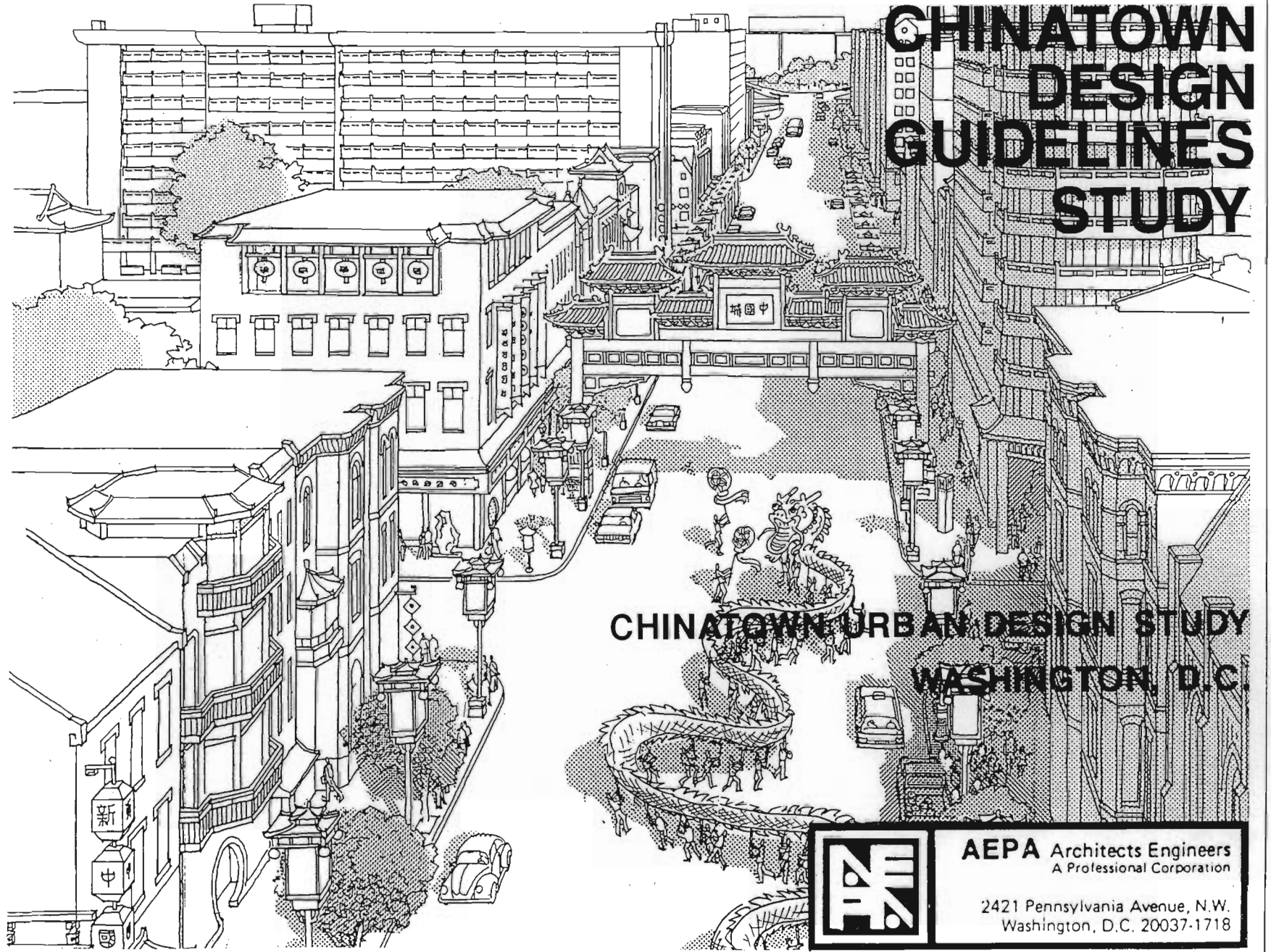


CHINATOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES STUDY



CHINATOWN URBAN DESIGN STUDY
WASHINGTON, D.C.



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A Professional Corporation

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Government of the District of Columbia

Office of the
Director



Office of Planning
415 12th Street, N.W.,
Washington, DC. 20004

16 DEC 1989

Dear Reader:

The Chinatown Design Guidelines Study was prepared under the auspices of the Office of Planning by a local consulting firm. It is intended to provide the basis for the development of a new design review process and guidelines that will improve the design quality and enhance the Chinese identity of Chinatown. It includes recommendations for building design guidelines, streetscape standards and implementation mechanisms.

In 1976, the District government's Chinatown Program called for design guidelines to reinforce the distinctiveness of Chinatown. The Mayor's Downtown Committee in 1982 and the Comprehensive Plan in 1984 reiterated that objective. The "Friendship Archway", completed in late 1986, is a major contributor to the enhanced design character of Chinatown. Burgeoning commercial development Downtown presents an opportunity to do far more toward the creation of an enhanced Chinese character through the substantial renovation or redevelopment of much of Chinatown. This can be fully realized through the implementation of proposed new guidelines, the basis for which is contained in the Chinatown Design Guidelines Study publication.

I am grateful to all those who contributed to this study. They include not only the consultant, AEPA, but also the Chinatown community through the Chinatown Steering Committee. Various District agencies and the Downtown Streetscape Committee also made significant contributions. All of these groups gave their time and talent to make this important endeavor possible.

This document is being circulated for your use. We welcome your comments. The Chinatown Design Guidelines Study provides owners, developers, architects, preservationists and citizens with a basis for making design decisions which will lead to an exciting and strengthened Chinese character for Chinatown.

Sincerely,


Fred L. Greene
Director

Preface

THE CHINATOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES STUDY

PREFACE

The Chinatown Design Guidelines Study is intended to lead to the adoption of building design guidelines and streetscape standards that will guide and assist architects, developers, and planners involved in development and renovation in Washington, D.C.'s Chinatown. It is hoped that the criteria and guidelines suggested herein will help to create an enhanced Chinatown with a strong Chinese character.

The guidelines will not nullify existing building code requirements, laws on historic preservation, or other related municipal codes and ordinances, which will still apply in Chinatown. Rather, the guidelines will complement these requirements and provide additional guidance.

We believe that Chinatown design guidelines, together with a strong design review process, will help Chinatown to reach its greatest potential and to make a strong and lasting contribution to Washington, D.C.

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1

Introduction

1 INTRODUCTION

Washington, D.C.'s Chinatown has long had a limited Chinese character or ambiance. The scattered Chinese restaurants in Chinatown are housed in both historic and nonhistoric buildings to which various Chinese ornamental design elements have been applied. Notwithstanding the new Friendship Archway spanning the main street of Chinatown, the overall effect is a disparate collection of building shapes and images--a collection with a Chinese character that is not sufficiently strong to enable Chinatown to play the vital role envisioned for it in the Comprehensive Plan.

1.1 History

Historically, the Chinatown area was home for the German immigrants who settled there and built a mixed residential and commercial community in the latter part of the 19th century. In the 1930s, the area also became home for the Chinese immigrants who were being displaced from both sides of Pennsylvania Avenue between 3rd Street and what was then 4-1/2 Street, N.W., because of impending government construction. In addition, many furniture stores were opened in the area, and 7th Street, N.W., became known as "Furniture Row."

The Chinese community, supported by the District government, has since the mid-1970s attempted to encourage an enhanced vitality and Chinese identity for Chinatown. In 1982 Wah Luck House, a new contemporary building with

Chinese design, was completed. Wah Luck House provides housing for elderly Chinatown residents. The Downtown element of the Comprehensive Plan was completed in 1982. It reinforced the District's objectives for an enhanced Chinatown and called for design guidelines that would help strengthen the Chinese character of the area. The Downtown Historic District, created in January 1984, includes approximately half of Chinatown. Most recently, in 1986, the Chinatown Friendship Archway was constructed across H Street, providing a strong focal point at 7th and H Streets and establishing a strong Chinese design element that is expected to encourage additional Chinese uses and design in the surrounding area.

1.2 Downtown Development: Threat or Opportunity

Development is occurring at a rapid pace downtown and is spreading east into Chinatown. It will be important for that development to proceed in a manner that contributes to an enhanced Chinatown, builds on the positive and unique Chinese design elements that already exist, and strengthens the overall Chinese character of the area. To ensure that new development is not merely an extension of the existing Downtown and to create the necessary balance between Chinese character and non-Chinese historic values, design guidelines and mandatory design review are essential.

2

Chinatown Today

2 CHINATOWN TODAY

2.1 Location

Washington, D.C.'s Chinatown is located in the northeast quadrant of Northwest Washington. To the north, it is bounded by Massachusetts Avenue and K Street; to the south, by G Street; to the east, by 5th Street; and to the west, by 8th Street. Chinatown is almost exactly midway between the Capitol and the White House. It sits on top of one of the few three-line Metro (subway) stations in the metropolitan area. It is adjacent to the Convention Center, the National Portrait Gallery, and Mount Vernon Square. Map 1 shows the location of Chinatown in the Metropolitan Washington area. Map 2 shows the location of Chinatown within Downtown Washington, D.C.

2.2 Existing Building Use, Condition, and Chinese Character in Chinatown

2.2.1 Existing Use

Map 3 indicates commercial, institutional, residential, and commercial/residential use in Chinatown. Approximate percentages* for each use category are:

o Commercial	42.9%
o Institutional	5.0%
o Residential	6.0%
o Commercial/ residential	3.1%
o Vacant land	<u>43.0%</u>
	100.0%

2.2.2 Existing Condition

Map 4 shows the existing condition of buildings in Chinatown. Currently, based on an informal survey, the condition of only a handful of buildings in Chinatown can be classified as "good." The rest are either "fair," meeting only minimal standards, or "poor," requiring major renovation or replacement. Even those that are "fair" will still need improvement.

2.2.3 Existing Chinese Character

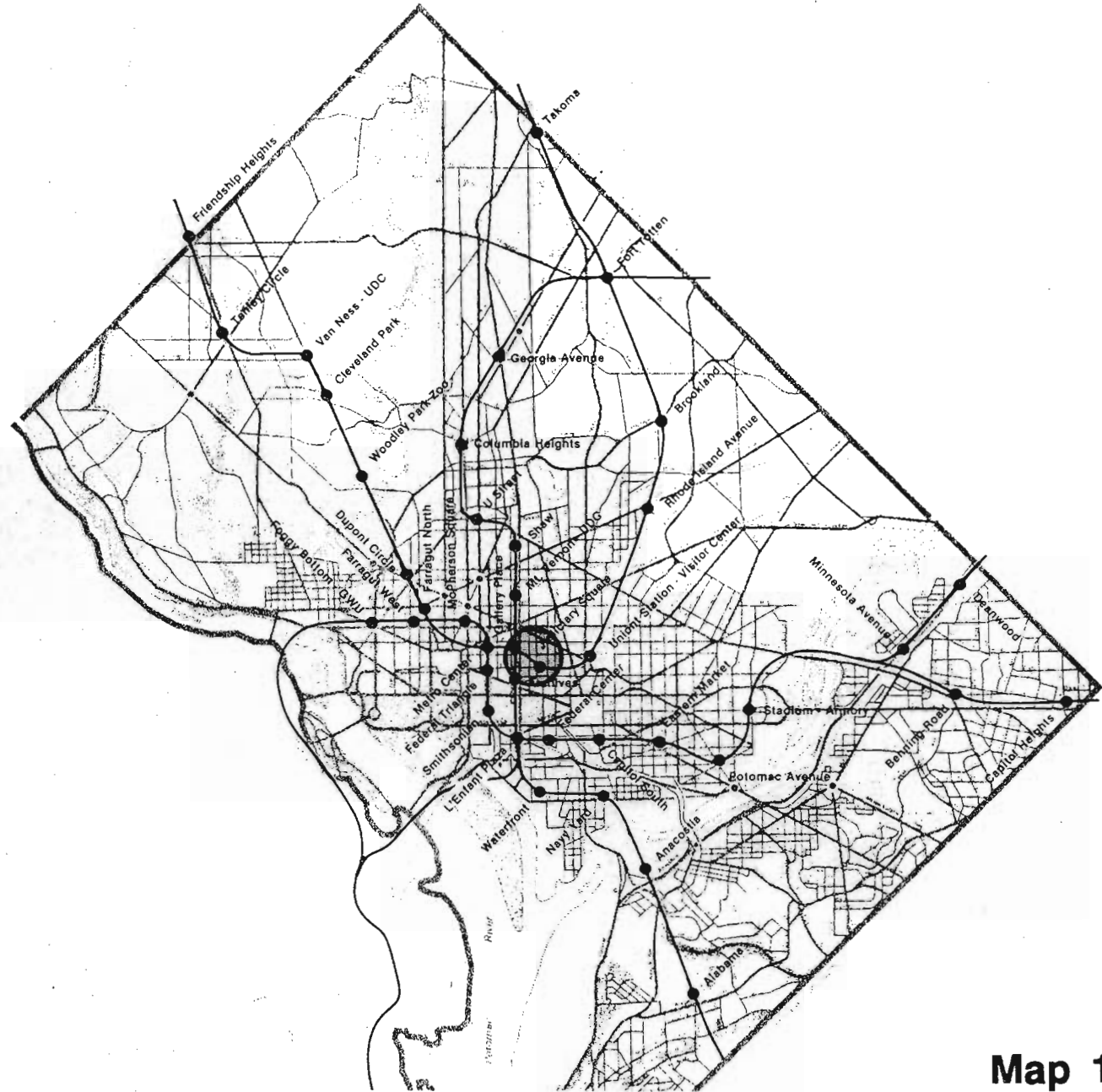
Map 5 indicates existing Chinese character in Chinatown. Surprisingly, within Chinatown only a few buildings can be described as having a positive Chinese character. The condition of those few is either "good" or "fair." Map 5 demonstrates graphically the need to add Chinese character to the area. Only Wah Luck House, the Golden Palace and some other restaurants exhibit good Chinese design or design elements.

2.3 Chinatown Historic District

Map 6 shows those areas of Chinatown that are within the Historic District. Also shown on the map are buildings with historic landmark designation.

*Calculations based on 1986 data provided by Rufus S. Lusk and Sons, Inc., Real Estate Information Services, Washington, D.C.

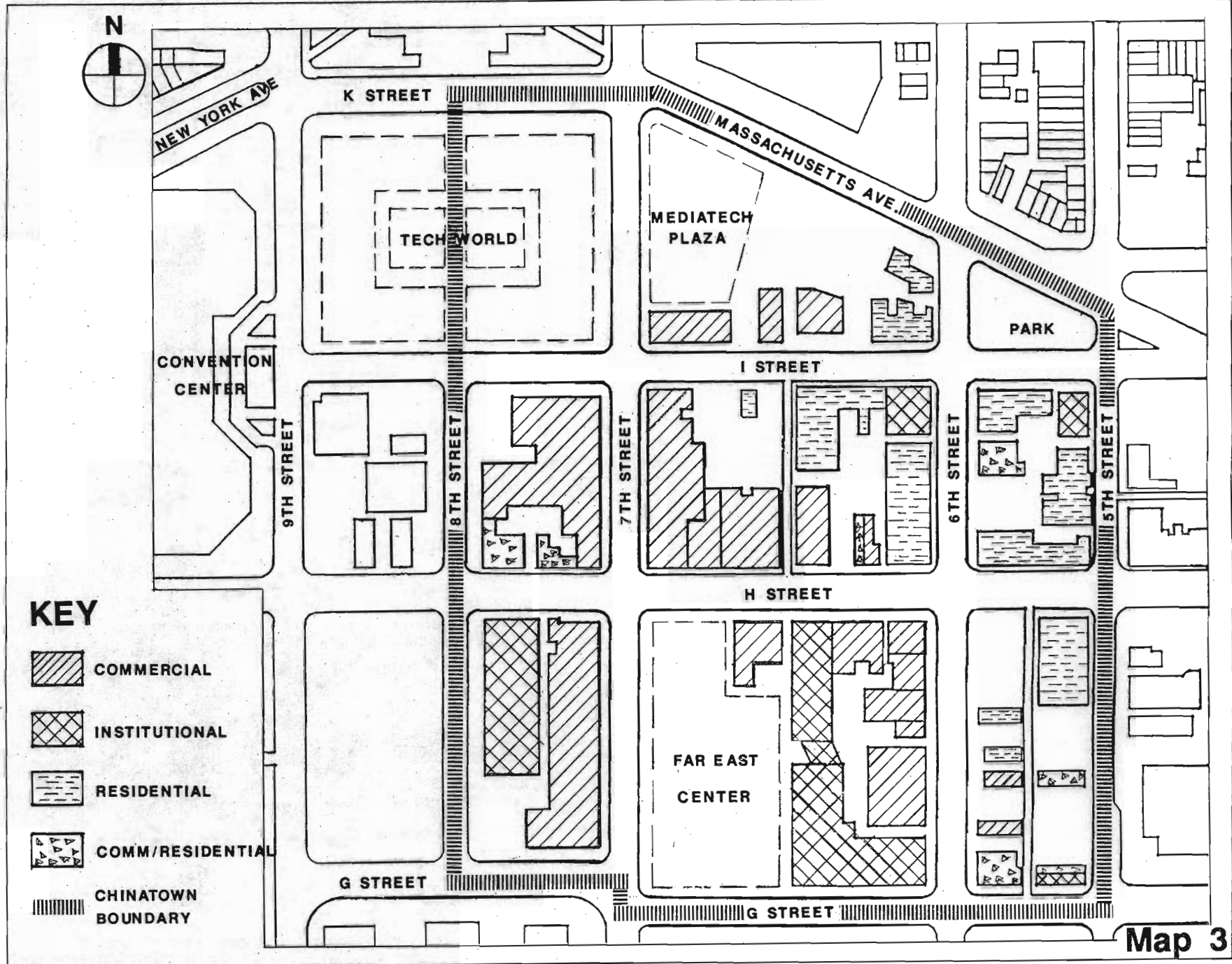
Chinatown Metropolitan Washington



Map 1

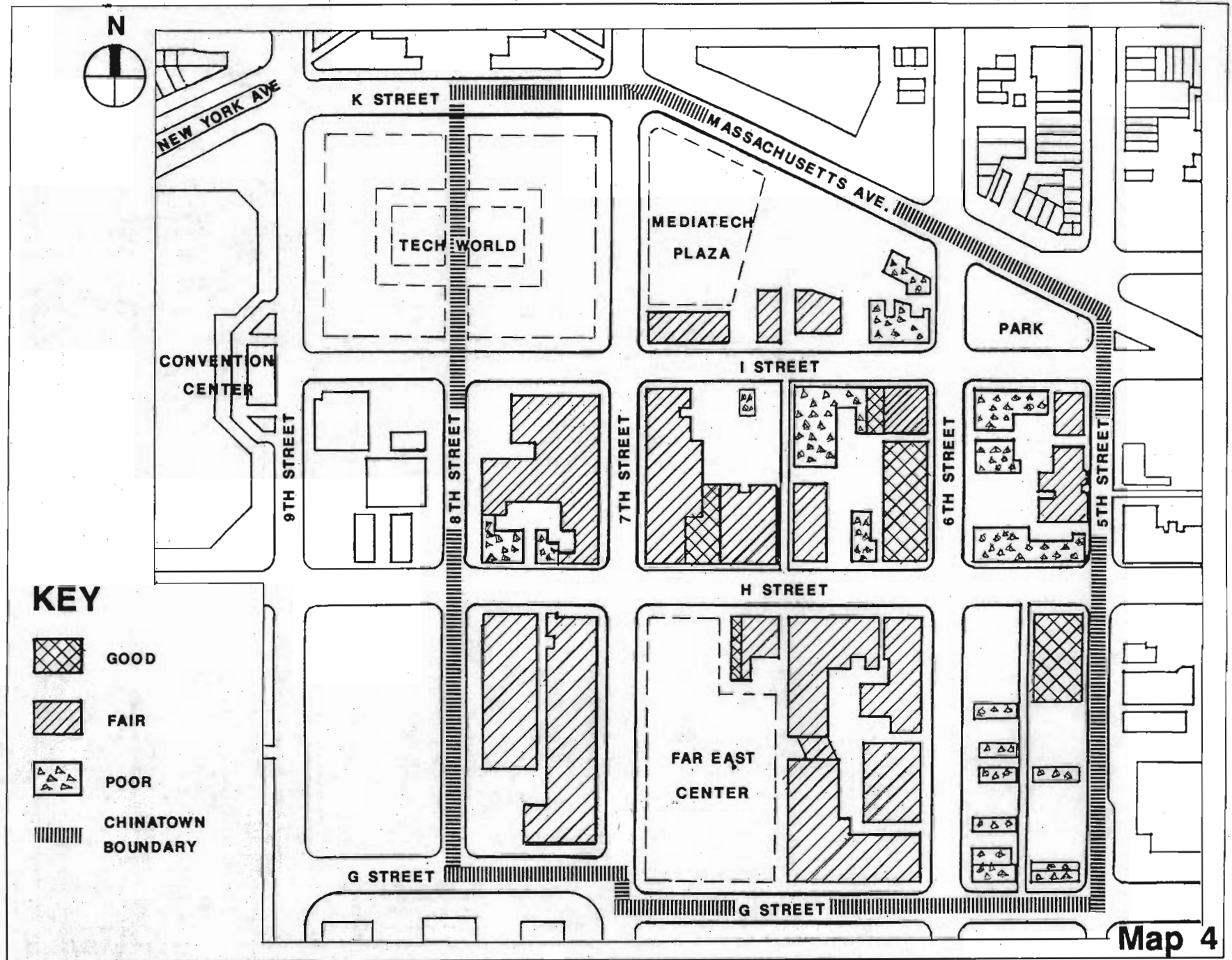
Existing Building Use

(as of June 1987)



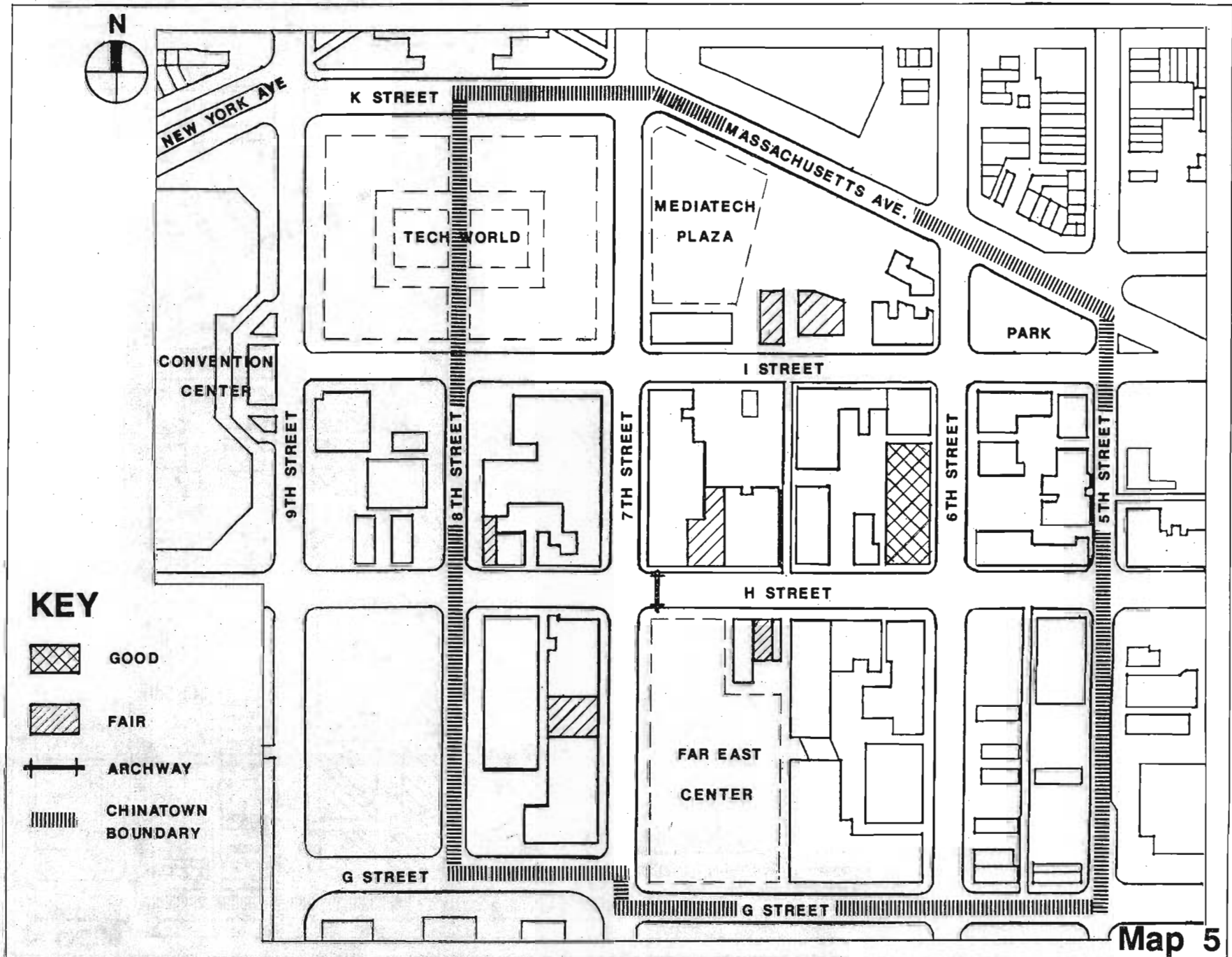
Existing Building Condition

(as of June 1987)



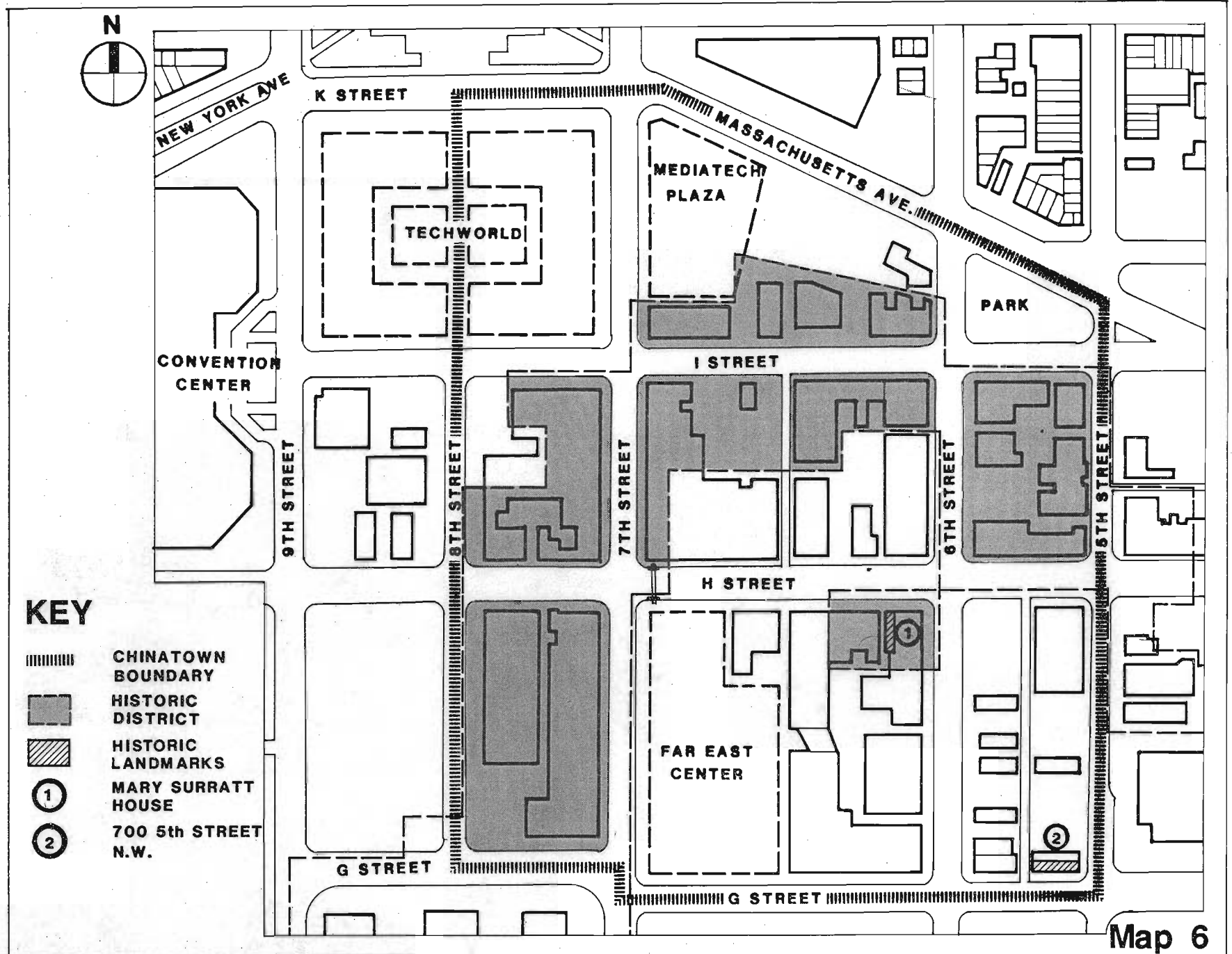
Existing Chinese Character

(as of June 1987)



Chinatown Historic District

(as of June 1987)



3

The Design Challenges

3 THE DESIGN CHALLENGES

3.1 How can Chinatown be designed to realize its highest and best use for the public good with increasing benefits for future generations?

3.2 How can Chinatown be so interesting, exotic, beautiful, and inviting that it will attract the visitors, businesses, jobs, trade, investment, and appreciation that will make it a source of prosperity and pride?

3.3 How can Chinatown be as harmoniously designed as a Williamsburg, as full of fun and life as a Harborplace, as popular night and day as a Georgetown, and as ethnically interesting as a Little Italy or an Adams-Morgan?

3.4 How can Chinese architecture proposed for the Historic District be in sympathy and harmony with the values of historic preservation? Since Chinese and Victorian architecture have in common the elements of height, scale, rhythm, proportion, and richness of facade detail, how can Chinatown use those common elements to achieve a pattern of development that blends old and new harmoniously?

3.5 In planning and working for the renewal of Chinatown, the highest and best use of Chinatown must not be precluded by lack of vision. It is important to provide a framework and design that capitalize on the natural and rare assets of Chinatown so that it can not only contribute to Washington's economy and cosmopolitan character, but also develop an intrinsic value in the world economy and become a place that people from all over the world will visit to admire and enjoy.

These are the design challenges.

4

Design Objectives

4 DESIGN OBJECTIVES

To meet the design challenge, five Design Objectives have been formulated. These Design Objectives incorporate basic economic principles in responding to the unique opportunities that Chinatown presents. The Design Objectives in turn are the foundation for the Streetscape and Building Design Concepts and Recommended Standards.

4.1 No. 1: Chinatown should have several "Must-see!" items

They should be "world-class attractions" that capture the interest and imagination of everyone. One such item is already in place: the Friendship Archway, the world's largest of its kind, putting Washington's Chinatown into The Guinness Book of World Records. The Archway is a highly visible success and has attracted wide attention and praise. Future "must-see" projects should be similarly spectacular and appealing.

The following suggestions are provided for consideration.

4.1.1 Tall, magnificent Chinese street lamps along H Street

H Street could become a grand boulevard for street traffic from the Convention Center to the heart of the Chinatown restaurant area. It will be filled with thousands for the Chinese New Year (January or February), Asian-American Week (first week in May), Moon Festival (September) and Chinese National Day (October).

Tall street lamps in the form of colorful, magnificent Chinese lanterns will complement and extend the Archway's impact and create a striking perspective from the steps of the Convention Center through the Archway to Massachusetts Avenue. The brilliant, colorful lights will be a new landmark, visible from the air to those flying into National Airport at night. In addition, the bright lights will help to create a safe, inviting environment for those visiting the area after dark.

4.1.2 A Chinese theme for the Chinatown Park

At the northeast entrance of Chinatown, the small park at 5th Street and Massachusetts Avenue could be made into a "must-see" attraction. For example, a theme park could be created with features such as a Chinese rock garden, sculpture, a pond, a dragon boat or a "Chinese junk." Another possibility is that of installing children's playground equipment with Chinese design elements. The park, now an empty triangle, is an opportunity. Discussions should be undertaken with the National Park Service, which now controls the park, regarding future development of the site.

4.2 No. 2: Chinatown should have special features to attract personal interest from visitors, to appeal to the individual

The sidewalks in Chinatown could have special features. They might be set with Chinese symbols, such as the signs of Chinese "astrology," indicating the Year of the Pig,

Cat, Hare, Snake, Dragon, Sheep, etc. People will come not just to see Chinatown, but also to find out something about themselves. What sign were they born in? What does it mean?

4.3 No. 3: Washington's Chinatown should result in more nightlife for D.C.

Chinatown will be another area to go to at night, one that is colorful, safe, different. Like New York's Chinatown, it will be an urban destination for after-theater dining and late-night parties. The area must not be just for offices, but for entertainment and shopping as well. Certainly, this will assist the Convention Center and help it to attract conventions and customers. People can bring their families, shop, relax, and eat. Chinatown will attract clients to nearby hotels. Why stay in the suburbs when there will be so much to do in Chinatown and the rest of Downtown?

4.4 No. 4: Chinatown should be a family place

It must appeal to families because today, when leisure time is often at a premium, entertainment and leisure activities usually center around the family. Young professional couples need family entertainment. Chinatown should be much more than just another anonymous shopping mall. It will have things out of the ordinary, a special streetscape, and a festive atmosphere. Chinatown's bright lights and other special features will appeal to children and their families and motivate them to learn more together. Chinese restaurants are the sort of informal places in which families can feel comfortable--children are always welcome. A

family atmosphere is essential to creating a strong anchor in the Downtown area. Washington will capture an important market segment by offering an appealing place to spend family educational, shopping, and entertainment dollars.

4.5 No. 5: Chinatown should be a place of excellent examples of Chinese architecture

In Chinatown, projects should be the best renovations, the best combinations of old and new, the best new Chinese development across the spectrum of Chinese architecture. As an architectural showplace, Chinatown will create pride for D.C. and will generate publicity--from all the media, including newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. It will also help position D.C. to attract welcome interest and capital from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the rest of Asia.

Streetscape and Building Design Concepts

5

5 STREETScape AND BUILDING DESIGN CONCEPTS

The components of the Streetscape and Building Design Concepts follow from the Design Objectives.

5.1 A Main Boulevard--H Street

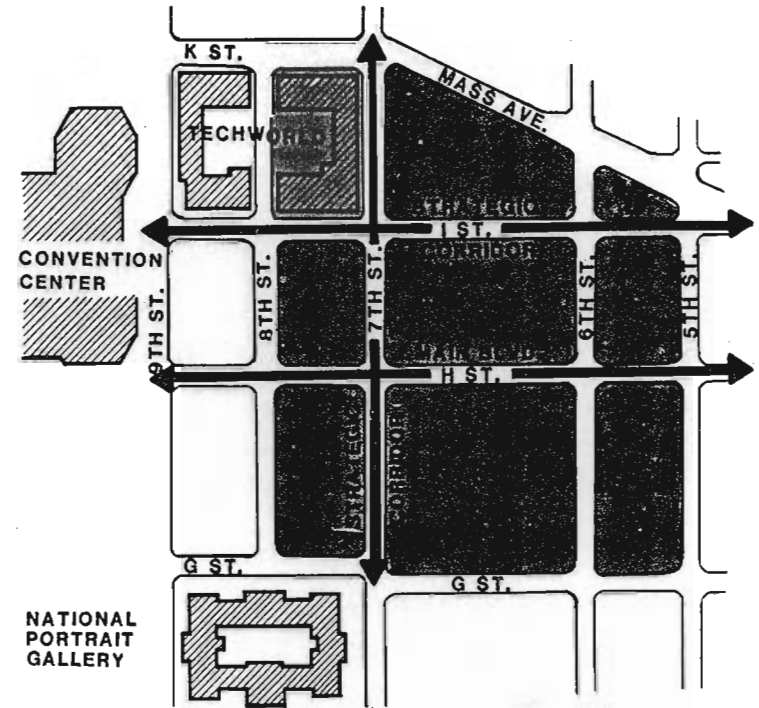
To achieve the goals for Chinatown, it will be essential to seek out and recognize any and all opportunities for exciting features. One such opportunity is that of extending the impact of the Archway by creating a Main Boulevard on H Street. (See map at right.)

5.1.1 Treatment

As suggested in Section 4, H Street might be turned into a Main Boulevard by installing large, spectacular street lamps in the form of Chinese lanterns along the street. Combining the world's widest Chinese archway with tall, colorful lights would create a wide, sweeping vista several blocks long. The result would be a strong, unforgettable visual image. To take full advantage of the view, the Main Boulevard theme could be continued along H Street from 9th Street to Massachusetts Avenue. Another suggestion for special treatment is the use of a unique sidewalk detail or pattern which differs from that to be installed elsewhere in the area.

5.2 Strategic Corridors

There are two logical Strategic Corridors in Chinatown: 7th Street and I Street. (See map at right.)



5.2.1 7th Street

People coming from the Convention Center going to Chinatown will walk primarily along I Street or H Street to 7th Street. If they are going to Metro, they will proceed down 7th Street to Gallery Place Metro station (which should have "Chinatown" added to its name). Seventh and H Streets form the main crossroads in Chinatown, and 7th Street is the principal arts/retail/commercial corridor in the area. Seventh Street is the main thoroughfare for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

5.2.2 I Street

I Street deserves treatment as a strategic corridor by virtue of its position in relation to the Convention Center at one end and the park at the other. In addition, Techworld, along I Street, is likely to provide additional foot traffic for Chinatown.

5.2.3 Treatment

The Design Concept for the Strategic Corridors envisions Chinese street lamps lining these streets. In addition, oriental trees should be planted along both sides of the streets.

5.3 Chinese Character for Streetscape

The key to creating a special Chinatown will be the design and implementation of a Chinese-style streetscape in the public space of Chinatown. The Chinese-style streetscape should include not just street lamps, sidewalks, and trees, but street furniture in its broadest definition--signage, benches, telephone booths, bus shelters, trash receptacles, fire alarm boxes, newspaper dispensers, awnings, planters, and landscaping.

Too often street furniture receives inadequate attention in an area's design. The results can be ordinary or very unattractive, as well as difficult to ignore. For Chinatown, all elements that make up the streetscape should be considered in the overall design, and the design should combine function and Chinese style, thereby making ordinary items extraordinary.

Careful streetscape design will ensure the kind of pleasing order and uniformity of theme needed to create the clean, safe, attractive environment that Chinatown must provide. Important design considerations include public safety, pedestrian movement, and maintenance.

The goal is a Chinatown as clean, well-swept, meticulously groomed, and harmoniously designed as a beautiful Chinese garden. Streetscape elements must be designed with that goal in mind.

5.3.1 Boundaries

Chinatown must be more than the H and 7th Streets crossroads; it should be more than a block or two of restaurants. Chinatown should be a "town." Its designation as a "special treatment area" establishes this. To be really special, Chinatown must look special from the outset.

Along its perimeters, colorful banners extending from lampposts could signify "Welcome to Chinatown." Of course, other elements of the streetscape--Chinese-style sidewalks, trees, and street furniture--will help to denote the boundaries. Maps of the area can be placed at appropriate sites. Bright, colorful, eye-catching boundaries will set the tone for what lies ahead inside Chinatown.

5.3.2 Intensity

Map 7 provides information on the intensity of the Chinese character proposed for Chinatown's streetscape.

5.4 Chinese Character for Buildings

Adding Chinese character to building design will be critical to the enhancement of Chinatown. The recommended Chinatown Building Design Guidelines are flexible enough to permit developers and architects to respond to the opportunities for use of Chinese design in Chinatown within the complex constraints that may be present. Buildings located within the Historic District will demand different design solutions from those that are outside the Historic District. Obviously the treatment of buildings that are row house scale will differ from that of buildings that are 90 to 130 feet in height. New construction and renovations will have differing requirements.

5.4.1 Historic District

Buildings within the Historic District should exhibit medium Chinese design with the obvious exception of the two historic landmark buildings shown on Map 6. Chinese character may be added to buildings in the Historic District through the use of Chinese banners, signage, lighting, paint colors, awnings, canopies, and Chinese design storefronts or other elements. Where gaps exist in the historic streetscape, new buildings of Chinese design may be added.

5.4.2 H and 7th Streets

Chinese building character should be of high intensity along H and 7th Streets to complement the Archway and as befits these two main streets. Intensity should peak at the intersection of H and 7th Streets, the heart of Chinatown.

5.4.3 Intersections

Chinese building character along blocks should be higher at intersections, with highest intensity at key intersections--near the Archway, for example--and at gateway intersections to announce the entrances to Chinatown.

5.4.4 Boundaries and Interior Areas

Chinese building character should be medium around the boundaries of Chinatown. It should be high in the interior to provide a strong internal focus.

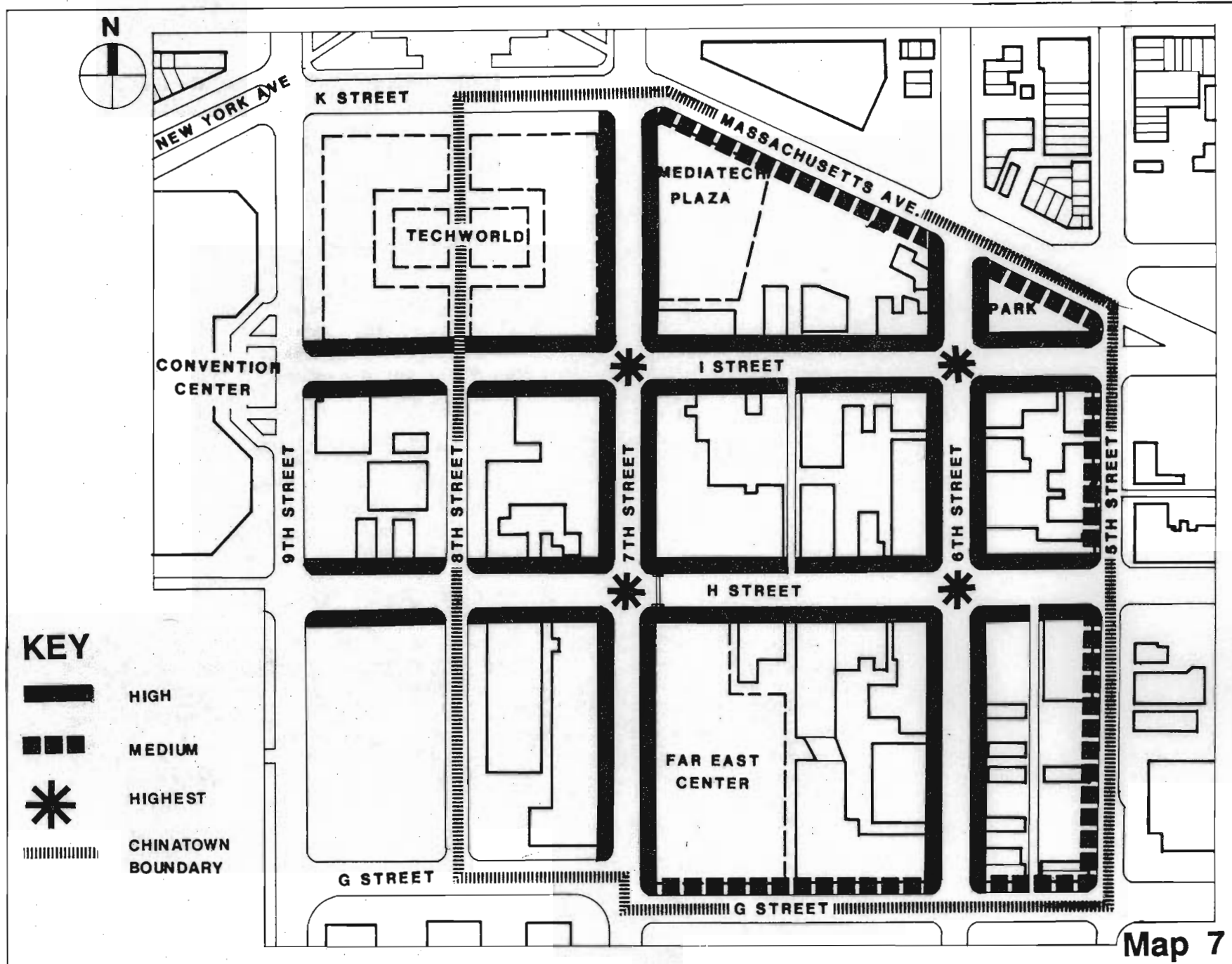
5.4.5 Buildings in General

For buildings in areas other than those discussed above, Chinese character should as a minimum be stressed at street level, but developers are encouraged to use Chinese design elements at all levels of buildings.

Map 8 provides information on the intensity of the Chinese character proposed for Chinatown buildings.

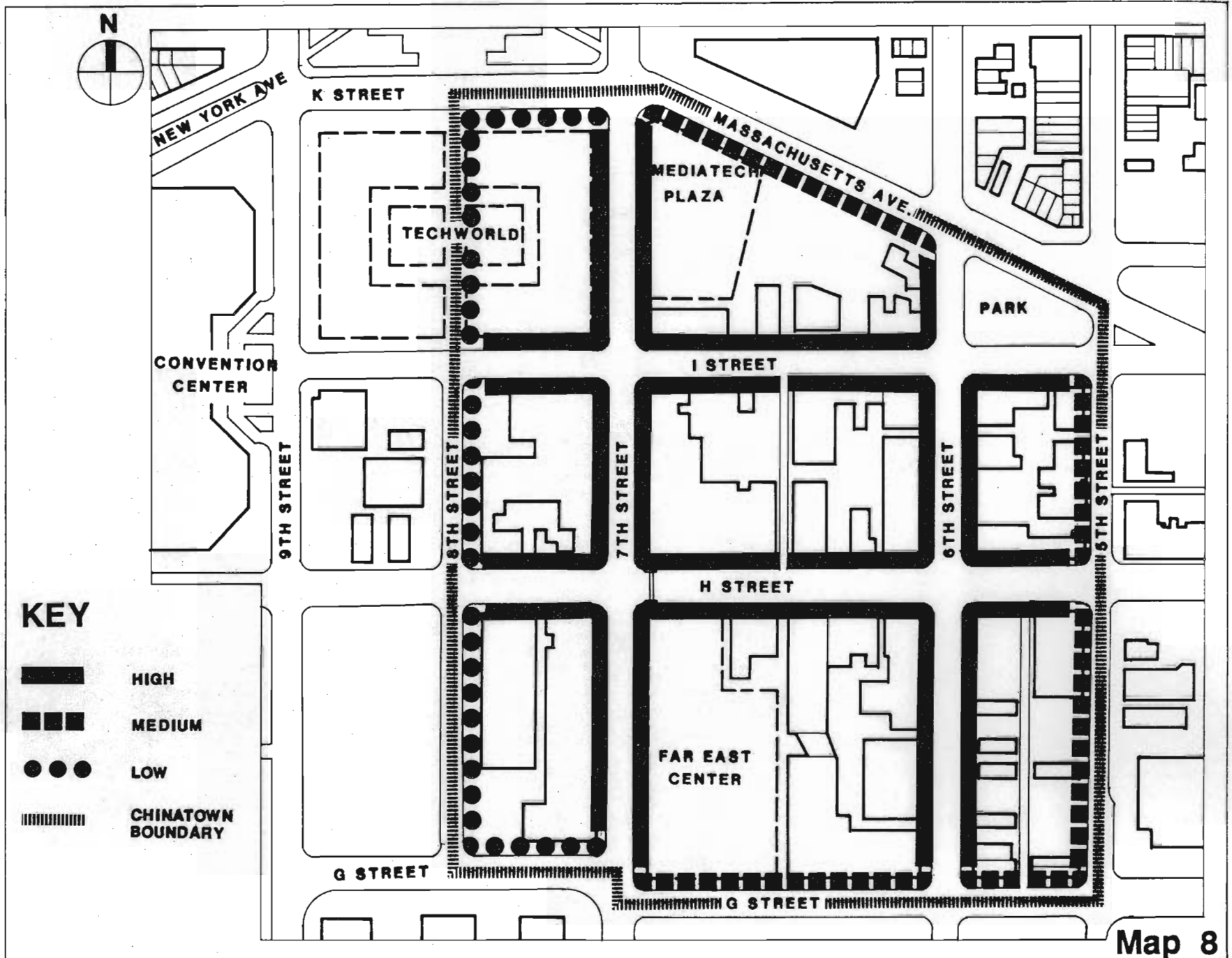
Intensity of Chinese Character in Streetscape

(as of June 1987)



Intensity of Chinese Character in Buildings

(as of June 1987)



Recommended **6**
Building Design Guidelines

6 RECOMMENDED BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES

D.C. Law 5-76 calls for a "stronger Chinese image in [Chinatown's] building facades and street improvements." D.C. Law 5-187 included the policy to "institute design standards that enhance the Chinese character of the area." The building design guidelines recommended in this report will guide designers and developers in the design of projects in Chinatown. The following criteria are proposed to facilitate the design review process that should be established for review of all development projects in Chinatown to ensure a stronger Chinese character for the area.

6.1 Overall Criteria

6.1.1 Good Design and Enhancement of Chinese Character

It is a central requirement that plans for buildings embody not just good design, but good design that fulfills the objective of enhancing the Chinese character of the area.

6.1.2 Compatibility with the Five Design Objectives

Review of projects should consider the compatibility of each project with the five Design Objectives (see Section 4):

- Chinatown should have several "Must-see!" items
- Chinatown should have special features to attract personal interest

from visitors, to appeal to the individual

- Washington's Chinatown should result in more nightlife for D.C.
- Chinatown should be a family place
- Chinatown should be a place of excellent examples of Chinese architecture

6.2 Criteria for Buildings

Building projects, whether new construction, improvements, or renovations, should be evaluated for the appropriateness of their Chinese design and design elements using the following as a guide:

- Approach to using Chinese style
- Overall East-West design integration
- Significant Chinese building elements
- Roofs
- Doors and windows
- Decoration
- Signage and Chinese characters
- Colors

6.3 Approaches to Using Chinese Style

6.3 Approaches to Using Chinese Style

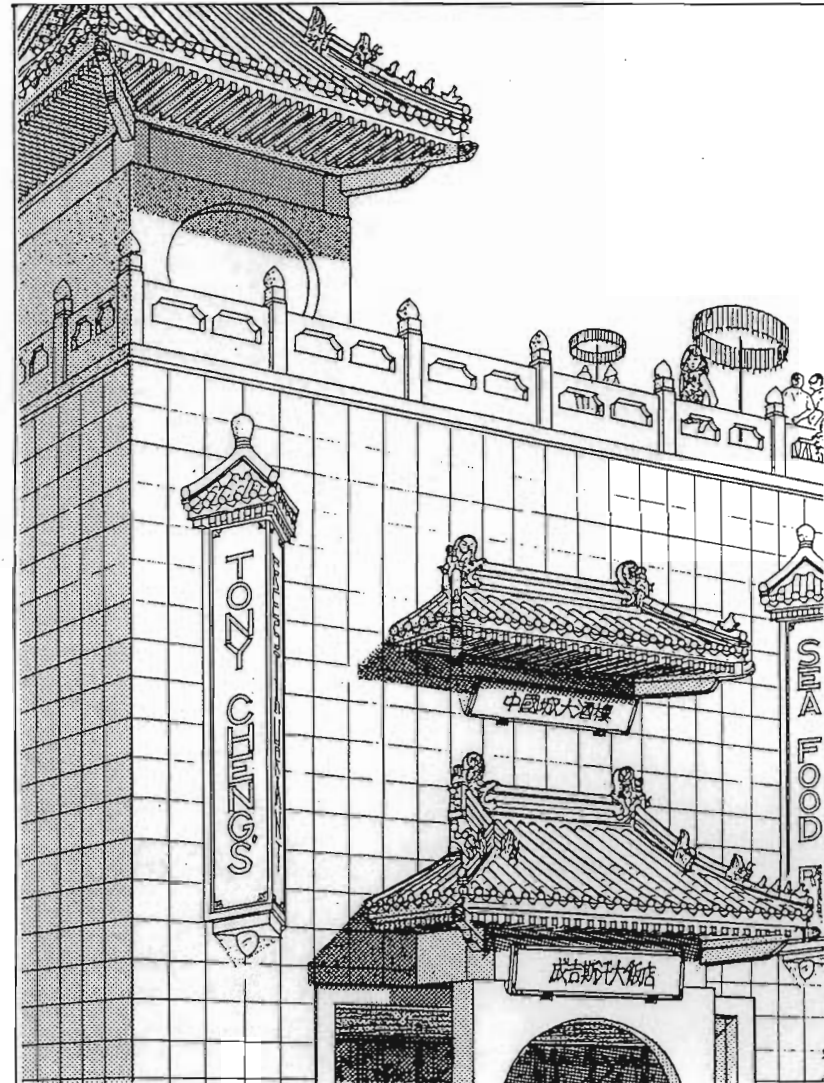
For Chinatown projects, architects may choose from among the following approaches to employing Chinese style:

Traditional--An authentic, identifiable Chinese style may be used.

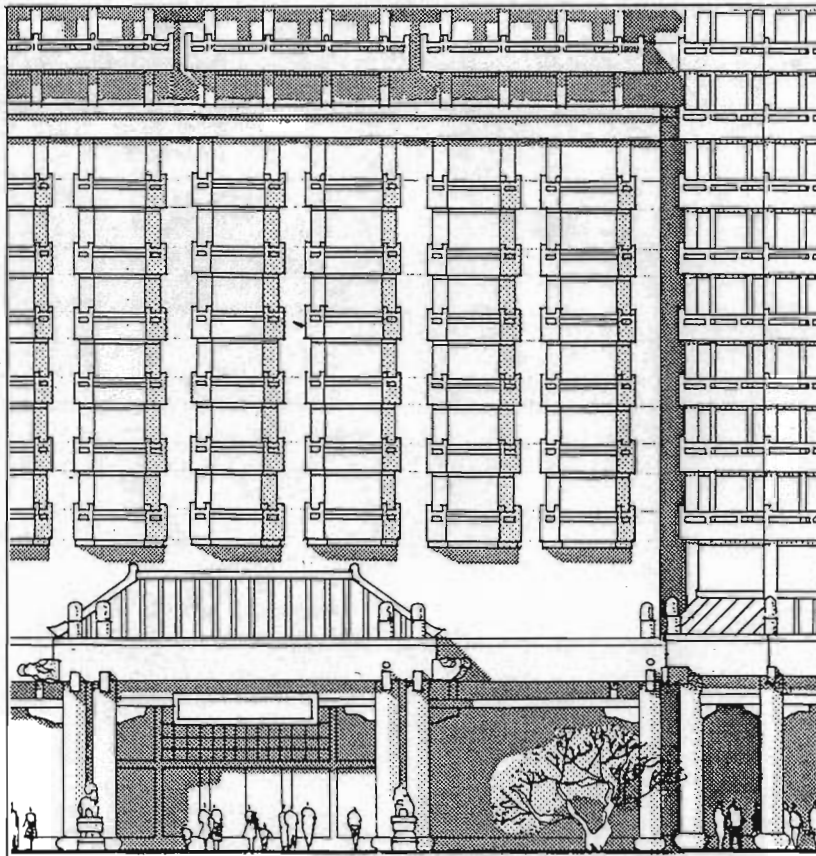
Modern Adaptation--Traditional Chinese architectural styles may be adapted and incorporated into a contemporary building.

Post-Modern Adaptation--Post-modern architecture borrows from classic styles. In Chinatown, classic Chinese architecture should be the source for post-modern design.

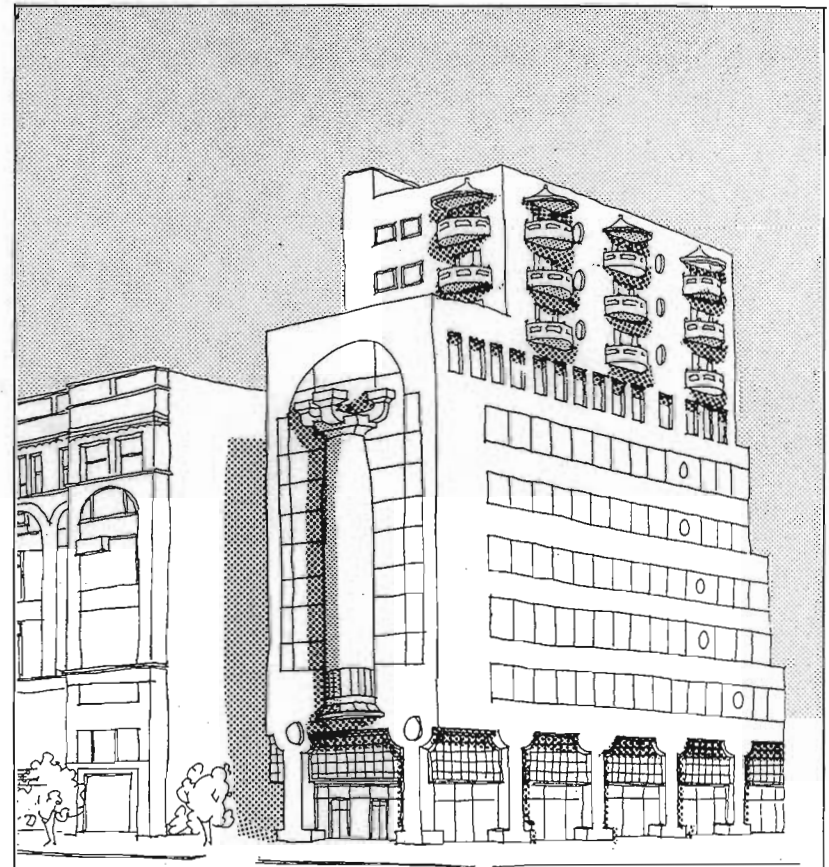
Chinese design should be added to the facades of buildings undergoing significant renovation. Architects may find they use one of the above three or a combination.



1. A Chinatown restaurant renovation. Chinese identity has been gained through straight-forward adoption and integration of Chinese elements.



2. In this hotel design, traditional Chinese motifs have been adapted. The massive roof is transformed into a glass-framed skylight, while the "pingzo" balustrades become components of the bay windows.

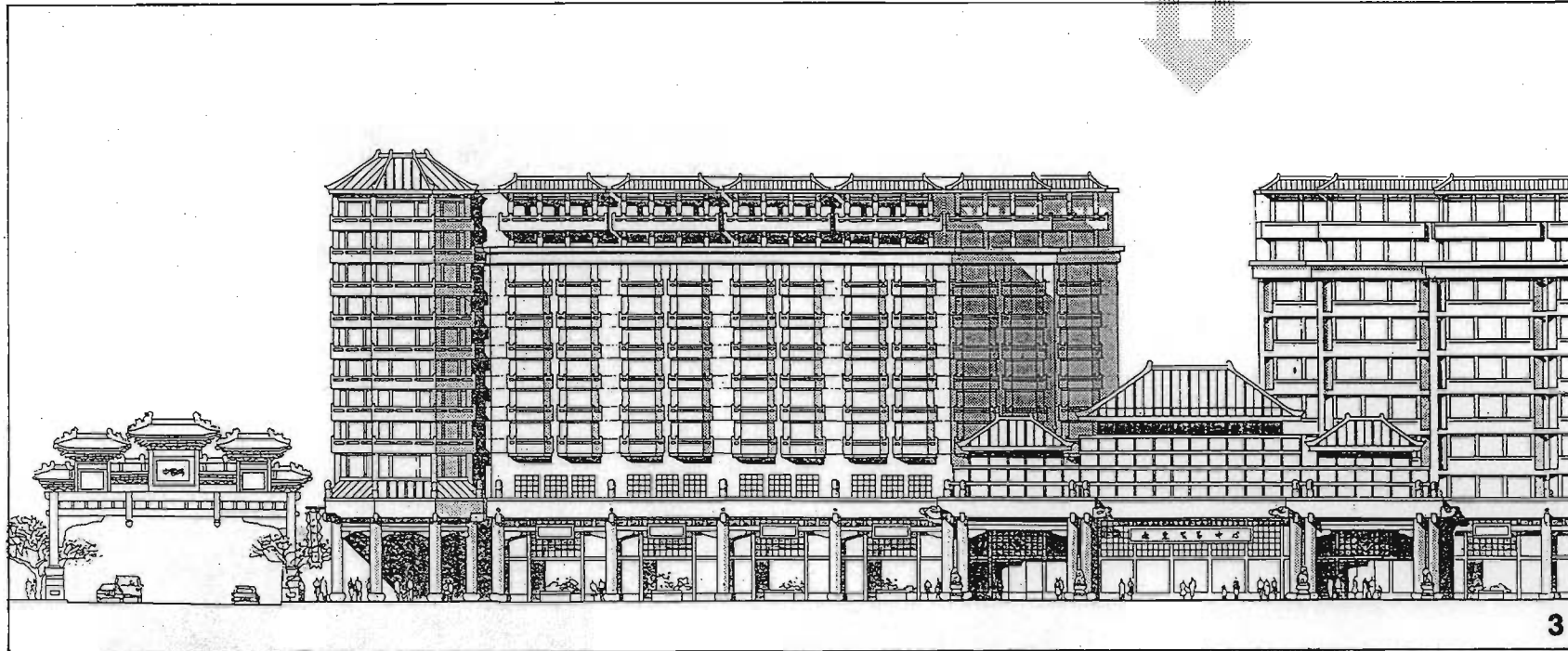
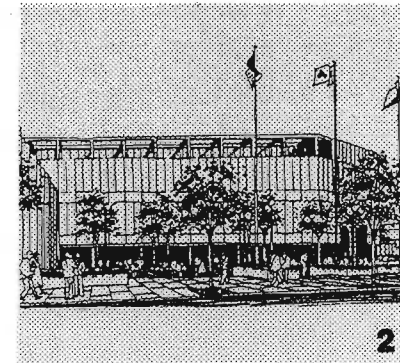
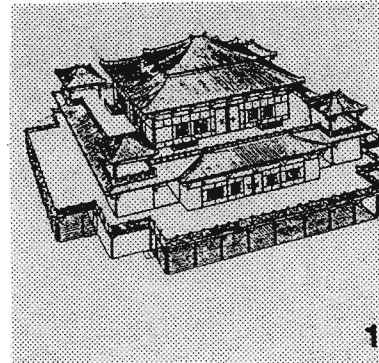


3. Following a post-modern approach, the designer of this office building has used Chinese elements as decoration rather than as functional components.

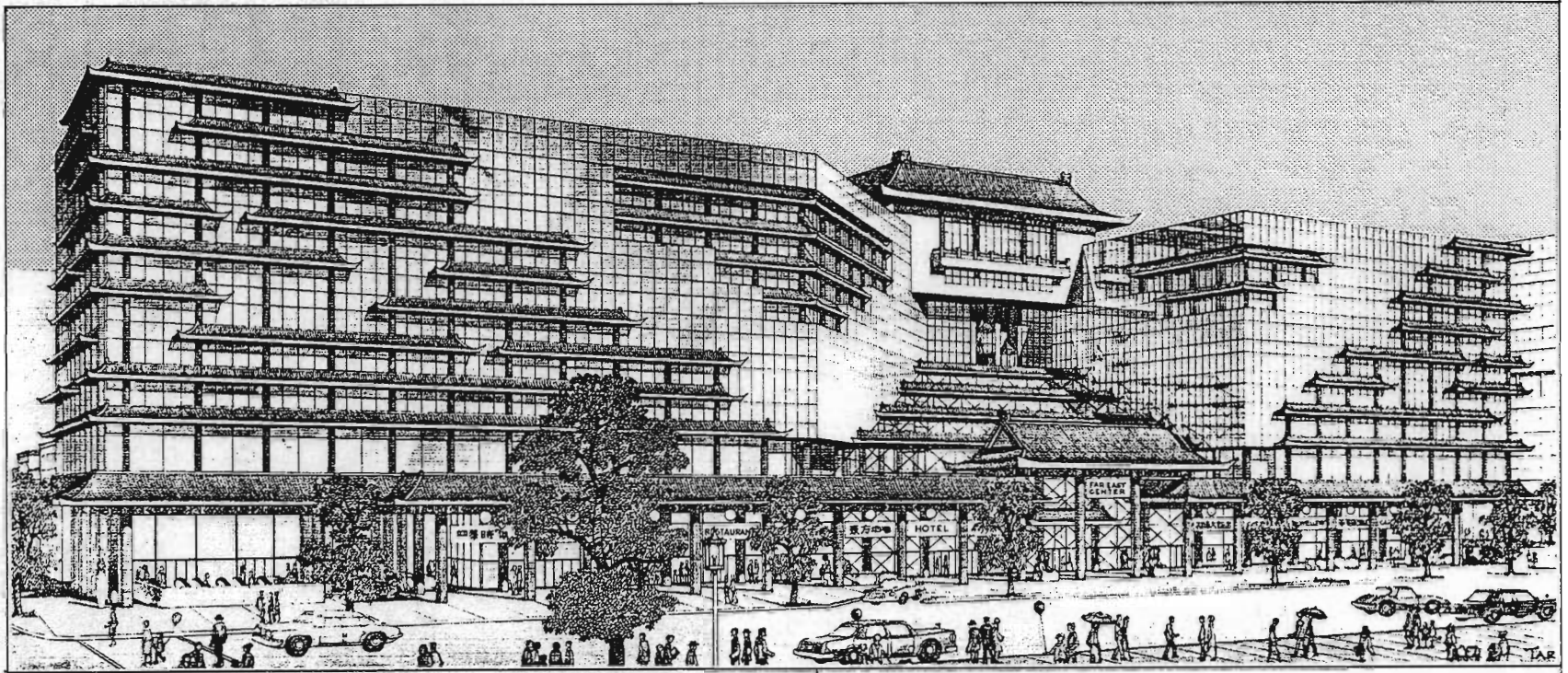
Combining Traditional and Modern Architectural Styles

Combining Traditional and Modern Architectural Styles

The following illustrations demonstrate how the design elements of a traditional Chinese timber-framed building and those of a modern building like the Convention Center may be combined without conflict. Framework is both structural and decorative.



1. Han dynasty ceremonial complex in Xian, China
2. Convention Center, Washington, DC
3. Design for mixed-use center in Chinatown



6.4 Design Integration

Ideally, new construction in Chinatown will exhibit an integrated Chinese design, having such Chinese design characteristics as a strong sense of center, horizontality, and proportional layering.

Top: Design for a mixed-use center in Chinatown

Right: The Wah Luck House in Chinatown. Both are modern and functional and display an integrated design.

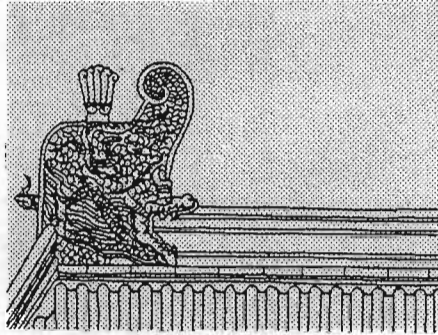
To create oriental ambiance, horizontal eave lines, balustrades and other Chinese elements have been added to glass curtain walls and precast concrete.



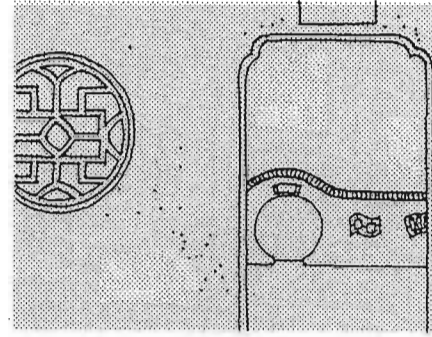
6.5 Significant Chinese Building Elements

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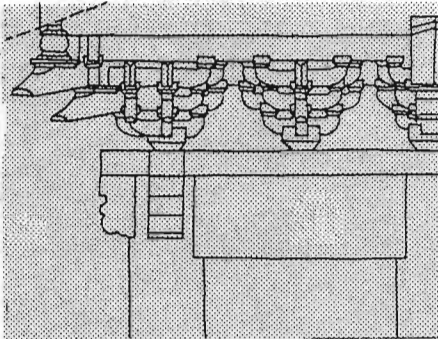
Roofs are distinctive in Chinese architecture. Different colors for ceramic tiles and decorations are used to show the rank and importance of a building.



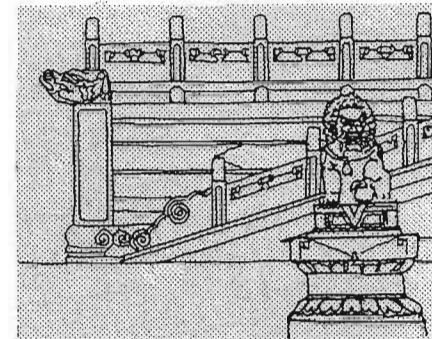
Framed openings in solid walls reveal the coordinate relationship between interior and exterior in Chinese architecture.



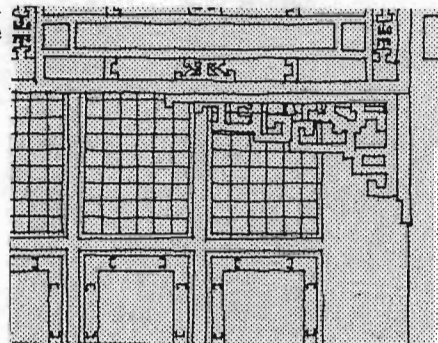
Timber frames serve both structural and decorative purposes. They are accentuated by the use of unique dou gong bracket sets, which add dignity and grace to buildings.



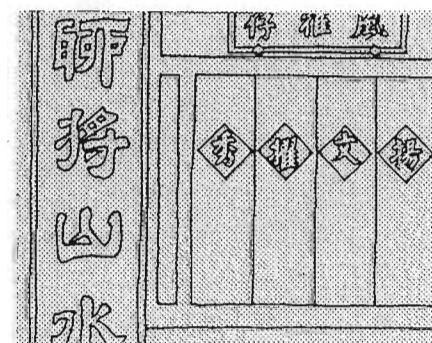
Carved stone for balustrades, ramps, statues, etc., adds strength, stability and richness.



Wooden lattices are mainly used on windows and doors. They may be in any of a variety of patterns and provide identifiable Chinese flavor.



Polychrome painted decoration uses distinctive Chinese colors and often features decorative Chinese characters.

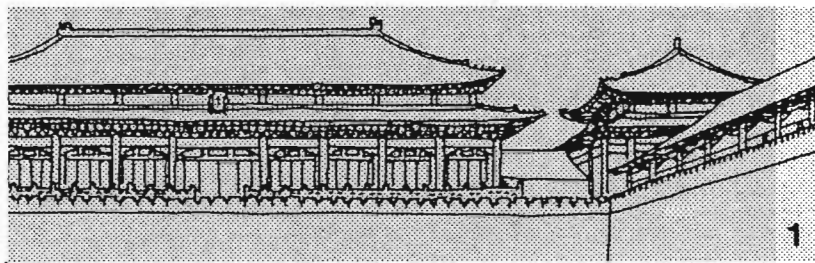


6.6 Roofs

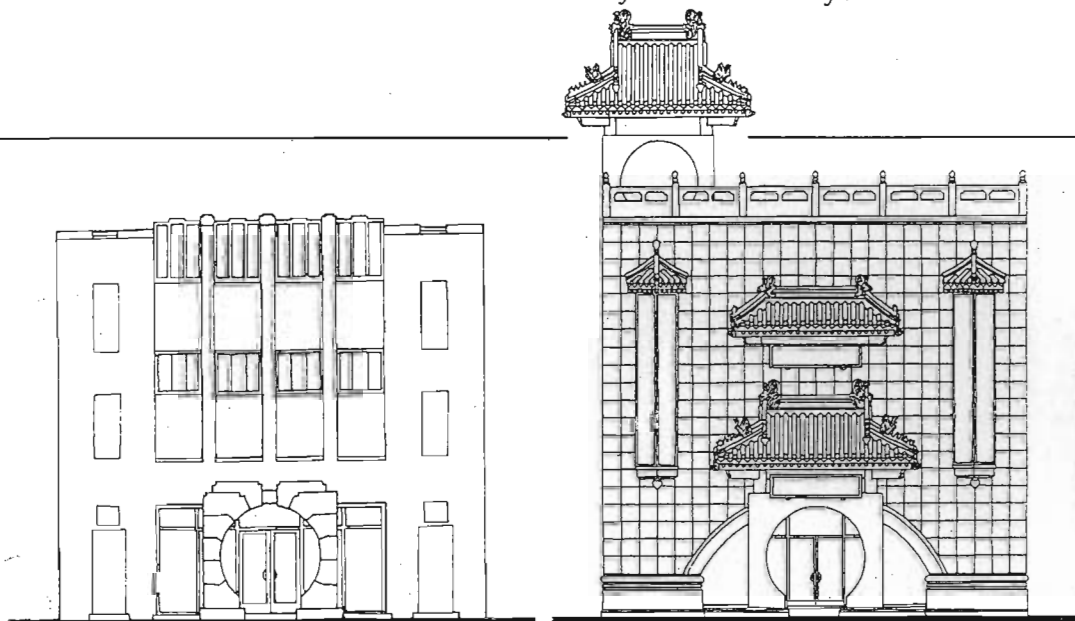
6.6 Roofs

Two categories of traditional Chinese roofs are sources for Chinatown building designs.

1. Orthodox Chinese roofs are characterized by moderate, elegant concave curves and upturned eave corners, as well as by brilliant orange-yellow, green, or blue glazed ceramic roof tiles and decorative tiles. In a large building or complex, the roofs all have a systematic relationship.
2. Vernacular Chinese roofs, largely of dark-gray clay tiles, are more divergent in form than the orthodox roofs. In South China, for example, roof curves are more pronounced and decoration is less restrained. Gables of various designs are used to add beauty and vitality.



Right: The original facade of a Chinatown restaurant. Far right: The facade after renovation. Using Chinese roof elements as motifs has endowed a non-oriental facade with Chinese character.



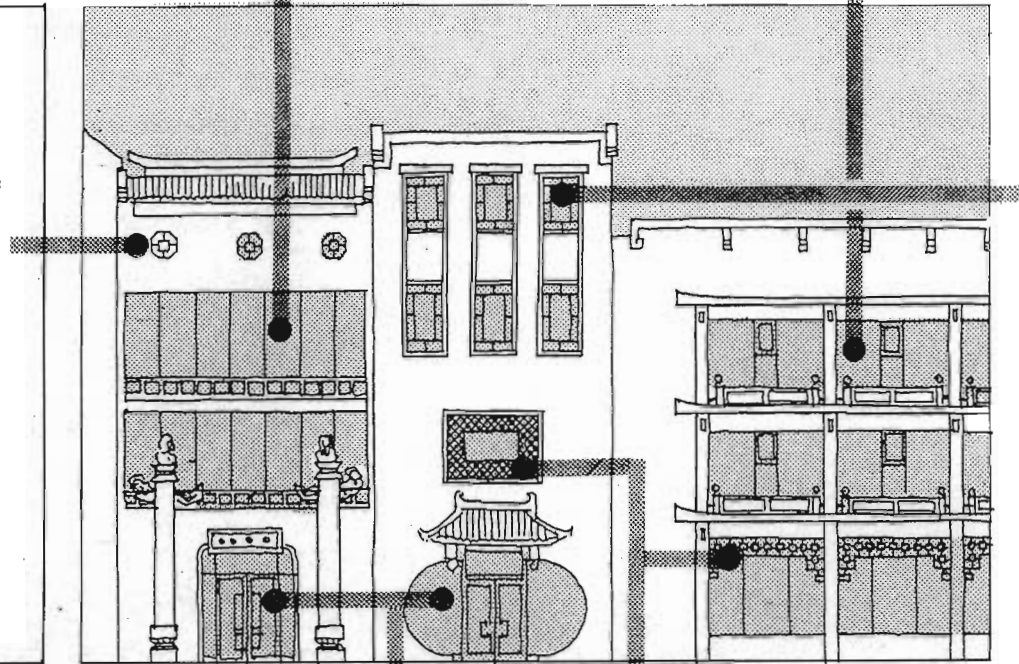
6.7 Doors and Windows

6.7 Doors and Windows

Design of Chinese door and window elements varies from very simple to complex and intricate. It is not difficult to select a suitable pattern that adds Chinese character and is appropriate in terms of both function and harmony with other design elements.

Windows bordered by the construction skeleton are typical in traditional Chinese architecture.

Patterned framing of small openings in solid walls is a traditional feature of Chinese architecture.



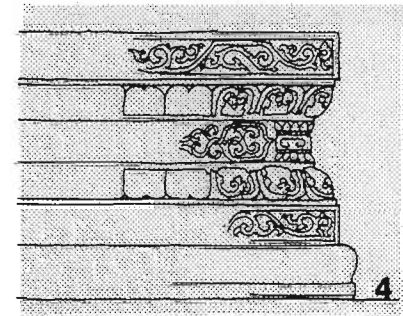
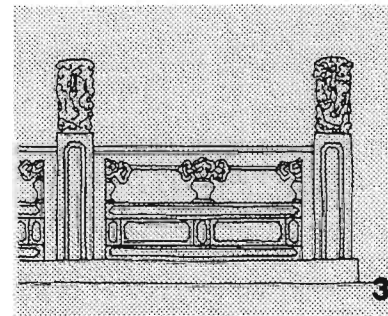
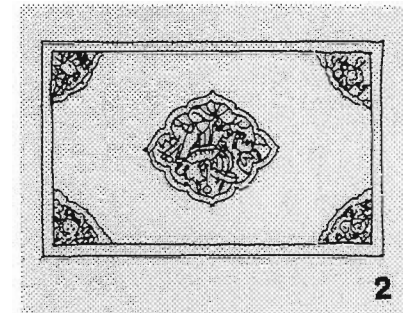
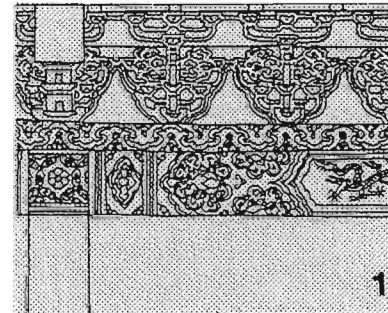
Vertically framing two windows is a popular Chinese fenestration technique.

Moon gates and other framed openings can be interpreted in contemporary architectural language. They can enhance building facades and make entryways more inviting.

If properly placed, densely patterned trellises in front of openings add elegance and richness.

6.8 Decoration

Chinese decoration--from glazed ceramic mythological animals found on some roofs to lotus-patterned Sumeru bases--is a rich source for motifs with which to enhance Chinese character in Chinatown. Chinese decoration is characterized by its use of symbolism and, frequently, by the inseparability of decorative and structural functions. Architects should be imaginative in selecting and adapting Chinese motifs for decoration. Merely piling up decorative elements and ignoring the traditional basis for the use of those elements may spoil the design of a new building.



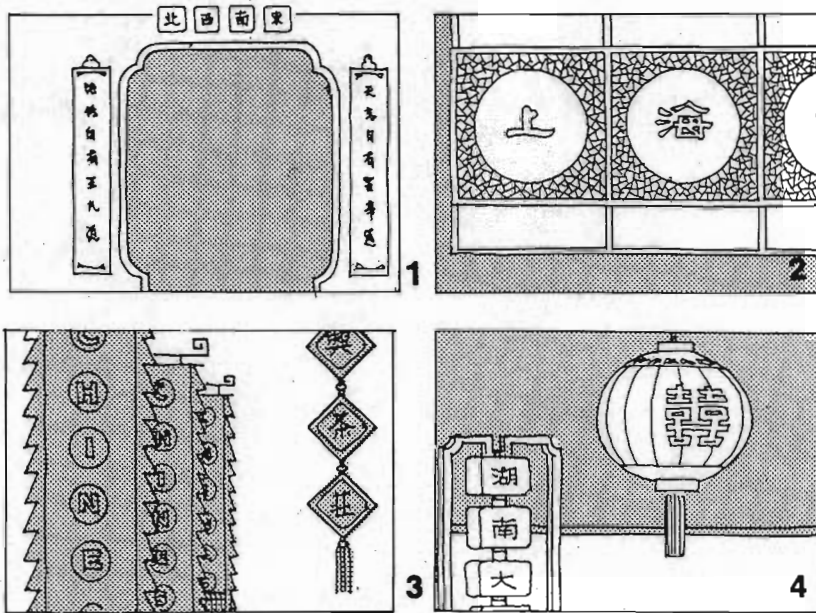
Examples of decoration in orthodox Chinese buildings

1. Painted polychrome dou gong bracket sets and beams under cantilevered eaves
2. Ceramic or brick wall surface decorated with flower patterns
3. Carved marble balustrade
4. Stone Sumeru base

6.9 Signage and Chinese Characters

6.9 Signage and Chinese Characters

Signage and Chinese characters are important design elements. Liberal use of Chinese characters in signage and decoration will provide needed Chinese ambiance in Chinatown.



1. Horizontal and vertical inscribed plaques
2. Lattice-framed Chinese characters
3. Banners and hung boards
4. Lanterns



A market in Chinatown. Left: Original facade. Right: Renovated facade with framed canvas signs topped by small roofs.

6.10 Colors

The lavish use of color is an unquestionable characteristic of Chinese architecture. It should be well understood and properly introduced in Chinatown projects.

In Chinese tradition, pure and strong colors bear important and deeply rooted symbolism. For example, red is a favorite color and signifies happiness, wealth, success, and celebration. The glazed yellow of building tiles symbolizes the superlative and was dedicated to the emperor.

On the facade of a Chinese building, every color has its customary place. Architects and designers should be aware of the conventions of traditional Chinese color placement. For example, red is not used for roofs, nor sky-blue for columns.

Polychromy can be useful in merging various building components into an attractive yet harmonious whole. Traditionally, complementary colors are often boldly juxtaposed. For example, a shining orange-yellow roof is set against the blue sky and contrasts with the eave shadow where green-blue painted patterns offer a cold tone. Below, red columns and windows and white balustrades provide another brilliant contrast. The effect is a building with vitality but without visual conflict.

Chinatown designs should carry on the traditional Chinese uses of color, but polychromy is not the only way to finish Chinese buildings.

Traditional residential and commercial buildings often display gray brick walls and pottery tiles, as well as painted dark-brown wooden components. These characteristics produce another kind of beauty, simpler and more natural. Chinatown designers should not overlook this aspect of Chinese building decoration.

The use of cold gray (as distinct from warm gray, which is commonly used in Washington buildings) can provide a fine contrast with other, more colorful buildings.

Recommended **7**
Streetscape Design Standards

7 RECOMMENDED STREETScape DESIGN STANDARDS

7.1 Streetscape Elements

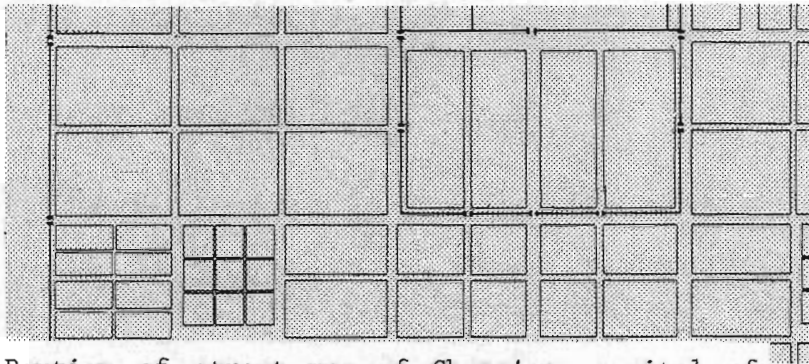
In Chinatown, streetscape design is a vital complementary partner of building design. It is critical to the development of a stronger Chinese image, which is one of the major policies set forth in D.C. Law 5-76. Evaluation of streetscape design should consider the following:

- Overall Chinese character of streetscape and landscape
- Compatibility with Streetscape Design Concept
- Sidewalk paving
- Relation between paving and landscaping
- Street lighting
- Freestanding design elements
- Street furniture
- Signage

7.2 Chinese Streetscape and Landscape

7.2 Chinese Streetscape and Landscape

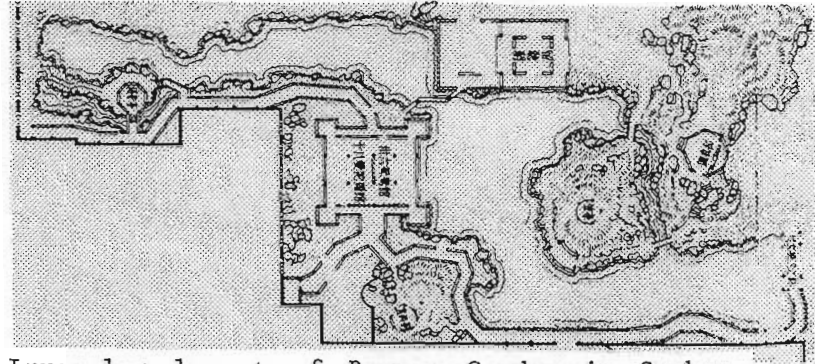
Streetscape: In terms of urban design, Washington's Chinatown and traditional Chinese cities have a common characteristic in that both have a perpendicular street network. What should be introduced and adopted in Chinatown is the distinctively Chinese approach to urban streetscape: Space is visually layered and sequenced by "preludes" and "terminals." That is, not only should Chinese character be added to the linear streetscape, but some of Chinatown's entrances



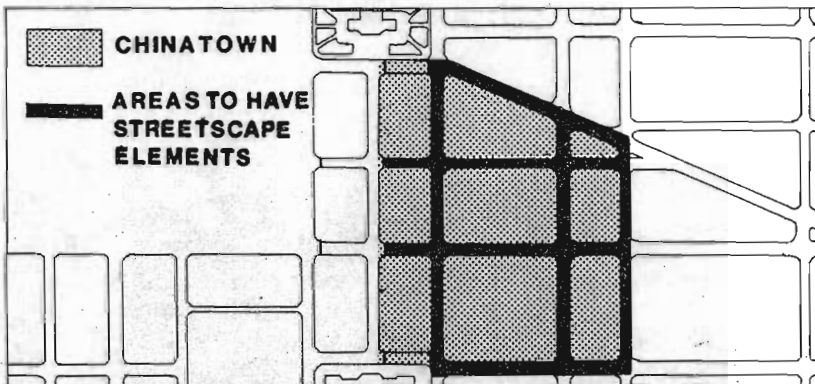
Portion of street map of Chang'an, capital of China in the Tang dynasty.

and intersections should be highlighted with additional Chinese design elements to demarcate space and enhance ambiance.

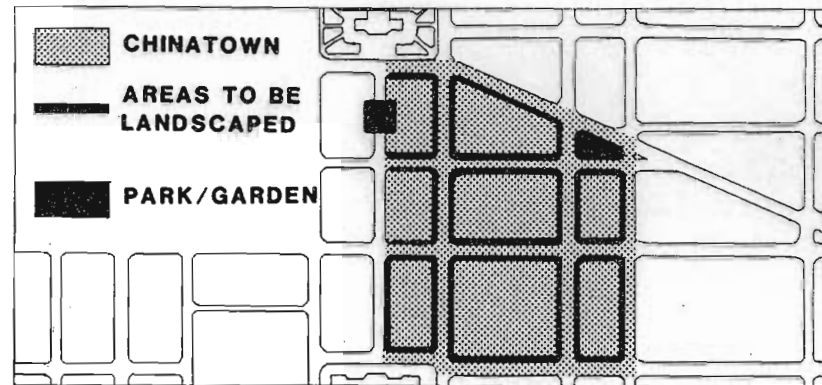
Landscape: Traditional Chinese landscaping emphasizes naturalness through unrestrained layout. Such elements as geometric topiary or elaborate "parterres" (formal ornamental gardens) are foreign to Chinese landscaping. Natural rather than formal landscaping should be introduced throughout Chinatown along sidewalks where space allows (such as along Massachusetts Avenue), in gardens, and in the small park at 5th and Massachusetts.



Irregular layout of Buyuan Garden in Suzhou, China.



Chinatown Streetscape Plan



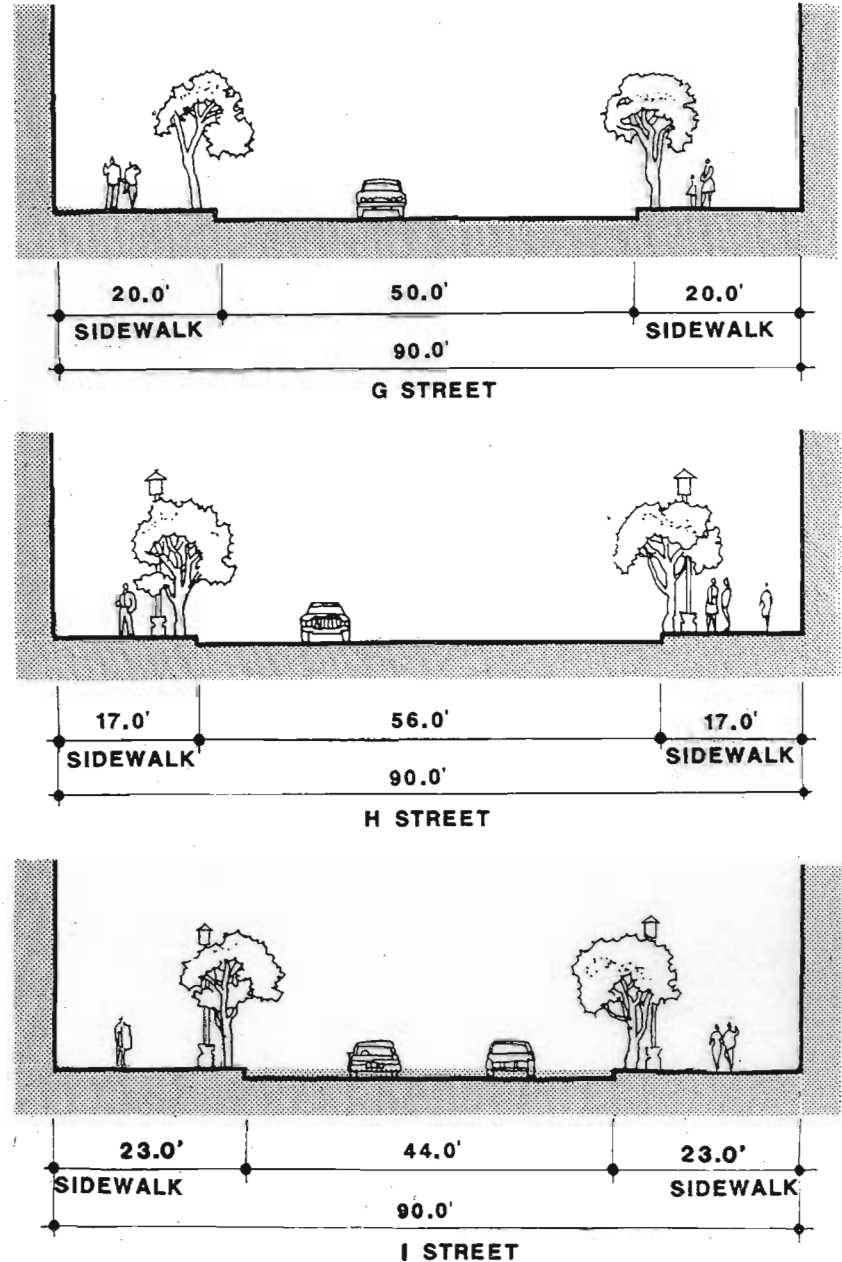
Chinatown Landscape Plan

7.3 Proposed Street Sections

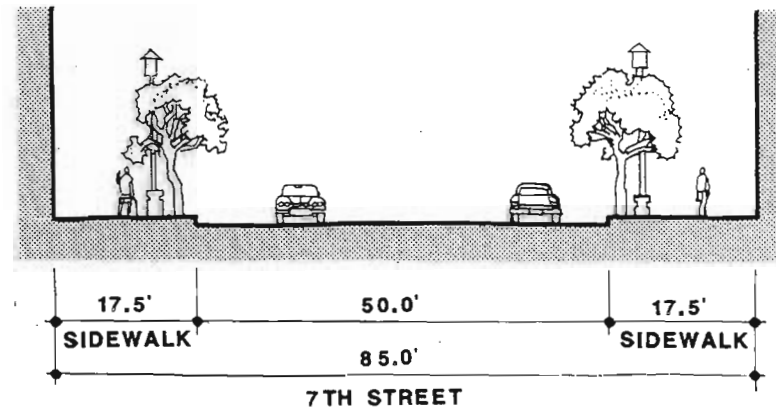
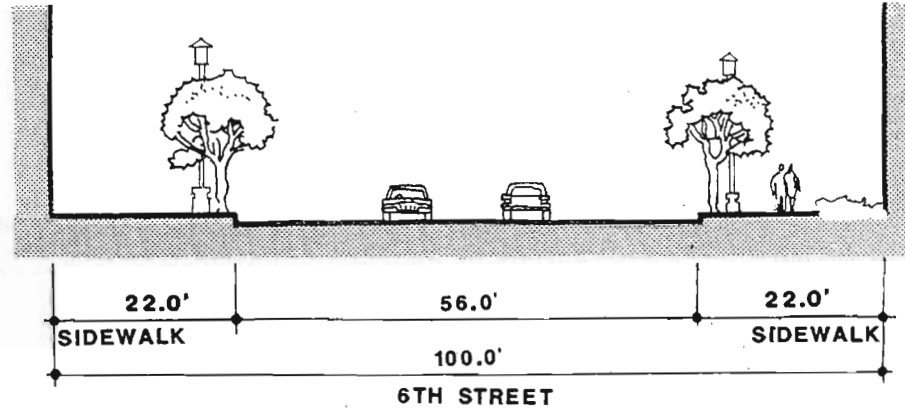
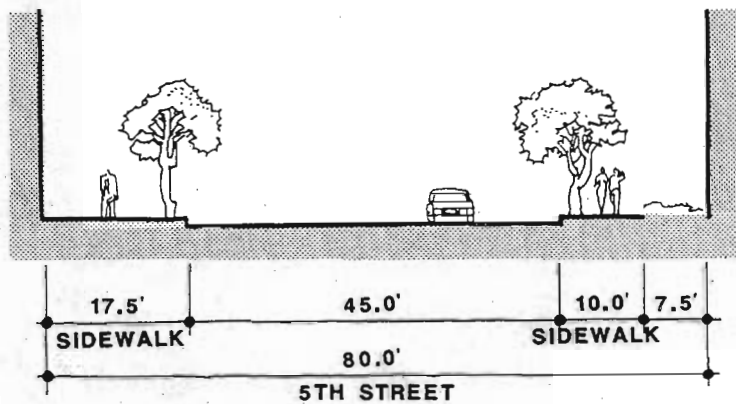
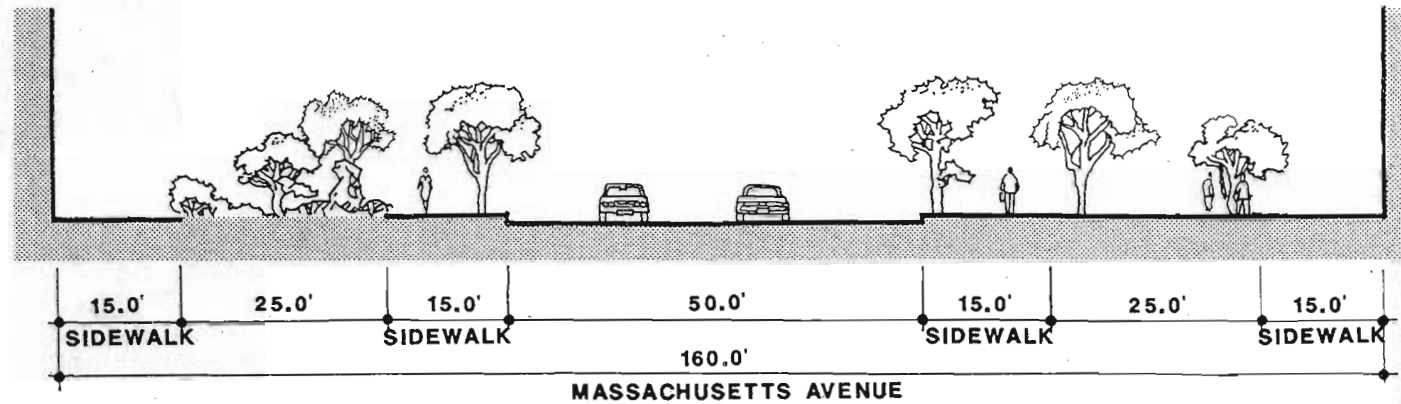
7.3 Proposed Street Sections

The street sections at right and on the following page indicate the proposed dimensions of sidewalks, green strips, and roadways in Chinatown. (No alteration of street location, direction, or dimensions is proposed.)

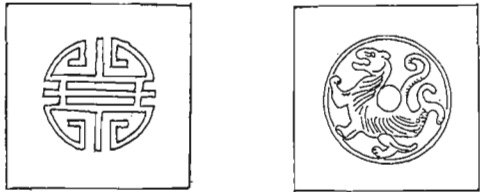
Green strips are proposed throughout Chinatown, where space permits, either between sidewalks and roadways or in the center of wide sidewalks (on Massachusetts Avenue). Streets with narrow sidewalks will have trees but no plants. Wider sidewalk areas may permit more landscaping.



Proposed Street Sections (continued)



7.4 Sidewalk Paving Pattern



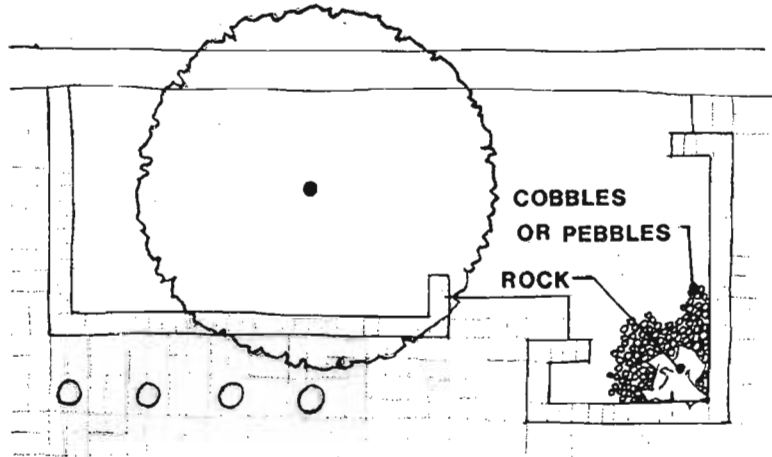
7.4 Sidewalk Paving Pattern

The paving pattern for sidewalks should be uniform throughout Chinatown. A Chinese paving design (above and right) is proposed consisting of 4" x 8" bricks and randomly placed 8" x 8" brick pavers.

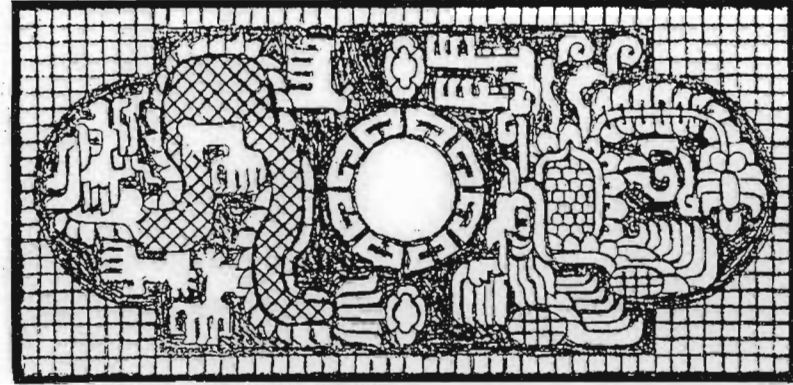
The 8" x 8" pavers will display special Chinese designs. (See above.) The design of these 8" pavers may include the twelve animals of Chinese "astrology"--symbolizing the Year of the Tiger, Horse, Rooster, Sheep, etc.

The Chinatown paving pattern should be incorporated into the Downtown Streetscape Standards and implemented through the Downtown Streetscape Committee.

Right: Examples of possible sidewalk treatments for Chinatown. Landscaping that includes trees will conform with the D.C. Streetscape Standards, Section 2.2, Tree Spaces.

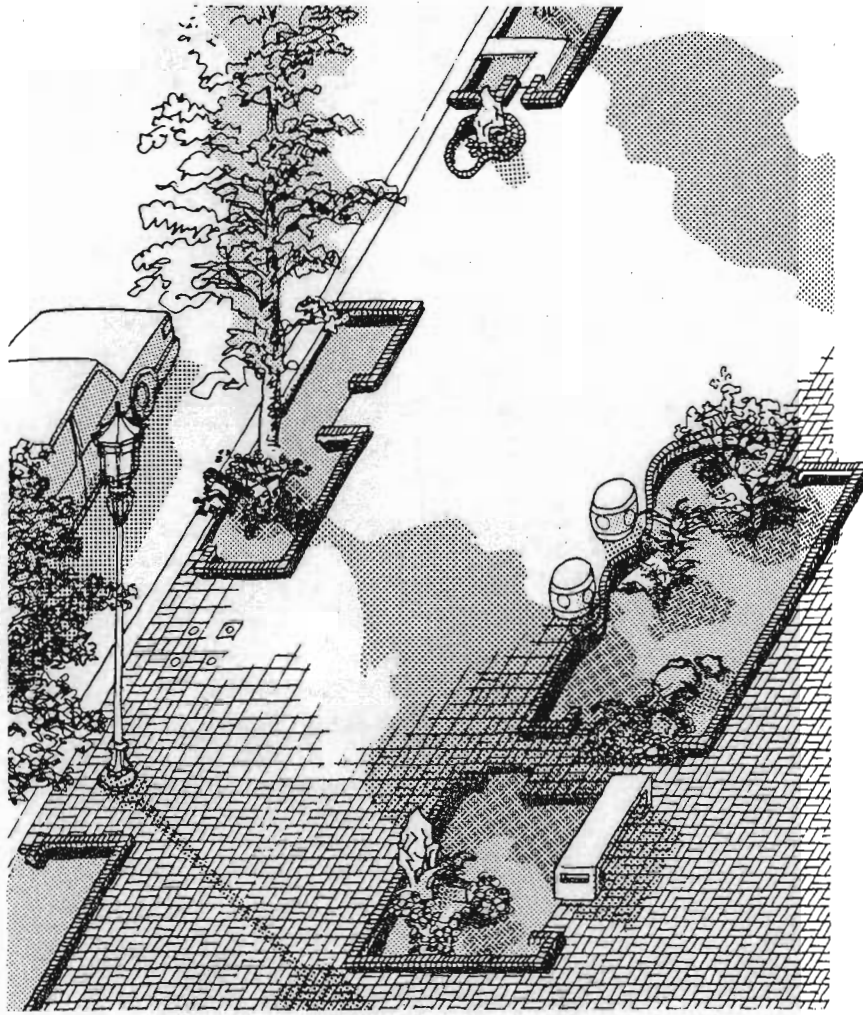


PROPOSED TREE PIT DESIGN



ALTERNATE TREE PIT DESIGN

7.5 Sidewalk Paving and Landscaping



7.5 Sidewalk Paving and Landscaping

Where space permits and sidewalks are wide enough, landscaping and sidewalk paving in Chinatown may be harmoniously integrated to create a Chinese ambiance. The illustration at

left shows how a variety of elements can be combined to achieve a pleasing and functional result.

The uniform sidewalk pavement will contrast but should not conflict with the landscaping, which should contribute vitality. Larger planting areas can be framed with alternating straight and curved brickwork. Combining geometric and nongeometric design will produce a visual effect that is both up to date and in the Chinese tradition.

Trees: Various oriental trees are proposed for Chinatown (see list on the following page). Trees will be planted along street blocks in straight lines and at regular intervals.

Plants: While trees will be placed regularly, plants and shrubs should be more naturally arranged. Streetscape space for landscaping is relatively limited, and for this reason, plants should be chosen carefully. Certain popular Chinese species may be usable. Landscape design should consider how the space will appear in the various seasons--for example, some plants bloom in spring, others in fall--so that a pleasing effect is presented year-round or for most of the year.

Rocks and Stones: For larger areas, stones are useful decorative elements. Pebbles can be used to create zig-zag mosaic paths. Strangely shaped rocks--for example, unusual volcanic rocks full of holes or rocks with sharply tortuous contours--can contribute Chinese flavor.



Trees Proposed for Chinatown

- 5th Street: Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)
- 6th Street: Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)
- 7th Street: Golden Rain Tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*)
- 8th Street: Upright male Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba* "Fastigiata"--"Sentry")
- G Street--In front of museum: Chinese Cederela (*Cederela sinensis*)
- G Street--Remainder of street: Aristocratic Bradford Pear (*Pyrus calleryana* "Bradford") (Cultivare: Aristocrat)
- H Street: Upright Japanese Katsura (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*)
- I Street: Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)
- Massachusetts Avenue: Silver Linden (*Tilia tomentosa*)
- Mt. Vernon Square: Japanese Zelkova (*Zelkova serrata*)

7.6 Street Lighting

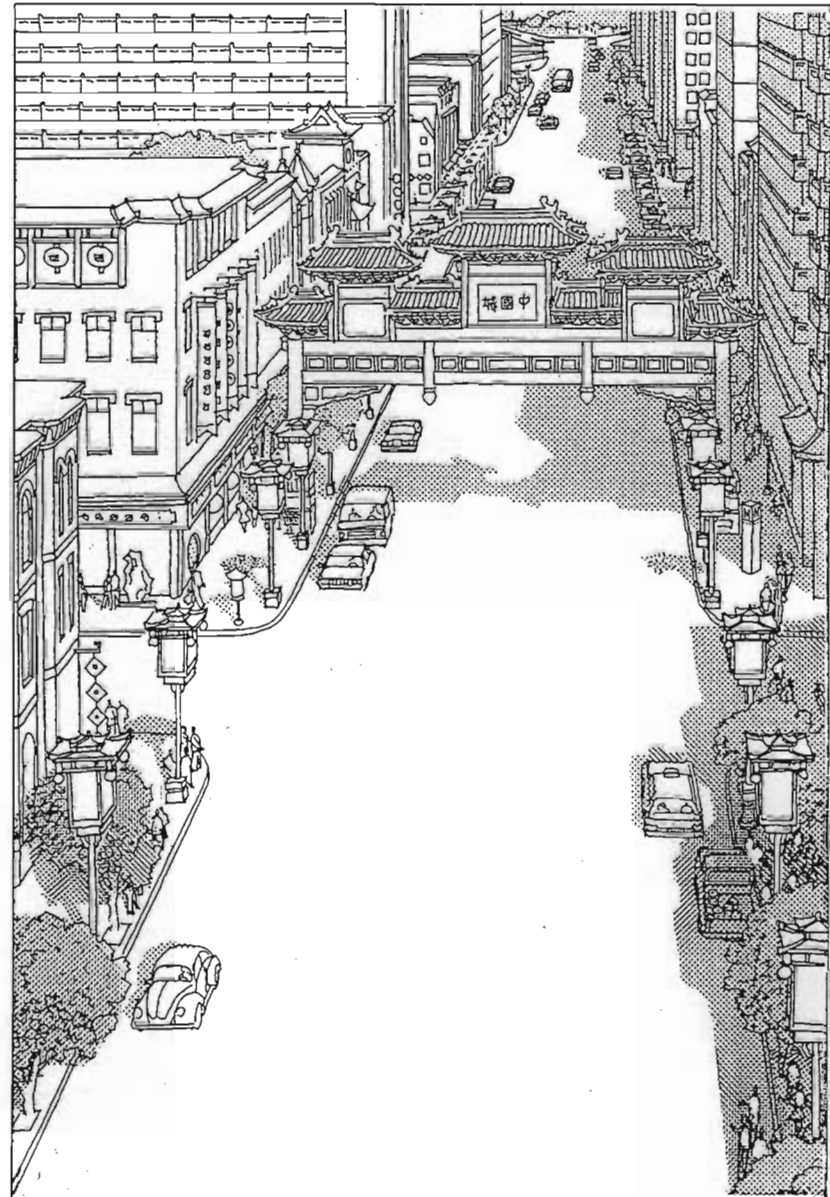
7.6 Street Lighting

Of all the streetscape elements, Chinese design streetlights will likely have the greatest impact on the character of Chinatown. Ideally, such streetlights would be located throughout Chinatown, their colorful and unique design enhancing the whole area (except for boundary streets where their presence along one side of the street would create an imbalance).

There are several ways in which Chinese lights could be added to the streetscape. First, the existing high intensity streetlights could remain to provide the required lighting levels, complemented by the new lower intensity (and lower height) lamps. The new Chinese lights would glow at night and be readily visible during the day, contributing immeasurably to the special Chinese character of the area.

Replacing the existing lights with the new Chinese lights is a second alternative. The new lights would be at the same general height as the Washington Globes, but would be spaced only twenty to thirty feet apart, thus creating a stronger visual presence.

A third alternative is to replace some of the existing lights with Chinese-style fixtures and let other existing fixtures remain.

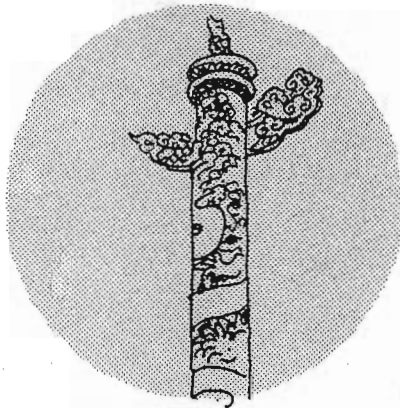


Streetlights along H Street with spectacular Chinese fixtures.

7.7 Freestanding Design Elements for Streetscapes

7.7 Freestanding Design Elements for Streetscape

Following are some freestanding Chinese design elements that may be adapted for use in Chinatown. Placed at Chinatown entrances and street intersections and in front of buildings, these free-standing elements will provide visual "preludes." Their scale can be varied to fit different situations.



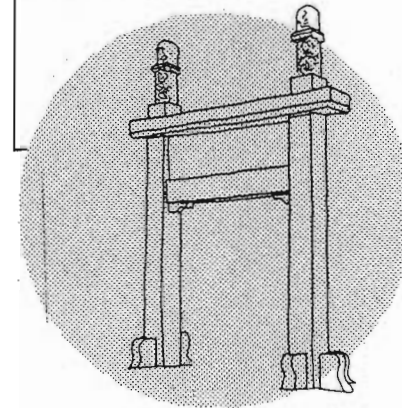
Ornamental stone column



Carved stone or ceramic lion, usually placed in pairs.



A view in Chinatown, San Francisco: Archway at the entrance to a street



Archway or gateway

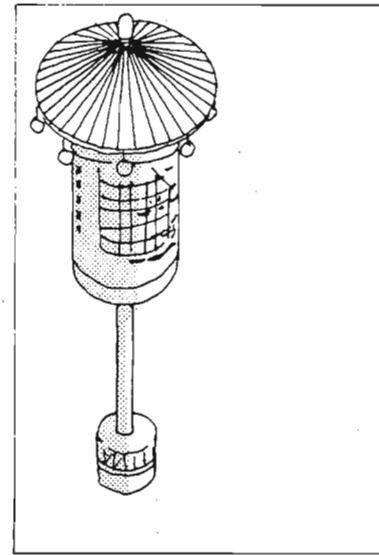


Raised flower bed: A miniature landscape comprising plants, rocks, etc.

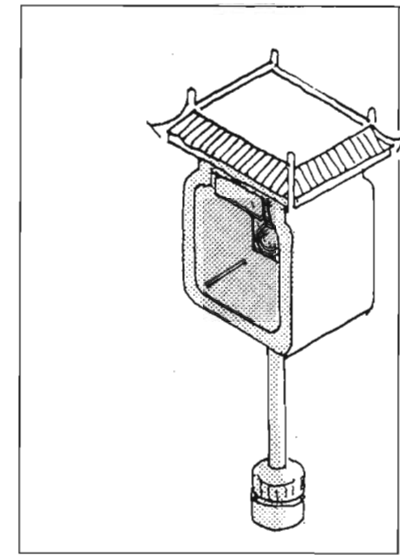
7.8 Street Furniture

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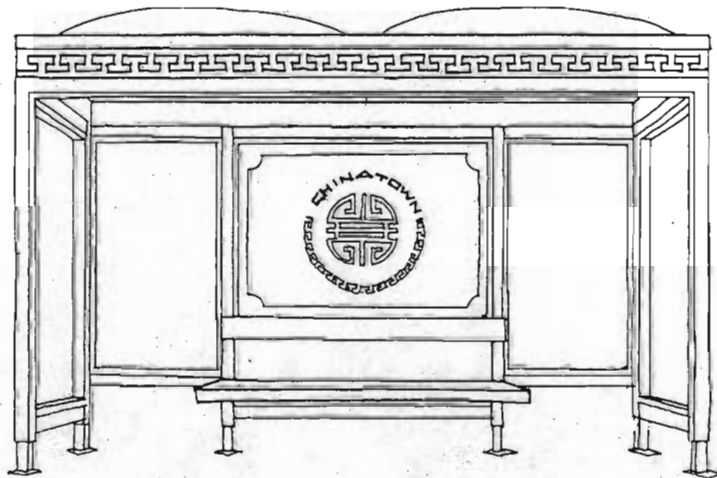
Street furniture--all the commonplace items ordinarily found on city streets--will play an important role in the Chinatown streetscape. Street furniture includes everything from telephone booths to trash receptacles--any such item regularly placed on a city street. Following are some designs for Chinatown street furniture.



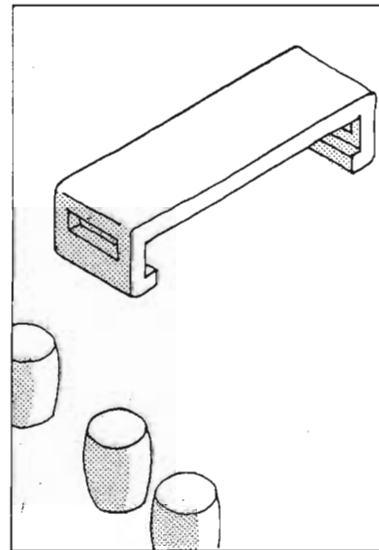
Tourist map



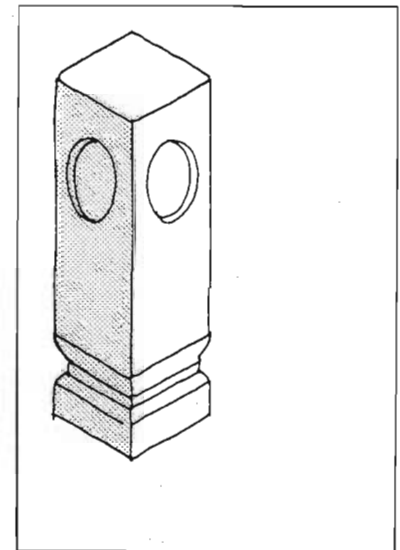
Telephone booth



Ordinary D.C. bus shelter, repainted and ornamented to add Chinese character



Bench and stools

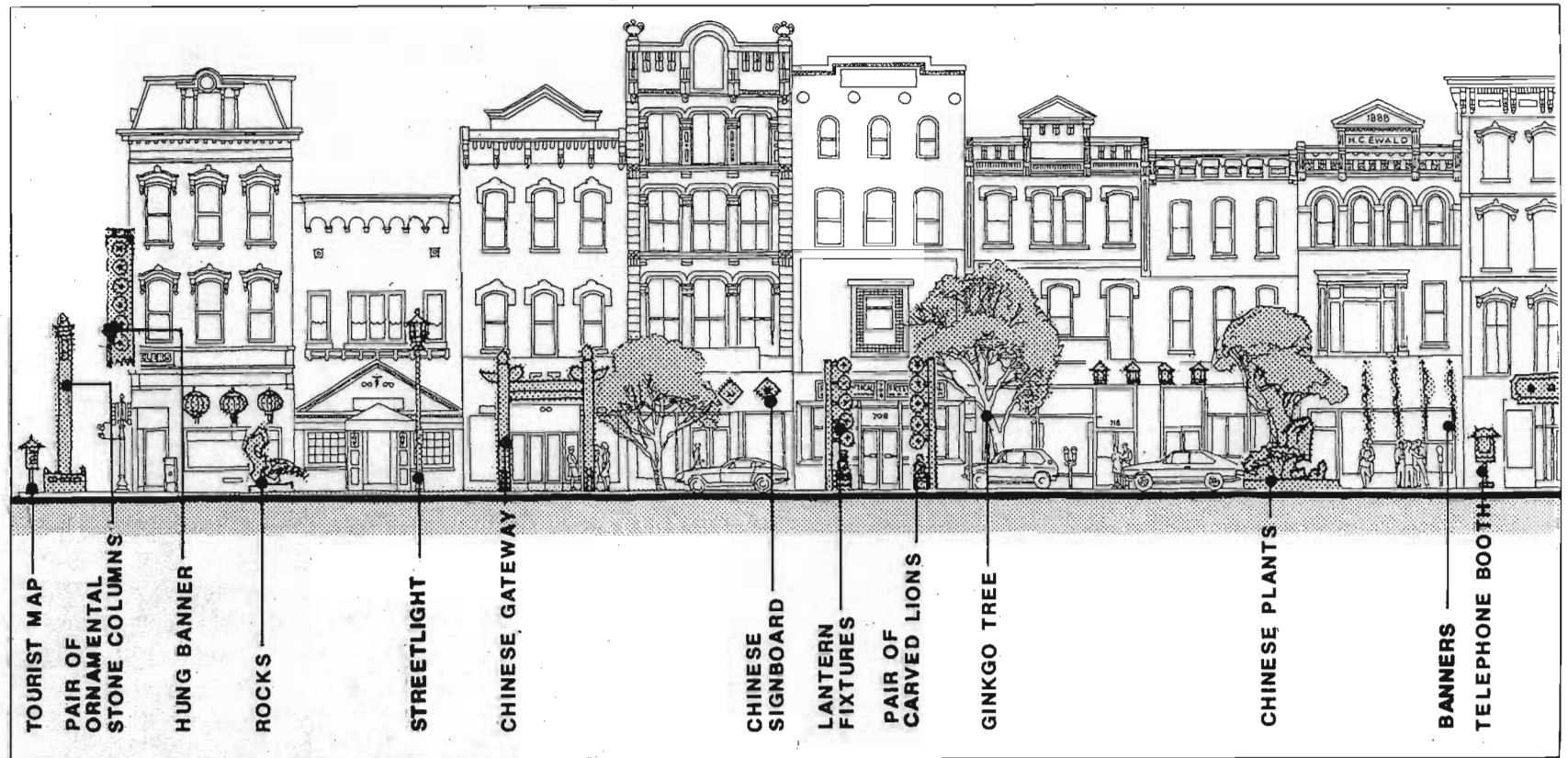


Trash receptacle

7.9 Streetscape in the Historic District

7.9 Streetscape in the Historic District

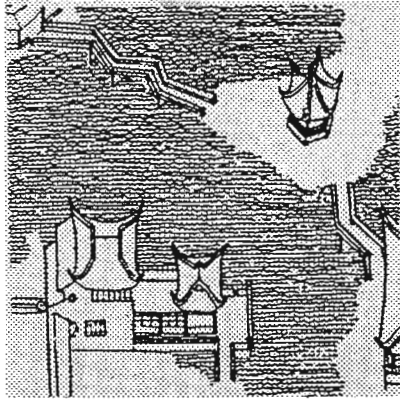
Within the Historic District, of course, the 19th century building facades will not be subject to major alteration. Chinese character can be achieved through added touches of color and by means of the sidewalk paving, landscaping, lighting and street furniture. Free-standing or attached elements of Chinese design, such as carved decorations, signs, or light fixtures, can help provide a transition from historic facade to Chinese streetscape.



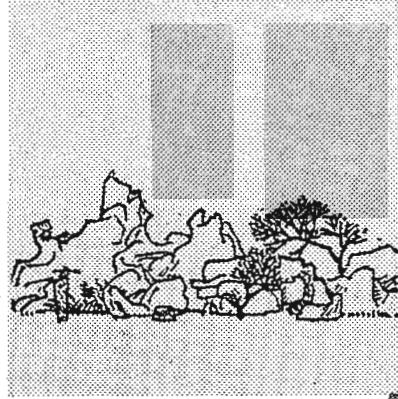
An example of a Chinatown Streetscape--west side of 7th Street

7.10 Chinese Elements for Park Design

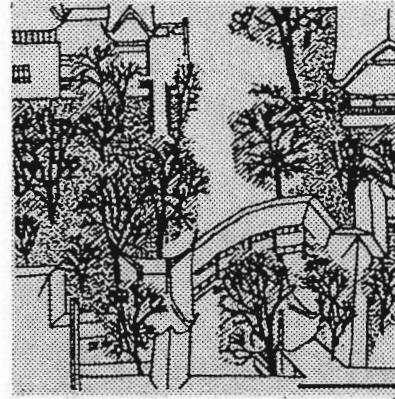
7.10 Chinese Elements for Park Design



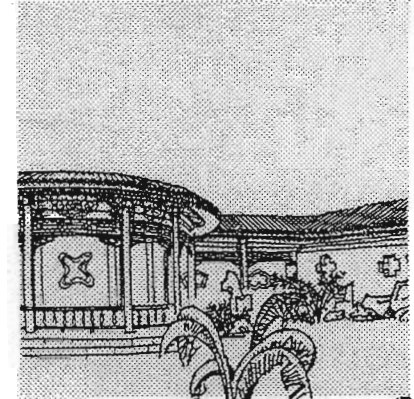
Water: The naturally shaped pond is an essential element in Chinese parks and gardens.



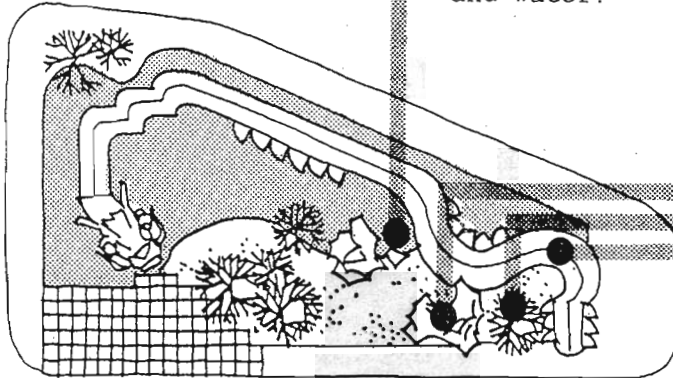
Rock Gardens: In the Chinese approach to landscape, the rock garden is a pond's counterpart. Together they symbolize mountain and water.



Plants: Specially selected species of trees, shrubs, and flowering plants are carefully placed to express natural beauty and elegance.



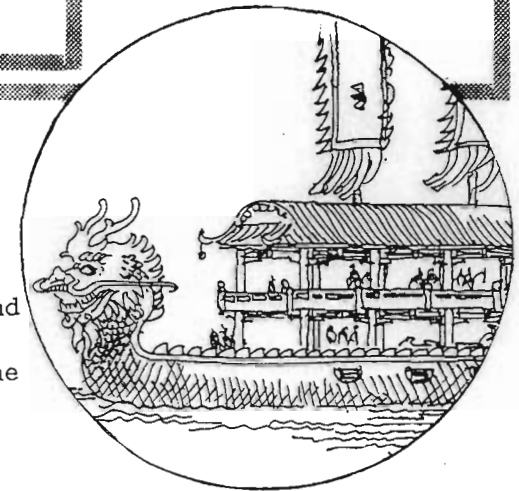
Galleries: One of the most vigorous and flexible elements in Chinese architecture. Gallery design can be unrestrained and vary widely to contribute vitality to a park area.



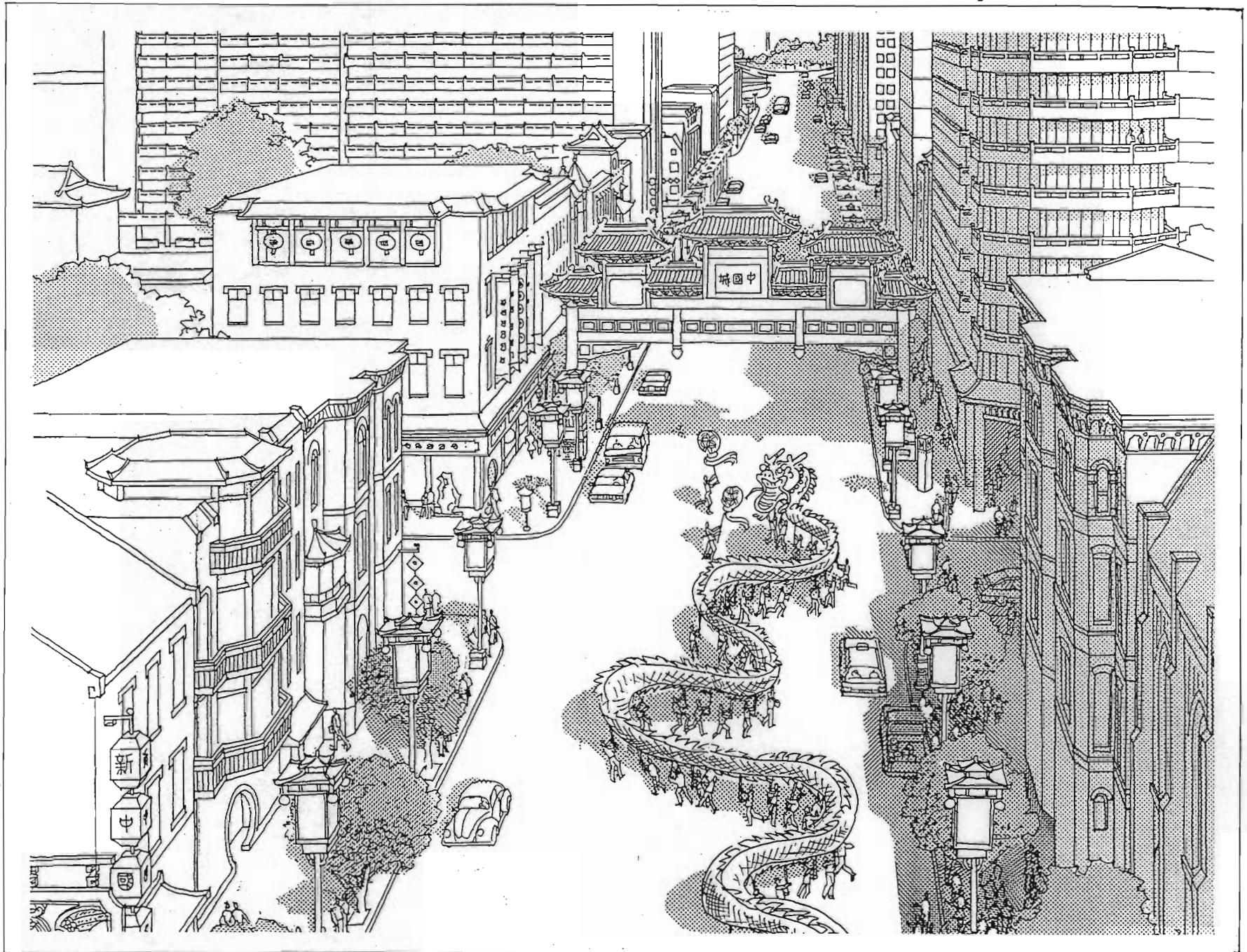
1 STREET



Left: A sample layout for the Chinatown park at 5th Street and Massachusetts Avenue, using Chinese motifs. The form of the mini souvenir/exhibition gallery is inspired by the Chinese dragon boat (right).



Sample Streetscape for H Street



8

Implementation

8 IMPLEMENTATION

It will be critical to establish mandatory procedures to implement building design guidelines and streetscape standards for Chinatown. The Downtown office development boom is placing too much pressure on sites in Chinatown for voluntary guidelines to be effective. Experience in other cities has shown that little heed is paid to voluntary or advisory design standards.

8.1 Streetscape Standards

Streetscape standards for Chinatown should be immediately incorporated into the Downtown Streetscape Standards, a mandatory set of standards administered by the Department of Public Works. All streetscape projects are reviewed by the Downtown Streetscape Committee. Any of the standards that will require further engineering or refinement before they can be applied should be held in abeyance and incorporated as soon as they are completed.

8.1.1 Private Development

Private developers of new construction projects in Chinatown should adhere to the new streetscape standards in the improvements they make to the public spaces in front of their buildings.

8.1.2 D.C. Government

The District government should adhere to the Downtown Streetscape Standards when making repairs to the public space in Chinatown.

8.2 Building Design Guidelines

Building design guidelines for Chinatown should be implemented immediately through either the Zoning Regulations or a Mayor's Order. In either case, the Office of Planning should establish administrative design review procedures that coordinate interagency and community input for any development projects in Chinatown having the potential for significant impact on the character of the area. Projects the Office of Planning determines do not have that potential (interiors, small signs, etc.) should be allowed to proceed on through the permit process once that determination is made.

8.2.1 Zoning Regulations

One option for implementing Chinatown building design guidelines is through the Zoning Regulations. Chinatown can be part of a Downtown Overlay District with specific requirements for administrative design review by the Office of Planning. In those cases where compliance with the building design guidelines and the design objectives for Chinatown cannot be accomplished, the application can go to the Board of Zoning Adjustment as a special exception.

8.2.2 Mayor's Order

A second option for implementing Chinatown building design guidelines is through a Mayor's Order. Such an order would establish the requirement for a design review and approval process to be administered by the Office of Planning. The process would be patterned after the existing Large Tract Review process.

8.2.3 Community Input

Regardless of the implementation mechanism chosen, community input will be required for each project in Chinatown. A notice of application should be mailed to the Chinatown Steering Committee (CSC) for review and comment. The applicant should be prepared to meet with the CSC to describe the project and answer questions. Citizens will be instructed to direct their comments on specific projects to the Office of Planning.

8.2.4 Agency Input

Whether building design guidelines are implemented through the Zoning Regulations or a Mayor's Order, the Office of Planning should coordinate applications with the affected agencies. For example, if the project is within the Downtown Historic District or is a historic landmark, it should be coordinated with the historic preservation staff of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. This coordination is particularly important because

of the possible constraints that the historic preservation review process can place on the design options for such a project.

8.2.5 Administrative Review

The Office of Planning should advise the applicant of the prospective coordinated review and request required documentation. After receipt of the agency and community comments and completion of the technical review, the Office of Planning should initiate negotiations with the applicant to implement the recommendations flowing from that review. Upon successful completion of negotiations, the Office of Planning should certify that the application complies with the general design objectives for Chinatown described in the Comprehensive Plan and embodied in the Chinatown building design guidelines.

9

Summary

9 SUMMARY

D.C. Laws 5-76 and 5-187 call for a strengthening of Chinatown's Chinese character. Implementation of building design guidelines and streetscape standards for Chinatown will help create an enhanced Chinatown with a strong Chinese character.

Review Criteria

The following criteria are recommended for incorporation into the design review process to be established for review of all development projects in Chinatown.

Overall Criteria

- Good Design and Enhancement of Chinese Character
- Compatibility with the Five Design Objectives

Criteria for Buildings

- Approach to using Chinese style
- Overall East-West design integration
- Significant Chinese building elements
- Roof detail
- Doors and windows

- Decoration
- Signage and Chinese characters
- Colors

Criteria for Streetscape

Streetscape design is a vital complementary partner of building design. Evaluation of streetscape must include:

- Overall Chinese character of streetscape and landscape
- Compatibility with Streetscape Design Concept
- Sidewalk paving
- Relation between paving and landscaping
- Street lighting
- Freestanding design elements
- Street furniture
- Signage

Implementation of building design guidelines and streetscape standards will help Washington, D.C.'s Chinatown to reach its greatest potential and to make a strong and lasting contribution to our city.

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