge of the park create visual connections to the street (from within and outside) which creates opportunities for socializing among adults and casual interactions with passers by. From interviews with stakeholders the possibility of intergeneration interaction is important culturally (among many current communities) and missing in current park design in the neighborhood.



Using 'The Troll' (Fremont) as a successful precedent in our own city, we know that creating memorable fun, figurative, art pieces in parks and open spaces can activate undesirable or unused public space. It can contribute to the identity of a community and help tourism by creating a destination within a neighborhood. Large scale figurative forms such as 'The Troll' are easily related to by adults and children alike and are fun to play on.

Addressing Safety--The design relocates the entrance to the corner of Seventh and Lane. Removing the existing overgrown trees and large retaining walls from this corner of the park and creating views through the park. In order to secure the space a five foot fence and a lockable gate would be added. This fence have a vegetative form, to help it blend into its surrounding, keep it as open as possible and to avoid creating any feelings or exclusivity that a tall wooden fence could create. Specifically the design calls for a blacksmithing technique that creates the appearance of bamboo. This could be painted green to address maintenance issues and to help with the illusion of vegetation form. This style of fence would allow for views through the space. The location of the Community Center would allow the Parks Department staff to lock the gates of the park at sundown and open it in the morning. Although locking parks at night generally does not stop people from using the park for illicit activities, it does could help to discourage this behavior and I believe that it would give the community a stronger sense of

ownership of this community amenity.

Color and Materials--There are many materials available for playground equipment and structures today, plastics, paint and rubber coatings come in many shapes and colors which help provide sensory stimulus and provide physical entertainment for children. Color is an important element to add to this currently monochromatic, grey space. Modern playgrounds now use soft synthetics as paths and landing zones. With these rubberized floors, children can fall without risking scratches or bruises. These materials also allow opportunity to introduce color to the playground.

The intent is that the landforms (of the dragon) are mainly turf areas with inlayed paths of rubberized pavement for high traffic areas. Areas that are not high traffic could be planted with low growing, drought tolerant grasses and plants to add visual, textural and sensory possibilities for children.

To address the need for shade in seating areas, I propose picking a small number of the established trees to keep that are healthy, have high canopies and add aesthetically to the parkscape. The removal of vegetation will decrease rain-fall absorption within the park so any hardscape areas should only be paved with materials that will allow rain-water infiltration and absorption.

Conclusions

The intent of this design is to try to address improvements to an existing open space and to speak to a broad range of the current, historical and possible future needs of the community. If we are to increase density in the city, we must make it a livable place for families and kids. To create a kid friendly environment with must start by providing great amenities that are already badly needed. This community is underserved by this site's existing conditions, the need for improvements is obvious.



Dragon Landform

Project 3. Growing Chinatown's Streetscapes

Alison Blake

The Chinatown neighborhood is an area with great potential character. It possesses this in spots, especially around the Hing Hay Park, but the character fades out towards the edges, resulting in no comprehensive image. At the same time, there is a strong need to improve safety, comfort, and well-being throughout the neighborhood. While the appearance of the area should not be placed ahead of the well-being of residents, it is hoped that this design can do both by creating a cohesive and enjoyable neighborhood image through key interventions.



Creating neighborhood character through vegetation + street furniture

Main Issues

Simply by focusing on street improvements, many of Chinatown's most pressing needs and issues could be addressed and at least mitigated, if not solved. This design focuses on the major issues and attempts to find a simple, integrated solution for the neighborhood. Safety was the number one concern that repeatedly came up in community conversations and interviews. Better and more regular lighting is the proposed solution because it makes the area feel both safer and more welcoming. Seating throughout the neighborhood in conjunction with improved sidewalks would allow the large elderly population in getting around and provide them places to stop and rest. The community also noted that there was no connection to nature in Chinatown. In response, street trees and plantings are recommended.



Streetscape Elements

Design Concepts

This design takes the simple form of a tree and uses it to create a fun and enjoyable typology of street furniture that will complement a regular grid of street trees. Abstraction of natural objects to create patterns and designs is a traditional technique used in Chinese gardens. It is hoped that through using techniques such as this, that the resulting design complements the culture of the neighborhood without creating a cookie-cutter, stereotypical Chinatown.

Trees--Each street is given its own tree, with smaller spring-flowering fruit trees planted on the Avenues and larger, fall-interest trees planted on the streets. The trees (all used in Chinese gardens and approved for Seattle Streets) are planted so that they will flower or change colors successively, creating a progression of interest throughout the seasons. Siting the fruit trees on the Avenues will give them a more human-scale, intimate feel, while the Streets will have a grander-feel, and be more appropriate for major pedestrian and automobile thoroughfares.

Furniture--The form of the street furniture is an abstraction of different parts of trees. Sculptural, brushed metal seats are based on curled leaves, while lamp-posts of the same material take their form from spreading branches. Other elements include drinking fountains, trash cans, benches, and light bollards. The sidewalks are repaved and stamped with an abstracted gingko-leaf pattern. On King Street, a planting strip is also proposed that would be partially cobbled and filled with low-growing plants used in Chinese gardens. The other streets have planted tree rings, and the avenues incorporate low, seat-wall planters around the trees, creating an "under-story" of greenery that is still low enough to not obstruct views. The crosswalks are designated using a traditional stone "cracked-ice" paving.

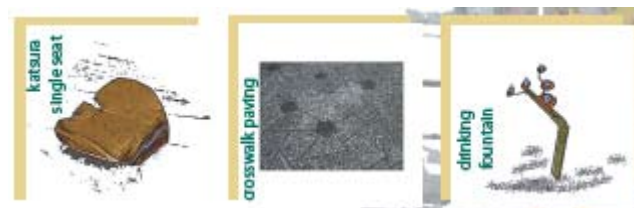
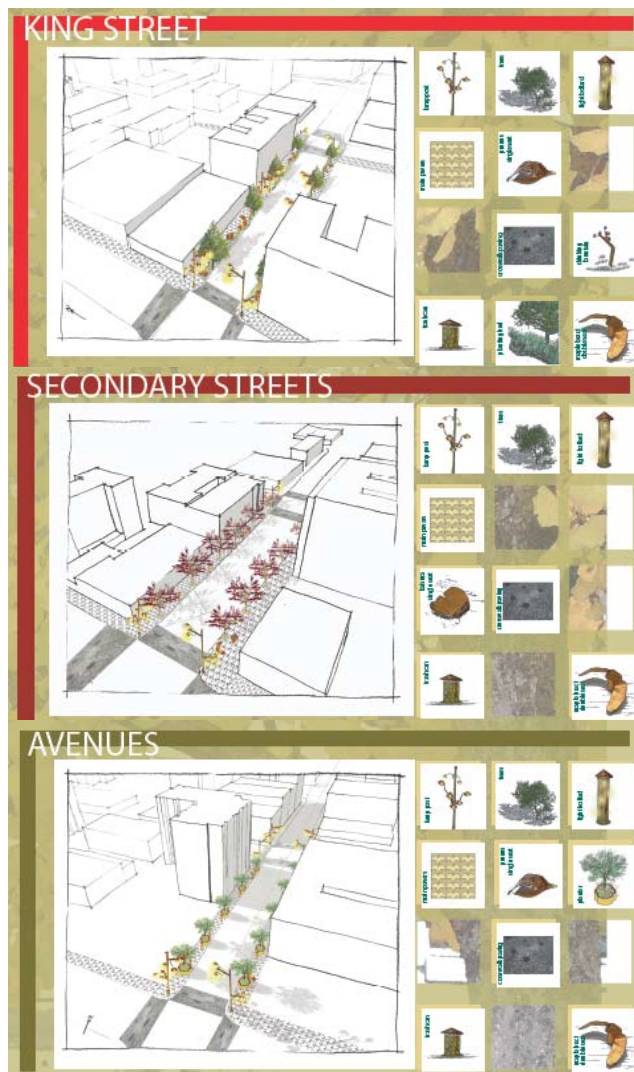


Hierarchy--The three different street typologies proposed create a sense of hierarchy within the neighborhood. King Street is denoted as the heart of Chinatown by having lampposts at both the corners and alleyways, and by having regular seating cluster located along the cobbled planting strip. The other streets have staggered seating clumps, and light posts only on the corners and also have different planting treatments as stated earlier. Bollards with lighted glass insets are set at regular intervals along all streets, making them feel safe, vibrant, and inviting.

Strategies & Mechanisms for Implementation

It is assumed that finances might not allow a complete overhaul of the neighborhood. This design can there-

fore be implemented in three stages, with key streets being improved first, followed by streets with moderate, and finally low-usage. Tier 1- High Priority Streets are King Street, Jackson Street, and 5th Avenue. Tier 2- Moderate Priority Streets are Maynard Avenue, 7th Avenue Weller Street, and Lane Street. Tier-3- Low Priority Streets are 6th & 8th Avenues.



Project 4. Places to Pause: An Urban Garden Experience

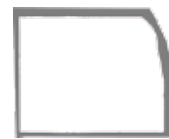
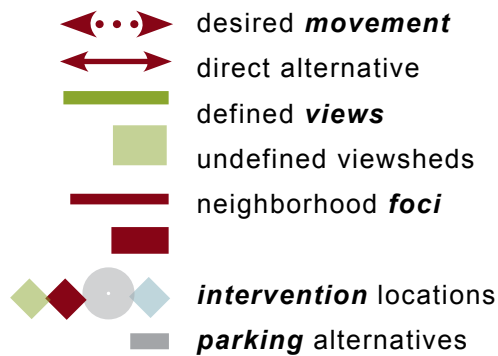
Kari Stiles

Walled in by large, vehicle-oriented streets and clearly defined by the cultural, economic and built traditions that have shaped it, Chinatown provides the pedestrian visitor with a diverse suite of views and experiences. Like the traditional gardens of China, Chinatown can not be viewed through a single lens. It is composed of many intimate, dynamic views and experiences that combine to paint a picture of the neighborhood's rich past and rapidly-approaching future.

Strategies

Shaping the pedestrian experience of Chinatown by changing patterns of movement and observation

Small interventions incorporating patterns and structures from the surrounding landscape & specific placement of street trees and plantings encourage slower-paced, meandering movement & focus views on community-selected neighborhood features



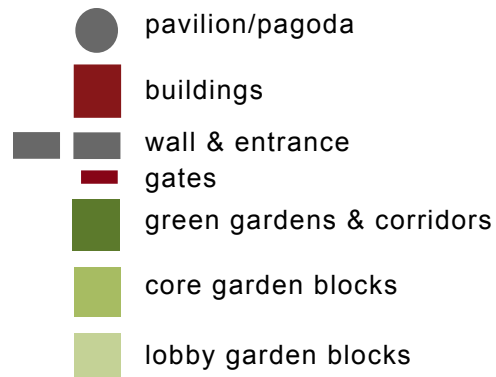
walls



buildings

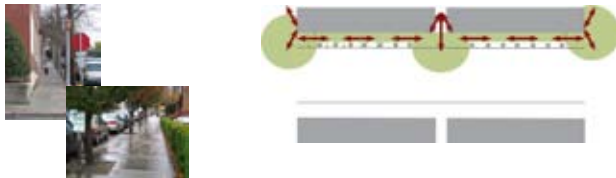


gardens

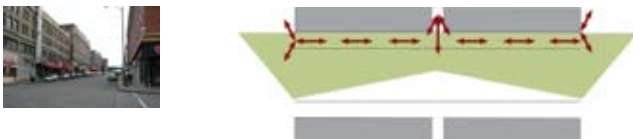


Current patterns of movement and viewsheds:

street trees restrict views

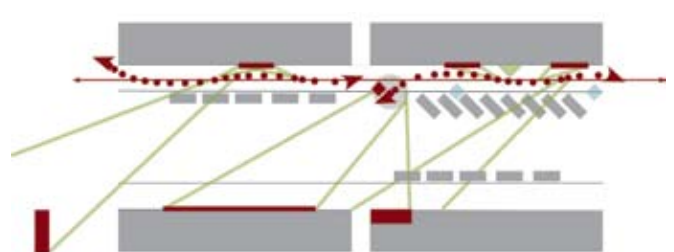


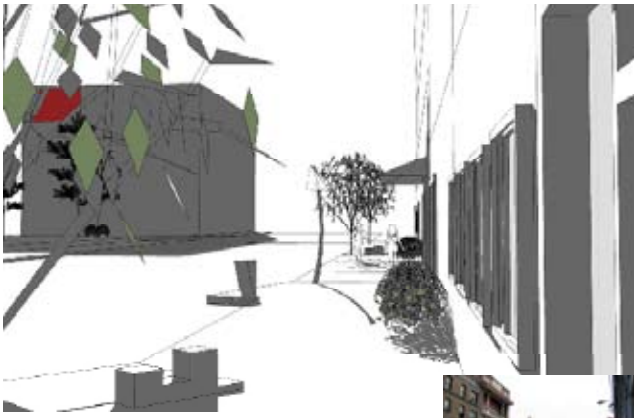
bare streets provide broad, undefined views



Proposed patterns of movement and viewsheds:

movement is directed and views are focused





Core Garden Blocks: King Street Corridor

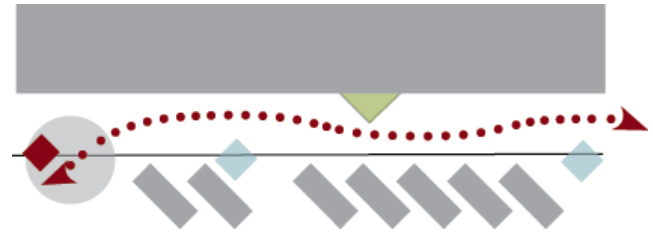
Core garden blocks focus inward to define views that highlight neighborhood features, including pavilions, details and amenities, and reflect the aesthetic character of block architecture and the activity of local businesses. The King Street block uses trees sparingly to frame views of upper balconies while still greening the street. Block-specific lighting structures direct movement and views, light alley entryways and play with sun and shade to create patterns on the sidewalk that reflect architectural patterns found along the block. Paving details and wall/seating structures pull architectural details into the streetscape. Runnels and shallow water panels reflect block details. Vegetation is used to subtly guide movement and direct views toward block-specific features.



Lobby Garden Blocks: Maynard Avenue

Lobby garden blocks define views and utilize a palette that develops a dialogue with the outside neighborhood. Streetscapes along Maynard Avenue borrow views from Japantown and use patterns and plants from architecture along Maynard and adjacent streets.

Intervention Framework



seating, walls & paving

- design & placement directs movement & views
- neighborhood features & local character are reflected in patterns pulled from local built environment

lighting

- form reflects character of local built environment
- decorates surfaces with sun/shade, day/night patterns

water

- channeled through runnels in paving to create dynamic patterns during storm events
- reflects built environment in shallow pools during storm events
- collected & stored in small cisterns for streetscape maintenance

vegetation

- low-maintenance plantings that direct views & movement
- tree removal/addition to define pedestrian views
- selection of plants reflects Pacific Northwest flora

parking

- reoriented on wide streets to open views and increase sidewalk space

Implementation & Stewardship

building community through Garden Block Design

Although the built environment provides many opportunities and materials for enhancing the pedestrian experience of the neighborhood, the community has not yet developed the sense of ownership of their local streets that will allow the design, construction & maintenance of vibrant streetscapes. Through community-based Garden Block Design projects, the residents and business owners of each street block will have the opportunity to contribute to shaping the streetscape and building a stewardship group to construct and maintain their unique landscape.

6. Major Recommendations

These recommendations are intended to enhance the existing features of the Chinatown neighborhood. They are based on interviews with stakeholders and attempt to address the particular issues and conditions we identified in this document. These recommendations are for the residence, community members, business owners and stakeholders. We present these ideas realizing that our Seattle downtown neighborhoods are about to encounter significant changes to accommodate increased housing density.

Activities--Create a weekly farmers market, a night market and other events to increase economic and social activity in three neighborhood.

Safety--Add lighting along the streets through the neighborhood. Remove structures and planting current obstructing views into and out of the parks. Activate parks spaces to discourage illicit activity.

Cultural Places--Use memorable art pieces and cultural icons to highlight Chinatowns unique identity. In Fremont, The Troll has provided such a function, activating an undesirable space and creating a tourist destination.

Stewardship--Cultivate community stewardship and neighborhood streetscapes through the creation of garden community involvement and maintenance for example garden block design groups.

Address diverse needs--Redesign existing parks to increase comfort and usability. Add "places to pause" along the street to encourage social interaction.

Green the neighborhood--Add trees and small plantings along the street. Reconnect the neighborhood to the Sound through stormwater collection and water features.



Community Open Space Initiative:
Chinatown, Japantown, Little Saigon—
International District, Seattle

2005 Community Design Studio Report

**Part 2. Chinatown Core -- Alison Blake,
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