

## Pattern Language for Community Self-made Design

Douglas Shaw

### User-Generated Design

The purpose of this project is to make a logical and practical case for user generated design in the Chinatown-International District. The District can benefit from user-generated design because of the multitude of different cultures that are represented within such a small area. User generated design can allow individuals within these groups to express their identity through design. It can, at a community level, result in a unique expression of the community's self-impression.

### The Pattern Language

Pattern Language refers to a system of design thought created by Christopher Alexander in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Alexander, in his book "A Pattern Language", sets forth the most comprehensive method for allowing non-professionals to shape their own environment. It stresses user design and the use of "patterns", or recurring considerations that need resolution when performing a design task. These issues are addressed when designing cities, neighborhoods, buildings and rooms. They aren't necessarily specific design solutions, as those should vary depending on the site, the surroundings, and the needs of the user.

The patterns are organized into a "language". This language has a vocabulary like any other language. In this case the vocabulary is made up by the patterns themselves. It also has a grammar, a proper relation of the patterns to each other.

The individual patterns have meanings, like words in a spoken or written language. Patterns such as "Household Mix", or "Mosaic of Subcultures" say something about the social and physical characteristics of "neighborhood" while patterns like "Bed Alcove" or "Window Place" describe the nature of "home".

### User-generated Design

1. Pattern language is an approach to user-generated urban design
2. Can allow people in different cultural groups to express their identity through urban design
3. Can result in a unique expression

### Pattern Language

1. User-generated design uses "pattern language" to allow non-design professionals to express their ideas
2. Patterns respond to issues in a neighborhood that need to be resolved through planning
3. Patterns are arranged into a "language", with patterns as the "words". The "grammar" is the relationship of patterns to each other
4. Pattern language is unique to each community

### Design Process

1. Makes the design process easy by creating a step-by-step process
2. Design work is often done on-site with rough drawings and markings directly on the site
3. Design professionals work with community to turn ideas into formal drawings and plans that conform to code, secure permits, contractors and financing
4. The design professional also works to help resolve disagreements among community members

### Pattern Generation for the District

1. Existing patterns in the District must be respected and new patterns need to be generated to meet the needs of the community
2. Patterns are generated when users examine considerations in building structures, public space, and other amenities

## 4. Design Proposals

The grammar of the pattern language is found in the support patterns for each other. Patterns should relate horizontally. There should be different patterns at the same level of organization such as neighborhood or home. They should also relate vertically. Patterns at the small scale contribute to build up a larger pattern.

For example, the pattern “Promenade” could work with the pattern “Activity Nodes” and “Gateway” to create a busy pedestrian street with identifiable entrances and one or more centers of intense activity. Smaller patterns such as “Individually Owned Shops”, “Nightlife”, and “Food Stands” flush out the social life of the place. “Small Public Squares”, “Positive Open Spaces”, and “Connected Buildings” define the physical characteristics of the street and the physical locations of the activity nodes. “Building Facades”, “Building Edge” and “Street Windows” support the larger “Promenade” pattern at the level of the building.

The pattern language given by Christopher Alexander is only a starting point for the development of individuals and community's own languages. Patterns can be generated by looking at the common considerations that go into design decisions and breaking them down into their component parts.

### **The Design Process**

The practical use of this language to solve design problems is fairly easy, because it attempts to demystify the process of creatively exploring alternatives with a step-by-step process of going from general and large scale issues to progressively smaller scale issues. As each issue is resolved, it leads to several detailing issues to flush it out, as demonstrated above.

In theory, the method is supposed to be used by those who will occupy the product- be it a neighborhood, office building, or house. As much design work as possible is to be done on site, with marks made directly onto the site and only rough plans being drawn out.

In reality, this seldom has been, or could be, the case. Very few people have the capacity to build a building on their own, contractors are needed, loans must be secured, and building codes met. These

things require a more formal plan and drawings be completed, in advance. This requires a design professional- an architect, engineer, developer, etc. to be involved in the process.

The next best option, then, is to have the community or individual work with the design professional to select and organize patterns into a coherent whole that supports the functions the community values. The important distinction between this and standard community involvement is that the community still designs, but with the help of a professional. This is in contrast to giving the professionals the hopes, fears, and ideas of the community and then waiting to see how the designer meets them. This is how, in fact, most projects using pattern languages have been done.

The designer, in this process, still has a very important role. The designer is still responsible for helping the community navigate through the network of complex problems involved in the design process. He or she is also important because, as a trained and experienced professional, the designer has a more highly developed ability to conceive the patterns as a whole and see difficulties in how they relate. They can also identify possible opportunities in certain combinations of patterns. The designer must also work as a mediator to resolve conflicts between different entities involved in the design process and to keep ideas within the bounds of feasibility.

### **Pattern Generation**

The patterns identified by Christopher Alexander are a good point of departure for the community and designers to start on a process of creating patterns that meet the specific needs of the International District. Existing patterns must be respected and new patterns must be generated to meet the needs of the District.

Patterns are generated by looking at what considerations must be met when building some specific type of structure, public space, garden, or neighborhoods. These considerations are then broken down into their commonly recurring component elements. The possible solutions for these considerations are then examined to see which most effectively solve the problem and relate to the overall structure of the language.

For example, protection from the elements is one common consideration in the design of streetscape. There are a variety of different ways to protect people from the elements. These range from street trees to awnings, arcades or freestanding pavilions. The designer can then look at these common solutions and see what other patterns he or she is working with and see which solution melds with the overall character of the language chosen so far.

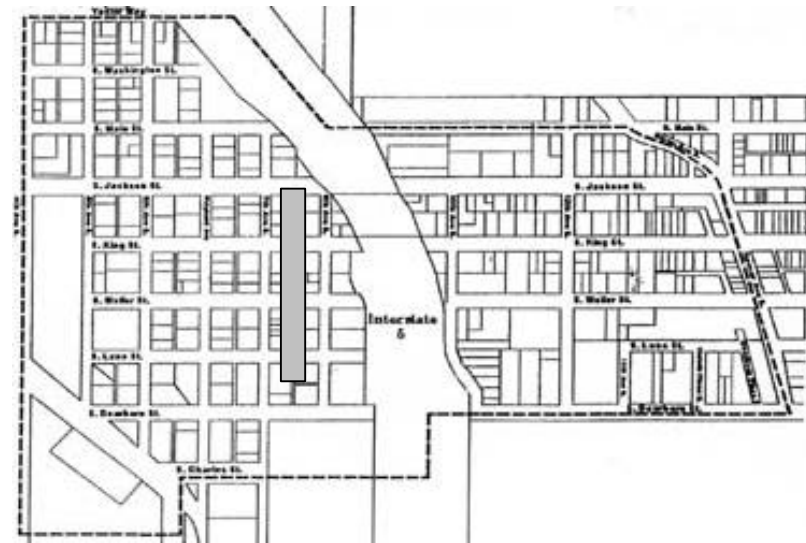
### Policy and Conclusion

For this to be a viable system of design in the District, some city policies must be changed. Street and building regulations must be changed to more performance-based standards to allow greater flexibility. Storefront renovation funds should be expanded to allow them to be used for structures that project out from the façade of the building and into the sidewalk. The use of user-design techniques should be encouraged by city development grants and in the creation of public facilities.

I think that user-design is the best way for the District to express its unique identity. Allowing for and actively encouraging these things will allow that expression to grow in an honest and organic fashion.

## Alley as Living Space

Gretchen Stromberg



Canton Alley, one of the most prominent alleys in the Chinatown-International District, is unique because of the large amount of residential buildings bordering it. As Chinatown increases its residential population the need to create meaningful outdoor spaces for families will also increase. There are three goals for this design:

- To create an alley that connects green spaces from the Danny Woo Community Gardens to the International Children's Park by introducing vegetation and p-patches along the alley
- To strengthen the linear form of the alley
- To redesign areas like the Chong Wa basketball court to welcome the community while improving the space for Chong Wa's needs

4. Design Proposals

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EXISTING LIVING SPACES

Canton Alley, one of the most prominent alleys in the International District, is unique because of the large amount of residential buildings bordering it. As a result, it houses the largest population. The goal is to create meaningful living spaces for families with their own...

There are three goals for this design: 1. To create an alley that connects green spaces from Sully Hill Community Garden to the other... 2. To introduce the green form of the alley... 3. To create a green line that... to create the community while improving the space for living...



S. Jackson Street

S. King Street



