3. SITE CONDITIONS

Overview

In addition to interviews with the local organizations, we conducted a series of site observations to evaluate the physical conditions and social uses of space in the District, as well as identifying the existing visual and physical characters of the neighborhood. Specifically, the students were divided into groups to study a list of eight issues identified from a preliminary observation of the site.

1. Surrounding Context – To examine recent development around the District and the physical linkages between the neighborhood and the surrounding areas, as well as the role of the District within the larger context of the city, particularly the South Downtown area.

2. Traffic and Parking Conditions – To examine the distribution of parking spaces and patterns of traffic flow through the District.

3. Natural Process – To examine the conditions of natural process in the District, including climate and vegetation, and the opportunities and constraints in incorporating natural processes into the development and improvement of open space in the District.

4. Street Conditions – To examine the physical conditions of streets in the neighborhood and how the existing streets function as social, commercial and neighborhood space.

5. Building Conditions and Typology – To examine the conditions and typology of existing buildings in the District, including a possible correlation between the design of street-level façade (fenestration, setbacks, etc.) and activities and social uses of the streets.

6. Cultural Characters – To examine features that express the unique characters of the neighborhood including building façades, architectural details, signs, uses of street space, vegetation, spatial patterns, etc.

7. Pattern of Business Locations – To inventory and analyze the location pattern of different types of businesses in the District and their implications for spatial and infrastructure needs.

8. Sacred Places – To identify spaces that are important to the residents and community members in their social life and collective images and memories of the neighborhood.

The following presents the findings of the site inventory and analysis as organized by the eight topics.

Surrounding Context

Surrounding context includes land use in and around the district, new and future development, views and physical barriers.

Land Use

Commercial

The Chinatown-International District is a central city, urban neighborhood. Its land use therefore is heavily commercial and residential with fairly little open space. Commercial land use comes in a number of varieties. Much of the District is zoned NC3 (Neighborhood Commercial 3). This is a pedestrian-oriented area with a wide range of retail and commercial activities. Storefronts are continuous and built to the front property line. Multi-story residential housing is also permitted in this area. Another zoning designation is C1 (Commercial 1). This is an automobile oriented area with a number of retail, service, business and office functions. It is composed mostly of shopping areas with on-site parking in front of or to the side of the shops. Some limited residential land use is also permitted. Finally there is the IC zone (Industrial Commercial). This is a mix of industrial and commercial land uses including manufacturing as well as research and development.

Open Space

Several small open spaces exist in the District. The Danny Woo Community Gardens, Kobe Terrace Park and the International Children's Park are some of the green spaces. Other important open, public areas are Hing Hay Park and the Union Station Plaza.

Residential

Although residential land use is somewhat limited in the District it still exists in certain areas. As was mentioned, areas zoned NC3 (Neighborhood Commercial 3) have multi-story residential housing. Some examples of this kind of land use are the Uwajimaya and the Pacific Rim Center. Another kind of residential land use in the District is

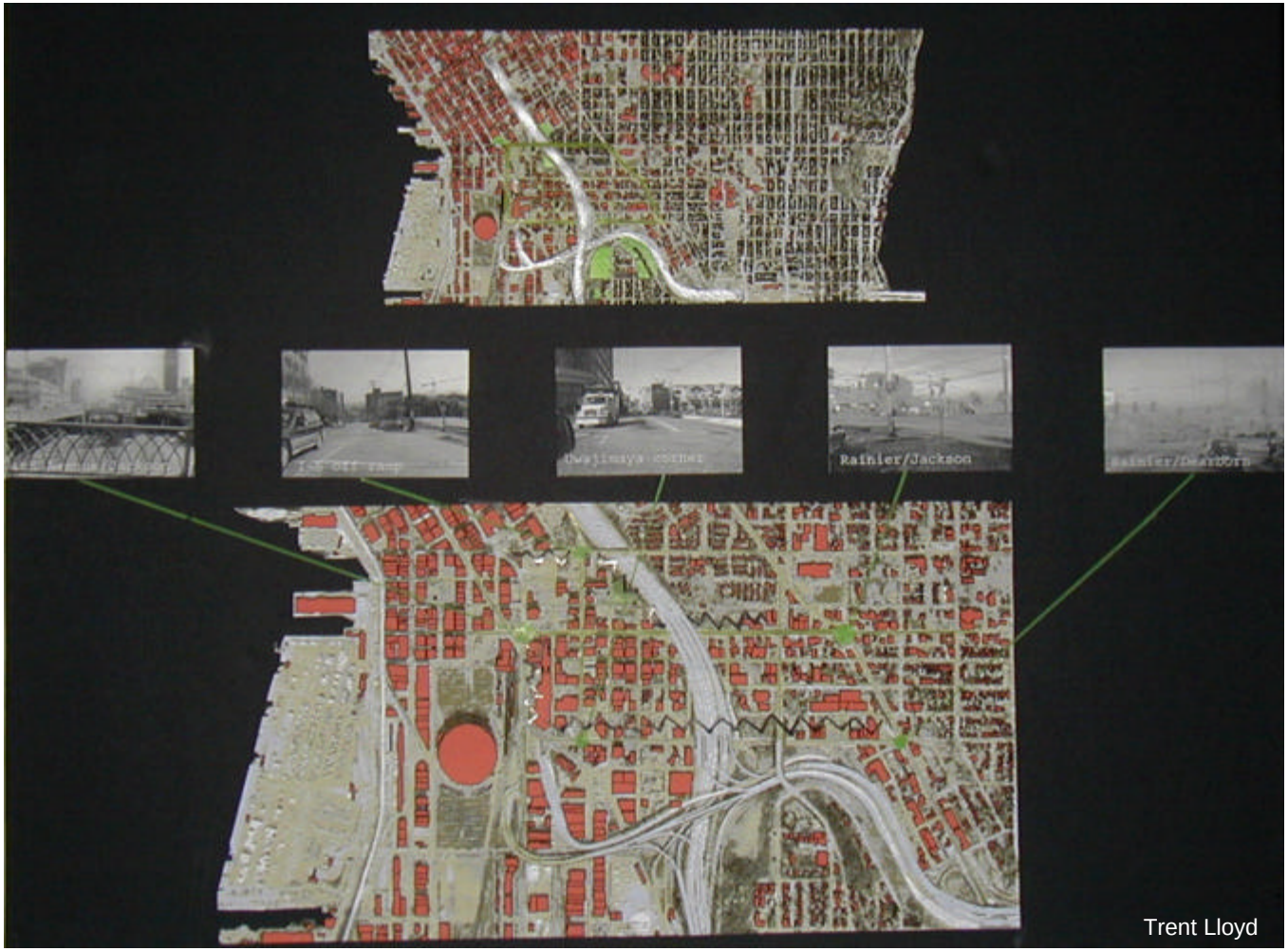
single/multi-family houses. These are found on the block between 7th and 8th Avenues South and between South Lane and South Weller Streets on the West side of I-5 and along South King Street on the East side of I-5.

New and Future Developments

There have been many new developments in and around the District in the last several years. Within the last three years Safeco Field, the Union Station renovation and Uwajimaya Village were completed. More recently the Seahawks Stadium and a number of new office buildings on the West side of the District have been built or are being built.

Views

Because many buildings in the District are multi-story views of the Puget Sound and Downtown are limited. In addition, the I-5 overpass blocks views from Little Saigon to some degree. Some new construction has had an impact on views especially on the West side of the district.



Trent Lloyd

Physical Barriers

A number of physical barriers exist in the District. Perhaps the most prominent is I-5 which bisects the district. Only Jackson Street and King Street are not cut off by the freeway. Although parking is available under the freeway, its construction represented a significant loss of land to the District. It also presents some public safety concerns.

This barrier has allowed the Little Saigon area to develop as a distinct part of the District, however. On the West side of the District, the railroad tracks form another barrier, especially where they run through a cut on 4th Avenue. To the South, Dearborn Street and Airport Way form significant physical barriers because of their size and high volume.

Traffic and Parking Conditions

Traffic Conditions

There are a number of issues relating to the safe and efficient flow of traffic in the District. There are several congested intersections. These are four-way stops with no traffic signals. Stop signs have been ineffective in regulating the flow of traffic through these intersections. To help increase efficiency and safety at these intersections, signals should be installed. There are a number of dangerous alley entrances where collisions can occur between cars exiting the alley and cars on the cross street. There is also a problem with excessive speeds on arterials such as Jackson. This is particularly true during the morning rush hour.

Parking Conditions

There are also many parking issues to be resolved in the District. There is a shortage of short-term parking and on-street parking is metered. Parking shortages are exacerbated by the construction of new stadiums and other developments in the area. Some people in the District also say that stadium attendees who park in the District sometimes behave disrespectfully. Parking shortages are especially a problem for people who live in the District.

Pedestrian Conditions

Pedestrian safety is problematic in the District as well. Streets are poorly lit and crime can make walking at night unsafe. Congested intersections can be difficult to negotiate for pedestrians. Cars coming out of alleys also create a hazard for pedestrians on the sidewalk. Sidewalks are in disrepair and are sometimes cluttered with garbage. Parking creates blind corners that can make it difficult for motorists to see pedestrians. Finally, the bike lane on Jackson Street is not heavily used, perhaps because of heavy car traffic volumes.

Traffic Conditions

- Several congested intersections
- Signal improvements needed at main intersections
- Dangerous alley entrances
- High speeds traffic particularly during AM rush hour
- Stop signs ineffective

Parking Conditions

- Shortage of short-term parking
- Most streets have metered on street parking (15 minutes-2 hours)
- Stadium attendees who park in the International District sometimes behave disrespectfully
- Concern that new development will worsen parking problem
- Parking shortage particularly problematic for community members

Pedestrian Conditions

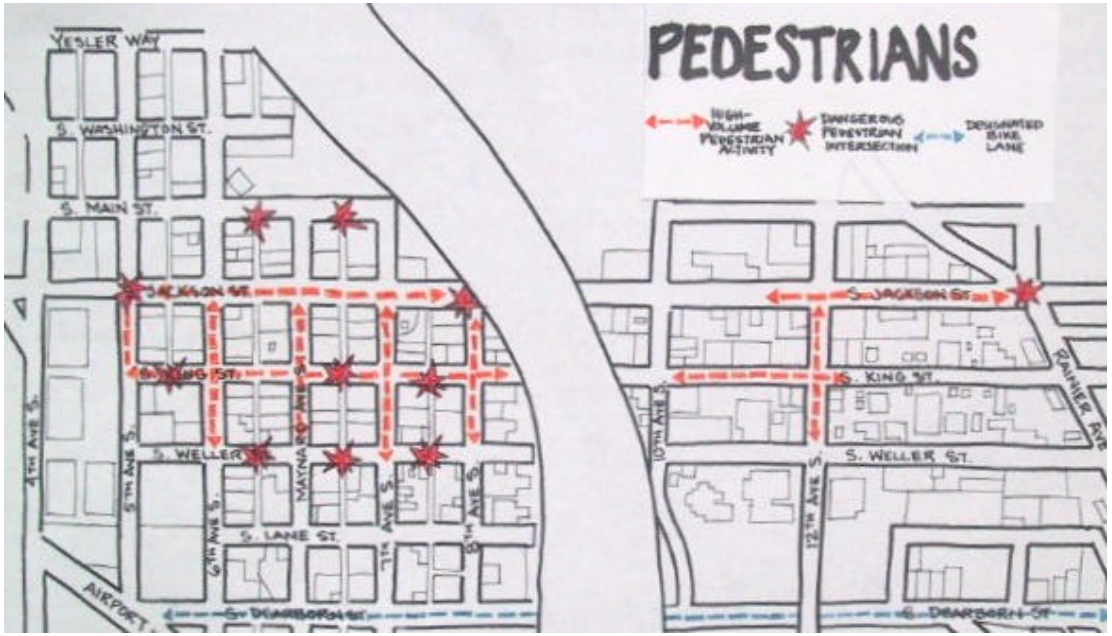
- Poor street lighting and crime
- Congested intersections
- Alley entrances
- Sidewalks in disrepair/cluttered with garbage
- Parking limits visibility
- Bike route on Jackson Street is not used heavily

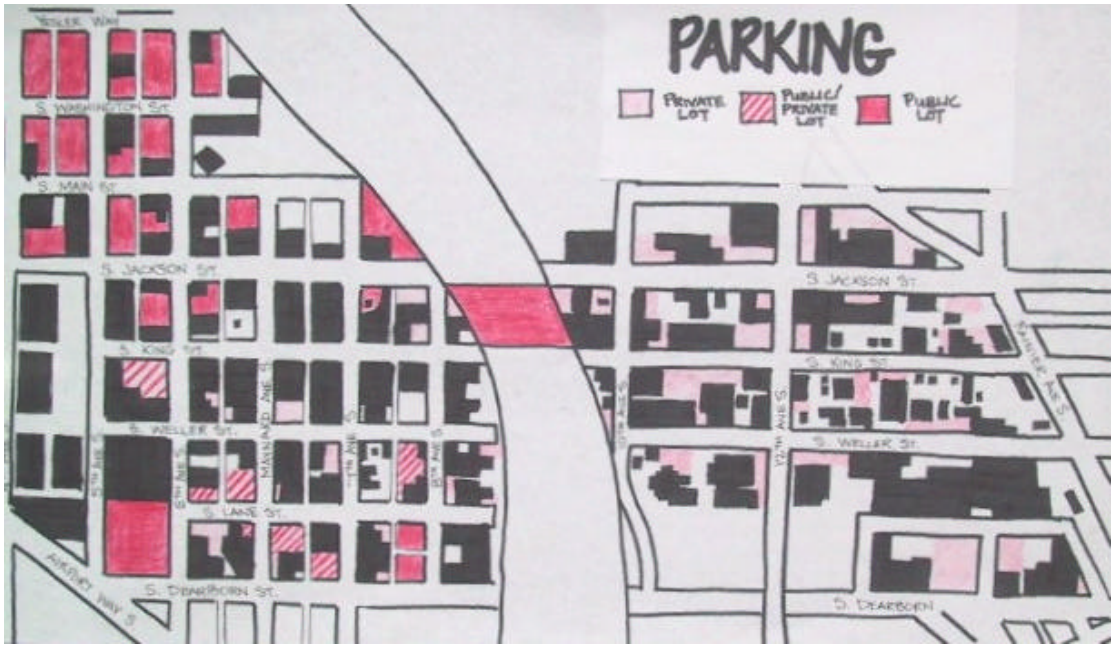
Transit Conditions

- Neighborhood served by routes 7, 9, 14, 36, 42 and 60 buses
- Tunnel and Free Ride Zone limits pedestrian/customer activity
- Internal neighborhood route could improve access for the elderly
- Additional service needed for routes 7, 14 and 36 buses
- Bus stop safety needs improvement including better lighting and traffic safety

Transit Conditions

The Chinatown-International District is served by a number of bus lines. Bus routes 7, 9, 14, 36, 42 and 60 are on the surface. There are also a number of routes in the bus tunnel. Restrictions on the hours of operation of the bus tunnel limits pedestrian and customer activity in the district. Limits on the hours of the Free Ride Zone and the fact that it does not serve Little Saigon also curtail commercial activity in the district. Internal neighborhood routes could improve access for the Elderly. There is also a need for more service on routes 7, 14 and 36. Bus stop safety needs improvement including better lighting and traffic safety.





Ellen Fitzsimmons

Natural Processes

Observations of the natural processes include climate and vegetation (including street trees).

Climate

Vegetation types in the District are affected by season. During different seasons various areas in the district may be either in sun or shade depending on the angle of sunlight. This affects what can grow in these places as well as their social uses.

Vegetation

A number of tree species are found in the International District. These include Honey Locusts, Ginkgoes, fruit trees, conifer trees (evergreens) and deciduous trees (leafy). Other kinds of plants include evergreen shrubs, deciduous shrubs and invasive plants such as black berries.

- Honey Locusts (*Gleditsia triacanthos*): 65%
- Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*): 11%
- Fruit trees: 14%
- Conifer trees: 6%
- Deciduous trees: 4%

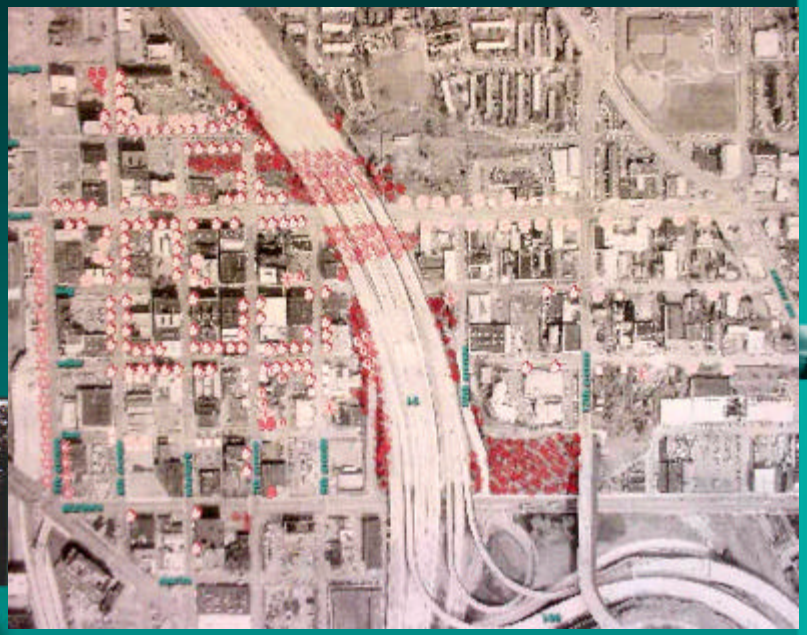
Other kinds of plants include evergreen shrubs, deciduous shrubs and invasive plants such as black berries.

Design Opportunities

Opportunities for incorporating natural processes into design of open space include sites along I-5 and existing parks, plazas and streetscapes.

natural processes

vegetation



low bio-diversity

opportunities for variety of plants, scale, native species & landscape change

low | non-existent wildlife

opportunities to provide wildlife habitat

contained stormwater system

opportunities to reveal water quality & quantity, re-use treatments

what works....

danny woo community garden
-connectedness to landscape
-cultural expression

legend

- honey locust (65%) "Gleditsia triacanthos"
- ginkgo (11%) "Ginkgo biloba"
- fruit tree (14%)
- conifer tree (6%)
- deciduous tree (4%)
- evergreen shrub
- deciduous shrub
- invasive plants

sun/shade study

winter

spring/fall

summer

CHINATOWN-INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

Jan Satterthwaite

Street Conditions

Street Conditions include physical conditions, street furniture, alleyways, pedestrian activities, social activities, and commercial activities.

Social Activities

There are a number of locations on the street in the International District that serve as focal points for social activity. Hing Hay Park is one of the few outdoor places for children to play, for people to gather, to do Tai Chi and to eat lunch outside. Adding more green space in this park could increase the number of users. Restaurants in the District attract visitors and have the potential to enhance streets by adding outdoor dining. Outdoor markets and unusual specialty shops also attract visitors and help to create street life in the district. Social activity also takes place at the Union Station Plaza, the Community Bulletin Board on 7th Avenue, 7th Avenue and King Street, 7th Avenue and Jackson Street, 12th Avenue and Jackson Street and Uwajimaya Village. Some locations on the street in the District that serve as focal points for social activity are as follows:

- Union Station Plaza
- Hing Hay Park
- 7th Avenue and King Street
- 7th Avenue and Jackson Street
- 12th Avenue and Jackson Street
- Uwajimaya Village
- Outdoor markets and specialty shops

Physical Conditions

There are number of different kinds of streets in the District. Some are large streets that carry heavy volumes of traffic. One example is Jackson Street. There are medium sized streets such as King Street, which have stop signs instead of lights and carry a lower volume of traffic. Finally, there are a number of residential streets in the district. Some streets in the District suffer from poor maintenance. Street types in the District include:

Social Activities

- Union Station Plaza
- Hing Hay Park
- 7th Avenue and King Street
- 7th Avenue and Jackson Street
- 12th Avenue and Jackson Street
- Uwajimaya Village
- Outdoor markets and specialty shops

Physical Conditions

- Large streets with heavy volumes of traffic such as Jackson Street
- Medium sized streets such as King Street
- Small, residential-type streets
- Poor maintenance a problem on some streets

Street Furniture

- Benches needed
- Bicycle racks needed

Alleyways

- Used as dumpster storage
- Used for loading and unloading
- Serve as a refuge for the homeless
- Alleys can be re-enlivened by using old storefronts

Pedestrian Activities

- Dumpsters block some sidewalks
- Limited maintenance of some sidewalks
- Trash on some sidewalks
- Loitering on some streets
- Hing Hay Park has loitering problem

- Large streets with heavy volumes of traffic such as Jackson Street
- Medium sized streets such as King Street
- Small, residential-type streets

Future design needs to consider the characteristics and needs of the different street types.

Street Furniture

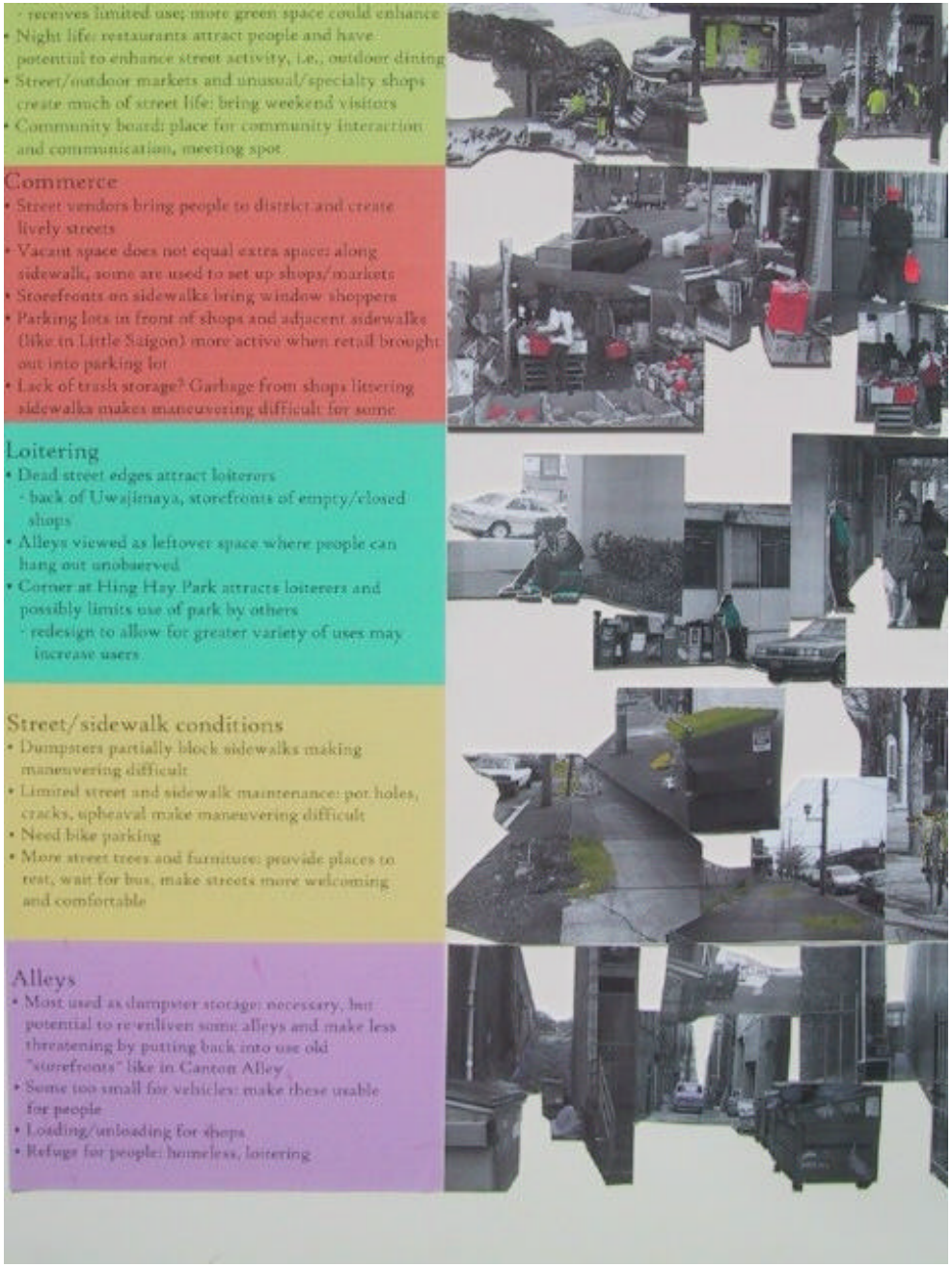
There is a need for more street furniture such as benches. This would create places for people to rest and wait for the bus. It would also make streets more welcoming. Finally, there is a need for more bicycle racks in the District.

Alleyways

Most alleys in the District are used as dumpster storage. Another use for many alleys is as a loading and unloading zone for shops. Largely vacated alleys also serve as a refuge for the homeless and others because they are seen as places one can loiter unobserved. There is a potential to re-enliven alleys and make them less threatening by putting into use old storefronts such as those in Canton Alley. Some alleys are too narrow to be used for vehicles but can be made useable for pedestrians. This will improve the appearance of alleys and discourage loitering and crime.

Pedestrian Activities

Dumpsters partially block some sidewalks making it difficult to maneuver for pedestrians. There is limited maintenance of some sidewalks including potholes, cracks and upheavals. A lack of trash storage for shops sometimes leads to garbage accumulating on sidewalks. Loitering is a problem on some streets in the district. Dead street edges, empty storefronts and alleys in particular attract loiterers. The corner of Hing Hay Park is also a place with a loitering problem. This limits use by other people. Redesigning this park to allow for a greater variety of uses may increase the number of visitors.



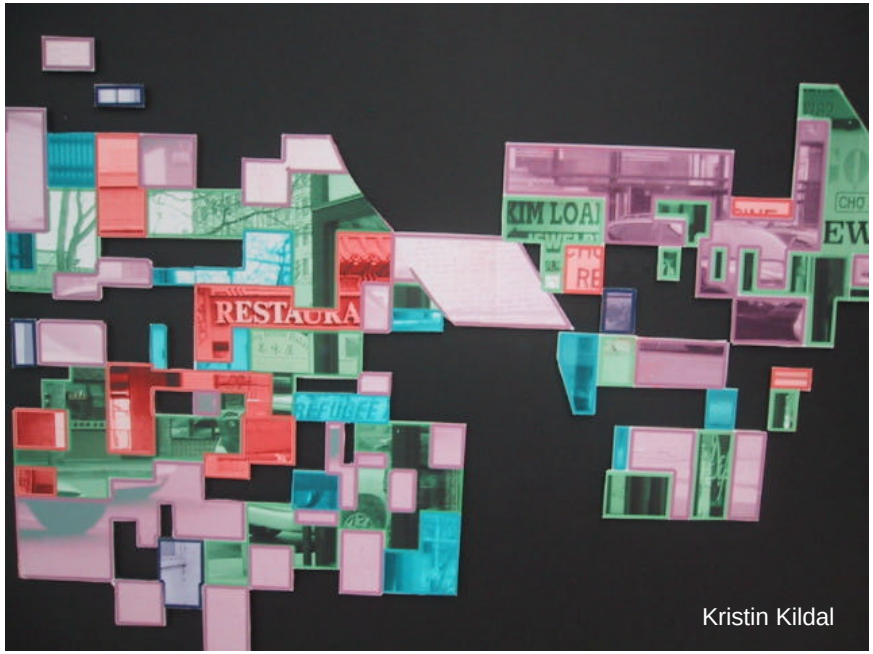
Sunny Ho and Anna O'Connell

Location Pattern

Location patterns are the tendency for community services, businesses of various kinds and other kinds of land use to be clustered together. Many different kinds of location patterns exist around the Chinatown-International District. On the West side of the freeway, especially along King and Weller streets are many restaurants. Chinese restaurants are most prominent in this area but many other kinds can be found as well. Many social services are also found in this area, including services for immigrants and refugees. South of this area, especially along Lane Street and behind Uwajimaya Village, are many parking lots. This is near the freeway interchange so much of the land use here is automobile oriented. East of the freeway, in Little Saigon, different location patterns exist. Here jewelry shops, pawnshops and Vietnamese restaurants predominate.

Several kinds of commercial activities as observed from the streets in the District (Kristin Kildal):

Type	Number
Social Services	27
Newspapers/Publications	7
Non-Retail/Manufacturers	9
Family Associations	8
Kung-Fu Schools	2
Travel Agencies	12
Banks	4
Acupuncture/Medical	13
Video Stores	8
Beauty Salons	6
Music/Cultural	7
Grocery Stores/Bakeries	18
Restaurants	52
Retail	32



Kristin Kildal

Businesses in the District

The types of businesses in the District are different from other areas in Seattle and appear to address the needs of the immigrant population in the district. There are more travel agencies, Asian grocery stores, alternative doctors and restaurants in the area than elsewhere. It seems that Asian immigrants coming to Seattle would find comfort, familiarity and contact with home because of the services provided. In looking at the business types, there is a distinct difference between the area west of I-5 and east of I-5.

West of I-5

The area west of I-5, the Chinatown area, seems more established in its community, identity and services. There are over fifty Asian restaurants, where they serve everything from Ph to dim sum to bubble tea, that are mainly clustered around the King Street and Maynard Street intersection. The number of restaurants, the types of food served and their late hours have help identify the character of Chinatown as a

destination for dining. Grocery stores are also a strong element adding to the identity. Uwajimaya is known throughout the region for its selection of Asian foods. While this is the most prominent grocery store in the area, there are several smaller markets along King and Jackson Streets.

East of I-5

The area east of I-5, known as Little Saigon, also has a significant number of restaurants, however they differ from Chinatown in that they are mostly take-out places, with Vietnamese sandwiches and Ph being the most common items served. The restaurants are mostly located on the intersection of 12th and Jackson Street. Like Chinatown, there are many markets, with the two largest on 12th and Jackson. Fruit stands in varying states of permanence are common as well and seem to be the only business connecting Little Saigon to the western area of the District. They are strung along Jackson from 5th to 12th Avenue.

Possibly because the Chinatown area is more established than Little Saigon, there are many more community services offered, from employment assistance to immigration services. In Little Saigon, there are few community services provided.

In Little Saigon, there are an unusually high number of jewelry stores. It appears that they double as pawn shops and places to get loans. There are only a few jewelry stores in Chinatown. Little Saigon is also known for its hair and nail salons. This seems to be a niche that the area has found and is part of its identity.

In both areas, especially in Chinatown, there are places for people to keep in touch with home. There are many travel agencies that specialize in trips to Asia. There are also places to make long-distance phone calls and to get cell phones and phone cards. These services seem to cater to people who have a strong connection to Asia.

Commercial Activities Needed in the District

While there are many thriving businesses in the District, there seems to be a lack of some basic services. There are few places to buy household items like furniture, bedding or fabrics. There are no clothing stores or hardware stores. People who live in the area would have to go outside of the district to find some of the basic items they may need.

The unusual types of businesses provide an opportunity to create a strong identity for the District and give people a reason to come from other areas. At the same time, this should be balanced with more basic services for the people who live there.

Building Conditions and Typology

Building conditions and typology includes building occupancy, façade appearance, scale and typology as well as patterns of building and spatial forms.

1. Building Types

Hotels

1. 3 to 6 story blocks
2. Ground floors used as retail space
3. Upper floors used for hotel rooms
4. Built from early 1900s to 1930s
5. Some converted to residential housing

Mixed-use Residential Development

1. Commercial use on ground floor
2. Residential use on upper floors
3. 3 to 5 stories generally
4. Footprint is relatively large

Single/Multi-family Houses

1. Small footprints
2. Pitched roofs
3. 2 stories maximum generally
4. Masses are relatively small

Residential Towers

1. Residential
2. 7 to 12 stories
3. Subdivided into living units
4. Retail space on ground floor of some towers

One-story Commercial Buildings

1. Commercial use only
2. One-story blocks
3. Some have only one business, some have multiple businesses
4. Buildings may be joined to form a plaza and parking lot in front

Commercial Complex

1. Commercial use only
2. 2 to 3 stories
3. Some are office space for one company, some subdivided among different small businesses

Industrial Buildings

1. Industrial use only
2. 1 to 2 stories
3. Factory or warehouse uses
4. High ceiling heights
5. Some of very large footprints

Community Services Buildings

1. Community use only
2. 2 to 3 stories generally

Building Types	Definition	Materials	Location
Hotels	These buildings are 3 to 6 story blocks with the upper floors originally designated as hotel rooms and ground floors as retail spaces. Most of them were built during the 1900s to 1930s. Today some of these buildings are converted to different uses such as housing. However, for some others, the upper floors were deteriorated and left unoccupied while the ground floor are still occupied by retail businesses.	These buildings are mostly finished with bricks or terra cotta and highly decorated in a classical style.	These buildings are mostly found on the West side of I-5 and especially along South King Street which is commonly known as the historic core of the District.
Mixed-use Residential Development	These buildings are composite buildings with commercial use on the ground or lower floors and residential use on the upper floors. They generally have 3 to 5 stories and a relatively larger footprint than the surrounding buildings.	Most are built with a concrete base and wood frame on top, and are finished with stucco panels.	Examples are the Uwajimaya and the Pacific Rim Center.
Single/Multi-Family Houses	These buildings are houses with small footprints and pitched roofs. They are generally no taller than 2 stories. Their small building masses contrast strongly with surrounding buildings.	Most of them were built and finished with wood.	They are found on the block between 7th and 8th Avenues South and between South Lane and South Weller Streets on the West side of I-5 and along South King Street on the East side of I-5.
Residential Towers	These buildings are residential buildings of 7 to 12 stories. Each story is subdivided into individual living units. Some of them have retail spaces on the ground level, but most of them do not.	Materials vary between individual buildings. Some of the are finished with a brick veneer, some are finished with stucco panels and some leave the concrete structure exposes.	They are found on the West side of I-5, and especially on the North side of South Jackson Street.

Building Types	Definition	Materials	Location
One-story Commercial Buildings	These buildings are one-story blocks for commercial use. Some of them are occupied by individual restaurants and offices. Some are broken down into smaller units of retail or restaurant spaces. Some of these buildings may join together to form a plaza with parking in front.	They are built with a brick or concrete structure and finished with paint. They originally had no ornamentation on their facades, but many of them are now decorated with signs or canopies at the storefront.	They can be found throughout the district, but many of them are found along South Jackson Street on the East side of I-5.
Commercial Complex	These buildings generally have 2 to 3 stories, and are wholly designated for commercial use. Some of them are office space for a single corporation, but most of them are subdivided into retail and office spaces for small businesses.	These buildings vary widely in age. The materials that they are constructed from depend on their age. Those built in the early 20th century are mostly finished with brick or terra cotta and highly decorated. Those built in recent decades are mostly finished with stucco panels.	They can be found throughout the district.
Industrial Buildings	These buildings are 1 to 2 story blocks for industrial use. Some are factories and some are warehouses. Most of them have high ceiling heights, and those on the East side of I-5, South of Weller Street, have very large footprints compared to the surrounding buildings. Most of them have parking spaces around them for loading and unloading.	Most of them are built with bricks or concrete and finished with paint.	They are mostly found on the South side of the district.
Community Services Buildings	These are buildings which are wholly designated for community use. They generally have 2-3 stories.	They are finished with bricks and have decorative facades.	Examples are churches East of I-5 and the Chong Wa building West of I-5.

(Table by Peter Lau and Carolyn Salisbury)

2. Façade Types

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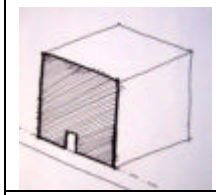
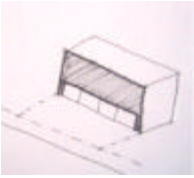
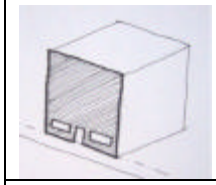
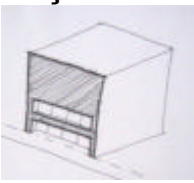
Façade Types	Definition	Examples
Enclosed Façade 	There is no opening on the façade except for the entrance to the building.	Examples are industrial buildings.
Subdivided Façade 	The façade of the ground floor is subdivided into small individual units. Each of which is mostly transparent and decorated differently.	Examples are the facades of some hotels, and some one-story commercial buildings.
Full-block Façade 	The façade of the ground floor is not subdivided and there are openings for entrances and windows.	Examples are some commercial buildings for office or restaurant use and Uwajimaya Village.
Double-story Open Façade 	The enclosure of the building in the ground and first floor is setback from the structure, leaving a transitional space between the inside and outside of the building.	Examples are some commercial complexes such as the Hao Hao building East of I-5.

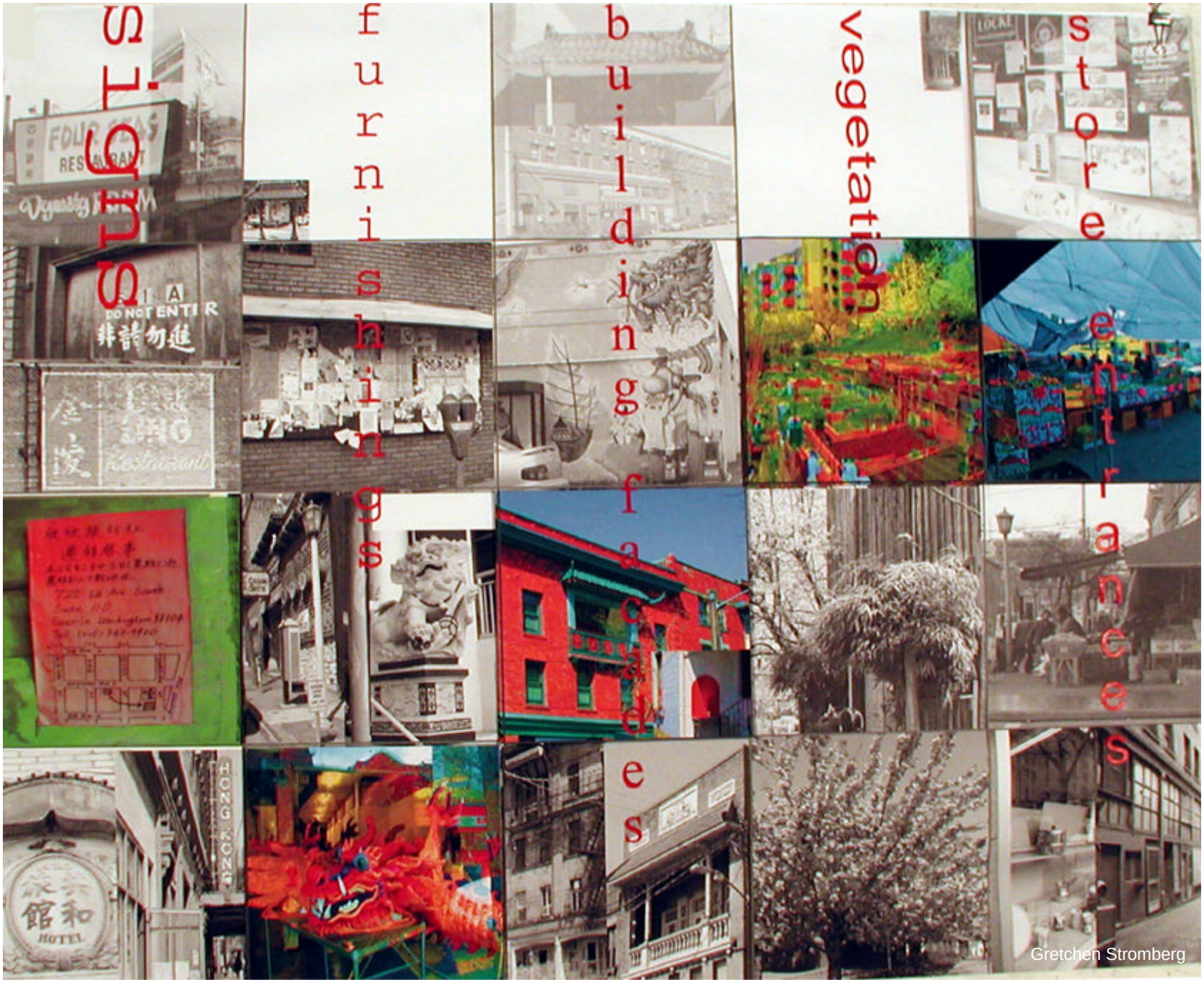
3. Lot Types

Façade Types	Definition	Examples
Set-Back	The whole building is setback from the lot boundary. The spaces between building façade and the street are generally used for parking. In some cases, activities in the buildings extend to the space in front and the space is used by people.	Examples are some commercial buildings for retail or restaurant use.
Partial Set-Back	A portion of the façade is setback from the lot boundary leaving a semi-enclosed space in front of the building.	The mixed-use building with community services and elderly homes West of I-5, where the open space is used as a plaza for people. Some L-shaped commercial buildings for retail or restaurant use, where the open spaces are used as parking.

(Tables by Peter Lau and Carolyn Salisbury)

Cultural Characters

Building and spatial features in the District denote the cultural character of the area. There are many examples around the district. Many signs are in Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and other Asian languages. Furnishings on the streets of the district also indicate the Asian-American identity of the neighborhood. There are many examples of furnishings as cultural characters in the District. Streetlights have Asian-influenced fixtures. Telephone booths and the information sign at Hing Hay Park have faux tile roofs like ones seen on traditional Asian buildings. Similarly, buildings in the International District show the unique set of cultures found here. The entrance of Chong Wa Benevolent Association's building is fashioned to look like a Chinese gate. Many buildings in the district have the tile roofs often seen in Asian architecture. Murals with Asian themes can also be found on the buildings of the District. Vegetation, which is normally a natural feature, can also serve as a cultural character. Some examples of typically Asian plants that can be found in the district are vegetables growing in the Danny Woo Garden, Japanese cherry trees in Kobe Terrace Park and bamboo trees. Finally, many of the district's store entrances show the Asian character of the area. Some storefronts feature posters and flyers relating to Asian-American cultural life. Signs from Gary Locke and Cheryl Chow campaigns are featured in many store windows. There are also signs and posters for plays and musical performances by Asian American artists. Another kind of store entrance unique to this neighborhood is the produce markets whose commercial activities spill out onto the sidewalk.


signs
furnishings
building facades
vegetation
storefrontes
entrances
Gretchen Stromberg

Sacred Places

Community Sacred Places are places that are especially valued by the community members. Sacred places in the District identified in the community interviews include the following locations (compiled by Doug Shaw):

- Nippon Kan Theater
- Union Station Plaza
- Hing Hay Park
- Uwajimaya Village
- 606 Maynard Building
- Community Bulletin Board on 7th Avenue
- Kobe Terrace Park
- Danny Woo Garden
- Bush Asia Hotel
- Wing Luke Museum
- 12th & Jackson
- 7th & King Street
- Hong Kong Hotel
- Village Square
- Chong Wa Building

Photos: Gretchen Stromberg and Jeffrey Hou