

CHINATOWN

PUBLIC REALM PLAN

DRAFT

District of Columbia
Office of Planning



District of Columbia Office of Planning

1100 4th Street, SW, Suite E650
Washington, DC 20024
(202) 442 - 7600
www.planning.dc.gov

September 2011

DRAFT

Contents

Introduction	4
The Opportunity to Create and Urban Center in Chinatown	
The Need to Improve Chinatown's Public Infrastructure	
A History of Planning Chinatown's Public Space	
1. Issues & Findings	10
2. Recommendations	18
Create an Active Dynamic Center for Chinatown	
Promote Outdoor Commercial Activity on Key Streets	
Enhance Chinatown's Visual and Cultural Identity	
Improve Pedestrian Comfort and Safety	
Green Chinatown's Open Spaces and Streets	
Enhance & Diversify Transportation Options	
3. Guidelines	44
4. Implementation	50
Acknowledgements & Credits	54

Since Chinatown's founding in 1931 it has had an active public realm where residents and visitors could participate in unique cultural experiences such as volley ball tournaments, parades, street food, or just take in the sights and sounds of one of DC's oldest ethnic neighborhoods. Many of these traditions, such as the Chinese New Year's Parade continue, but others have disappeared completely as traffic demands on streets grew, sidewalks were narrowed, and regulations governing the use of public space evolved. The Chinatown Public Realm Plan is an effort to reexamine the layout and use of Chinatown sidewalks and streets, to ensure that future generations of Washingtonians will continue to enjoy the unique Chinatown public space experience.



Chinese group participating in a "dragon" dance, for the 39th convention of the Hip Sing Association, in Chinatown around the 500 block of H Street NW, 1958



Introduction

This plan is a follow-up action of the Chinatown Cultural Development Strategy (CCDS), approved in December of 2009, to reposition Chinatown as the region's premier cultural destination for Asian and Chinese American events, performances, festivals, shopping and dining. This document presents a detailed plan of actions to fulfill the CCDS's recommendation to develop Chinatown's streets and public spaces into a stage for experiencing Asian and Chinese American culture. The District of Columbia Office of Planning has created the Chinatown Public Realm Plan to both guide government agencies and private property owners decisions about capital infrastructure investments and policies for designing and managing Chinatown's streets and public spaces.



The Chinese New Years parade is a major cultural attraction drawing over 10,000 visitors to chinatown each year



Gallery Place features a number of premier entertainment attractions including Lucky Strike and Regal Cinemas

The Opportunity to Create an Urban Center in Chinatown

Today Chinatown is one of DC's premier entertainment and nightlife destinations, drawing people from all over the District and the region, as well as visitors and tourists and it has the potential to be one DC's premier public places too. Chinatown attracts countless visitors a year to its many restaurants, bars, and entertainment options. The heart of Chinatown, at 7th and H Streets, is strategically situated between the Walter E. Washington Convention Center and the Verizon Center, and is located on top of the second busiest Metrorail stop in the region. This confluence of destinations and location attracts over 30,000 people each day to cross through this intersection and is the frequent site of protests and meet-ups. Despite this apparent popularity, little on-street commercial or cultural activity seems to capitalize on the dynamism of this intersection, and many visitors try to avoid 7th and H Street due to its congested sidewalks. Furthermore, once a pedestrian leaves the immediate vicinity of 7th and H Streets, pedestrian volumes wane, commercial activity drops off, and Chinese architectural character decreases.

The streets and sidewalks of Chinatown need improvement to support the level of commercial and social activity occurring there and to ensure that the intersection of 7th and H streets --- the heart of Chinatown --- is a place for positive experiences.

If strategic improvements to Chinatown's key public spaces are made, pedestrian comfort, safety, and volume could dramatically increase. Enhanced pedestrian volumes would in turn provide greater business opportunities for unique retail and restaurant experiences and on-street commercial activity, such as vending or sidewalk cafes. Finally, an increased diversity of commercial and cultural options in Chinatown would help draw a wider range of visitors to Chinatown to create a safer more self-monitoring public space.

Enhanced public space would also enhance Chinatown’s role as visitor destination for Asian and Chinese American cultural experiences. Expanded sidewalks could provide space for Asian themed vendors selling street food and crafts. Additional Chinese themed streetscaping including murals, public signage, and lighting would provide a more positive visitor experience to increase Chinatown’s ability to both draw visitors and encourage them to stay longer. Finally, Interactive signage, displaying Chinatown cultural events and history, could further enhance the visitor experience and encourage greater understanding and awareness of Chinatown’s cultural and culinary offerings.

Chinatown, like much of Downtown, is home to a growing residential population of over 1,000 individuals. As the population has expanded over the last ten years calls for parks and streetscape beatification have grown. Enhancing the public realm with well maintained green spaces, pedestrian amenities such as benches, and improved perceptions of safety will provide critical services to improve resident enjoyment in their neighborhood. Furthermore, restoring Chinatown Park into a premier well maintained cultural and recreational space will create an neighborhood anchor that encourages continued residential growth in and around Chinatown.

The Need to Improve Chinatown’s Public Infrastructure

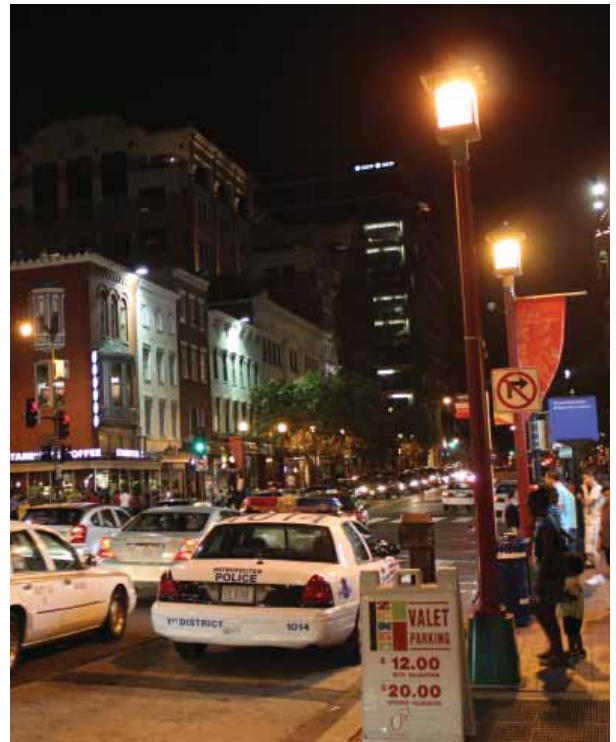
Over the last ten years a major transformation and investment in Downtown streets and public spaces has occurred. Broadly applied paving standards have created pleasant clean sidewalks, businesses have discovered the commercial opportunities of public space with an explosion of over 120 sidewalk cafes, and reinvestment in neglected public spaces is occurring. Unfortunately, Chinatown has not kept pace with the rest of Downtown in this public realm renaissance: many streets lack consistent pavement, sidewalk cafes are limited on key commercial streets, parks and open spaces are under-maintained, and the pedestrian experience is degraded by street-side garbage collection, narrow obstruction filled sidewalks, poorly placed busstops, and a lack of street furniture. Furthermore, Chinatown’s active nightlife scene has begun to attract a criminal element which has degraded the perception of public and personal safety at night in Chinatown. Recognizing these issues, the CCDS recommended as a key action the creation of a Public Realm Master Plan to set a vision and guide government agencies and property owners on specific improvements to the streetscape and public spaces of Chinatown.



Chinatown Express’ noodle preparation window is one of Chinatown’s popular authentic cultural attractions



The Residences at Gallery Place is home to 192 households, and one of several new residential buildings in Chinatown



Police cars and officers are a common sight at night in Chinatown



The Freindship Archway is the nation's largest Chinese archway



The Chinatown Design Review Program has resulted in number Chinese language signs and banners

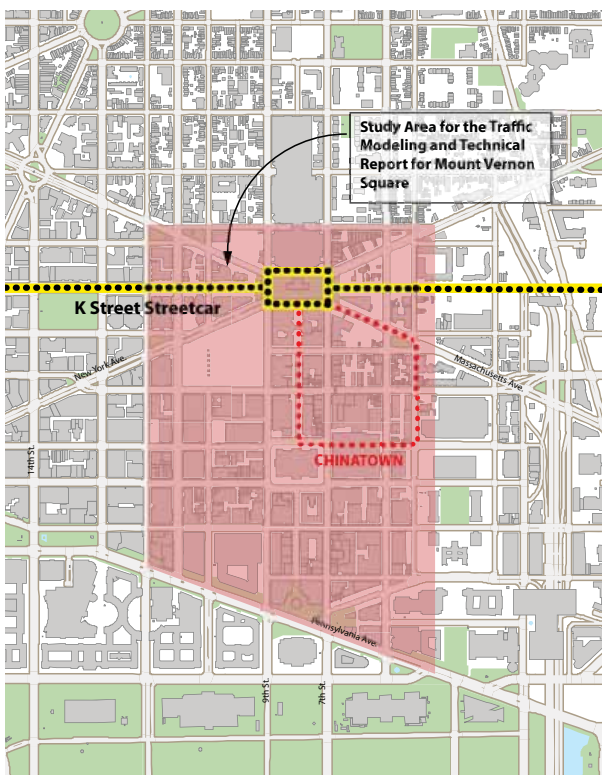
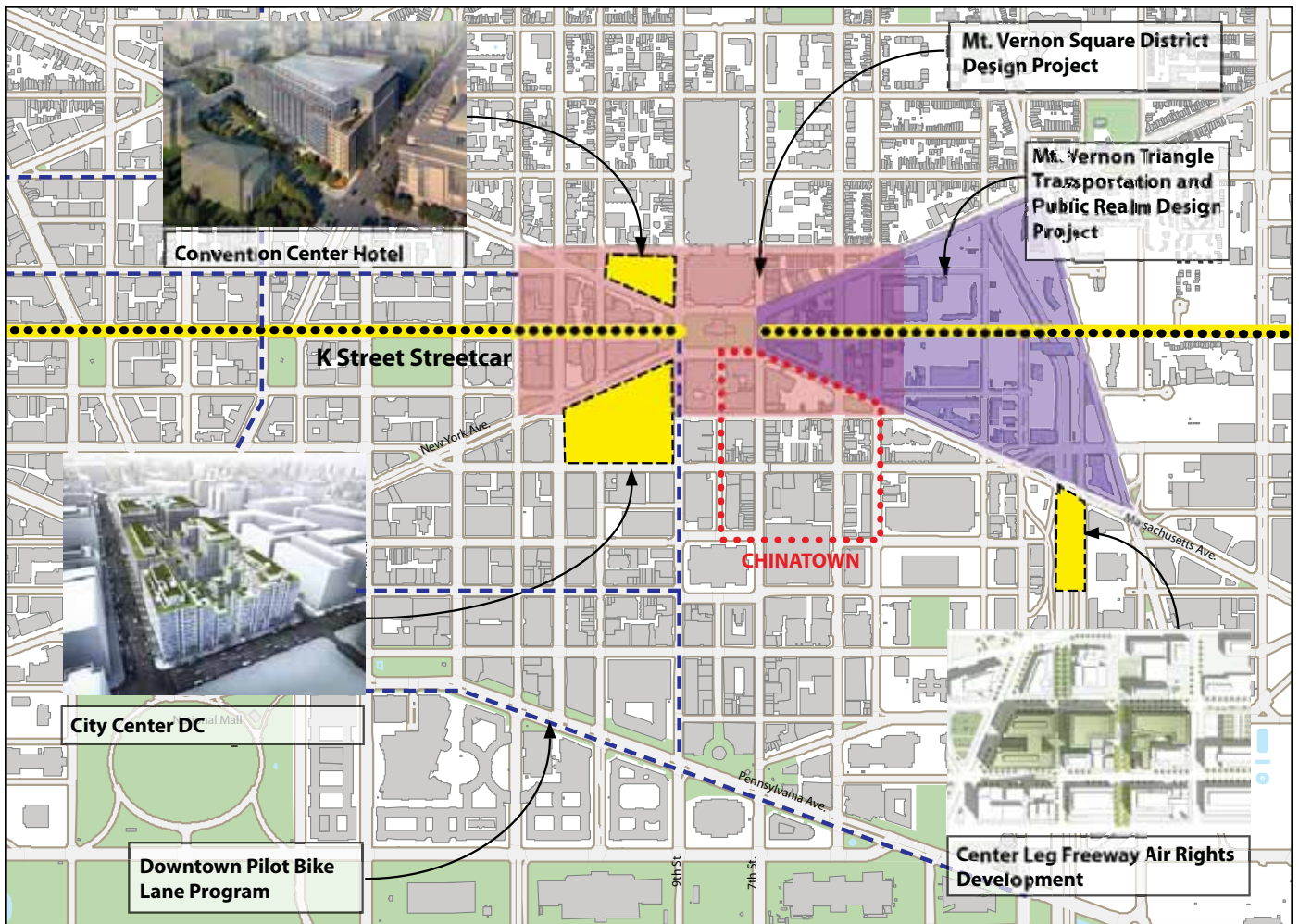
A History of Planning Chinatown's Public Space

The Chinatown Public Realm Plan is part of a coordinated series of design and streetscape efforts to enhance the cultural character of Chinatown which have occurred since the early 1980's. The most prominent of these efforts was the construction of the Friendship Archway in 1986. The 48-foot-high, 75-foot-wide archway serves as the gateway into Chinatown at H and 7th Streets, NW. At this time period the District undertook a number of projects including installing Chinese themed streetscape elements including Chinese lantern streetlamps and brick paving with unique Chinese symbols.

A number of major planning and transportation efforts have occurred in and around Chinatown that have helped strengthen its position as a premier place. The Mount Vernon Square District Plan has laid out a vision for restoring Mount Vernon Square and parks in its immediate vicinity. Additionally, the plan is also examining changing traffic patterns around the square and on 7th and 9th Streets to increase pedestrian and bicycle friendliness and improve the ability of the square to be a central gathering place. The proposed K Street streetcar is a major planned transit project that will provide additional access to Chinatown from currently underserved parts of the District. In addition the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has installed a number of improvements in the area such as a bike lane on 9th Street, a Capital Bike Share station at 8th and H streets, on-street spaces for bike parking, and Zip Car locations in Chinatown. Most recently, the Downtown BID in coordination with DDOT began repairing the original Chinatown brick paving, installing modern LED light fixtures in the Chinese lantern streetlamps, and fabricating Chinatown lamp post banners.

In addition to physical improvements, the District also worked with the Chinatown Steering Committee in 1986 to create Chinatown design guidelines and establish the Chinatown Design Review Program, to protect and promote Chinese inspired architecture in Chinatown. Recently, the Office of Planning revised the Chinatown Design Guidelines to provide clearer direction for incorporating Chinese design into rehabilitation projects and contemporary architecture, and to promote the increased usage of signs and banners in public space. The Chinatown Public Realm Master Plan coordinates with all these efforts by providing a new vision and framework for improvements and policies for managing Chinatown's streets and public spaces.

Planning and Development Projects in and Around Chinatown



Coordinating with Areawide Transportation Planning

Chinatown's transportation operations are highly coordinated with Mount Vernon Square -- its adjacent neighbor to the north -- and the planned K Street Streetcar. Chinatown Public Realm Plan's Transportation recommendations cannot be finalized or implemented until the completion of the Mount Vernon Square District Design Project -- including its Transportation Modeling Technical Report for Mount Vernon Square District -- and the DC Streetcar Union Station to Washington Circle Alternatives Analysis.

The Mount Vernon Square District Design Project envisions a future transportation system that integrates and balances multiple transit modes. Transportation concepts for the square include a one-way loop, a partial one-way loop (7th and 9th Streets become two-way streets) and a two-way loop around Mount Vernon Square. Some of these recommendations may impact 7th Street in Chinatown and alter the possibility of curb extensions, bike lanes, and bus stop relocations.

DC Streetcar Union Station to Washington Circle Alternatives Analysis is investigating street car alignment alternatives along K Street from Washington Circle to Union Station, including analysis of multi-modal connections and facility needs in the Mt Vernon Square area. When the alternatives analysis and the Transportation Modeling Technical Report for Mount Vernon Square District are complete, the Office of Planning will finalize the Chinatown Public Realm Plan's transportation recommendations and release an update to the plan.



Photo: 7th Street looking south, crosswalk



Issues & Findings

Key Issue Pedestrian Overcrowding and Safety



Pedestrian congestion at 7th and H streets



Bus traffic conflicts with pedestrian flow during peak travel times

As the popularity of the Chinatown area has grown, so has the number of pedestrians. In 2010 daily pedestrian activity at the corner of H and 7th Street increased XX%. This has led to crowded pedestrian conditions at the corner closest to the Metro station entrance. Not only is this unpleasant for pedestrians, but it creates unsafe conditions like people walking in the street when there is no room for them on the sidewalk.

Key Issue Lack of Outdoor Commercial Activity



Inactive storefronts on H Street



A lack of outdoor commercial activity in Chinatown

While many streets around Downtown are boasting new sidewalk cafes and curb side vending, Chinatown's 7th and H streets have missed out on this lucrative trend due to their narrow sidewalks. This is a significant loss of revenue for Chinatown restaurants, and a missed opportunity for promoting Asian themed entrepreneurial businesses in the District.

Key Issue Inconsistent Streetscape Materials and a Lack of Pedestrian Amenities



Cluttered newspaper boxes on H Street



Inadequate facilities for patrons waiting for an intercity bus on Eye Street

Despite being in an area covered by the Downtown Streetscape Regulations, sidewalks on key streets in Chinatown such as 6th Street and 7th Street lack consistent Chinatown brick pavement and do not include any pedestrian amenities such as benches or public art. This results in a disorganized public environment that confuses people, and discourages people from lingering, resting, or exploring Chinatown further.

Sparse Trees and Vegetation Planting

Key Issue

Some Chinatown streets such as Eye Street have a healthy tree canopy with planted tree boxes and tree box guards; however, most streets in Chinatown have only a few trees per block and lack any other kind of vegetation like hanging flower baskets, tree box vegetation, or outdoor planters. This detracts from the walking experience in Chinatown, especially in the long hot summer when trees could provide much needed shade and cooling.



Chinatown Park suffers from poor maintenance



Most tree boxes on H Street lack vegetation or tree guards

Pedestrian Nuisances Like Trash Storage or Poorly Maintained Sidewalks

Key Issue

Many Chinatown businesses do not have alley access and use dumpsters or cans in public space to store trash. This is a visual eyesore and creates foul odors that deter visitors -- particularly diners -- from spending time in Chinatown and enjoying its cultural offerings. In addition, many key streets in Chinatown such as H Street have broken or uneven sidewalks that are hazards for pedestrians, particularly elderly and disabled individuals.



Unscreened foul-smelling alley on H Street



Sidewalk on H Street in disrepair

Diminishing Chinese Cultural Character

Key Issue

The Friendship Archway and the Gallery Place rotunda create a strong cultural presence at the corner of 7th and H streets. However, other parts of Chinatown such as 8th Street lack any distinctive Chinese character in the architecture or the public space. This short changes the visitor experience and leaves many visitors with the perception that Chinatown is just one block.



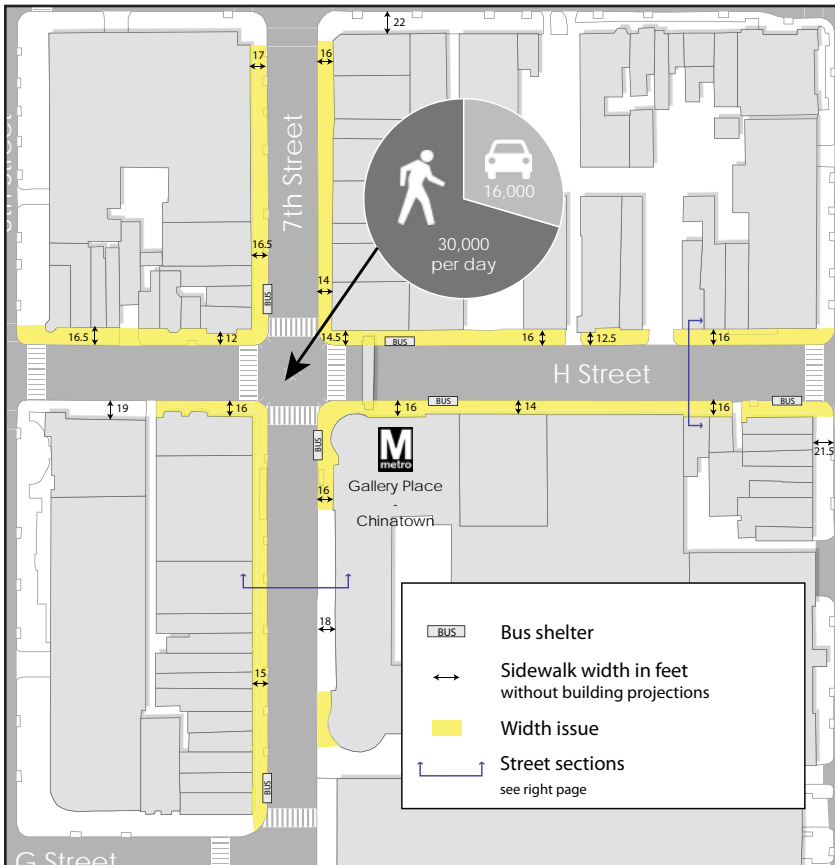
Storefronts without a strong Chinese character on H Street



Portions of 7th Street lack Chinese-style streetlights

Key Issue:

Pedestrian Overcrowding and Safety



Sidewalk Widths and Pedestrian Volumes
Around 7th and H Streets

Detailed Findings

- **Pedestrian crowding at 7th & H streets**

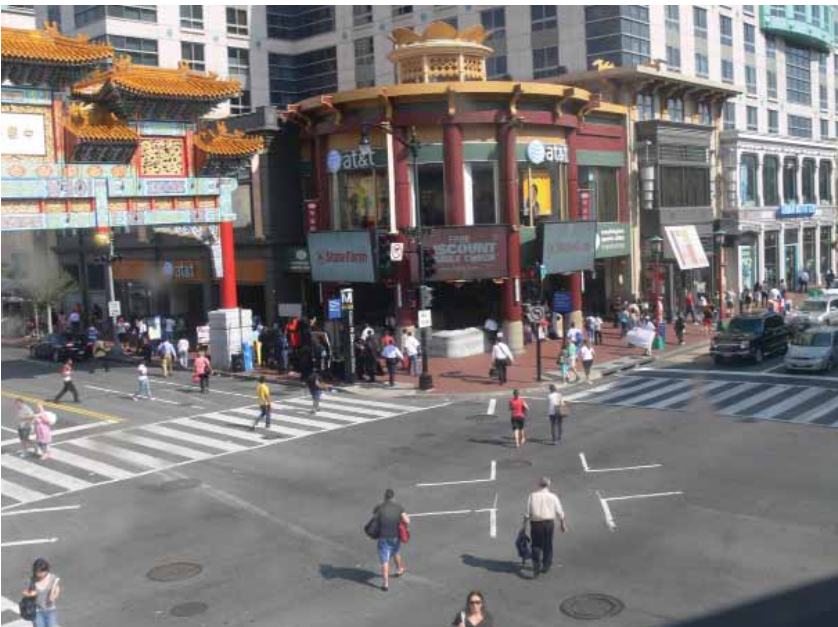
Over the last Seven years Chinatown streets have started to become very busy as pedestrian volumes almost doubled from 15,879 daily pedestrian counts in 2004 to 29,764 in 2010. During this time, sidewalk widths have stayed the same, leading to crowded pedestrian conditions during peak travel times. Furthermore, the street is not divided equitably between pedestrians and automobiles. While pedestrian volumes are rapidly growing, automobile counts have stayed constant at about 15,000 vehicles per day.

- **Success of the “Barnes Dance”**

The “Barnes Dance” intersection at 7th and H streets, installed by DDOT in 2009, favors pedestrian movements over vehicles. It has reduced the number of conflicts between pedestrians and cars by allowing a cycle where only pedestrians -- and no automobiles -- are able to cross the intersection in any direction they want. Chinatown is the first community in DC to have a “Barnes Dance” since the 1960’s.

- **Narrow sidewalks**

Pedestrian crowding is exacerbated by Chinatown’s narrow sidewalks, H Street in particular. Most of H Street’s sidewalks are less than 16’ wide and often the pedestrian clear zone is less than 5’ due to stairs and stoops obstructing the sidewalk. This prevents a great deal of outdoor commercial activity seen in other parts of the city like vending and sidewalk cafés. The yellow markings on the map to the upper left show areas in Chinatown where sidewalk width prevents these complimentary urban activities from occurring.

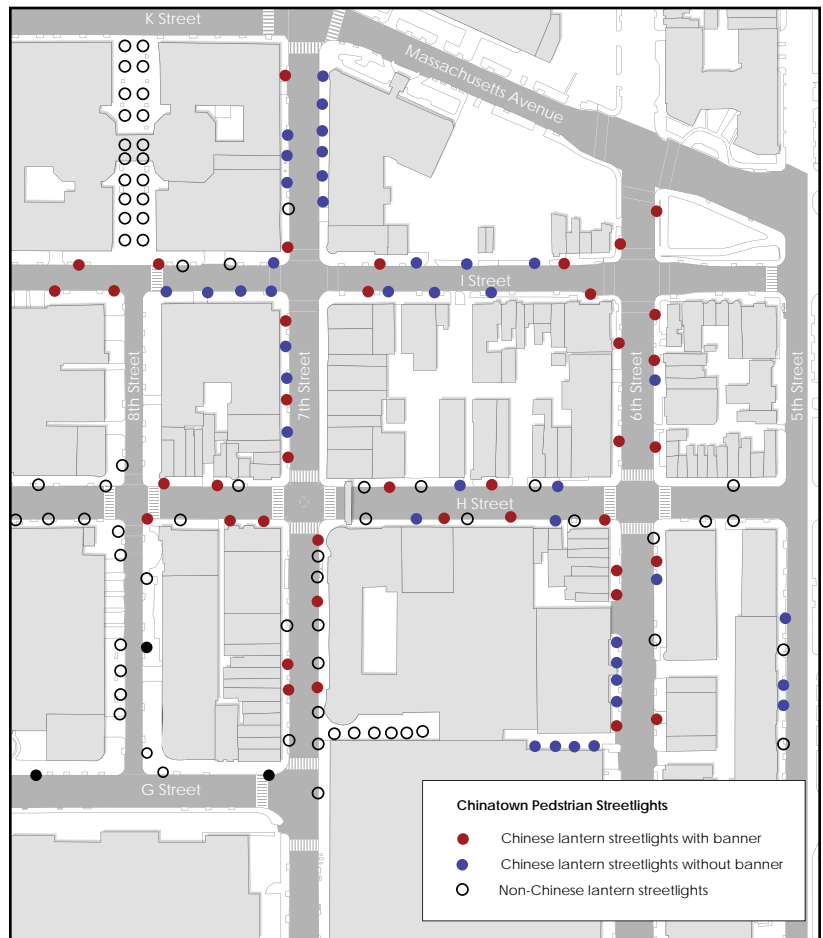


The “Barnes’ Dance” crosswalk at 7th and H streets was installed as a pilot project by DDOT in 2009

Key Issue: Diminishing Chinese Cultural Character

Detailed Findings

- Inconsistent Chinese character in streetscape elements**
 Chinatown’s streetscape elements are distributed fairly evenly throughout the area; however, they lack consistent application on key streets. For example, on 7th street between H Street and G Street there are both Chinatown lantern streetlights and the downtown historic standard in the same block. In addition, the Chinatown banners installed in 2010 are not consistent on these streets.



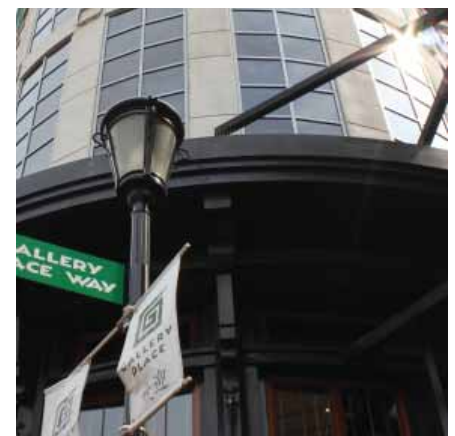
Chinatown Streetlights and Banners



Chinatown lantern streetlight with Chinatown banner



Chinatown lantern streetlight on H Street without Chinatown banners



Non-Chinese streetlight that is part of Gallery Place

Key Issue:

Sparse Trees and Vegetation Planting



Detailed Findings

- Missing street trees**
 Chinatown needs more street trees. Key blocks of H Street and 7th Street have less than 6 trees per block face. Many of these block faces have several empty or paved-over tree boxes. The residential portions of 6th Street and I Street have the strongest tree canopy, but even on these streets there is room to increase the number of street trees.
- Lack of tree box vegetation**
 Tree box vegetation is also not very consistent. Only 39% of Chinatown’s tree boxes have vegetation or plantings of some kind. The majority of the tree block plantings are in front of buildings owned by large property owners such as the 700 block of the west side of 7th Street.

Existing Street Trees and Treebox Plantings



Dead street tree on H Street



Street trees and plantings on 6th Street



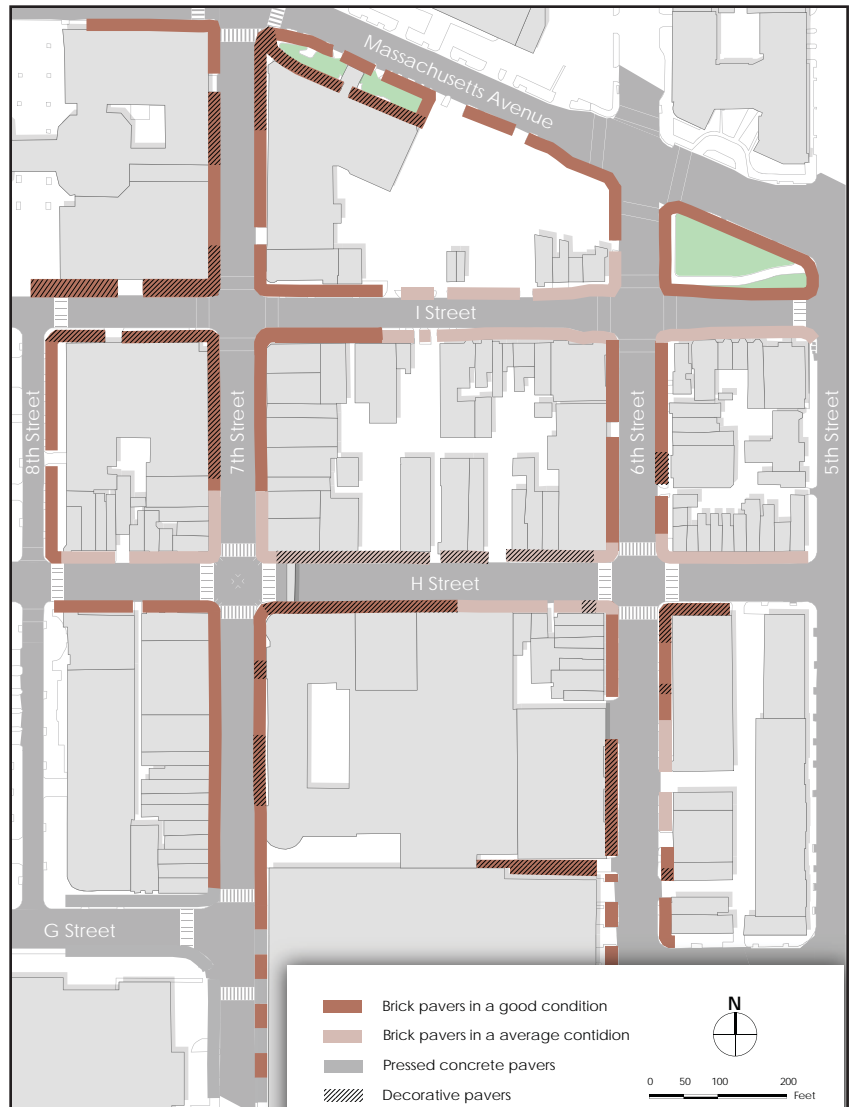
Empty tree box on H Street

Key Issue: Inconsistent Streetscape Materials

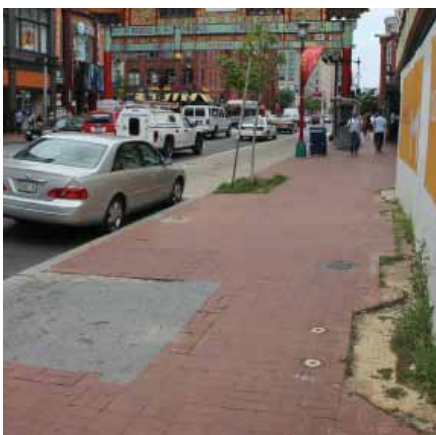
Detailed Findings

- Inconsistent sidewalk pavement type and condition**

Chinatown has a wide variety of pavement conditions as shown in the map to the right. While most of the pavement is brick, much of it is in average or poor condition. This is most acute on H Street, one of Chinatown’s busiest pedestrian streets. More than 60% of H street has average or poor condition pavement. In fact, more than 50% of Chinatown’s sidewalks do not have the decorative Chinese zodiac pavers despite being required by the Downtown Streetscape Regulations. This erodes the unity and Chinese character of Chinatown, especially on key blocks of 7th Street and H Street.



Chinatown Pavement Type and Condition



Poor pavement conditions on H Street



Decorative Chinese zodiac brick paver



Missing decorative pavers on H Street



Photo: 7th and H Streets "Barnes' Dance" crosswalk showing proposed decorative treatment

3

Recommendations



Recommendations Summary

1. Create an Active Dynamic Center for Chinatown

pg. 22



- Install temporary curb extensions (or bulbs-outs) at 7th Street & H Street
- Install a decorative Chinese themed crosswalk painting at the 7th Street & H Street “Barnes Dance” intersection

2. Promote Outdoor Commercial Activity on Key Streets

pg.24



- Amend vending regulations to place H Street & 7 Street within the Downtown Vending Demonstration Zone
- Explore curb extensions on 7th Street and H Street to increase café seating

3. Enhance Chinatown’s Visual and Cultural Identity

pg. 28



- Commission Chinese inspired wall murals for key blank facades on H Street
- Install Chinese language street signs
- Install Chinese “Zodiac” decorative pavers at key missing locations
- Design a new Chinese themed streetlight standard and install it on H Street and 7th Street
- Install new decorative red lantern garlands over portions of 6th Street, 7th Street, and H Street
- Design and install interactive devices to display cultural and historic info about Chinatown

4. Improve Pedestrian Comfort and Safety

pg. 32



- Screen trash dumpsters and garbage cans visible from public space
- Install benches and public art on Chinatown retail streets
- Repair broken or missing sidewalk pavement
- Relocate and right-size bus shelters on H and 7th Streets

5. Green Chinatown’s Open Spaces and Streets

pg. 34



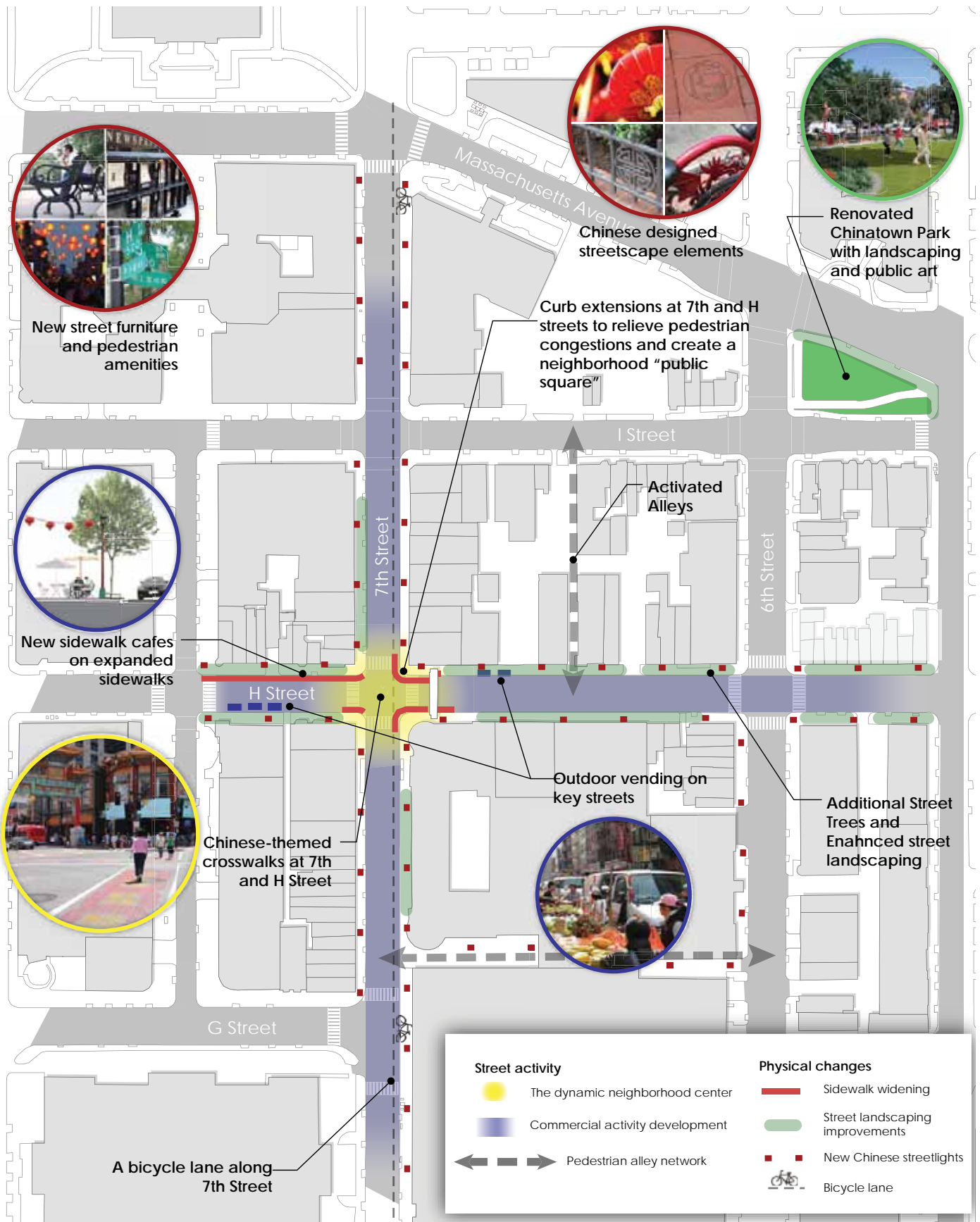
- Install new tree boxes on H Street and 7th Street
- Install new tree box plantings throughout Chinatown
- Add Chinese landscape elements to Chinatown Park
- Add temporary Chinese themed sculpture to Chinatown Park

6. Enhance and Diversify Transportation Options

pg. 40



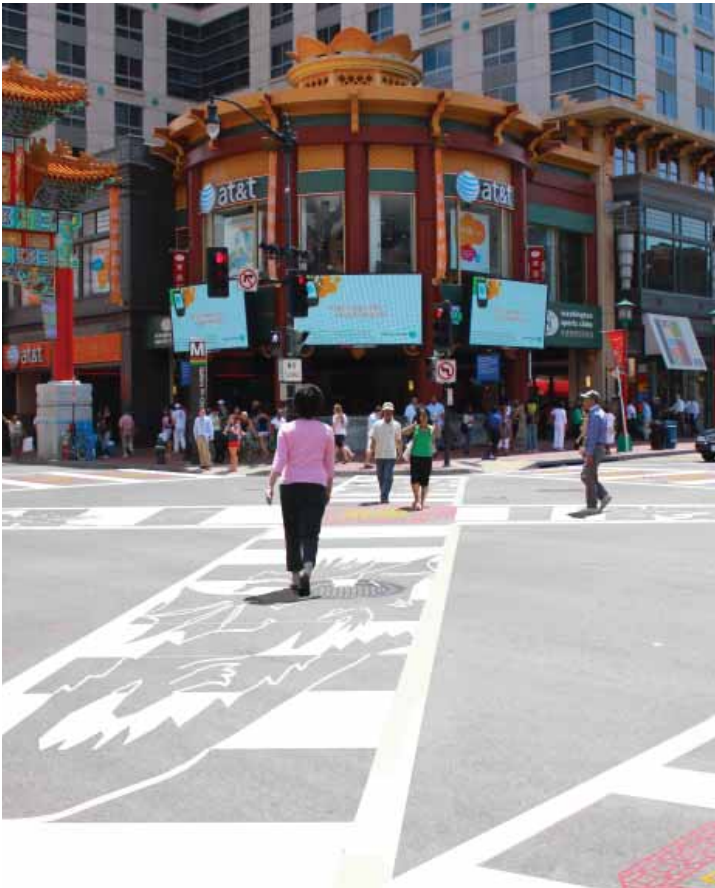
- Remove peak hour parking restrictions on 6th Street
- Install additional bicycle racks near bus stops
- Add a bicycle lane to 7th Street



Location Map of Recommendations

1. Create an Active Dynamic Center for Chinatown

The corner of 7th and H streets has an untapped potential to develop into a focal gathering space and “public square” for Chinatown. High pedestrian volumes of over 30,000 pedestrians a day and dramatic landmarks create the foundation for a place that can support dramatic Asian street performers, Asian-themed vendors selling unique goods and food, and a gathering spot for people to meet-up and socialize. The chief barrier to realizing this vision is a lack of sufficient pedestrian space at the corner, or more simply put: narrow sidewalks. This problem is not unique or isolated to DC. Many prominent urban spaces such as Piccadilly Circus in London or Times Square in New York City face this same issue. Some cities, such as New York City, have begun to develop innovative temporary and inexpensive ways to expand space for pedestrians while balancing traffic demands. These include temporary seasonal closures of streets, expanding pedestrian environments by removing parking or traffic lanes, and repaving and painting intersections to make them more pedestrian friendly. The diagram to the right shows how many of these strategies could be applied in DC Chinatown.



Proposed Decorative “Barnes Dance” crosswalk at 7th and H streets

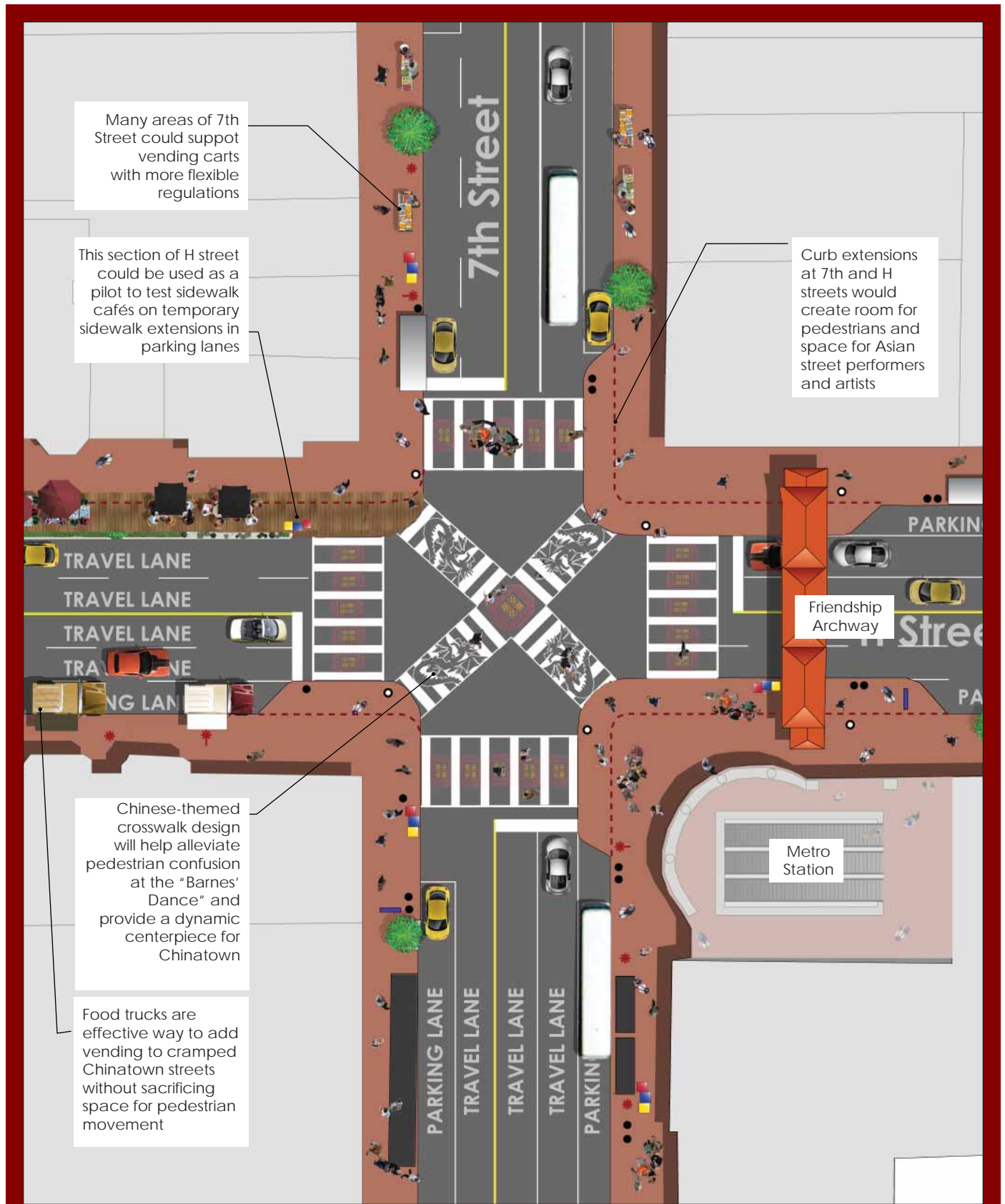
Recommendations

1a. Install temporary curb extensions (or bulb-outs) at 7th Street & H Street

widening sidewalks by removing parking lanes on 7th and H streets creates space for vendors, street performers, and pedestrian amenities. Temporary extensions can be built for minimal cost using wood platforms and cement planter barriers. This plan recommends that DDOT study sidewalk extensions as part of the Mount Vernon Square Plan traffic study. A temporary sidewalk extension pilot project on the north side of H Street could begin more immediately.

1b. Install a decorative Chinese themed crosswalk painting at the 7th Street & H Street “Barnes Dance” intersection

Creating clearer crosswalk markings will help alleviate pedestrian confusion about the “Barnes Dance” crosswalk at 7th Street and H Street, and improve pedestrian safety. The plan recommends that DDOT work with DCCA to commission an artist to design a Chinese themed crosswalk painting using standard thermoplastic crosswalk paint.



Many areas of 7th Street could support vending carts with more flexible regulations

This section of H street could be used as a pilot to test sidewalk cafés on temporary sidewalk extensions in parking lanes

Curb extensions at 7th and H streets would create room for pedestrians and space for Asian street performers and artists

Chinese-themed crosswalk design will help alleviate pedestrian confusion at the "Barnes' Dance" and provide a dynamic centerpiece for Chinatown

Food trucks are effective way to add vending to cramped Chinatown streets without sacrificing space for pedestrian movement

Friendship Archway

Metro Station

Proposed Curb Extensions for the intersection of 7th Street & H Street

2. Promote Outdoor Commercial Activity on Key Streets

An active outdoor commercial culture is a key trait and association of many Chinatowns. Places with merchants proudly displaying their goods, vendors hawking freshly prepared food, and artists and performers on street corners. Bringing this culture to DC Chinatown is key to fulfilling the CCDS's goal of restoring the look, feel, and experience of Chinatown. The lack of outdoor commercial activity on Chinatown's key retail streets is both structural and cultural: municipal regulations prevent most kinds of vending, sidewalks are too narrow and filled with obstructions to allow café seating, and most of Chinatown's merchants are not accustomed to street sales. Encouraging businesses to sell outside will take time and the development of consumer demand for outdoor sales and display of merchandise. The first step to changing this culture is to reduce structural and regulatory barriers including reform of vending regulations and expansion of space for commercial activities through curb extensions and corner bulb-outs.



Fruit vendor in Chinatown New York City



Wooden sidewalk extension and outdoor seating in San Francisco, CA

Recommendations

2a. Amend vending regulations to place H Street & 7 Street within the Downtown Vending Demonstration Zone

Vending is currently restricted in Chinatown due to outdated regulations that mandate vending only be allowed in Downtown on sidewalks that are a minimum of 18' wide. DCRA has proposed comprehensive reforms to the Districts vending regulations, but their approval is indefinitely held up due to political concerns. To provide immediate relief to Chinatown, this plan recommends that legislation be introduced to expand the boundary of the Downtown Vending Demonstration Zone to include Chinatown. This would allow Chinatown to take advantage of the innovative vending management of the Public Space Planning and Management Corporation and alleviate it from the current restrictive vending regulations.

2b. Explore curb extensions on 7th Street and H Street to increase café seating

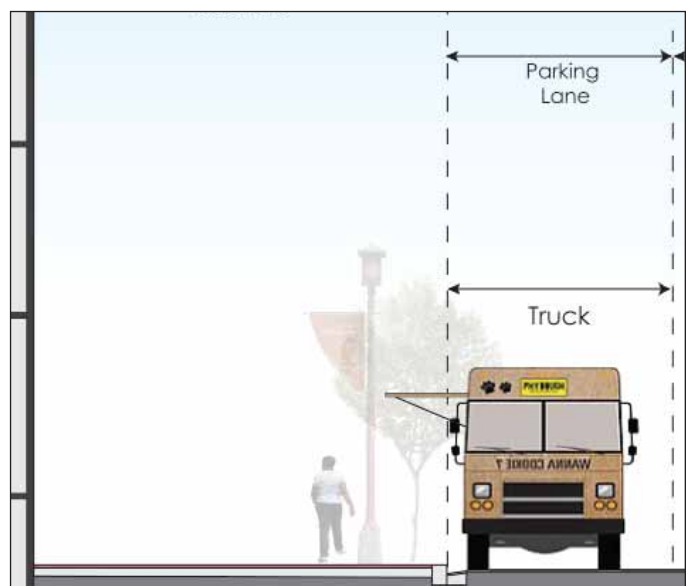
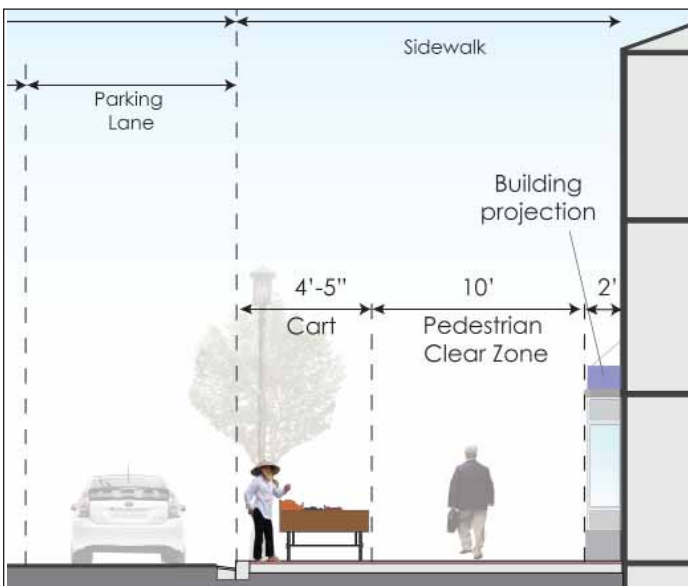
Wooden curb extensions into parking spaces have been used in several other jurisdictions, including New York and San Francisco, to provide café seating in areas with narrow sidewalks. These extensions can be as small as one parking space; however, they provide the opportunity to expand Chinatown's café seating by dozens of seats. The plan recommends that DDOT's Planning, Policy, and Sustainability Administration develop pilot regulations that allow restaurant owners to use parking spaces as outdoor table space and pilot test them on 7th Street in Chinatown.



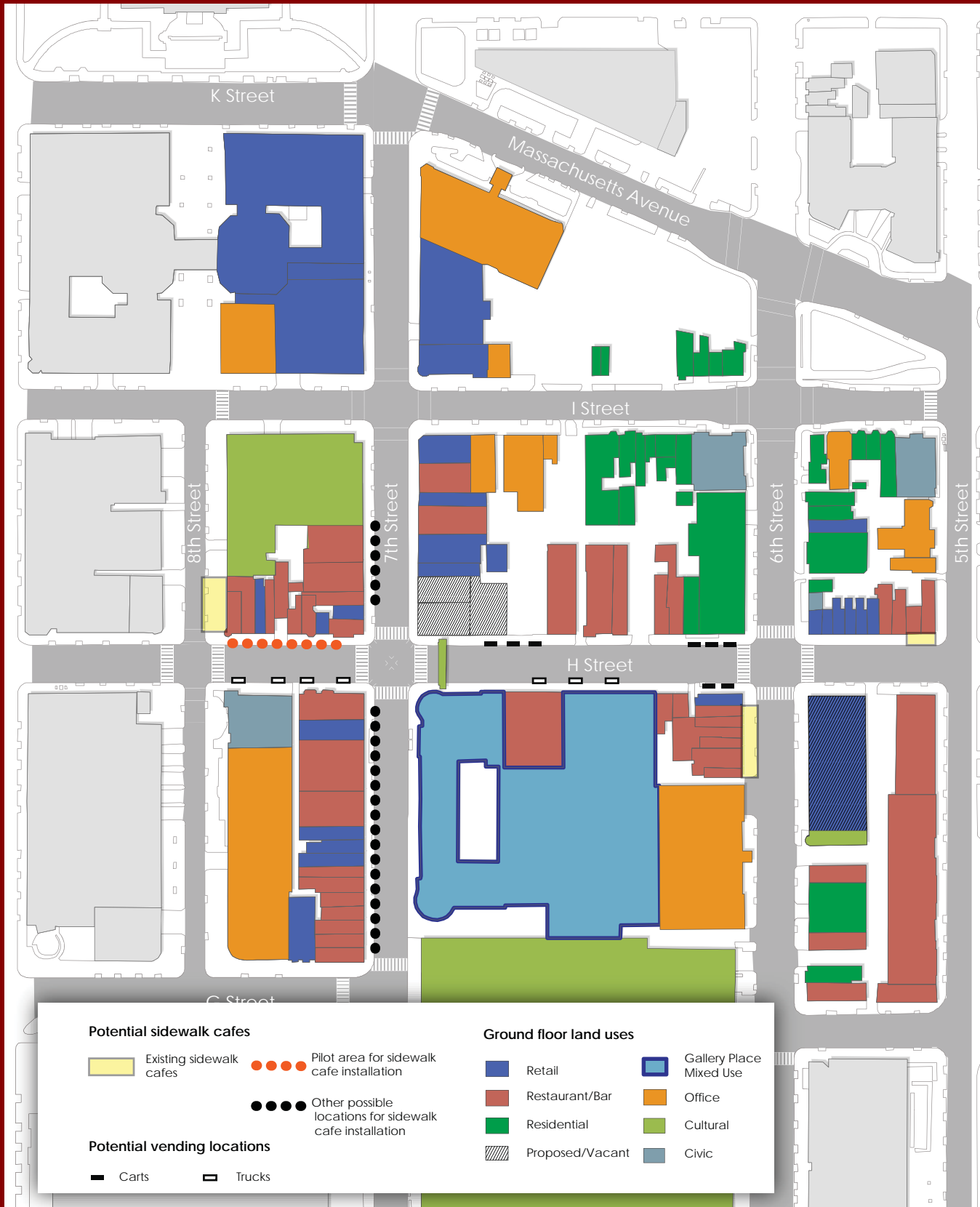
Proposed sidewalk extensions with sidewalk cafes

Wooden curb extensions into parking spaces are a cost effective method to provide café seating in areas with narrow sidewalks.

Vending Trucks or Carts?



Sections through H Street illustrating vending options: Where there is 10' clear for pedestrians sidewalks could have vending carts, vending trucks can be used in more congested areas or where sidewalks are too narrow for vending carts



Potential Sidewalk Café and Vending Locations

3. Enhance Chinatown's Visual and Cultural Identity

Celebrating Chinese culture through public art and streetscape elements is a traditional motif of Chinatowns. San Francisco, New York City, Boston, and DC all have Chinese inspired lampposts, street signage, and public art. In the 1980's several streetscape elements were introduced to Chinatown to celebrate Chinese culture including decorative brick pavers, Chinese lantern style street lamps, and even pagoda topped telephone booths. A lack of investment in these items as well as new bright commercial signage has reduced their impact. Enhancing the character of Chinatown's streets and public spaces requires reinforcing these existing efforts, such as reinstalling unique Chinatown brick sidewalk paving, and developing new standards and elements that can compete with the bright lights and sounds of Chinatown. In addition to these efforts, new wayfinding signage and interactive display elements are also important way to enrich the visitor experience.



Proposed new wayfinding signage



The only street sign translated into Chinese in Chinatown DC

Recommendations

3a. Commission Chinese inspired wall murals for key blank facades on H Street

Chinatown has a couple key blank walls that face major streets. Instead of detracting from the active nature of Chinatown's streets, these walls could enhance it by featuring decorative murals or signage. Decorative murals have been used by many cities such as Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Baltimore to enliven blank walls on commercial streets to great success. This plan recommends that DCCA, working through its DC Murals program, commission an artist to design at least one substantial mural in Chinatown.

3b. Install Chinese language street signs

Currently all businesses in Chinatown must have bilingual signs in English and Chinese. However, this requirement does not exist for public and wayfinding signage. This is a key opportunity to enhance the cultural character of Chinatown and provide language access to Chinatown's non-English proficient residents. This plan recommends that DDOT, working with its partners, update all street signs and wayfinding signs to include Chinese translations.

3c. Install Chinese "Zodiac" decorative pavers at key missing locations

Many of the new streetscape paving projects in Chinatown, including the 6th Street sidewalk restoration in 2010 as well as developer funded improvements, lack Chinatown's signature Chinese Zodiac brick pavers (see map on page 17). The plan recommends that DDOT work with these property owners to install decorative pavers at key missing location on H Street and 7th Street and ensure the decorative pavers are used in all future DDOT contracts.

3d. Design a new Chinese themed streetlight standard and install it on H Street and 7th Street

The existing Chinatown light standard often gets unnoticed in the high activity signage of Gallery Place and



Proposed Chinese Character Enhancements for 6th and H streets

Decorative murals, Chinese lantern garlands, and crosswalk paintings are low cost methods that can dramatically increase Chinese character in Chinatown.



Existing Chinatown decorative paver



Chinese themed streetlight in Chinatown, Chicago



Red lanterns garlands are a cost effective way to add Chinese to Chinatown's wide streets

(Recommendations Continued)

Chinatown. This is unfortunate, since it could be key element to strengthening the Chinese character of Chinatown's streets. This plan recommends that DCCAH, in partnership with DDOT, commission a design that creates a new larger scale, bolder, and brighter Chinese light standard and install it on Chinatown's key retail streets. Additionally, existing Chinatown streetlights being replaced could be placed on residential streets in Chinatown where Chinatown streetlights are currently missing.

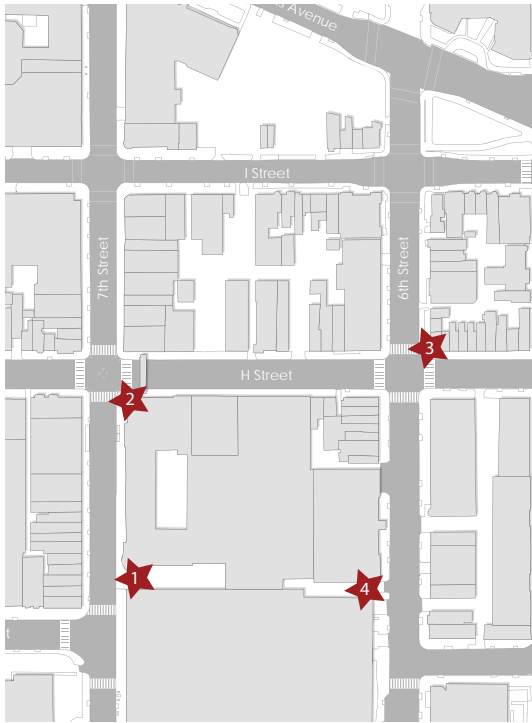
3e. Install new decorative red lantern garlands over portions of 6th Street, 7th Street, and H Street

Decorative Chinese lanterns on garlands are a low cost solution to enhancing Chinese character on Chinatown's wide streets. While stringing garlands across the street is not permitted, they can be strung from buildings to lampposts on the sidewalk. This plan recommends that the Downtown BID working with DDOT and the Chinatown Steering Committee design, fund, and install decorative red lantern garlands on 6th Street, 7 Street, and H Street.

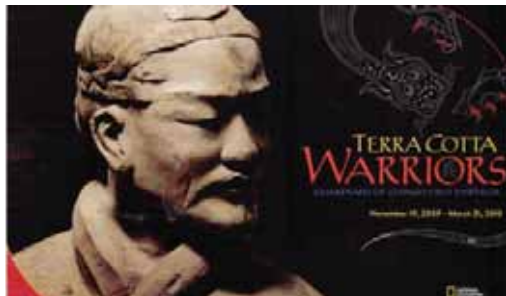
3f. Design and install interactive devices to display cultural and historic information about Chinatown

New interactive sign and kiosk technologies offer a unique opportunity to tell the story of Chinatown and profile its unique cultural offerings to visitors. Several high profile tourist destinations including museums, theaters, and attractions such as the Capitol Building, use interactive display devices to communicate important facts to their visitors. Chinatown's display devices could be located at key entry points like the Metro station and profile daily events, cultural history, and information on merchants and restaurants. They would also be fullt interactive and allow users to generate content such as restaurant reviews and travel tips for other visitors. The Office of Planning, working with DDOT and the Chinatown Community Cultural Center, will investigate the design and installation of an interactive displays for Chinatown.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Map and photos of potential interactive display device locations



Information on Cultural Events



Information on Chinatown's History



User generated content

Potential features of the Chinatown interactive Display Devices



Example fo an interactive display device in London, UK

4. Improve Pedestrian Comfort and Safety

While Chinatown is a very busy pedestrian place, it currently is dominated by automobile traffic and suffers from poor management of its public space. This detracts from pedestrian safety and comfort, and discourages people from visiting Chinatown. Pedestrian safety and comfort can immediately be improved by taking a few simple steps that include fixing broken sidewalk pavement, adding benches, and screening unsightly trash. Bolder actions include relocating bus stops to free up pedestrian space and developing Chinatown's alleys as pedestrian corridors. The overall goal is to create slower-paced pedestrian scaled spaces where small scale commerce such as vending or outdoor markets can flourish.



On-street trash storage at the northeast corner of 6th and H streets



Potential trash screen



Chinese themed bench in Chinatown Los Angeles, CA

Recommendations

4a. Screen trash dumpsters and garbage cans visible from public space

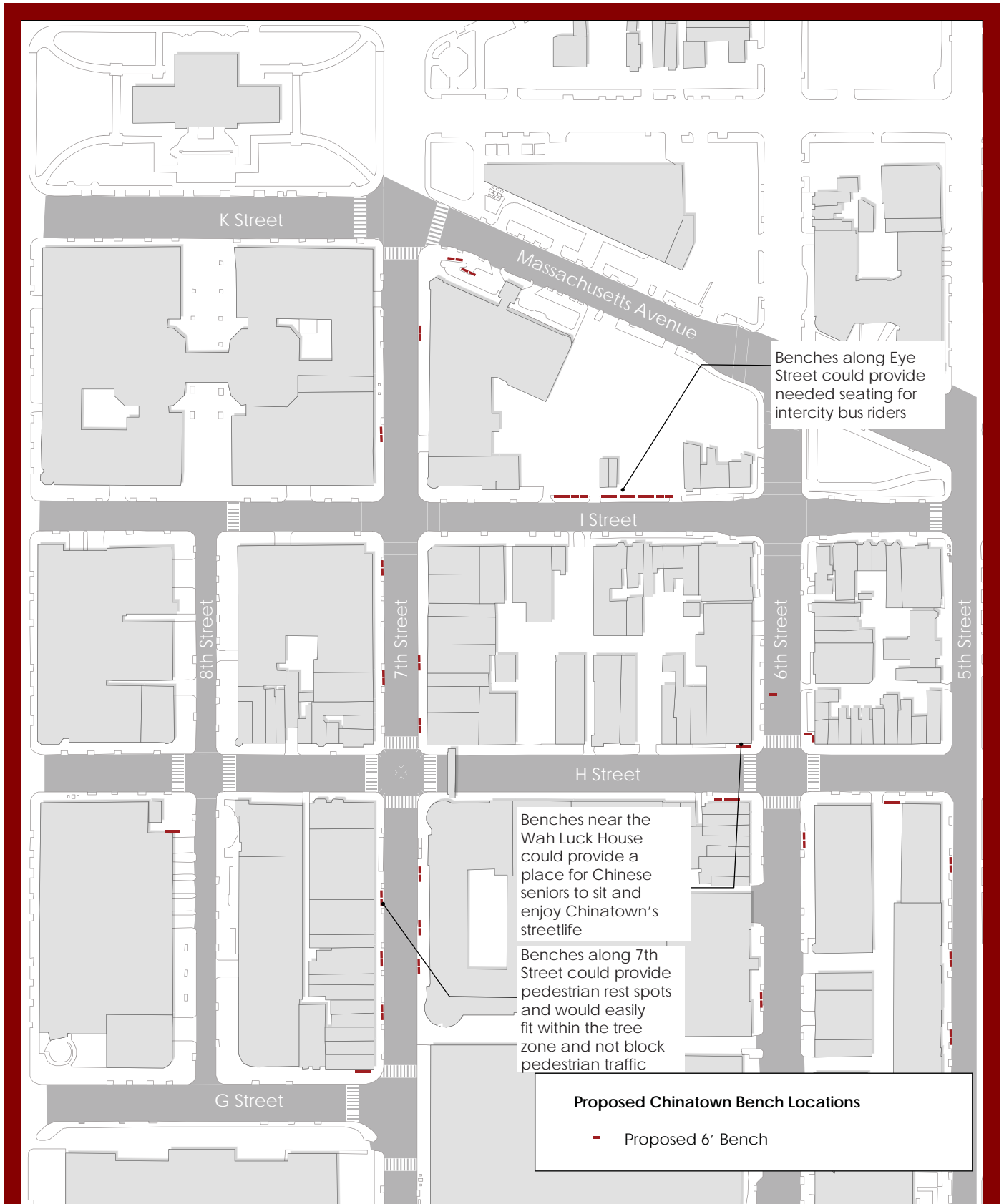
Trash storage in public space is not a large problem in Chinatown, but there are two highly visible sites near the corner of H Street and 6th Street that need attention. The first is an alley on the south side of H Street which already has a gate, but the gate does not properly screen the alley and trash. The addition of a metal panel on the back of the gate would improve its screening function while preserving its artistic character. The second site is a trash dumpster located in public space on the northeast corner of 6th and H streets. The plan recommends to screen the dumpsters with vegetation or a metal panel.

4b. Install benches and public art on Chinatown retail streets

Benches are a pedestrian amenity that can be both neighborhood and business assets. Additional benches on main retail streets in other cities such as Melbourne, Australia, and Copenhagen, Denmark, have been shown to encourage longer more comfortable stays by visitors and increased spending at local establishments. Benches are also important for neighborhood seniors as a place to sit and enjoy Chinatown's public spaces. The map to the right identifies specific locations for proposed benches based on proximity to where pedestrians have been observed to congregate. The plan also recommends that the Downtown BID, working with DDOT and DCAH, commission a Chinatown bench standard and prioritize installing them over the next two years.

4c. Repair broken or missing sidewalk pavement

Over 15% of Chinatown's pavement is in need of repair. Repairing broken and missing sidewalk pavement needs to be a priority given Chinatown's high number of pedestrians. The plan recommends DDOT quickly work to repair broken and missing sections of sidewalk pavement, and work with Chinatown organizations to improve reporting of problems in public space like damaged pavement or incomplete pavement repairs after utility work.



Proposed Locations for New Benches

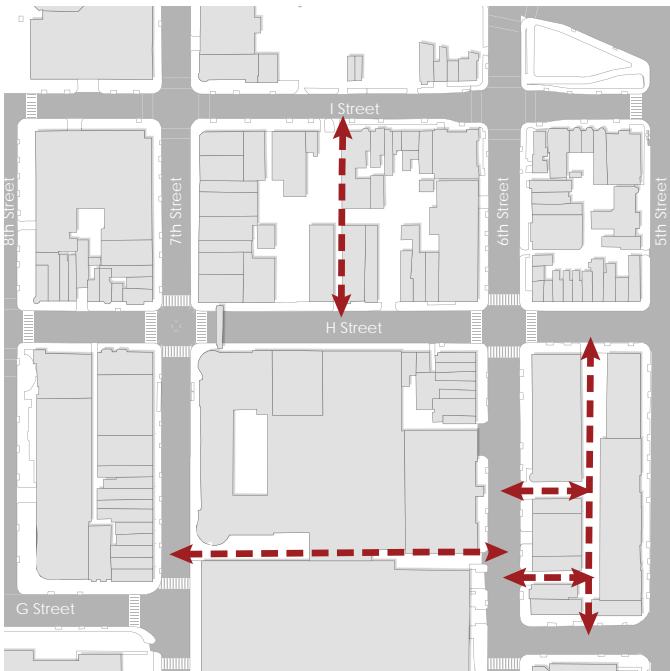
(Recommendations Continued)

4d. Create an enhanced alley experience with decorative lighting and pavement

While currently underused, Chinatown's alleys have the potential to become a second street network for pedestrians. In fact, the alleys around Gallery Place already do this, and with the future development coming on I street the alley between H and I could do this too. Improving this connection can be as simple as adding planting and additional lighting in the alley; however, a greater impact can be realized if the alley were repaved and made available for vending or a street market. The plan recommends DDOT work with private property owners adjacent to the alley as well as Chinatown organizations to develop and implement this concept.

4e. Relocate and right-size bus shelters on H and 7th streets

There are currently too many bus stops in Chinatown, and many are spaced less than one block from each other. Furthermore, most of the bus stops are undersized for the high daily ridership levels in Chinatown. The diagram on page 41 show proposed relocations and resizing of bus stops in Chinatown with the goal of improving bus performance and reducing pedestrian crowding. The most immediate benefit of relocating bus stops in Chinatown is a significant improvement pedestrian safety by relieving crowding at 7th and H streets due to bus queuing. Relocating stops will also allow more space for trees, vendors, and other commercial activities. The plan recommends Chinatown organizations work with WMATA to develop a plan for relocating and right sizing bus stops.



Chinatown's potential pedestrian alley network



Alleyway storefront



Proposed Alley Pedestrian Improvements to the Alley Between I and H Streets

Chinatown’s alleys have the potential to become a second street network for pedestrians. Improving this connection can be as simple as adding planting and additional lighting; however greater impact can be realized if the alley were repaved and made available for vending or a street market.

5. Green Chinatown's Open Spaces and Streets

A lush pedestrian environment has several distinct benefits for Chinatown: trees provide shade and comfort during DC's hot summers, vegetation helps beautify Chinatown and create a more pleasant visitor experience, and greening public spaces provides needed neighborhood open space for recreation and relaxation. Luckily, most of the improvements necessary to achieve these benefits can be easily realized within a short time frame. Chinatown Park, Chinatown's primary open space, is already undergoing a renovation to improve landscaping and tree coverage. Additional street trees are needed in Chinatown, but many parts such as lower 7th Street and Eye Street have excellent street tree coverage. Additional vegetation is also manageable from a cost and maintenance perspective due to the small number of street in Chinatown.



Street tree with tree box plantings on 6th Street near the Verizon Center

Recommendations

5a. Install new tree boxes on H Street and 7th Street

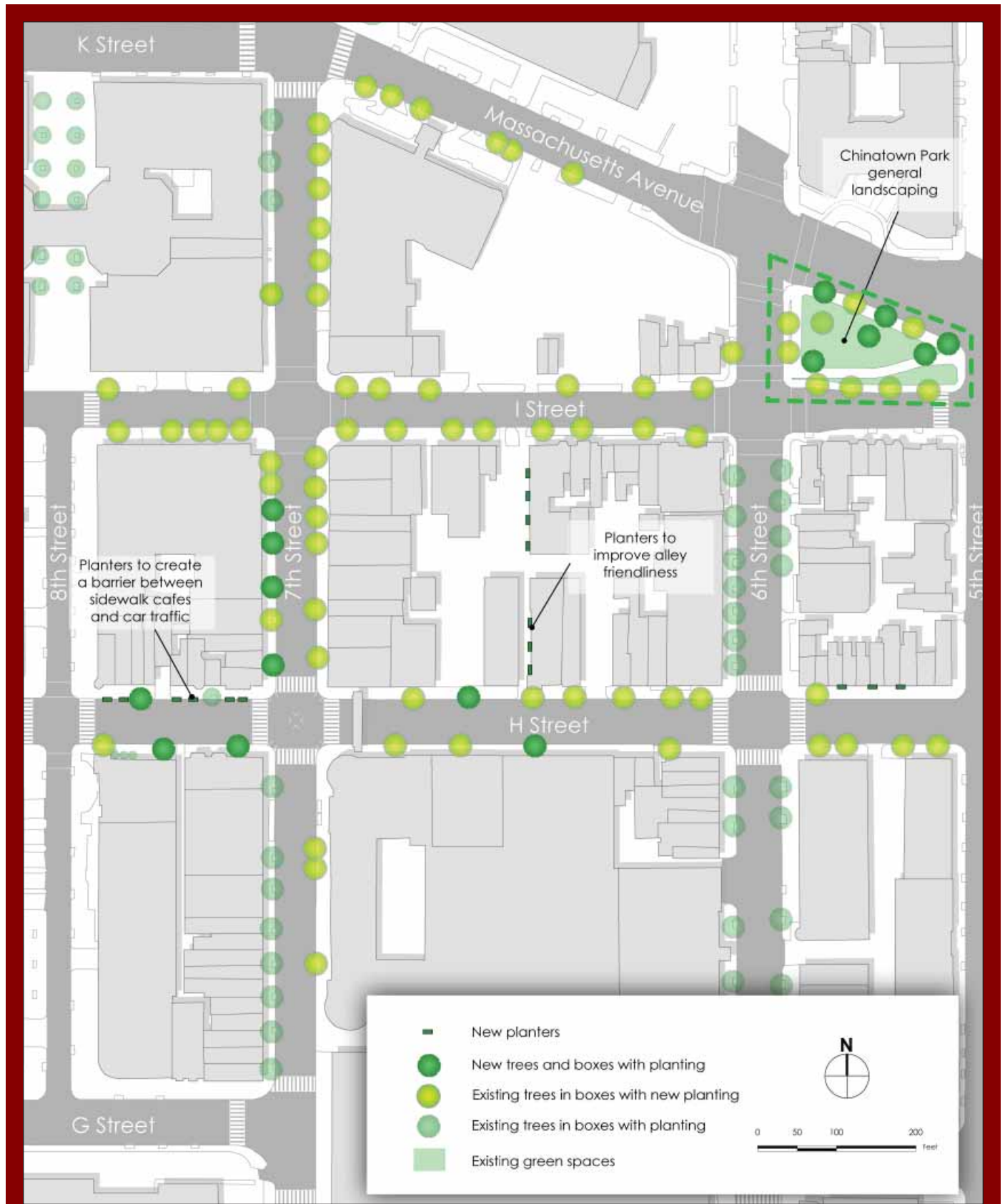
H Street and portions of 7th Street are most lacking in street trees. For example, the entire 600 block of H Street has only 9 trees, compared to the same block of I Street that has 15. The plan recommends that the District's Urban Forestry Administration work with Chinatown property owners to expand Chinatown's tree coverage by 20% in the next two years, and focus tree planting efforts on 7th and H streets.

5b. Install new tree box plantings throughout Chinatown

Tree box plantings are a quick and low-cost way to improve the look and feel of Chinatown streets. Most large property owners such as Douglas Development and Akridge already provide landscaping in tree boxes. However, smaller property owners largely do not. Some suggested reasons for this are the lack of time small business owners have to commit and the low benefit that is received from maintaining just one tree pit. The plan recommends that Chinatown merchants and property owners work with the Downtown BID to contract with a landscaping firm to plant and maintain tree boxes throughout Chinatown.

5c. Add Chinese landscape elements to Chinatown Park

Adding landscape elements that draw inspiration from Chinese architecture and gardens will add needed Chinese character to Chinatown Park, and will be a valuable



Proposed Street Trees and Plantings



Plantings examples



Asian planting bed



Chinese topiary gardens at the 2010 Beijing Olympics in China

(Recommendations Continued)

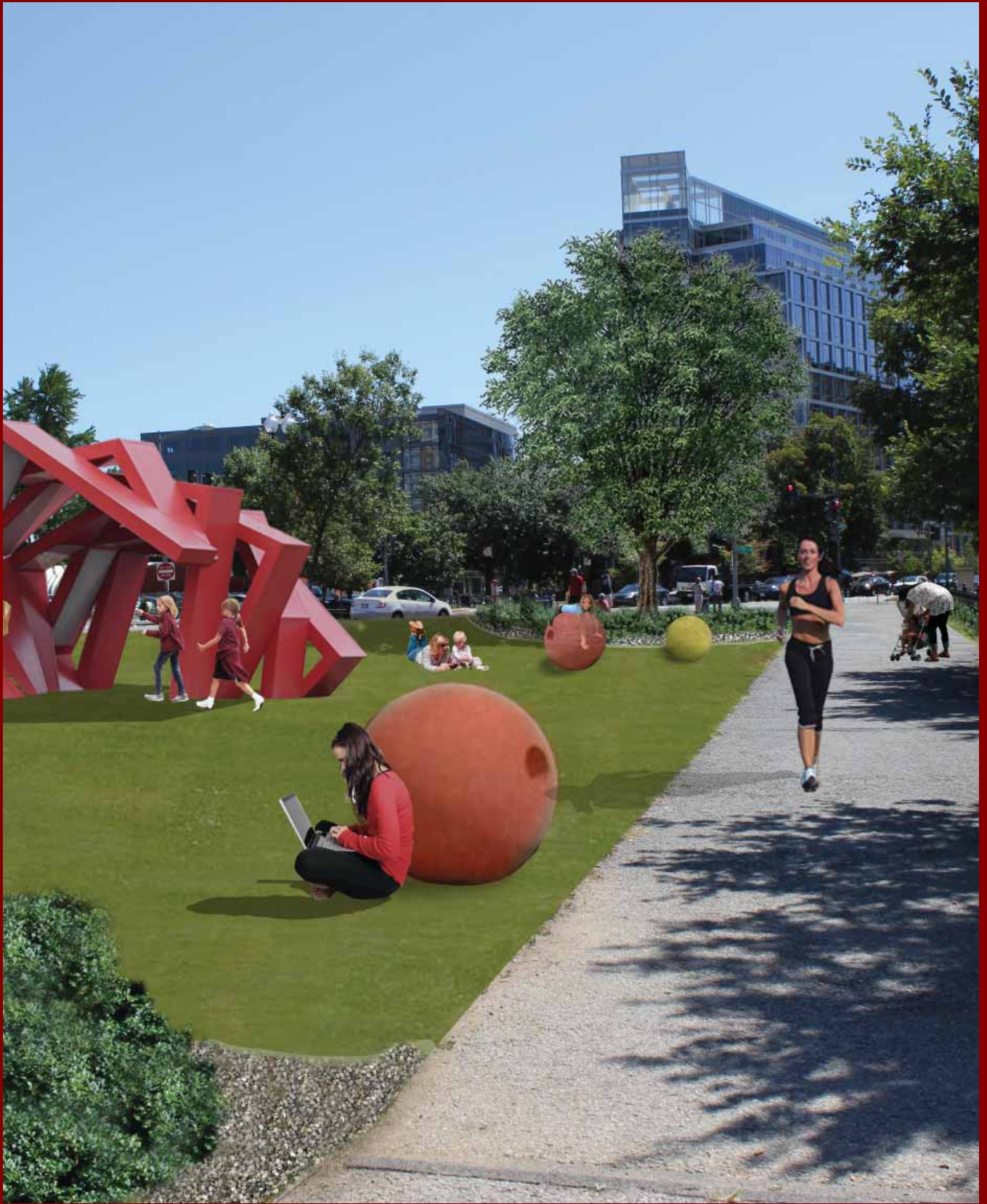
amenity for residents living near the park. Improvements of any kind to Chinatown Park require extensive review by the National Park Service(NPS). To achieve this recommendation the plan encourages Chinatown residents to form partnerships with the Downtown BID, District agencies, and property owners to collectively engage the NPS.

5d. Add temporary Chinese themed sculpture to Chinatown Park (Reservation 72)

Temporary sculpture is an effective way to add character to Chinatown Park that requires a less complicated federal review process. DCCA has recently begun curating temporary sculpture installations as part of its 5x5 program. This plan recommends that Chinatown community organizations partner with DCCA to commission, design, and install, an Asian themed temporary sculpture in Chinatown Park.



Proposed plan for Chinatown Park



Proposed Improvements to Chinatown Park

Chinatown Park can be transformed into an active cultural significant space for resident Chinese Americans and Downtown residents with the addition of temporary sculpture and Chinese themed landscaping.

6. Enhance & Diversify Transportation Options

As a central gathering place for DC, Chinatown needs to be accessible by all modes of transportation. This plan focuses heavily on increasing pedestrian space and comfort; however, maintaining automobile accessibility and improving bicycle facilities are just as important. Improving access for all transportation modes can be coordinated to improve pedestrian safety. Reducing parking restrictions tames streets by reducing the number of travel lanes during peak hours, and adding parking and bicycle lanes create additional buffers between sidewalks and vehicular traffic. The following recommendations are parts of a proposal to improve all modes of transportation access to Chinatown.



DDOT recently installed on-street bike parking on 7th Street



Chinatown bike rack

Recommendations

6a. Remove peak hour parking restrictions on 6th Street

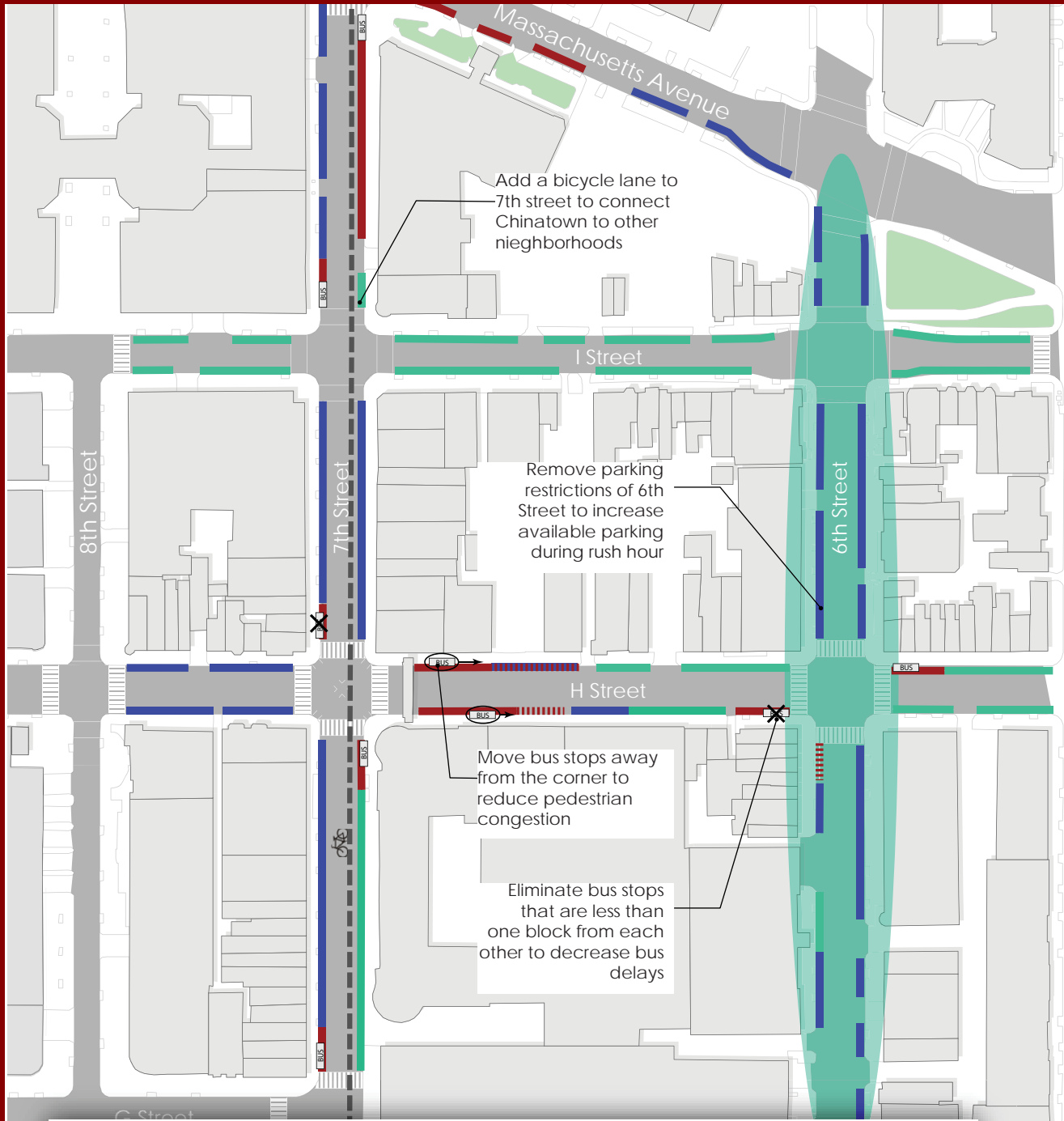
The creation of sidewalk extensions, as proposed in action 1a. and 2b, on Chinatown's key streets will impact parking. To offset the lost spaces created by the sidewalk extensions, the plan recommends removing peak hour parking restrictions on 6th Street. While 6th Street is a primary arterial for vehicular traffic leaving Downtown, it is four lanes wide and rarely congested enough to require additional lanes during peak travel periods. It is recommended that DDOT investigate removing peak hour restrictions on 6th Street as part of the Mt. Vernon Square traffic analysis.








6b. Install additional bicycle racks near bus stops

Chinatown's bicycle racks are at capacity. Bicycles are frequently seen locked to tree gates and light poles due to a lack of available bicycle parking. Additional Chinese style bicycle racks at key locations like bus stops will provide extra capacity for bicycle parking and make transferring from bike to bus easier. The plan recommends that the Downtown BID work with DDOT to install 2 additional bike racks near each bus stop in Chinatown.

6c. Add a bicycle lane to 7th Street

Chinatown currently has few direct connections to bicycle lanes. To improve bicycle access to Chinatown the plan recommends the addition of a bike lane on 7th Street to connect Chinatown with Mt. Vernon Triangle, Shaw and other neighborhoods to the north. It is recommended that DDOT explore this option as part of the Mount Vernon Square traffic analysis.



Transportation enhancements		Existing conditions	
	Area of proposed removal of peak hour parking restrictions		2 hour parking 7am - 6:30 pm
	Proposed bicycle lane		No parking or standing during peak hours & 2 hour parking 8:30am - 4pm
	Proposed bus stop removal		No parking Loading zone 9:30am - 4pm
			Bus stop

Proposed Transportation and Parking Recommendations



Photo: 6th Street sidewalk illustrating existing Chinatown decorative pavers

4

Guidelines

Introduction

Streetscape improvements and installations in Chinatown shall follow the Downtown Streetscape Regulations. The following guidelines are an illustrative reference for property owners and public works officials to Chinatown streetscape elements based on the recommendations of this plan and the requirements of the Downtown Streetscape Regulations. The plan recommends several additions to the Downtown Streetscape Regulations to enhance Chinese Character including new standards for Chinese themed street lights, benches, and trash cans.

Street Trees & Ground Cover Plantings

Tree planting Standards

Any person wishing to plant a tree should review the Downtown Streetscape Regulations for size, spacing, planting medium, and planting techniques.

Standard Trees for Chinatown Area

The following list, from the Downtown Streetscape Regulations, is a suggested list of tree species for various streets in Chinatown.

5th STREET, NW G Street to Massachusetts Avenue
 - Ginkgo (male) (*Ginkgo biloba* male)

6th STREET, NW G Street to Massachusetts Avenue
 - Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)

7th STREET, NW G Street to Massachusetts Avenue
 - Goldenrain Tree (*Koelruteria paniculata*)

8th STREET, NW G Street to Mt Vernon Place
 - October Red Maple (*Acer rubrum* 'October Glory')

G STREET, NW 5th Street to 9th Street
 - Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)

H STREET, NW 5th Street to 8th Street
 - Upright Japanese Katsura (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*)



Ginkgo (male) (Ginkgo biloba male)



Upright Japanese Katsura (Cercidiphyllum japonicum)



Chinese Elm (Ulmus parvifolia)



Zelkova (Zelkova serrata)

I STREET, NW 5th Street to 8th Street
 - Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)

MASSACHUETTS AVENUE, NW 5th Street to 7th Street
 - Silver Linden (*Tilia tomentosa*)

MOUNT VERNON SQUARE, NW
 - Zelkova (*Zelkova serrata*)

Planter Edging

Brick edging and a metal rail surround planting beds in Chinatown. The metal rail should be approximately 12" high and Chinese design in style. An example is shown to the right.



Low fencing precedent on 6th Street

Groundcover

Annuals plantings (that won't compete with the tree for water) are recommended for groundcover under newly planted trees and existing trees under 6" CAL. A combination of groundcovers and perennials are recommended under established trees for lasting effect. The following plants are suggested:

Bulbs: *Chionodoxa forbesii*, *Scilla siberica*, *Narcissus* spp., *Crocus* spp., *Leucojum* spp.

Annuals: *Impatiens*, *Coleus*, *Ipomoea*, *Lantana*, *Melampodium*, *Scaevola*, *Lobularia maritimum*

Perennials: *Liriope muscari*, *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*, *Pachysandra terminalis*, *Geranium 'Rozanne'*, *Alchemilla mollis*, *Euphorbia var. robbiae*



Tree box beautification on 6th Street



October Red Maple (Acer rubrum 'October Glory')



Silver Linden (Tilia tomentosa)



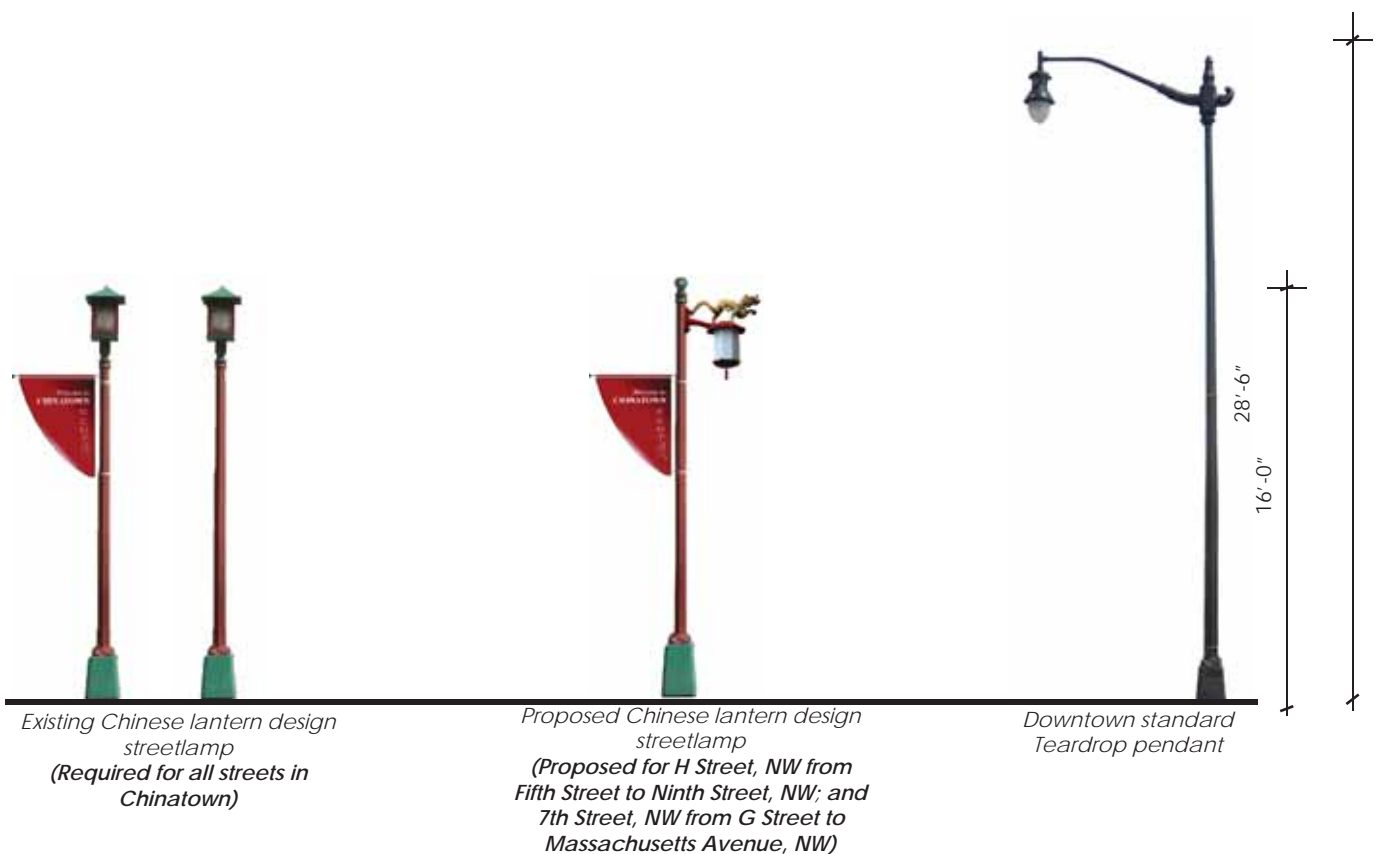
Goldenrain Tree (Koeleruteria paniculata)



Dawn Redwood

Lighting

Chinese lantern design streetlights are required by the Downtown Streetscape Regulations for all streets in Chinatown. This plan recommends the design an installation of a new streetlight standard for H and 7th Streets which is bolder and larger in scale. Per the Downtown Streetscape Regulations, any person who installs the Chinese lantern design streetlight is required to furnish all expenses for installation and other associated costs of the streetlights, and must purchase an additional streetlight (including pole and base) for each Chinese lantern design streetlight installed. The D.C. Department of Public Works will be store the additional streetlights. The adjacent property owner must also provide paint for the maintenance of each Chinese lantern streetlight purchased. Streetlights should be located to provide twenty (20') feet on one side of a tree box space to allow for the maneuvering equipment.



Paving & Curbs

Granite Curb

A 7"H x 8"W x 6'0"L granite curb is required by the Downtown Streetscape Regulations for all streets within Chinatown.

Standard Brick Gutter

A standard 12" wide brick gutter is required by the Downtown Streetscape Regulations for all streets within Chinatown.

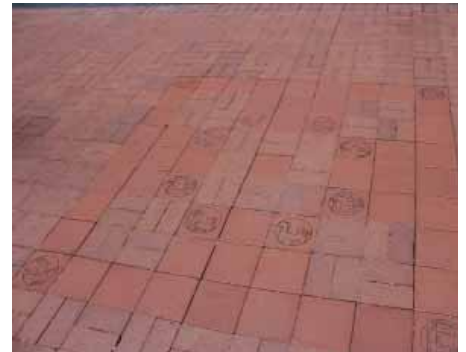
Decorative Brick Pavement

According to the by the Downtown Streetscape Regulations, Sidewalks in Chinatown shall be paved with brick pavers and decorative pavers, as specified by the Downtown Streetscape Committee, which shall meet the following requirements:

- a) The brick size shall be eight inches (8") by four inches (4") by two and one-half inches (2 1/2");
- b) The decorative brick paver size shall be eight inches (8") by eight inches (8") by two and one-half inches (2 1/2");
- c) The color of the decorative brick paver shall be red as specified in the standard specifications;
- d) Except adjacent to the building, the brick pattern shall be a basket weave pattern, which begins at the curb;
- e) The brick pattern adjacent to the building shall be a soldier course on its side, perpendicular to the building;
- f) The decorative brick paver shall be located in a random pattern, one for each 200 square feet of a sidewalk;
- g) The design layout of the decorative brick paver shall be approved by the Director of the Department of Public Works;
- h) The Joint (butt joint) shall be at a maximum of one-eighth (1/8) of an inch and shall be swept with dry sand cement mix of two (2) to one (1) by volume; and
- i) The adjacent Property owner shall purchase and store at the site extra decorative brick pavers.



Standard Chinatown curb & gutter



Decorative pavers



Decorative pavers detail



Downtown standard trash receptacle

Street Furniture

Benches, trash receptacles, and bicycle racks are intended for the retail areas of 7th, H, and 6th Streets; as well as the parks and other public open spaces. In general site furniture should not be used along residential streets of Chinatown. Exact locations for site furniture are shown on the map on page 33.

Trash Receptacle

According to the Downtown Streetscape Regulations, trash receptacles should be the wrought iron frame Downtown standard manufactured by Victor Stanley shown to the left. This plan recommends that all trash cans in chinatown should be painted Red.

Chinese Metal Bench

This plan recommends the creation of a new Chinese design bench standard for Chinatown similar to the example shown below to the right. Currently a 6' or 8' black wrought iron Victorian style bench is also permissible according to the Downtown Streetscape Regulations.

Chinese Bicycle Racks

A red Chinese style bike rack should be used similar to the example shown below to the left.



Proposed Chinatown bicycle rack standard



Example of a Chinese themed bench design



Photo: I Street streetscape illustrating Chinatown banner on streetlight

5

Implementation

Implementation Matrix

Introduction

The implementation matrix that follows organizes the various actions according to the timeframe for their implementation. Each initiative is presented with an estimated cost, and an indication of the implementing agency or other entity, and potential partners. The following agencies or other entities are referred to by acronyms in the implementation matrix:

DCCAHA	District of Columbia Commission on Arts and Humanities
DCRA	Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
DDOT	District Department of Transportation
OAPIA	Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
OP	Office of Planning
NPS	The National Park Service
UFA	Urban Forestry Administration

Regarding the suggested time frames:

- Short Term: refers to actions that can be initiated within two years after the completion of the plan.
- Mid Term: refers to a four-to-five-year implementation calendar. This group consists of projects that might require engineering or other design work and/or inclusion in the City's capital budget. It should be underscored that these projects are competing with other District initiatives for funding.
- Long Term: actions which may take many years to implement, and may begin 5 years after the adoption date depending on funding and available staff resources

Short-Term, by 2013:

Actions	Lead Implementer (Agency/Group)	Partners	Cost Estimate
1a. Install decorative crosswalks at 7th & H Street "Barne's Dance" (pg. 22)	DDOT	DCCAHA, Chinatown Community Cultural Center	
3b. Install Chinese street signs (pg. 28)	DDOT		
3c. Install interactive information display devices at key intersections in Chinatown (pg. 28)	OP	Downtown BID, Private Property Owners, Chinatown Community Cultural Center	
3d. Develop a new Chinese theme streetlight standard (pg. 30)	DDOT	DCCAHA	
3e. Install decorative Chinese red lantern garlands during festivals and events (pg. 30)	Chinatown community organizations, Property Owners	DDOT/Public Space Committee	
5a. Install new tree boxes on H Street and 7th Street (pg. 36)	DDOT/UFA	Merchants and Private Property Owners	
5b. Install and maintain new tree box plantings throughout Chinatown (pg. 36)	Merchants, Private Property Owners, Chinatown community organizations	Downtown BID	\$20,000 - \$30,000 annually
6b. Install new bike racks on H Street, 6th Street, and 7th Street (pg. 40)	DDOT	Downtown BID	

Mid-Term 2014 - 2016:

Actions	Lead Implementer (Agency/Group)	Partners	Funding Sources
1a. Temporary curb extensions at 7th and H Streets (pg. 22)	DDOT		
2a. Amend Downtown vending regulations to allow vending on H Street in Chinatown (pg. 24)	DCRA	OP, Downtown BID	N/A
3a. Create decorative Chinese theme wall murals on blank facades on H street (pg. 28)	DCCAHA	Chinatown business and property owners	
3c. Install decorative Chinese pavers throughout Chinatown (pg. 28)	DDOT	Downtown BID	
4a. Update decorative alley gate on H Street and include screening element (pg. 32)	DCCAHA	Downtown BID, Chinatown business and property owners	
4a. Install decorative trash bin screens or other solutions to screen trash dumpsters at 6th and H streets (pg. 32)	DCCAHA	Downtown BID, Chinatown business and property owners	
4b. Install new benches and public art on 7th and H streets (pg. 32)	DDOT	Downtown BID, DCCAHA	
4c. Repair broken sidewalk pavement on H and I streets. (pg. 34)	DDOT		
4d. Install enhanced alley lighting on key alleys (pg. 34)	Merchants and Private Property Owners	DDOT	
4e. Relocate and right size bus shelters on H and 7th streets (pg. 34) (requires further review with WMATA)	WMATA	DDOT, Downtown BID	
6a. Change parking regulations on 6th Street to increase on-street parking during peak hours (pg. 40)	DDOT		N/A

Long Term, 2017 and Beyond:

Actions	Lead Implementer (Agency/Group)	Partners	Funding Sources
3d. Install new Chinese style street lamps on H and 7th Streets based on new standard (pg. 30)	DDOT		
4d. Install new decorative pavement in key alleys (pg. 34)	DDOT		
5d. Install Asian theme landscaping and planting beds in Chinatown Park (pg. 38)	NPS		
6c. Add a bike lane to 7th Street (pg. 40)	DDOT		

Acknowledgements

District of Columbia Government

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray, Mayor

The Council of the District of Columbia

The Honorable Kwame R. Brown, Chairman
The Honorable Jack Evans, Council Member, Ward 2
The Honorable Thomas Wells, Council Member, Ward 6
Advisory Neighborhood Commissions Ward 2C, 6A

Planning Team

District of Columbia Office of Planning

Harriet Tregoning, Director of Planning
Rosalynn Hughey, Deputy Director of Citywide Planning
Patricia Zingsheim AIA, Associate Director of Revitalization and Design
Thor Nelson, Project Manager & Urban Designer
Marie LePotier, Intern

Participating District Government Agencies

Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
District Department of Transportation

Additional Participating Agencies and Organizations

Chinatown Steering Committee
Downtown Business Improvement District
Downtown Neighborhood Association

Photographic Credits

