

User's Guide to Chinatown Design Review

What is Chinatown Design Review?

Chinatown Design Review is a process by which the City and local community representatives evaluate proposed project designs in Chinatown to ensure that they result in high quality buildings and streetscapes that respond to this area's unique cultural context. The Chinatown Steering Committee and the Design Review Sub-Committee provide input to the Office of Planning.

In order to obtain a building permit, all new signage, awning, new construction and substantial renovation projects in Chinatown are subject to Chinatown Design Review.

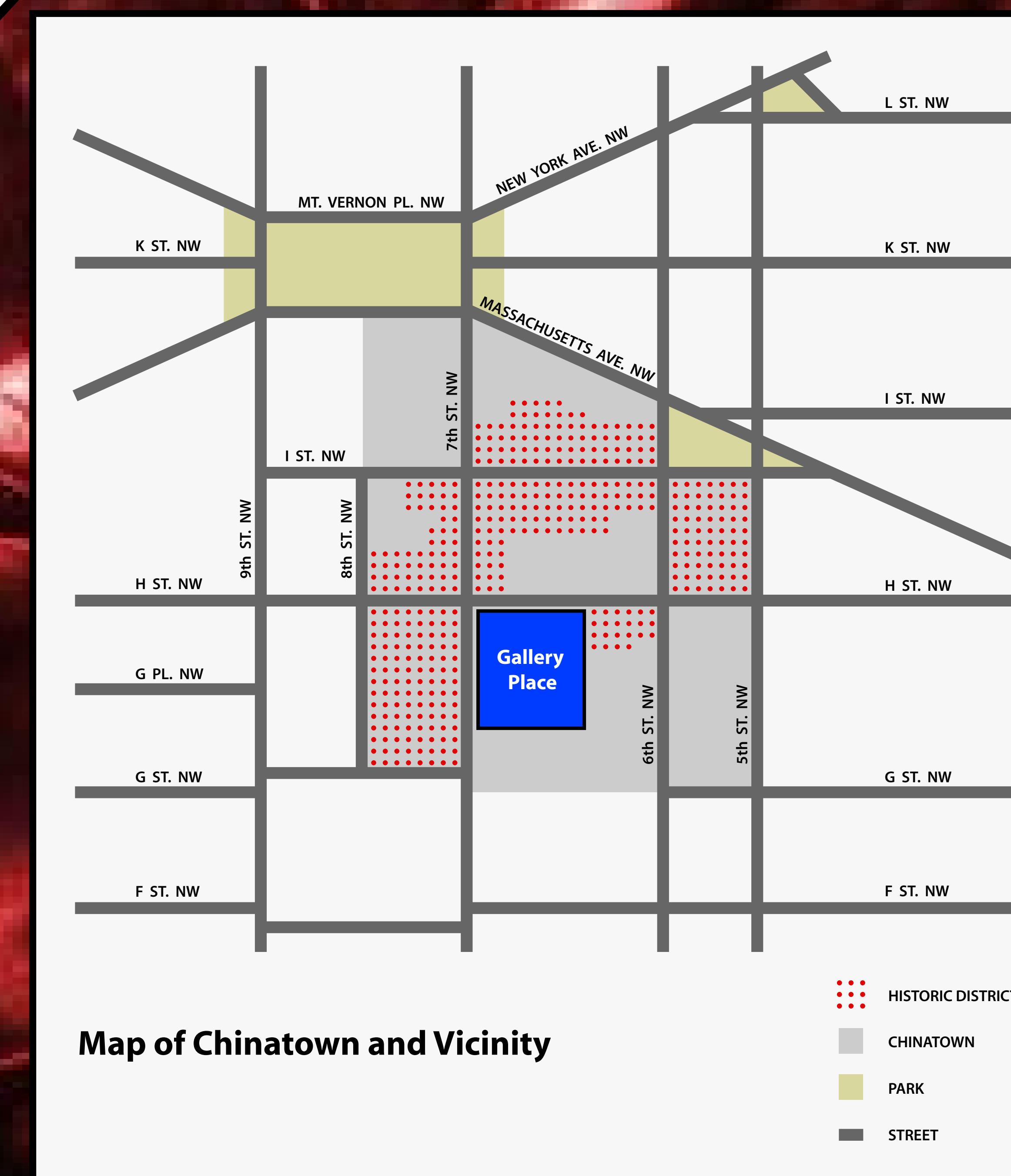
What are the objectives of Chinatown Design Review?

There are three objectives of the Chinatown Design Review process:

- (1) Retain consistency with the policies outlined in the District Elements of the 2006 DC Comprehensive Plan, especially those outlined in the Urban Design Element;
- (2) Contribute to the Chinese "Theme" of Chinatown through building facades, awnings, and/or signage design; and
- (3) Improve and contribute to the Chinese and pedestrian character of public space by following guidelines established for Chinatown in the DC Downtown Streetscape Area.

Is my project subject to Chinatown Design Review?

If you are planning to construct a new building, carry out substantial renovation of an existing building, install a storefront sign, a banner or an awning (any form of construction that requires a building permit) and your project is located within Chinatown (see map below), your project must undergo Chinatown Design Review. If your project lies within the Historic District or is a sign in the Gallery Place project, it must also undergo additional review. Projects in the historic district must be reviewed by Historic Preservation staff; signs at Gallery Place must be reviewed by the Office of Planning and the Department of Transportation.



How does the Chinatown Design Review process work?

1 Submit Application to OP

The Applicant starts the Chinatown Design Review process when they provide all the **necessary information required by the Office of Planning (OP)**.

Necessary Information:

Application Form for Chinatown Design Review with all fields appropriately filled-in.

Names and Addresses of all owners and their authorized agent.

Statement describing how the project responds to the Chinatown Design Review objectives.

Drawings including plans, elevations, sections, rendering and other visual material indicating the appearance and proposed uses of the project, including dimensions, colors, and materials.

Historic Districts require extra documents. If the project is within a Historic District, submit a statement describing how preservation constraints affect Chinese design character and how this character can be accommodated within those constraints. In addition, the Applicant should contact the Historic Preservation Office to initiate the Historic Preservation Design Review process.

Gallery Place Graphic Review, which includes all signs at the Gallery Place project, will take place concurrently with Chinatown Design Review and requires coordination with the Department of Transportation

Circulation Plan is required for new construction and major renovation projects. It must show the location of vehicular and pedestrian access ways, the location, number, and dimension of all off-street parking spaces and loading bays, and the locations and dimensions of other public space improvements.

Construction Timetable is required for new construction and major renovation projects that states the approximate schedule of building construction.

2 Notification

OP informs the **Chinatown Steering Committee (CSC)**, **Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2C (ANC-2C)**, and any other relevant city agencies (Historic Preservation Office, District Department of Transportation, etc.) about the project. If, upon examination of the Application, the Director of OP determines that a design review is unnecessary, the Director will promptly notify all parties.

3 OP and CSC Review Project

No later than **60 days** after the application has been accepted by OP, the Applicant presents their project design for initial evaluation. OP seeks input from the Chinatown Steering Committee and their Design Review Sub-Committee and any other relevant city agencies on the project's design.

4 Response from OP

At the end of the 60 day review period, OP issues a set of findings and recommendations to the Applicant in response to the project's design. In the case of small projects, such as storefront signs and awnings, OP may issue a report before the end of the 60 day period.

...after initial review with the Chinatown Steering Committee, OP determines that the project **has responded sufficiently and adequately** to all Chinatown Design Review objectives

then

Project is Approved

Congratulations! OP notifies all parties of the project's approval and sends a **Letter of Approval to DCRA**. This letter certifies that the Applicant has successfully completed Chinatown Design Review and is now allowed to apply for and receive building permits from DCRA.

...after initial review with the Chinatown Steering Committee, OP determines that the project **has not responded sufficiently and adequately** to all Chinatown Design Review objectives

then

5 Revise Design

...the review process continues for **up to 120 more days**. Within this window of time, the Applicant must address OP's findings and recommendations through revisions to their project design, drawings and presentation (Step 2). OP will seek input from CSC and any relevant city agencies and organization. (Step 3). Based on the revisions, OP may grant approval or suggest further changes to the project design (Step 4).

Relevant Documents:

Chinatown Design Review Procedures

You can find more details about the Chinatown Design Review process in Chapter 24 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations. This document is not available online, but you can request a copy by calling or writing the Office of Planning.

2006 DC Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive policy document that provides overall guidance for future planning and development of Washington, DC.

Available online: www.planning.dc.gov

Downtown Development Overlay District

The Downtown Development (DD) Zoning Overlay District is applied to the core of the Washington's downtown area, including parts of Chinatown, with the purpose of helping to accomplish the land use and development policies of the Comprehensive Plan relating to the affected Downtown sectors.

Available online: www.dcoz.dc.gov/info/reg/chapter_17.pdf

Historic Preservation Program

The District's Historic Preservation Office has prepared several useful resources to guide individuals through the Historic Preservation Review process and foster a clear understanding of Washington's preservation laws, context, and regulations.

Available online: www.planning.dc.gov

Downtown Streetscape Regulations

This District Regulation applies to any person engaged in redevelopment or substantial rehabilitation, including sidewalk rehabilitation, where more than 50 percent of the sidewalk area adjoining a project is planned for construction, within the Downtown Streetscape Area (which includes Chinatown).

Available online: www.ddot.dc.gov

Questions? Contact us:

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