

# Innovation: Envisioning Improvements *for* Tomorrow

*presented by:*

Jonathan Cheng, Annelisa Luong,  
Nancy Chen, Erin Dong

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the past eight weeks, fellows at the Chinatown Urban Institute have been learning the history, skills, and practical applications of the planning profession through a mixture of seminars, walking and biking tours, and interactive fieldwork. This culminated in a final project where we examined major planning issues that plague one city block in Chinatown. In order to address the needs and concerns of important community stakeholders, a comprehensive study was conducted, examining the existing conditions and problems. Based on our own observations as well as personal interviews, we formulated recommendations to maximize the land use potential of our block of study and improve the quality of life for the community.

As one of the oldest ethnic communities still in existence in the same location for the past 100 years, Chinatown serves as a cultural, social, political, and religious center for the greater Chinese community in the San Francisco Bay Area. One of the densest residential neighborhoods in San Francisco, Chinatown is also a commercial and tourist destination. For our block of study, we examined the block bordered north by Washington Street, west by Grant Avenue, south by Clay Street, and east by Kearny Street and home to Portsmouth Square. This block was selected as it encompasses all three roles Chinatown plays as residents, commercial tenants, and tourists all utilize the space on this block. Narrow sidewalks, congestion, speeding vehicles, noise pollution, and a lack of maintenance plague this block. Given these physical conditions, we decided to focus on issues concerning transportation and open space.

In developing recommendations for our block of interest, we examined the existing conditions. We researched the history of this block and analyzed how zoning has affected its development into its present form. Given the high volume of foot traffic experienced on this block, pedestrian and vehicle counts were conducted on Walter U Lum Place to gain a better understanding of traffic safety in the area. In addition, personal interviews were conducted with key community stakeholders. Each holds a unique perspective as their interactions and concept of space on this block differs. As a result, their ideas for improving this block vary. In moving forward with developing recommendations for enhance land use on this block, we must consider the needs of the community and incorporate their visions for the future.

After conducting interviews and observing how people use and interact with the space, we conceived several policy and programming proposals to improve transportation and increase open space on our block. We developed proposals for three major areas on our block: Grant Avenue, Walter U. Lum Place, and Kearny Street. In addition, we also have two additional projects for future study at the Hilton bridge and Portsmouth Square.

### Proposals:

#### Grant Avenue

- Sidewalk extensions
- Reconfiguration of parking and loading zones
- Installation of a pedestrian scramble

#### Walter U Lum Place

- Installation of a stop sign at the southern end of alleyway

- Add a pedestrian cross and corresponding yield signs
- Human scale lighting
- Sidewalk extensions with additional seating and greenery
- Enlarge bulbouts at the ends of the street
- Increase and improve visible of “no parking” signs
- Installation of speed bumps

\*Long term vision: Closure of alleyway to night traffic and reintroducing weekend night markets

#### Kearny Street

- Installation of a pedestrian scramble
- Installation of a left hand turn signal
- Open both parking garage entrances to all patrons
- Increase signage

#### Hilton Bridge

- Increase greenery and seating
- Develop into an open space and link the Chinese Culture Center

#### Portsmouth Square

- Convert children play structure into a senior recreational area

Our next steps are to advocate for funding to plan and implement these priority projects, present the findings and gather feedback from community members, and provide support to other neighborhood-based community organizations undertaking pedestrian assessments.



Chinatown Community  
Development Center

華協中心

## Chinatown Community Development Center Mission Statement

The mission of the Chinatown Community Development Corporation (CCDC) is to build community and enhance the quality of life for San Francisco residents. A place-based community development organization serving primarily the Chinatown neighborhood, the CCDC also serves other areas throughout the city, including North Beach, Tenderloin, the Northern Waterfront, Civic Center and the South of Market area. The roles CCDC plays in these areas include, but are not limited to, neighborhood advocates, community organizers, planners, developers, and managers of affordable housing.

## RATIONALE

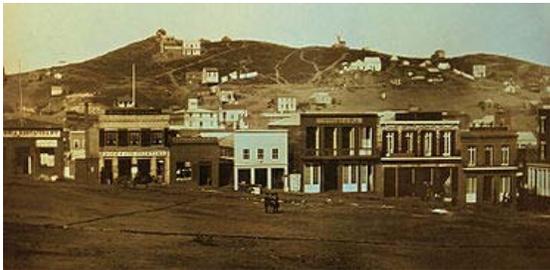
For our study, we examined and assessed current major transportation and open space issues as well the historical nature of development on the square block bordered by Washington Street to the north, Grant Avenue to the west, Kearney Avenue to the east, and Clay Street to the south. Portsmouth Square, one of the few open spaces in the highly dense Chinatown neighborhood, is located right in the heart of our chosen block. This site was chosen because the Portsmouth Square component is the social hub of the community and Grant Avenue is one of the main tourist attractions. Therefore, the area meets the needs of many locals and visitors alike. It is also an opportunity of untapped potential to improve the use of space along Grant Street and Walter U. Lum alleyway, as well as improve pedestrian safety along Kearny, Grant and Clay streets. This block is unique compared to others, with essentially two smaller square blocks completely different in its zoning and tenant use, connected by a well traveled alleyway. This block was also chosen to study how the alleyway serves as a tie between the two blocks, and how improvements can be made through open space and transportation recommendations. With an initial walkthrough of our block, we identified three major areas that would benefit from improvements focusing on our two topics of choice. These areas include the intersection of Clay and Kearney Streets with emphasis on the Portsmouth Square Garage, Walter U. Lum alleyway, and Grant Street. We have concluded that these three areas after improvement will greatly benefit the community.

## HISTORY

Block 209 and Portsmouth Square hold a great historical significance in San Francisco because of development that occurred in the beginnings of San Francisco. To the North of Block 209 is Grant Street, formerly known as Dupont Street. Walter U. Lum Place is a small alley that joins Block 209 and Portsmouth Square, a plaza that sits atop a multi-level public garage.

### Portsmouth Square

Portsmouth Square is particularly important to the history of San Francisco because it is practically as old as the city itself. It was the center of trade when the Spanish colonial rule was in place. In the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake, the Chinese community used Portsmouth Square for emergency quarters (Choy, 42). Over the past century, Portsmouth Plaza has seen its uses vary from rallies, to night markets, and daily tai chi exercises (Fong, 1). In 1960, the Square was torn down and a plaza was built atop a three-story parking structure to meet the community's demand for parking. The Portsmouth Plaza Parking Corporation was later "chartered to contribute toward the maintenance of Portsmouth Square by contributing to a fund specifically for this open space in Chinatown (Chinatown Neighborhood Improvement Resource Center, 34). The new design included a space for children to play and areas for elderly to play chess and do morning exercise (Chinatown Neighborhood Improvement Resource Center, 1; Yip, 6). It now serves as a 500 space garage that offers the community a wide variety of options for transportation into Chinatown (Portsmouth Plaza Parking Corporation).



Portsmouth Square, 1851



Rally at Portsmouth Square in support of International Hotel tenants

## Grant Avenue

Grant Avenue, previously known as Dupont Street, is the oldest street in San Francisco and much of the city's initial development was along Grant Avenue (Fong, page S). Records show that by the mid-1800's, there was an only one Chinese-owned store on Dupont but by the 1880's, the Chinese businesses would expand north the Pacific Street (Choy, 3). At the time, these establishments catered to the Chinese community, including family associations, markets, and gambling parlors (Yip, 4). The new vision for Dupont Street after the earthquake was that it would serve as the main corridor for the "Oriental" bazaar sector of town (Yip, 8). Look Tin Eli and others in the Chinese community added two pagoda styled lampposts with curved eaves that would later be the trend for lampposts on Grant Avenue. The "Oriental City" was intentionally marketed to attract tourists rather than locals (Yip, 8). In 1908, the street was renamed Grant Street, although locals still refer to the street as Dupont in Chinese (Yip, 10).

The "Oriental City" legacy continues on as Grant Street remains a tourist destination. Merchants on Grant Street generally sell souvenirs, t-shirts, and other (Fong, page S). Grant is also one of the main streets used for street fairs in the Chinese community (Fong, page S).



A picture of Dupont Street

## Walter U. Lum Place

Walter U Lum Place, previously known as Brenham Place, is a small street West of Portsmouth Square. The street is named after an activist who advocated for civil rights on behalf of the Chinese American community (Zhao, 97). Lum also founded a Chinese newspaper in 1904 and managed it for 35 years (Zhao, 106). The street was renamed Walter U. Lum after a vote by the Board of Supervisors in



1985, making Lum the first Chinese American to have a San Francisco Street named after him (**Schwisguth**). Between the years of 1965 and 1983, Kuo Lien Ying would teach Chinese martial arts in front of his studio on Walter U Lum Place (Fung and Fung).

Walter U. Lum – Courtesy of Chinese Historical Association

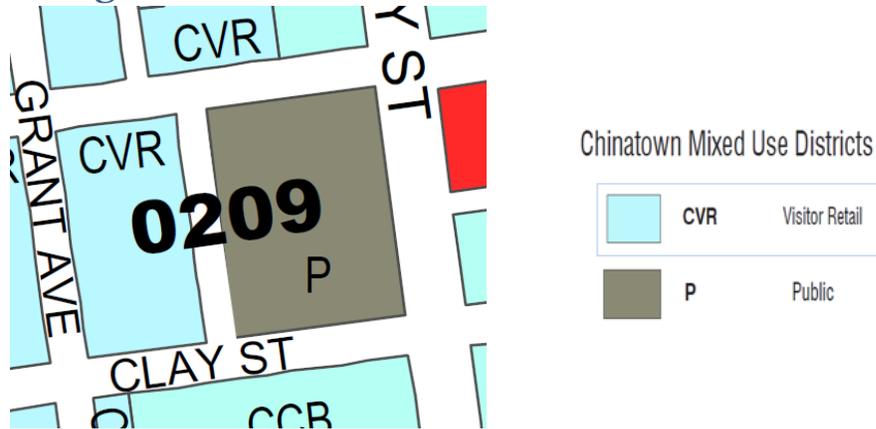
## METHODOLOGY

In order to make recommendations to improve current conditions on our block of study, we first must make an assessment of the existing area and conditions. Research was conducted as to the historical development of our block to its present day state. Data was gathered to gain a better understanding of how space is currently being used and interview conducted to learn about how local stakeholders view this block. In addition, we asked them about their ideas for improving this block. In the end, we hope to develop a comprehensive blueprint to maximize the land use potential on the block to better serve the community.

To understand our block of study, we must delve into the historical significance of the block and its impact on the development of it into its present state. We examined primary and secondary data, including archival research provided by the Chinatown Community Development Center as well as information from the San Francisco Planning Department and various Internet sources. A pedestrian and traffic count was also conducted on Walter U Lum Place to better understand and observe how residents, tourists, and merchants use this space. Also, personal interviews were conducted with stakeholders in order to gain a detailed “snapshot” of life on this block. During the interview process, specific questions, in addition to general questions, were asked to interviewees as pertaining to their role in the community. For tourists, this meant asking them their perception of the area while restaurants and commercial tenants were asked questions such as when and how often they use the loading zone. In addition, questions were asked as to what improvements they thought could be made, especially in relations to open space and transportation. Incorporating the voices of community members will allow for us to make proposals that address the needs of those who will be impacted by any improvement project.

The goal of this research and data collection is to develop both policy and programming proposals to better utilize space on this block. In accordance with the mission of the Chinatown Community Development Center, we believe that the community has an equal voice in any neighborhood projects and as such, should be included in the process. Our recommendations seek to incorporate these opinions and remedy the most glaring issues local stakeholders encounter on our block of study. In the end, we hope our proposals will be one step forward in developing a contemporary Chinatown community.

## Zoning and Land Use



Source: San Francisco Planning Department, San Francisco Citywide Zoning Map

As one of the oldest ethnic communities still in existence in the same location for over 100 years, Chinatown serves as a cultural, social, political, and religious center for the greater Chinese community in the San Francisco Bay Area. Of the 30 or so blocks that comprise Chinatown, many buildings are relatively low, often times no more than three stories high (San Francisco Planning Department). Many are mixed use structures, housing grocery stores, restaurants, family associations, specialty shops, and single occupancy residences (SROs). However, due to its proximity to the Financial District of San Francisco, as well as the wealthy communities of Nob Hill and North Beach, Chinatown is facing encroachment issues as these surrounding areas seek to expand. As such, according to the San Francisco General Plan of the Chinatown area, it has been specially zoned as the Chinatown Mixed Use District. The purpose of this zoning is to maintain the cultural heritage and historical urban character of the area while transforming it into a contemporary neighborhood.

Our block of study, which is bordered by Grant Avenue, Clay Street, Kearney Street, and Washington Street, with Walter U. Lum Place intersect this block, forming two distinct areas within this square block. This block is utilized by several key stakeholders, including tourists, residents, and merchants. Each group, while using this block and its space for their own individual functions, must interact with one another. As such, the specific zoning for this block reflects the way the land is being used.

One section of the block is bordered by Grant Avenue, Clay Street, Walter U Lum Place, and Washington Street. This segment of our block is zoned as part of the Chinatown Visitor Retail District (San Francisco Planning Department). According to the San Francisco Planning Department, this area is to be a concentration of shopping bazaars, art goods stores, and restaurants that attract visitors and shoppers and contribute to the city's visual and economic diversity (San Francisco Planning Department). The purpose of this district is to preserve the street's present character and scale and to accommodate uses primarily appealing to visitors. In order to promote continuous retail frontage, entertainment, financial services, medical service, automotive and drive-up uses are restricted. Most commercial uses, except financial services are permitted on the first two stories. There are also special controls on fast-food restaurants and tourist hotels (San Francisco Planning Department).

The specific zoning of this block has impact the existing stores that occupy the block. On one end at the corner of Clay Street and Grant Avenue, there is Asian Image, a shopping bazaar while at the other end of the block, there is another commercial tenant that sells t-shirts

and other souvenirs to tourists. In between these two shops are other shopping bazaars and restaurants. As a result of the homogeneity of commercial stores, Grant Avenue is frequented mainly only by tourists. This is also seen among the stores along Clay Street and Washington Street on this block. Along Walter U Lum Place, there is a bit more diverse in terms of the type of businesses. In addition to restaurants, there are several food related stores as well as a church, professional services, and specialty stores.

The other section of our block is bordered by Walter U Lum Place, Clay Street, Kearny Street, and Washington Street. It is zoned as public (San Francisco Planning Department, 2011). The main occupant of this space is Portsmouth Square, a public park in Chinatown. Below Portsmouth Square is a four story, 500 space parking garage (Portsmouth Square Garage). Chinatown has been designated by the San Francisco Planning Department as a high need neighborhood and has been granted acquisition funds through Proposition J Open Space acquisition program. However, since 1987, it has been the only high need neighborhood to not build a new park (San Francisco Planning Department). With Portsmouth Square being one of the few open spaces in Chinatown, measures are being taken to preserve its current physical character. Section 295 of the Planning Code was implemented in response to the passage of Proposition K in 1984. Planning Code Section 295 protected certain public open spaces from shadowing by new structures during the period between one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset, year round. Planning Code Section 295 restricts net new shadow on public open spaces under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Department, by any structure exceeding 40 feet, unless the Planning Commission, in consultation with the Recreation and Park Commission, finds the impact to be less than significant (San Francisco Planning Department, 75-76). These regulations have restricted the development of high rise buildings in the areas adjacent to the park.

The current zoning for block occupied by Portsmouth Square does reflect its intended function and purpose. Portsmouth Square is highly used by nearby residents as well as tourists looking to take a quick break from their exploration of Chinatown. Children run around at the play structure while their mothers and grandmothers converse among themselves. Elderly men gather around tables and benches located in the shaded areas to play checkers, GO, and cards as well as chat with one another. In the mornings, some of the elderly participate in traditional Chinese exercises aimed at keeping them active.

With the northern half of our block designated as part of Chinatown Visitor Retail District while the southern half zoned as a public space, it seeks to serve distinct constituents. Although its zoning has accomplished its intended results, it has also led to severe issues in the area. Along Grant Avenue, the narrow sidewalks are not sufficient for the large volume of tourists who frequent the area, resulting in spillover onto the streets. Also, the restrictions in terms of the types of businesses that can be operated do not encourage local residents to frequent these establishments. Regulations have kept Portsmouth Square from being negatively impacted by nearby new developments. However, within the park, we see a lack of maintenance in terms of facilities and landscaping. Also, the playgrounds designated for children are underutilized while seniors lack any recreational or exercise structures. There is also a lack of tables and shaded area, as many of the elderly congregate in these specific areas. Although present zoning has achieved its desired objectives, there have been unintended problems as a result of such policies.

## Existing Conditions

When looking at the existing conditions of our block of study, no one has a better perspective than local stakeholders. These people use this space everyday and can provide a more detailed “snapshot” of life on this block. Looking at our block, we identify three key stakeholders: residents, commercial tenants and merchants, and tourists. Although they all use this space, each possesses a unique viewpoint as their interactions with this space vary. Therefore, their perception of our block differs from one another.

### RESIDENTS

Although our block is zoned both as a part of the Chinatown Visitor Retail District and public, there is housing located on our block. According to the 2000 census, there are 172 residents who live on our block. This same data set also reported that there are 80 units located on our block. However, according to the most recent available data, which was provided by the Chinatown Community Development Corporation, there are 89 units located in five buildings on our block. This housing stock is comprised of 60 units are single occupancy residences (SROs), 26 units are apartments, and 3 units are flats (See Appendix B). According to the 2000 census, 57 of the 80 reported units were comprised of one to two people households, indicating that many are long term residents. This is not surprising as over 50 percent of the population is 50 years old and older and there are many SROs located on this block. There are also some families who live on this block as well. Making the block a more livable space for residents is an important aspect to consider when developing policy and programming recommendations.

While zoning for this block has led to a high concentration retail stores focused on attracting tourists, residents are also important stakeholders to consider when devise a plan to improve the area. Based on our interview with two local residents who live near Portsmouth Square, we discovered that there is a great need for more open space in Chinatown. The elderly lady we interviewed stated that she spends her entire day at Portsmouth Square, only leaving to eat lunch. She enjoys the fact that she gets exercise walking to the park everyday and that it is very conveniently located. When envisioning improvements that could be made, she would like to see more shaded areas with benches underneath them added (See Appendix C). This statement was very reflective of how local residents used the park. Regardless of the time of day, we see people huddled around benches and makeshift tables under trees. In addition, although the elderly woman felt safe walking to and from Portsmouth Square, we observed vehicles travelling at high speeds along Clay Street and Walter U Lum Place, stopping suddenly when they notice a pedestrian crossing the street. With Portsmouth Square being one of the few open spaces in Chinatown and a social gathering spot for local residents, any proposals to improve this block must encourage greater interactions with the existing space and address pedestrian safety.

### COMMERCIAL TENANTS/MERCHANTS

The zoning of our block as part of the Chinatown Visitor Retail District is intended to attract visitors and shoppers and as such, has a high concentration of shopping bazaars and restaurants, especially along Grant Avenue. There are 27 merchants located on this block. However this does not include the various commercial and professional offices located in the China Trade Center, which is anchored by the Empress of China restaurant. These establishments help fuel one of the main economic sectors in Chinatown as well as contribute to the greater San Francisco tourism economy. Based on interviews conducted with commercial

tenants on Grant Avenue and Walter U Lum Place, we learned about some of the challenges they encounter as well as what they believe will help improve their business.

Grant Avenue embodies the goal of the zoning as it is mainly patronized by tourists and visitors. As you walk down from Clay Street to Washington Street, one is bombarded by huge window displays of jewelry, ornaments, and other souvenirs as well as restaurants. The homogeneity of stores speaks volumes as to who are their targeted customers, tourists. Many of the tenants we interviewed expressed the need to improve conditions in order to bring more tourists into the area. One of the tenants we interviewed was Asian Image, an art goods and souvenir retailer, has been in business for many years. Like other businesses on the block, tourists are their main customers and making their experience more enjoyable is vital. Among the complaints they received from customers was the lack of available public restrooms. The owner of the store stated that although there is a private bathroom located in office of the building, they could not allow for customers to use it and often have to redirect tourists to Portsmouth Square. Accessibility was also an area of concern for this shop owner. When the possibility of reducing parking on Grant Avenue was discussed, there was great opposition. She thought it would make visiting Chinatown more inconvenient for tourists and could possibly reduce revenue (See Appendix C). The loss of any parking could also impact their ability to unload merchandise. Overall, based on our interviews with merchants along Grant Avenue, providing a better experience of tourists is a top priority but without any hindrance to their ability to conduct business.

Although there are many commercial businesses on this block, there is a sharp contrast in terms of the types of establishments operating on Grant Avenue and Walter U Lum Place. As a result, although these two streets are less than 100 feet apart, they cater to different customers. Whereas stores on Grant Avenue are carbon copies of one another, all selling souvenirs for tourists, there is more diversity in terms of the types of businesses on Walter U Lum Place. In addition to a restaurant, there are two food processing vendors, numerous specialty stores, a church, and nonprofit organization. These establishments serve a wider audience, primarily local residents and nearby workers, than those on Grant Avenue. Based on our interviews with various commercial tenants on this street, they face obstacles in attracting more patrons and worry that any dramatic changes to Walter U Lum Place could adversely impact their business. One of the tenants we interviewed, Golden Star Vietnamese Restaurant, reiterated concerns that closing the alleyway to through traffic would create an inconvenience to tourists and negatively affect not only their business but Chinatown as a whole. In addition, this street is used for unloading purposes by not only the restaurant but by Jackson Produce, a food processing vendor. Apprehension about closing Walter U Lum to vehicular traffic was echoed by the Chinese Congregational Church. During our interview, it was mentioned that many families and seniors who attend Sunday services are usually unloaded in front of the church before the vehicles are parked. Hills add provide additional hurdles for the elderly, who already have trouble walking long distances (See Appendix C). Like merchants located on Grant Avenue, tenants along Walter U Lum Place want to attract more customers but without increasing the difficulties or cost of operating their business.

Based on our interviews and observations of this block, we noticed a lack of interaction between residents and commercial tenants. While walking along Grant Avenue, we noticed that nearly all the customers in the stores were tourists. Given the restrictions on the types of businesses that can be operated, this is not particularly surprising. Most of the goods being sold are souvenirs and other trinkets, which attract visitors and not local residents. The owner of Asian Image, a arts good retailer on Grant Avenue stated that her main customers are tourists. On Walter U Lum Place, there was a bit more interaction between commercial tenants and residents. This could be due to the diverse businesses on this street. Located on this street are specialty stores and a church, two establishments that cater to the needs of the local population.

However, like Grant Avenue, many non-residents frequent businesses on this block, such as Golden Star Vietnamese Restaurant. Based on an interview with the owner of the restaurant, their main customers are local business people. This lack of interaction between residents and commercial tenants signify the need to improve land use in the area to better service these local stakeholders.

## **TOURISTS**

A third important stakeholder to consider that is unique to our block of study are tourists. Although as individuals they are not permanent entities like residents and merchants, as a group, they maintain a consistent presence and as such, bring a fresh and distinct perspective to the use of space on our block. Our block is zoned as part of the Chinatown Visitor Retail District, which is designed to highly concentrate shopping bazaars and restaurants that would attract tourists and visitors. While the city has been largely successful in transform Grant Avenue into a magnet for tourists, improvements must be made in order to sustain and grow this vital industry.

To ensure that Chinatown remains a welcoming place for tourists, one must consider how they interact and understand the existing physical environment of our block. Personal interviews were conducted to familiarize ourselves with their point of view. Based on these interviews, tourists stated the need for Grant Avenue to be more pedestrian friendly. Although there are not many vehicles that use this street, the sidewalks are too narrow to accommodate the high volume of tourists. Both families we interviewed stated the need for wider sidewalks, more greenery, and additional seating. One family from the Netherlands proposed eliminating all daytime parking. Concerns that road closures or a loss of parking by local merchants would deter visitors from coming seemed unfounded. Both groups we interviewed stated that they walked to Chinatown. One family from Auburn, California who had previously lived in the San Francisco Bay Area stated that the loss of parking would not deter them from revisiting Chinatown. The wife mentioned that Chinatown is a destination; one will find a way to get here regardless of any inconveniences that may occur (See Appendix C). While Grant Avenue is a premier destination for tourists, many improvement projects can be implemented to enhance their experience.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation to and from the area is convenient yet often hectic, with each block a one-way, single lane street with two bus lines that directly serve on our particular block. Clay Street consists of parked cars lining both sides of the street up until the block bordering Portsmouth Square, with a single lane going east. Parallel to Clay is Washington Street, which also consists of parked cars lining both sides of the street up until Portsmouth Square, and a single lane going the in direction of west. Perpendicular to Clay and Washington are Grant and Kearny streets, which are both one-way blocks traveling north. Grant Street is a single lane with parked cars lining only the west side of the block, leaving the east side open for loading. At the end of the block the lane splits into two, a left turn lane onto Washington and a lane that continues straight. Meanwhile, Kearny is a fast-paced and heavily traveled block consisting of three lanes with a forced left-turn lane from Clay into Portsmouth Square Garage, a bus stop for the 8X Bayshore Express lines on the east side of Kearny, and white and red zones lining the rest of the block on both sides of Kearny.

As for access to our square block, public transportation is one of the central methods of travel into the area for those who do not reside in Chinatown. For our block, two major MUNI lines travel in our area, which include the 1-California line and the 8X Bayshore Express lines.

The 1-California runs inbound on Clay Street from the outer Richmond towards Embarcadero while the 8X, 8AX and 8BX Bayshore Express line runs north on Kearny towards North Beach. Besides public transportation, traveling by personal automobile is also heavily relied on as a major mode of transport to our block. Cars especially frequent the blocks of Clay, Kearny, and Washington if they are parking in the Portsmouth Square Garage.

There are many interrelated transportation issues when researching and observing this square block. The two transportation issues that are especially important in this issue are pedestrian safety and congestion. Both of these issues are related and affect each other, but require different recommendations to improve these issues. These issues will be discussed in further detail in our Alternative Vision section.

The first issue, pedestrian safety, stood out as a major concern when it was observed that there were (and still are) plenty of jay-walkers crossing on Clay Street to enter or exit Portsmouth Square. A pedestrian and traffic count was performed to log the number of jay-walkers at the intersection of Walter U. Lum and Clay Street. This is particularly dangerous due to the speeding cars traveling down Clay Street, with the nearest crosswalk either at Grant Street or Kearny Street. Not only does this intersection raise a red flag, but pedestrian safety is also an issue along the intersection of Clay and Kearny streets. According to the Pedestrian Safety Needs Assessment performed by Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC), the intersection with the highest count of pedestrian-motor vehicle accidents in our block of study is this intersection (PSNA, 12). The data, which was gathered by SFPD, reveals that between 1999 and 2009 there were 6-10 pedestrian-vehicle injury collisions (PSNA, 12). The second transportation issue surrounding our square block is congestion at the intersection of Clay and Kearny streets. This not only affects traffic but pedestrian safety as well. Cars turning left in the forced left turn lane are consistently backed up along Clay Street, Walter U. Lum, and even in the intersection on Kearny, making it unsafe for pedestrians while in the crosswalk.

With this study, we identified recommendations that are key to improving pedestrian safety among our block. We envision a safer block for pedestrians and motorists, especially at targeted intersections. Because CCDC tenants have reportedly felt that the intersection of Clay and Kearny streets is relatively dangerous (PSNA, 9), it is anticipated that transportation needs for this area must be improved/met in order to increase safety for the community. With policy recommendations and physical improvements, short term and long term changes will seek to improve what is greatly needed by the community.

# INTRODUCTION TO ALTERNATIVE VISIONS

In developing our alternative visions for our block of study, we incorporated comments from the various community stakeholders as well as our own ideas based on our own personal observations on how people interact with the existing space. We will be focusing on addressing concerns about transportation and open space on our block. In formulating our recommendations, we identified best practices we learned through our weekly seminars and observed during our walking and biking tour of the city in order to maximize the potential land use of our block. Although some of our proposals may be somewhat ambitious, we believe that there are some feasible ideas that when implemented can dramatically improve how people interact with the space on our block. Any project that enhances how stakeholders use the land is an important step in improving the greater Chinatown community as a whole.

## GRANT AVENUE

### **Existing Conditions:**

There are currently seven commercial tenants located on Grant Avenue, not including the numerous businesses inside the Empress of China. There are currently 60 units of housing at Grant Avenue, including Single Room Occupancies and apartments.

The structure of Grant is unlike the rest of Chinatown - there is an abundance of tourist attractions like souvenir shops; whereas, Chinatown is more of grocery stores and fish markets, along with cheaper restaurants catering to locals. As for the physicality of Grant, there is a long, narrow sidewalk on both sides; parking on one side of Grant, and no parking on the other side. The part of Grant with no parking includes a loading zone, painted with yellow - no loading with traffic.

### **Alternate Vision:**

Our vision for Grant Avenue is to create a safer street for pedestrians; primarily to create an open space and have a better flow of traffic.

### **Policy Recommendation 1 – Sidewalk Extension**

One improvement we want to make is to have a two feet sidewalk extension - large enough to cover one lane and leave one lane to be converted into both a one way lane and a left turn lane. By doing so, the sidewalk extension would become a sitting area with plants. It would allow pedestrians to have more space to walk, to be able to sit down and rest; perhaps attracting more consumers for the stores of Grant as well. But, by reducing one lane, the cars would have more traffic buildup instead of the leisurely traffic there is now.

**Time frame:** 1-2 years

### **Policy Recommendation #2 – Loading Zone**

For Grant Avenue, we have observed that people park in the loading zone during loading hours because of the lack of signage. In order to add another loading zone, the sidewalk extension would not start from the beginning of the intersection of Clay and Grant – instead, there would be a loading zone approximately three parking spaces wide before the sidewalk extension begins. By adding a loading zone, the commercial tenants will have one on both sides

of the street instead of just one, adding to convenience. However, through the interviews we conducted, we have found that storeowners do not want to decrease the amount of parking because they believe less parking will deter customers from visiting Chinatown, and thus, their stores.

**Time frame:** 2 years

Example of a bench:



(Source: Google Images)

Example of plants:



### **Policy Recommendation #3 – Scramble System on Grant and Washington Intersection**

A scramble system on Grant and Washington would improve the street in terms of allowing cars and people to proceed at different times. Although there will be backup in traffic due to the one lane on Grant Avenue, the scramble system will allow the cars to go separately from the pedestrians – reducing the amount of accidents on Grant Avenue. Ideally, the pedestrians would not cross on red light and the cars will only turn on green – thus minimizing the chances of pedestrian accidents.

**Time frame:** 1 year

## **WALTER U. LUM PLACE**

### **Existing Conditions**

At the heart of our square block is Walter U. Lum alleyway. A one way street, this alleyway borders Portsmouth Square to the west, serving as a major thoroughfare for cars traveling south from Washington Street to Clay Street. This alleyway is unique; the west side of the street is lined with commercial and residential units that have an unobstructed view of the square due to the east side of the block without any buildings. Located in the alleyway are ten commercial tenants with residential units on the upper levels of the buildings, which is a mix of single room occupancies, flats, and apartments.

Walter U. Lum functions not only as a passageway, but also as a roundabout for cars wanting to park in the Portsmouth Square Garage. The forced left turn lane from the alley onto Clay Street provides garage users a protected and separate lane from the rest of traffic directly into the garage. Because the garage sees over hundreds of vehicles per day, much of this traffic is directed in a queue that starts from Kearney to Washington to the alley, to Clay and back to the entrance of the garage. Hundreds of private automobiles travel through Walter

U. Lum per day to get to Clay Street or the garage, and combining that with the loading vehicles, congestion will ensue.

### Alternative Visions

To make Walter U. Lum a safer thoroughfare for both pedestrians and motorists, there are several steps that can be taken to improve pedestrian safety and open space, particularly at the intersection of the alleyway at Clay and Washington streets.

#### **Pedestrian Safety Recommendations:**

##### **Recommendation #1: Add a stop sign at south end of alleyway**

One of the recommendations that we feel strongly for is adding a stop sign at the south end of Walter U. Lum. Although there is currently no posted sign, cars turning left onto Clay Street must yield to oncoming traffic. Though it is common sense to do so, during our observations many cars do ignore the rules of the road and do not yield. This is a safety issue because cars parked along the north side of Clay Street at the corner of Walter U. Lum create a blind curve, making it even more difficult to spot cars barreling down Clay before turning left. Adding a stop sign will ensure that cars are more aware of their surroundings and to look out for pedestrians.

##### **Recommendation #2: Add pedestrian crosswalks and corresponding yield signs**

Another recommendation equally felt as strongly for is the need for crosswalks on both ends of the alley. The numbers gathered from the pedestrian count performed on the corner of the Clay Street and Walter U. Lum revealed that in 25 minutes, 41 people jaywalked across Clay Street (See Appendix A). Those who desire to enter Portsmouth Square or the alley from Clay Street legally have the option of crossing at Grant or at Kearny streets, which can be seen as inconvenient. Adding the crosswalks and a “Yield to Pedestrians” sign will alert motorists of potential crossings. Currently on the south end of Walter U. Lum there is a faded, standard crosswalk, and at the north there is none due to fading. What would best fit for this intersection is what Waverly Place has currently, which is a repaved section in the middle of the intersection to mark a crosswalk. This distinction between road and brick helps alert drivers of the crosswalk and to slow speeds.

**Timeline for both recommendations:** Immediately

Example of street sign:



(Source: Google Images)

Example of crosswalk seen on Waverly Place:



##### **Recommendation #3: Human scale lighting**

Currently there is the standard street bulb lighting, where human scale lighting is much needed on this alleyway. Installing lamps along the alleyway such as those seen on Grant Street would help to cast the light onto the sidewalk and pedestrians, making the area brighter

and safer. Installing human scale lighting at the intersections of the new crosswalks would also help to warn drivers of potential pedestrians.

**Timeline:** 6 months-1 year

Example of street lamp on Grant Street:



(Source: Google Images)

### **Open Space Recommendations:**

#### **Recommendation #1: Restructure the east side sidewalk, add benches and greenery**

Expanding the sidewalk on the east side of the alleyway and reconstructing it to form the shape of a wave would allow for creativity through open space designs. Not only would the expansion allow for benches and potted plants or planters to be placed there for the public to enjoy, but decreasing the size of the road will aim to eliminate illegal parking, double parked cars, and reduce the speed of drivers. By placing potted greenery and seating in an alternating pattern, this design for open space improvement will seek to create a more pedestrian and motor friendly alleyway.



Example of ideal sidewalk

#### **Recommendation #2: Create open space between the east sidewalk and the edge of Portsmouth Square**

Currently there is a railing that separates the alleyway from the edge of Portsmouth Square, which stretches the entire length of the sidewalk. To increase and utilize as much open space as possible, removing this railing to extend the sidewalk into the park will provide greater accessibility and improve the aesthetics of the alleyway. Once the railing is removed, the patch of grass adjacent to the sidewalk at the northwest corner of the square will also be

removed to allow for more seating, along with tables and trees for shade. From our observations and interview with a local resident, seats provided under shade are most valuable (See Appendix C). At present there are no seats on the patch of grass, and the area is completely empty compared to the seating on the paved ground of the park. By removing the railing and grass, and adding benches and tables, the space that once separated the alleyway and the park will be better utilized.

**Timeline for both recommendations:** 1-2 years

### **Transportation Recommendations:**

#### **Recommendation #1: Improve and increase signage-no parking**

During our observations, it was noted that there is a lack of signage enforcing the rules of parking on the block. Because of this, cars are parked along the red zone and in the loading zone which is strictly allowed for trucks only. But because the signs are not enforced, with them practically hidden by trees or damaged, improving and enforcing stricter parking regulations is needed to also increase safety and access. On the east side of the alleyway posted are two “Tow Away: No Parking Any Time” signs, and on the west posted are two signs for street cleaning and two “1 Hour Truck Parking 7AM to 6 PM Except Sundays”. Since there is no “No Parking Any Time” sign alongside the red zone at both ends of the alleyway, cars are parked there illegally. A “Tow Away: No Parking Any Time” sign should be placed next to the red zones to enforce this restriction. Below are the street signs currently on Walter U. Lum:



**Timeline:** immediately

#### **Recommendation #2: Add speed bumps**

Because Walter U. Lum sees numerous vehicles per hour, adding speed bumps at two ends of the alley to slow the speeds of eager drivers will increase vehicle and pedestrian safety. The west side of the alley is dedicated to loading zones for the commercial tenants, where often vehicles double park due to the inverse bulb out of the west side sidewalk and no parking allowed on the east side of the block. With double parked cars, large trucks loading, and cars driving through at a high speeds all in one alley, danger levels increase and the safety of

travelers are at risk. Speed bumps will slow speeds and keep motorists aware of all the action that is taking place within the alley.

**Timeline:** 6 months- 1 year

### **Long term recommendations**

Because these recommendations are short term, a long term goal envisioned would be to bring back night markets or other night-related events by closing down the alley to through traffic between the hours of 6pm to 9pm. This alleyway is hardly used for enjoyment, and closing down the street for a short amount of time will allow commercial tenants and residents enjoy the open space.

## **KEARNY STREET IMPROVEMENTS**

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

At the eastern end of our block of study lies Kearny Street. A one way street, it serves as one of the main arteries from downtown San Francisco to Chinatown, especially for private vehicles. The entrance for Portsmouth Square Garage, a four story, 500 space parking garage is also located on this street. Also sharing this road are public transit vehicles, as the heavily used 8X, 8AX, and 8BX transport residents from Visitacion Valley to Chinatown as well as the 1 California, which runs nearby along Clay Street. In addition, it is adjacent to Portsmouth Square, one of the few open spaces in Chinatown, which is frequented by many seniors and young children. All these ingredients combine to make a very hazardous intersection, for both pedestrians and motorists, at the corner of Kearny and Clay Street.

The corner of Kearny and Clay Street is one of the most dangerous intersections in Chinatown. In the “Chinatown Pedestrian Needs Assessment,” a report conducted by the Chinatown Community Development Center, Kearny Street was highlighted as one of the two hotspots for pedestrian fatalities. In a pedestrian count that was conducted on both weekday and weekend mornings and afternoons, over a two hour period, over 2000 pedestrians use this specific intersection, indicated a high volume of foot traffic (Chinatown Community Development Center, 17-19). At this intersection, pedestrians not only have to contend with vehicles heading straight but also with those who are making a left turn from Clay Street onto Kearny Street to enter Portsmouth Square Garage. According to the San Francisco Police Department, from 1999 to 2009, there have been six to ten pedestrian/vehicle collisions at the intersection of Kearny and Clay Street (Chinatown Community Development Center, 12). Many residents perceived this intersection to be dangerous. Improving transportation in the area, especially at this intersection, will not only allow for better traffic flow but increase public safety as well.

### **ALTERNATIVE VISIONS**

To make Kearny Street a safer road for both pedestrians and motorists, there are several steps that can be taken to improve transportation, particularly at the intersection of Kearny and Clay Street.

### **RECOMMENDATION #1: INSTALLATION OF A SCRAMBLE**

The installation of a pedestrian scramble at the intersection of Kearny and Clay Street would allow pedestrians to freely cross the street in all directions without the worry of moving

car traffic. As previously noted, this intersection experiences a high volume of pedestrian foot traffic everyday. Studies have shown that at intersections such as this one, where there is a high pedestrian traffic, pedestrian scrambles can reduce pedestrian crashes by 50 percent at intersections with high pedestrian volumes and low vehicle speeds and volumes (Zegeer, Opiela, and Cynecki). Following the installation of pedestrian scrambles along Stockton Street, a study that was conducted showed that automobile and MUNI bus speeds decreased when compared to vehicular speed prior to these installations (United States Department of Transportation).

**Timeline:** 2 to 4 years

### **RECOMMENDATION #2: INSTALLATION OF A LEFT TURN SIGNAL**

The installation of a left hand turn signal at the intersection of Kearny and Clay Street would force vehicles turn left into the garage to come to a full stop and prevent any blocking of crosswalks. Currently, the only entrance for all daily users of the Portsmouth Square Garage is by turning left from Clay Street into a designated lane that is separated from thru traffic on Kearny Street with cones. Although drivers should yield to pedestrians, often times, they do not. This lack of awareness could possibly be the cause behind the pedestrian/vehicle collisions that have occurred. The goal of installing this precaution is to heighten motorists' attentiveness of their surrounding area and increase public safety

**Timeline:** 2 to 5 years

### **RECOMMENDATION #3: CONVERT KEARNY ENTRANCE TO PORTSMOUTH SQUARE GARAGE FROM MONTHLY ONLY USERS TO ALL USERS**

Changing the Kearny Street entrance to the Portsmouth Square Garage to allow for all patrons to enter would hopefully reduce the need for vehicles to speed down Walter U Lum Place as a way to get onto Clay Street and turn into the current entrance. By providing an additional entrance on Kearny Street into the parking garage, vehicles will no longer have to circle around Portsmouth Square and reduce the likelihood of a pedestrian/vehicle collision. Implementation of this proposal would also require additional signage along Kearny Street to inform motorists of their ability to turn right into the parking garage.

**Limitations:** This particular project requires addressing some issues that may arise. When discussing this proposal with Peter Lee, manager of the Portsmouth Square Garage, he raised the possibility of traffic backing up on Kearny Street, particularly from noon to 2pm, as it is the busiest time of day. From our personal observations, almost no vehicles entered the designated monthly user entrance on Kearny Street. A traffic study must be conducted to examine the potential congestion on Kearny Street should this garage entrance be opened to all customers. This will likely require temporary opening this entrance to all customers and seeing if this traffic back up materializes.

Mr. Lee also mentioned that if Walter U Lum Place was closed to thru traffic, patrons are likely to use Waverly Street to get to Clay Street in order to enter the garage. This is a legitimate concern as it would not solve any of the existing traffic concerns, including speeding and pedestrian safety, and would only redirect these issues to another part of Chinatown. Once again, a traffic study should be conducted to determine the feasibility of this plan without redirecting traffic elsewhere.

**Timeline:** At owner's discretion

## RECOMMENDATION #4: INCREASE SIGNAGE

Increasing signage along both Kearny and Clay Street will provide motorists with more information and prompt better decision making skills. Currently, many drivers, particularly along Clay Street, are not aware of which lane turns into the parking garage, leading to last minute lane changes. This is particularly dangerous as the downhill orientation of this street requires more time to brake, especially MUNI buses. Repaving the road to include which direction the lane leads to as well as increasing signage before drivers can switch lanes will allow motorists to make safer lane changes. Also, given that some drivers may be monolingual, Chinese language signs directing drivers to the parking garage would be helpful.

**Timeline:** ASAP

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

### Hilton-Portsmouth Bridge

In 1971, the Holiday Inn Hotel originally built the bridge to connect the Chinese Cultural Center to Portsmouth Square (Choy 1979). In 2006, the building was bought and renovated by Hilton and gates were installed to keep the bridge open at only certain times of the day.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

The bridge that connects Portsmouth to the Hilton is made of concrete and brick. There are benches made with concrete slabs lining both sides of the bridge. At the end of the bridge, there is a set of gates that serves as a barrier between the bridge and Portsmouth Square. This bridge is closed during the night time and only has one side open during the daytime. Only a handful of people from the hotel and park use the space for seating.



### ALTERNATIVE VISIONS

To make the Hilton-Portsmouth Bridge an attractive space for tourists and local park users alike, there are several recommendations that would help make it more welcoming.

Recommendations:

- Increased greenery – Potted plants may create shady areas under which people like to congregate.
- Comfortable seating – To make the bridge more welcoming, exchange the concrete benches to something more comfortable such as wood, etc.
- Pedestrian lighting – Install lighting so that the bridge can be well-lit and safe for users at night.

- Link to Chinese Culture Center – The bridge can be used as a platform or space for an exhibit for artists working with the Chinese Culture Center



(Source: Google Images)

## Senior-centered playground

### Existing Conditions

Today, Portsmouth Square is a multi-level park that offers open space, seating, and a playing area mostly for children. Elderly community members comprise the largest group of park users yet often times, they are seen sitting playing games on the benches. There is also a small park on a lower level that children tend not to utilize since they favor the main play structure on the plaza.



### Alternative Vision

Some of the currently underutilized spaces in Portsmouth Square can be converted to better serve the elderly population who go to the park.

### Recommendations

Countries like the UK and Japan have led the way in installing playground equipment that is suitable for elderly to use. These prevention parks do not only provide patrons with a new way to interact with each other, but they also provide a space fitness and health prevention.



Demonstration of stretching structure.

Courtesy of <http://seniorsaloud.blogspot.com/2009/02/playgrounds-for-elderly.html>.

## Conclusion

After assessing current conditions on our square block, we determined that the most pressing issues that need to be addressed are transportation and open space. Through our observations, we noticed that narrow sidewalks, congestion, speeding vehicles, noise pollution, and a lack of maintenance plague this block. Said complications impact how community stakeholders interact with our block. In order to allow residents, commercial tenants, and tourists to better utilize our block, new policies are necessary to upgrade existing conditions. Improvements to transportation will help vehicles move more efficiently around our block and make it more pedestrian friendly. By improving pedestrian safety through transportation policies, it provides ample opportunities for the creation of quality open space. Enhancing and increasing open space will provide residents with a halcyon utopia amid the chaos and noise of Chinatown. Each street in our square block offers a chance to propose different policy and programming solutions to improve existing conditions.

Chinatown has historically been neglected and ignored by city officials despite pleas from the community. As a result, planning policies have been imposed on the neighborhood without much consideration of its impact on the residents. However, with the construction of the Central Subway, Chinatown is beginning to transform into a contemporary neighborhood. Grassroots activism, as the foundation for the Chinatown Community Development Center, is one of the essential elements to the advancement of advocacy planning. Thus, as Chinatown continues this metamorphosis, any improvement projects should prioritize the needs and wants of the community.

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## APPENDIX A. Traffic and Pedestrian Count – Walter U. Lum Place

Trial #1 – 12:00PM – 12:25PM (Weekday)

	Total	Rate per minute	Rate per hour
Pedestrians who "J-walked" across Clay Street	41	1.64 ppl/min.	98.4 People/Hour
Total number of people who walked into WUL or along WUL in non-designated pedestrian zones	56	2.24 ppl/min	134.4 People/hour
Total amount of cars that went through the alley	61	2.44 cars/min	146.4 cars/hr
Total amount of cars that drove directly from WUL alley to the parking lot	49	1.96 cars/min	117.6 cars/hr

% WUL drivers\* that did not enter parking 19.673

% WUL drivers\* that entered parking 80.33%

\*WUL drivers are cars that entered on the Washington side of Walter U Lum Place and exited at Clay Street during the time of the observation.

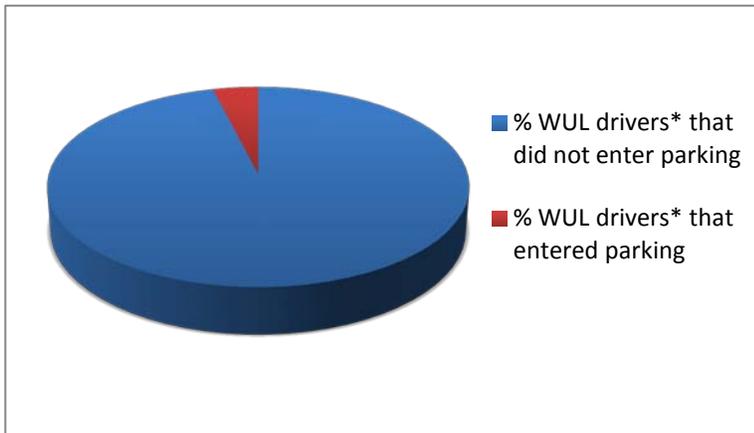


Figure 1: Percent of drivers in Trial #1 using Walter U. Lum Place en route to the Portsmouth Garage

Trial #2 – 12:00PM – 12:13PM (Weekday)

	Total	Rate per minute	Rate per hour
Pedestrians who "J-walked" across Clay Street	16	1.2307	73.846
Total number of people who walked into WUL or along WUL in non-designated pedestrian zones	23	1.76 ppl/min	106.153
Total amount of cars that went through the alley	35	2.692 cars/min	161.53 cars/hr
Total amount of cars that drove directly from WUL alley to the parking lot	21	1.615 cars/min	96.923 cars/hr
% WUL drivers* that did not enter parking	40		
% WUL drivers* that entered parking	60		

\*WUL drivers are cars that entered on the Washington side of Walter U Lum Place and exited at Clay Street during the time of the observation.

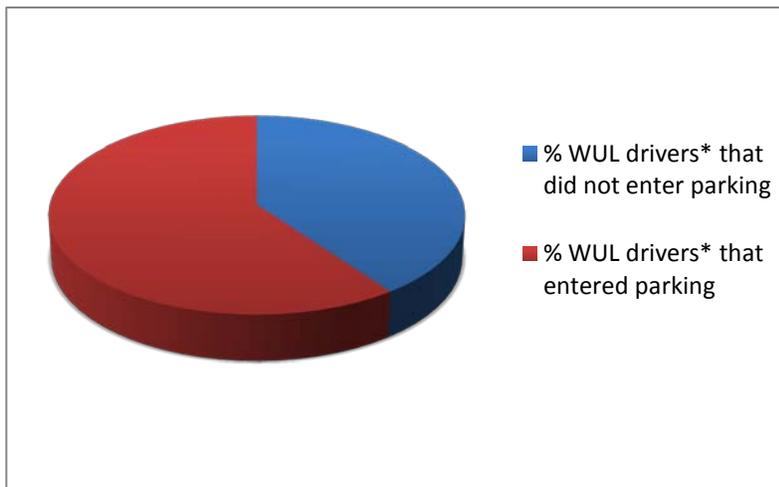


Figure #2: Percent of drivers in Trial #2 using Walter U. Lum Place en route to the Portsmouth Garage

## Appendix B. List of Residential/Commercial Tenants

### RESIDENTIAL

Address	Type of Residence	Number of Units
808-814 Grant Avenue	Apartments	20
824-828 Grant Avenue	Single Occupancy Residences	40
731-735 Washington Street	Single Occupancy Residences	20
21 Walter U Lum Place	Flats	3
49 Walter U Lum Place	Apartments	6

### COMMERCIAL

Address	Name of Business	Type of Business
764 Clay Street	Wing Hop Company	Retail
766 Clay Street	Health Source USA	Retail
768 Clay Street	Sing Sang Jewelry	Retail
778 Clay Street	Oriental Restaurant	Restaurant
	Asian American Elderly Humanitarian Society	Non Profit
800 Grant Avenue	Asian Image	Retail
814 Grant Avenue	Dragon City	Retail
826 and 832 Grant Avenue	Peking Bazaar	Retail
838 Grant Avenue	Empress of China	Restaurant
	Various retail and professional offices	Retail Professional Services
848 Grant Avenue	Maggie's Café	Restaurant
850 Grant Avenue	Bow Hon Seafood Restaurant	Restaurant
854 Grant Avenue	Yee Shew Yaw Association	Family Association
864 Grant Avenue	Only in Chinatown	Retail
743 Washington Street	EastWest Bank	Financial/Banking
737-739 Washington Street	Grant Place Restaurant	Restaurant
733 Washington Street	Washington Bakery and Restaurant	Restaurant
727 Washington Street	Sweet Mart	Retail
63 Walter U Lum Place	L+G Trading	Retail
61 Walter U Lum Place	Franklin Sing Insurance Agency	Professional Services
	Archs	Professional Services
57 Walter U Lum Place	Guangdong King and King Sausage	Food Vendor
53 Walter U Lum Place	Sam Yick Benevolent Association	Family Association
49 Walter U Lum Place	Golden Gate Buddha Supplies	Retail
21 Walter U Lum Place	Chinese Congregational Church	Church
17 Walter U Lum Place	Chinese for Affirmative Action	Non Profit
15 Walter U Lum Place	Jackson Produce Inc.	Food Vendor
	Lien-Ving Tai Chi Academy	????

11 Walter U Lum Place	Golden Star Vietnamese Restaurant	Restaurant
733 Kearny Street	Portsmouth Square Garage	Non-Profit

## Appendix C. Interviews with Residential and Commercial Tenants

Grant Street Commercial Tenant Interviews		
Questions	Asian Image	Empress of China- Eric Tom, owner of the building
How long has your business been here?	Oops. Didn't ask	
How often do you use the loading zone on Grant? Walter U. Lum?	Everyday. Load in front of their store on Grant	Use W.U.L. loading zone on a daily basis, especially by Empress of China
What times do you use the loading zone?	Morning, before 10AM	
What impact do you think parking/transportation in the area has on your business?	Parking issues, not enough parking	
Who do you generally service (tourists/residents)?	Tourists	
How would the closure (making it into open space with seating, greenery) of this block affect your business?	No. No parking means nobody comes to store; increase the amount of free parking and public restrooms	Closing off the street would not be favorable unless it is only for small periods of time. I would suggest earlier in the morning or later in the evening. Closing off the street would redirect traffic to Waverly or Stockton Street. If tenants were notified that the street was closed off at certain times, they would adjust their delivery times accordingly.
Would outdoor seating be something you would support (and be willing to maintain)?	They like it the way it is, sidewalk isn't wide enough so it's too crowded	
If we wanted to make this into a closed open space, would you mind if we put loading on the side of the block, a little bit farther [from your business]?	They don't load on weekends, if they can park in yellow zone then it is okay.	**Other comments: It's unclean and the trees have leaves that make the street dirty, and get rid of parking

**Walter U. Lum Commercial  
Tenant Interviews**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Golden Star Restaurant</b>	<b>Jackson Produce</b>
How long has the establishment been here?	20 years	20+ years, almost 30.
How often do you use the loading zone on WUL?	Quite often, everyday in the mornings	one day-not just morning, they send it (produce) to the restaurant themselves. restaurants located everywhere
What times do you use it (when do you usually load/unload)?	Mornings, before 10 AM	morning, 8am-11am at most. they open at 7am
What/who do you service? If businesses, where are they located?	Not too many tourists, mostly business people during the lunch hour	other restaurants, located nearby (walking and driving distance), a food processing and packaging business so no outsiders actually buy food from them
How would the closure of WUL affect your business?	No! Chinatown will be dead- no business, no one will come	have to let them load and transport- usually park at the corner. when not closed, moved to store and ....
What can be done to better improve business?		none- people don't buy stuff here
How important is the vicinity of the loading zone to your establishment?	Important because there's always deliveries. And its convenient right out in front.	no preference- can't change loading zone, if put farther it is fine- as long as cars can come and go
What impact do you think parking/transportation in the area has on your business?	no impact	no impact
How do you feel about cars turning on WUL to get to Portsmouth?	doesn't bother her, honking if too crowded drivers her crazy	
Would outdoor seating be something you would support (and be willing to maintain)?	people use road to get around, it is easier. if closed, not as convenient and less people will come out if closed to Chinatown. So no outdoor seating.	if open space- nothing can change. maybe make more bathrooms
If Walter U. Lum were closed to create open space, would you mind if we put loading at the ends of the block instead of where it is now?	not as convenient if loading zone further.	

**Walter U. Lum Commercial  
Tenant Interviews**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Chinese Congregational Church</b>
How long has the establishment been here?	morning and afternoons busy for drop off, deliveries throughout the day. Sunday mornings busy, esp for church. drop off in white loading zone, don't park here
How often do you use the loading zone on WUL?	Busiest on Sundays for church services, and loadings/drop offs throughout the day. It is used everyday
What times do you use it (when do you usually load/unload)?	Worshippers, summer camp programs, Bible studies. They usually find street parking, some park in garage. Most often the people find street parking
What/who do you service? If businesses, where are they located?	100% against closing, esp on sundays. No! no access, need to load and unload. would create a huge line on clay trying to get into garage, esp lunch time. no one (business) on the block would agree to closing down thru traffic or loading zones at end of blocks.
How would the closure of WUL affect your business?	N/A
What can be done to better improve business?	Very important. Senior citizens use it, parents drop off their kids, people are dropped off before Sunday worship services. It would be inconvenient to close it and there would be backup if no loading zone.
How important is the vicinity of the loading zone to your establishment?	Parking is hard in Chinatown and people know that. People know they can't park in the loading zone in front of our church, so they find street parking.
What impact do you think parking/transportation in the area has on your business?	It is needed.
If Walter U. Lum were closed to create open space, would you mind if we put loading at the ends of the block instead of where it is now?	(see response to question of closing Walter U. Lum)
What would you like to see improved?	Cleanliness (looks down the alley and points towards the boxes of vegetables outside of Jackson Produce)
What/how would you improve the safety of the alley?	Pretty safe already, cars don't speed down

**Local Interview at  
Portsmouth Square**

**Questions**

**Grandma and her helper**

Where do they live?	Commercial alleyway
How often do you use the park/how did they get there?	Everyday, by walking; Morning at 10, then go home to eat, and then go back to park in the afternoon
What do you like most about the park?	Can walk, good for their health
How many people do you usually come with?	Two total (grandma and her helper
What part of the park do you use the most?	They sit on the bench on the playground
What time do you use the park? (Morning, afternoon, night) and for what reason?	Morning and afternoon to walk
Are there any other parks/open space areas you frequent in Chinatown?	No, only Portsmouth is convenient
How is traffic in the area? Do you feel safe coming and leaving the park?	They feel safe
What would they like to see more of (i.e. tables, trees/shaded areas, cleaner facilities)?	Trees, shade, adding benches, benches under the trees for shade. bam.
What would they like to see less of (i.e. pigeons, cigarette butts)?	none
Would you like to see more open space nearby (bring up proposed closure of Walter Lum Place, night market)?	Yes; they would like to close off Walter U. Lum

**Portsmouth Square Garage Interview**

**Questions**

**Garage Manager- Peter Lee**

What is the busiest time of the day?	Between 12 pm - 2pm
How many monthly users are there? Regular/Daily	There are two different types of monthly users - 1) [75] Chinatown residents; 2) Financial District users (~200)
What type of users use the garage the most?	On the weekdays, it is most used by locals; On the weekends, its filled up by people outside of San Francisco; mostly people come in for lunch; there's also parking for the Hilton Parking lot ~ 25-30 cars overnight
What do you feel could be improved to make access to the garage more convenient, safer, and easier?	Sometimes when cars come out of the parking lot, they get a lot of traffic coming up washington, especially because of the queue that goes around the block requires cars to go up washington too
How many monthly users are there? Regular/Daily	There are two different types of monthly users - 1) [75] Chinatown residents; 2) Financial District users (~200)
What type of users use the garage the most?	On the weekdays, it is most used by locals; On the weekends, its filled up by people outside of San Francisco; mostly people come in for lunch; there's also parking for the Hilton Parking lot ~ 25-30 cars overnight
What do you feel could be improved to make access to the garage more convenient, safer, and easier?	Sometimes when cars come out of the parking lot, they get a lot of traffic coming up washington, especially because of the queue that goes around the block requires cars to go up washington too
What if we closed WUL	A lot of traffic would be redirected to Waverly
Could the inside of the parking lot be rearranged so that the public can also enter the monthly user gate?	yes but this could lead to a lot of traffic on kearny
Cones	Cones - cones are only up during peak hours, It is beyond their jurisdiction so they have to put up cones

Tourists Interviews		
Questions	Tourists in park	Tourists on Grant
How did they get here?	Walking	Subway
Where are they from?	Auburn, CA (moved to Auburn, used to live in East Bay and commuted to SF before)	Netherlands
What is their perception of the area (transportation, businesses, open space)?	Traffic is a nightmare	Too many cars, need to increase safety - have more benches, seating, open space, pedestrian area, more greenery
What could be done to make their visit a better one (i.e. wider sidewalks, diversify businesses)? What would they like to see more of?	Walking mall on Grant, but what is going to happen to the businesses then?	More restaurants, less cars
What would you like to see improved?	More greenery, seating; but there's a problem of cross streets	Eliminate daytime parking
Would the loss of parking spots deter them from visiting?	No	Didn't ask them this
Did you use the park while you are here? What about the bus? If yes, which bus(es) did you use?	Walked, staying at the marriot. easier to come to CT with the freeway, but it wouldn't bother them if Walter U Lum was closed off	No, just walking along the main streets



# CHINATOWN STOCKTON. POWELL JACKSON. WASHINGTON BLOCK STUDY



CHINATOWN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER  
URBAN INSTITUTE 2011

AUTHORS: IVANA HE, LINDA LY, JOYCE SLEN, CALVIN TRANG

FACILITATORS: DELAND CHAN, JUDY KUANG, ANGELINA YU

# BLOCK STUDY

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Stockton, Powell, Jackson, and Washington

Authors: Ivana He, Linda Ly, Joyce Slen, and Calvin Trang

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Chinatown Community Development Center  
Urban Institute 2011  
Facilitators: Deland Chan, Angelina Yu, and Judy Kuang

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August 5, 2011

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# INTRODUCTION

## Project Purpose

Our selected block is bounded by the following streets: Stockton, Jackson, Washington, and Powell. Many different uses on this block include residential, commercial, medical, and recreational uses. The mixed-uses characterizing this block describe the density and close-knit corridors of the Chinatown neighborhood. Our group selected this block to examine the transportation issues and economic development of Stockton Street, and how it characterizes regular life in the neighborhood. This report will give a comprehensive analysis of our block, offer extensive policy recommendations, and innovative planning ideas to enhance the quality of this unique and historic square block.

This particular block is very special to the Chinatown neighborhood because much of its past has illustrate significant struggles in the Asian American community. Some historic buildings on this block include the Chinese Hospital and Chinese Women’s Resource Center. In the first section, we will discuss the history of this square block. By commemorating the past, we will have great insight on the key aspects that make the block it is today. Second, we will step into the zoning and land use of the square block. The economic development on Stockton Street is an enormous aspect of land use on this city block. In addition, the rezoning of Chinatown has been affected from the residential advocacy of Orangeland. Third, we will present interviews from the residential and commercial tenants of this block. These features intertwine with land use and illustrate most of the block’s demographics. Last but not least, transportation is fundamental on Stockton

Street and Powell Street. We will examine the different issues that pedestrians face while walking along the neighborhood streets. It is essential that we take a look at all of the diverse aspects that make this block what it is.

Overall, we have observed that our square block is filled with a wonderful history. This block is more than just part of the Chinatown neighborhood. The past events of this block have become stepping stones for Asian American advocacy in America. Many of the buildings symbolize the struggles and triumphs of this community; so we encourage for a creative way to establish open space on this block, commemorate its significant past.

**Figure 1.1.** Stockton Street



# URBAN CONTEXT



**Figure 1.2.** Chinatown and its urban context.  
Original map by San Francisco Planning Department.

# URBAN CONTEXT



**Figure 1.3.** (Above) Map of selected block in Chinatown  
Original map by San Francisco Planning Department



**Figure 1.4.** (Below) Plan view of selected block  
Original plan by Turnstone Consulting, KCA Engineers

# HISTORY

## Block History

The streets perpendicular of Jackson and Washington are Stockton and Powell. There have been many historical events that have occurred on that block. This square block is significant to Chinatown's history because it houses the Chinese Hospital. It was created in 1911 and became a place where many immigrants go to seek medical attention. Before the establishment of this hospital, Chinese immigrants were excluded from other medical services because of their ethnicity. During the creation of this Hospital eleven family association and YMCA became part of part of the board, which enables them to voice the interest of the community<sup>1</sup>.

Another landmark on this square is Commodore Stockton Child Development Center. This building was originally a part of the Chinatown elementary school Commodore Stockton, before its name change. The Child Development Center was one of many places where Asian American fought for their civil right in the Tape v Hurley case<sup>2</sup>. During this case, there was a little girl named Mamie Tape who rejected from Springfield Elementary School. She was rejected because of the California Political Code that prohibited state government would cut all funding to the school if they accepted any children who were diseased, ill-mannered, or of children of Chinese or Mongolian decent<sup>3</sup>. So because of this law Mamie Tape was not able to go that

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<sup>1</sup>From interview with Reverend Norman Fong

<sup>2</sup>Chinatown Alleyway Tours

<sup>3</sup>[http://web.me.com/joelarkin/MontereyDemographicHistory/1885\\_C\\_A\\_Educ.html](http://web.me.com/joelarkin/MontereyDemographicHistory/1885_C_A_Educ.html)

school. However, she fought for her rights ultimately bringing her cases to the California Supreme Court. She eventually won the case clause "Separate but Equal"<sup>4</sup>. Her case was the precedent of the Plessy v. Ferguson, which applied the "Separate but Equal" clause.

## Landmarks



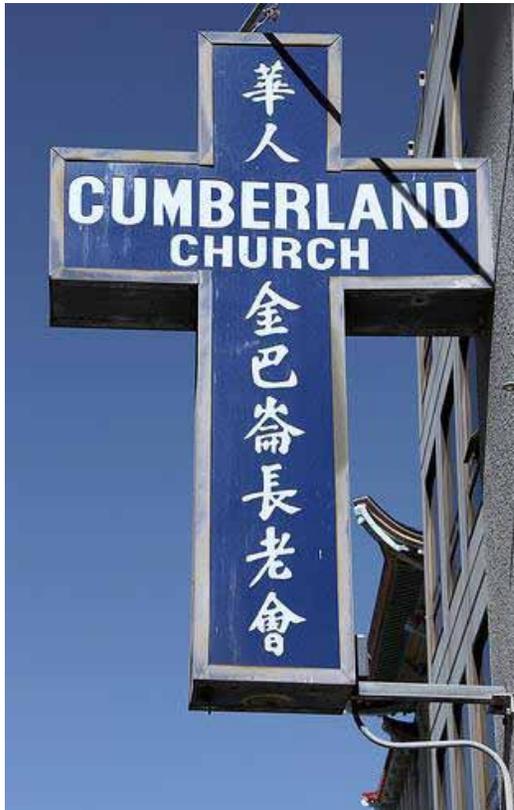
**Figure 2.1.** Commodore Stockton Child Development Center

The Commodore Stockton Elementary School has gone through many name changes. Now located across the street from Commodore Stockton Child Development Center, it was originally called The Chinese School then the Oriental School and then Commodore Stockton and now called Gordon J. Lau Elementary School.

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.asianamericanlegal.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=15&Itemid=36](http://www.asianamericanlegal.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=15&Itemid=36)

# HISTORY



**Figure 2.2.** Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church

Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church was established on January 1, 1984 and is part of the Chinese Christian Union. This missionary church fought to convince many people to join their church. Over the years it was a place that facilitated educational activities like Chinese school and summer camp. It also has a food pantry where food is distributed to local residents. Also over the years, the church's recognition in the community led to other

churches to practice similar educational youth activities<sup>5</sup>. Over the years, Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese church expanded into two campuses, one in San Francisco and another in Daly City.



**Figure 2.3.** Gum Moon Women's Residence

A historical building on this block is Gum Moon Women Residence. This was originally used as a place to assist woman who were “Shanghaied” to America; meaning women were forced to prostitution, to repay their travel debt coming to America<sup>6</sup>. So, during this time where women were “Shanghaied” the Gum Moon's Women

<sup>5</sup><http://notentirelylost.com/library/Historic%20and%20Architectural%20Guide%20to%20SF%20Chinatown.pdf> page 84

<sup>6</sup><http://notentirelylost.com/library/Historic%20and%20Architectural%20Guide%20to%20SF%20Chinatown.pdf> page 85

# HISTORY

Residence was a building where woman were rescued from prostitution and was taught domestic skill as a way to survive. When they fully learned these skills, they were able to go back into the community and find themselves a husband. Now, Gum Moon's Women Residence has become the Asian Women Resource Center. Here, women are still able to find help and learn life skills. Also this building has similar objectives as Donaldina Cameron House. However, Cameron House is more direct to youth assistance and activities. Currently, the building of Gum Moon's Residence is being renovated by Chinatown Community Development Center.



**Figure 2.4.** Chinese United Methodist Church

Another historical building is the Chinese United Methodist Church, which was reopened in 1911. This was a

church that also helped Gum Moon's Residence with woman who had been "Shanghaied". Also it was a place where many Asian American found support and help from the community. This church also believed in social justice for women. They believed mistreated women should be given shelter and be allowed to live a normal life.



**Figure 2.5.** Chinese Hospital old wing

The historically significant occupant residents of this block would be Bruce Lee who was born at the Chinese Hospital. Another historically significant occupant would be Gordon Chin who helped create Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC). This is a non-profit organization that advocates for changes in the community. The various issues CCDC fights against are eviction throughout the community, pedestrian safety, street

# HISTORY

improvement, and senior assistance. Also there was Mr. Kwong who was the first President for Community Tenants Association (CTA).



**Figure 2.6.** Past residence of Chinese Hospital:  
Bruce Lee and Gordon Chin

The renovation of the new Chinese Hospital was a fight from David Chui who wants to improve the health services in Chinatown. Chui campaigned for the renovation of the Chinese Hospital, where he fought to have a higher building zone than the ordinance. So by fighting for the renovation of the hospital, it illustrated how significant and important the Chinese Hospital is to the people of Chinatown and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Another land use battle was Orangeland that is located on 1055 Stockton Street (corner of Stockton and Jackson). It was one of the toughest land use issues that occurred in Chinatown, next to the International Hotel. In 1984, a developer proposed a plan to build condominiums, where the height of the building would be 105 feet high. Unfortunately, this would mean that the Orangeland

building would have to be torn down. Many current tenants living in Orangeland opposed this idea of eviction and began to fight.

In other cases, there were many people who wanted this building to be made, like Self Help for the Elderly. They saw this development project as an opportunity to create more senior housing. In contrast, organizations like the Chinatown Coalition for Better Housing and CCDC (previously known as Chinatown Neighborhood Improvement Resource Center), opposed the demolition of the building and the eviction of the tenants. This conflict ultimately led to many community advocates to choose sides, creating escalating tensions within the neighborhood.

Nevertheless, this land use battle resulted with a tenant victory. The developer decided to move the building to another location (near Broadway tunnel), and renames the original building from pine View Housing to Lady Shaw. During the end of this conflict, the creation of the Community Tenants Association (CTA) was formed and they feel proud that they were able to protect Orangeland. To conclude, this land use battle was an enormous impact to the rezoning of Chinatown buildings; keeping a low building height limit to preserve the Chinatown neighborhood from going commercial.

All of these past conflicts or changes affected the community greatly and created what is currently in place. Memorable events include the fight for Orangeland to the support for the construction of the Chinese Hospital. Through these conflicts and struggles, community organizations formed to bring on major changes and

# HISTORY

justices for the greater Chinese American community. Also surrounding the block are multiple kinds of transportation. So through all these input and ideas it helped us come up with our main focus which are safety and transportation, and our focus is trying to improve these conditions of the block.



**Figure 2.7.** (Above) Orangeland currently with Nissan Market as the current tenant



**Figure 2.8.** (Right) Orangeland in the past

# ZONING & LAND USE

## Land Use and Zoning Description

Located in the northwest quadrant of Chinatown where commercial businesses, community institutions, and residential housing thrive, our selected block belongs to the Chinese Residential Neighborhood Commercial (CRNC) Zoning District with the exception of two parcels in the Public Use (P) Zoning District.

Buildings designated as CRNC on this block typically have a ground-floor commercial space with residential units above. The dense concentration of housing found on Stockton Street and Powell Street demonstrate the block's primary role as a neighborhood of Chinatown. As stated in the San Francisco Planning Department Code, the CRNC zoning controls aim to "preserve neighborhood-serving uses and protect the residential livability of the area<sup>7</sup>." The zoning controls thus encourage new development that is "consistent with the residential," small-scale, and mixed-use characteristics of the area. The controls limit tourist-oriented commercial development, fast-food restaurants, financial services and automobile services and parking lots because of their inconsistency with the needs of the Chinatown community. The second zoning district found on this block is Public Use (P) and identifies public property

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<sup>7</sup>San Francisco Planning Code, Article 8: Mixed Use Districts, Sec. 812.1. Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District. San Francisco Planning Department. American Legal Publishing Corporation. 20 May 2011.

owned by a governmental agency. It applies to spaces for public use, such as open space.

## CRNC District Zoning Controls<sup>8</sup>

### Building Standard for New Development

- Height and Bulk: 50 ft. – 65 ft., 85 ft. max
- Lot Size (per development): 5000 sq. ft., Conditional (C): 5,001 sq. ft. and above
- Sun Access Setbacks: 15 ft.
- Maximum Street Frontage (per building): 50 ft., C: more than 50 ft.

### Commercial and Institutional Standards and Services:

- Open Space: 1 sq. ft. for every 50 sq. ft. of building over 10,000 sq. ft.
- Hours of Operation: 6 a.m. – 11 p.m., C: 11 p.m. – 2 a.m.

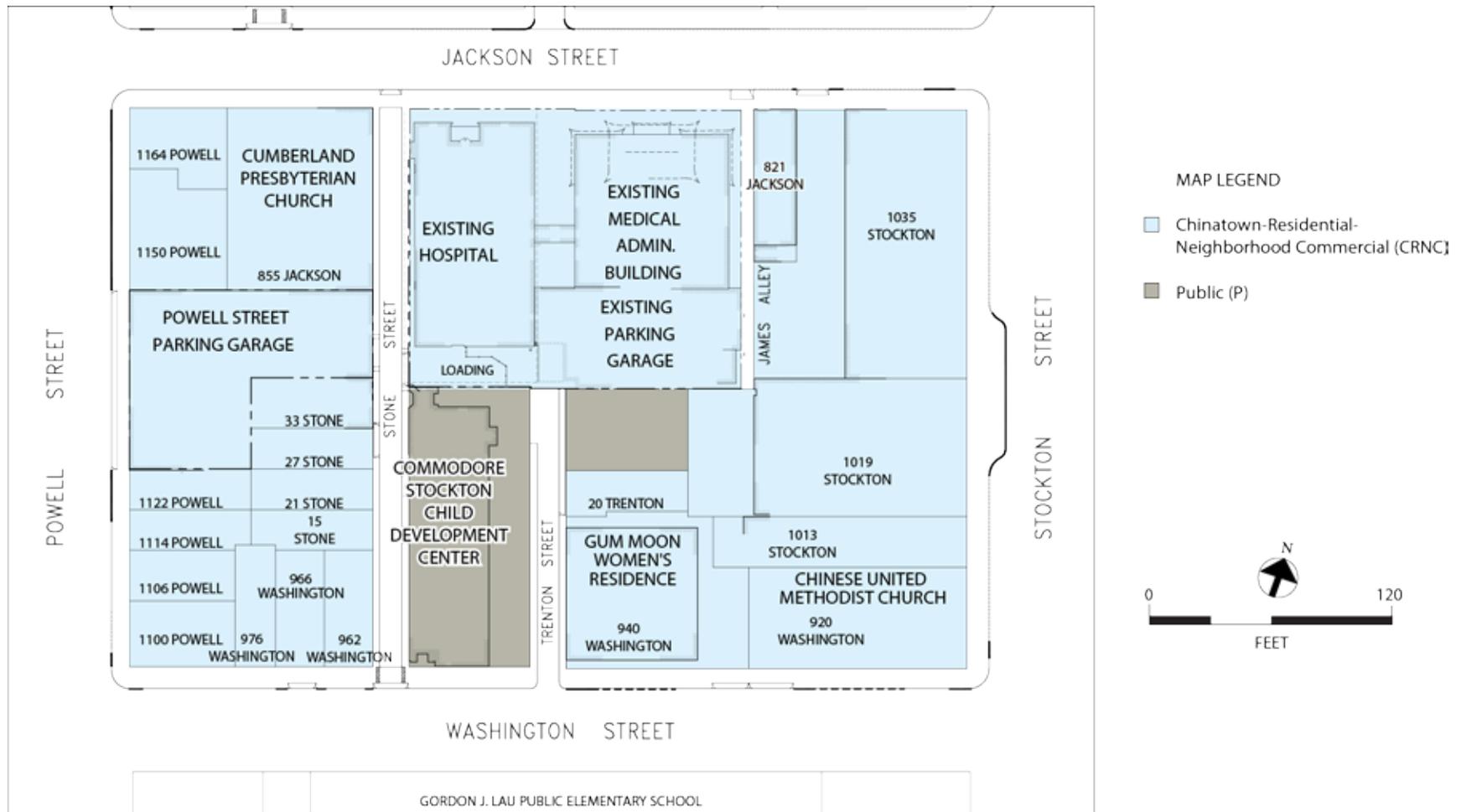
### Residential Standards and Uses

- Density, Dwelling Units: 1 unit per 200 sq. ft. lot area
- Density, Group Housing: 1 bedroom per 140 sq. ft. lot area
- Usable Open Space (per residential unit): 48 sq. ft.
- Off-Street Parking, Residential: Generally, 1 space per unit

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid. Table 812. Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District: Zoning Control Table.

# ZONING & LAND USE



**Figure 3.1.** Land Use and Zoning break down

Original plan provided by San Francisco Planning Department, Chinese Hospital Replacement Project Environmental Impact Report

# ZONING & LAND USE

## Existing Land Uses

Currently, twenty-three of the twenty-five parcels on this block are designated as CRNC. To reflect the “residential” and “commercial” nature of this district, buildings have residential units found above ground-floor, commercial space. Stockton Street is a major corridor for transportation, commercial and residential uses. The street is often called Chinatown’s “Main Street” because of the variety of shopping and goods available. Here, consumers may find a variety of local and regional specialty foods such as fresh vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, herbal medicine, pharmaceuticals, pastries and household necessities. Aside from commercial services, the block contains major community institutions that have historically served Chinatown and the greater Chinese community. These historic institutions include Chinese United Methodist Church, Cumberland Church and School, and Gum Moon Women’s Residence (Asian Women Resource Center).

While the CRNC encourages commercial and institutions vital to the neighborhood, there have been exceptions. The Chinese Hospital is a facility generally not permitted within CRNC districts<sup>9</sup>. Yet its historic significance in providing health care services to the neighborhood makes it an important and necessary landmark. Other exceptions include Wells Fargo and Bank of the Orient (financial services), Powell Automotive Center

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid. Table 812, Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial Zoning Control Table states under “Institutions .80” that medical facilities are allowed upon conditional permits.

and a commercial parking structure. While zoning controls aim to be rigid, it can be overcome through the method of obtaining conditional permits. Despite the flexibility in this process, the goal of CRNC is to first preserve the urban role of Chinatown as a neighborhood for residents and merchants. Zoning controls are thus designed to protect the livability of the neighborhood and retain the mixed-uses serving the needs of the community.

Lastly, two buildings on this block are designated as Public Use “P.” The Commodore Stockton Child Development Center is a civic institution serving as a preschool for young children with a before and after school program. Also found on the site are two playgrounds with great potential as open space. The second “P” parcel is a vacant lot located between Chinese Hospital and Gum Moon Women’s Residence that can be accessed through Trenton Alleyway. Currently it is used as a surface parking closed to the general public.

With public transit and civic development projects underway, it may become a challenge to retain the block’s predominant role as a residential neighborhood. The completion of Central Subway Station project one block away (Stockton Street and Washington Street) will increase the amount of visitors and potential consumers on this block. In addition, the Chinese Hospital Improvement project seeks to implement a Special Use District (SUD) for the hospital’s physical expansion. To curb new development that deviate from neighborhood interests

# ZONING & LAND USE

requires aggressive zoning controls. Retaining Chinatown's neighborhood-serving uses is vital not only for local residents, but also for the tourist industry. The neighborhood community is what makes Chinatown a unique attraction for tourists. Balancing competing land uses and self-interest groups amidst new development poses various dangers, but also provides opportunity to physically improve the block for open space, or introduce innovative uses and services that further harmonize the community.

**Figure 3.2.** Powell Street and its mixed-uses found

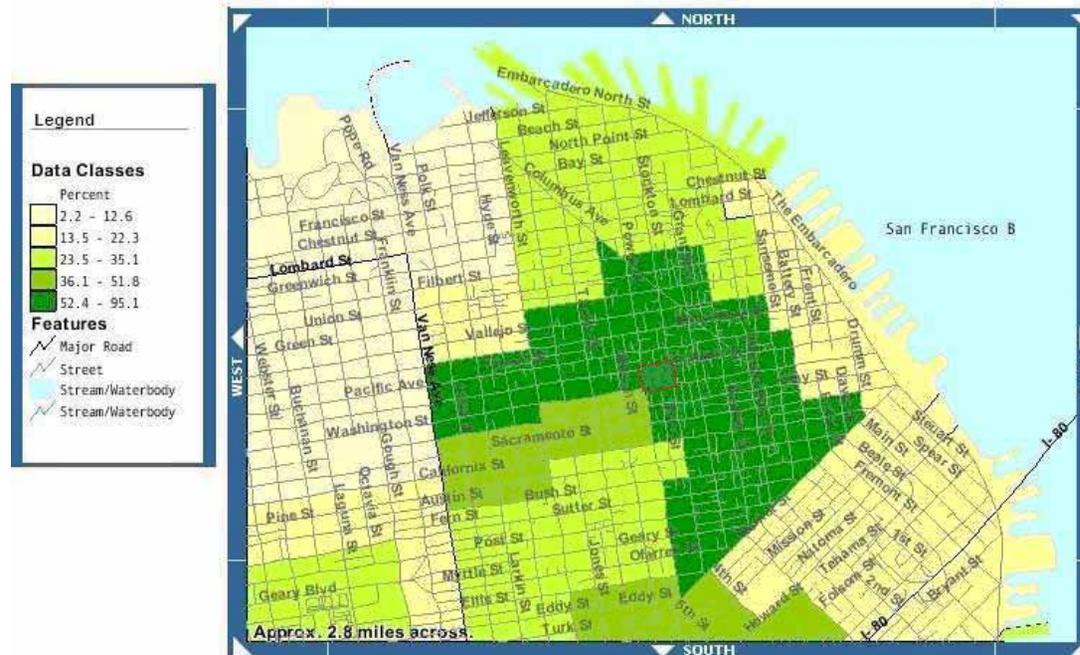


# NEIGHBORHOOD & COMMERCIAL

## Block Demographics

In addition to asking interview questions that were based on the themes of our project, we allowed the interviewees to speak freely on issues that they personally felt needed to be addressed.

**Figure 4.1.** Distribution of Asians throughout Chinatown (Census)



## Residential Tenants

1017 Stockton Street

After talking with a male tenant, who was in his 70's and a retiree of a Chinese restaurant right around the corner living in the 2-story SRO for over 20 years, we were able to capture his perspectives on public transportation and economic development in the neighborhood as well as touch upon the issues of his current living conditions.

He, who prefers to remain anonymous, stated that he was paying approximately \$200 a month for one of the larger rooms on his floor, whereas most of the other rooms that had been remodeled but divided in half to allow for additional renters, cost \$450/month. The rent is lower for those who lived there for a long time.

As someone who hardly stays at home and is always on the go, Mr. X is very satisfied with the public transportation. He heavily relies on his senior pass, now loaded onto his clipper card. Although, his destinations require him to transfer bus lines to get places, he believes that public transportation is very convenient.

He pursues recreation outside of Chinatown because he prefers the parks and recreation in other neighborhoods in the city. When asked whether Portsmouth Square was where he, like many other seniors who

## NEIGHBORHOOD & COMMERCIAL

utilize the park, likes to spend his time during the day, he told us “No, I like going to Golden Gate Park where there’s more sunlight and trees.” He shows a strong preference for spaciousness and more airy places. He dislikes the atmosphere in Portsmouth, like its poor ventilation, smoking, and gambling. When asked whether he was supportive of nightlife in Chinatown, he replied, “Very much. In fact, back in the days, Portsmouth Square held weekly nightly festivities. They should bring back activities like storytelling.” When asked about his opinion, as a senior, whether nightlife noise would disturb him and his fellow elderly neighbors of Chinatown, he said it should work if festivities end no later than 10 p.m.

For someone who hardly makes much use of his own neighborhood, when asked what of changes he’d like to see on this block, he said there isn’t anything particular that he feels could be changed and expresses concern more for the housing conditions. He complained about the lack of proper ventilation in the hallways, particularly what used to be an outdoor deck shared by everyone on the floor that the owner had closed off due to avoiding fixing potential weather damages. Also, although cleaning maintenance had become more frequent than before, he feels the sanitation could be further improved with a more regular cleaning schedule.

### Commercial Tenants

Businesses on this block serve mostly locals and, more specifically for Stockton Street, Chinese from other neighborhoods. The block sells produce, poultry, pastry, ginseng and other dried edibles, household items, medical services products, automotive services, snacks, and drinks.



*AMD Trading CO, 1021 Stockton Street.*

Mr. Ho, a non-Chinatown resident, is AMD Trading CO’s store manager. We saw a variety of items that were displayed, including clothes, towels, and other daily necessities. He illustrated a typical business day in which he would drive to North Beach, where his wife also runs a store of her own, park his car, and then make his way to Stockton Street by opening hours, 9-9:30 in the morning.

## NEIGHBORHOOD & COMMERCIAL

He closes the store at six in the evening to make it in time for dinner.

For a neighborhood that has already attained the reputation for selling goods at cheap costs, he believes having a successful business in Chinatown is being able to break even. In order to sustain business, he pays 3,000/month for rent and constantly stirs up his inventory. He said that, in the type of business where he sells a bit of everything, he needs to keep up with trends that change seasonally and takes note of what sells and what doesn't. In Chinatown, there's a large stock of stores that sell anything and everything, so price wars are inevitable.

He also feels that safety can be an issue sometimes, more after closing hours than during the day. Once he chased after the thief who robbed a purse from an elderly pedestrian along Stockton Street.



*WELLS FARGO, 1015 Stockton Street*

On the contrary, the store manager for Wells Fargo, a young man, possibly in his late 20's, feels that the bank, which opened in 2006, is flourishing. He acknowledges Bank of the Orient, which is located a couple stores down the block, but, as a chain store, competition is dealt with on a corporate level, so he doesn't think that as part of a branch, he should be in the position to feel threatened.

He too shared an overview of what his business days looked like. He drives from South Bay into Chinatown and parks his car on Vallejo Street. Approximately 70% of the bank's customers are Asian. The peak hours are around noon, although the beginning and end of the week is when he said business is heaviest.

## NEIGHBORHOOD & COMMERCIAL

When asked what he disliked or would like to change about the block, he suggested that stores along Stockton prevent their merchandise from spilling onto the sidewalk. He specifically emphasized how the grocery stores congest the sidewalks with their crates of produce disrupting the flow of pedestrians. He also said that sanitation of the streets could be improved. When asked if he would like to see any further improvements in Chinatown, he brought up how much he'd like to see nightlife. He said that besides the restaurants and businesses along Grant, which target mainly the tourists and stay open into the evening hours, the majority of Chinatown is "dead".

### **Tourists**

We approached two European tourists who were visiting the neighborhood for the first time. They made their way to Chinatown from Union Square by foot and explored souvenir shops on Grant Street. The two things that they said that could improve Chinatown as a tourist attraction include an information booth and nightlife.

# TRANSPORTATION

## Safer Streets

On our square block, the different modes of transportation are the cable car on Powell Street and the bus line on Stockton Street. The buses that run through Stockton Street are the 8AX, 8BX, 8X, 30, 45, and 91. People that use the cable car of transportation are usually tourists and other neighborhood visitors. Many people travel on foot to do their local grocery shopping or hospital visits. On the other hand, people that also work in the Chinese Hospital or hospital visitors usually park in the parking lot.



The top transportation issues on this square block are pedestrian safety on Stockton Street and parking on Powell Street. To begin, with constant ongoing traffic (i.e. bus lines and cars), there is constant congestion on Powell Street. Many pedestrians complain that other pedestrians do not follow traffic laws; ultimately causing dangerous accidents that could be avoided. Some cross the street while it is clearly a red light, and believe that they can cross without any danger. However, there have been severe accidents where the constant traffic on the street is unavoidable. In addition, many elder residents believe that because they take more time to cross the street, drivers become impatient and begin to honk. With the lack of cooperation from both sides of sidewalk safety, it is essential that we create secure boundaries that can cope with the limited space that is provided. The other transportation issue is parking on Powell Street. Some locals have addressed their concern about limited meter time, and how strict regulations have caused many parking tickets to occur.

However, a new way to envision a new streetscape design that will incorporate transportation planning is to expand Stockton Street. By extending the street, it will alleviate congestion on this commercial block. There will be further information on our recommendation.

**Figure 5.1.** Bilingual cross signs on Stockton Street and Jackson Street to accommodate Chinatown's multi-lingual residents.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Expanding Part of Stockton Street Sidewalk

In this plan to expand Stockton Street, we have examined and evaluated the main problems of this commercial block. We discovered there are too many people and there is no place to walk! That is why we have decided to extend part of the sidewalk permanently. This will occur in front of the Methodist Church and take away a few parking/loading spots. By doing this, pedestrians are able to walk on the street, and not be shoulder to shoulder.

## Business Loading Zones

Taking into consideration that local businesses on Stockton Street do load their commercial goods throughout the day, we will leave the other half of Stockton Street (near Jackson Street) to be an all-day loading zone. Although this recommendation will be taking away a few 30-minute meter parking spots, this will encourage visitors to use public transportation instead. In addition, since Stockton Street is a no parking zone until 6pm, we have seen that cars still do stop at the loading zone to pick up others from their grocery shopping. When we expand part of the city block, it will prohibit drivers from parking or picking up anyone.

## Increase Pedestrian Safety

Extending part of the sidewalk and allowing pedestrians to walk on the street will relieve the crowdedness of the street. Especially, with the expansion on the sidewalk between Washington and Stockton Street, it would be more welcoming to Central Subway goers. It

# TRANSPORTATION

will give a chance for people that are waiting for the bus to have more room to wait for public transportation. The limited space that surrounds the corner of Stockton Street (crossing Washington Street), people will have more room to wait on the extended street. This will alleviate congestion and resolve pedestrian-driver conflicts.

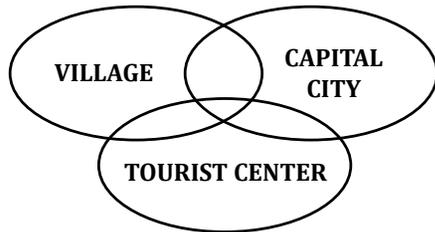


**Figure 5.2.** (Left) Expanding Stockton Street Sidewalk from the bus stop bulb out up to Washington Street, where the Central Subway Station will be.

Original plan by Turnstone Consulting, KCA Engineers.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Economic Development



**Figure 6.1.** Three sectors of the community

Commerce plays a vital role in Chinatown for all sectors of community: the residents, businesses, and the tourists. Three quarters of our block serves mostly the local community. Stockton Street is comprised of produce markets, banks, and variety shops, Jackson Street is the main location for medical services, and Washington Street is where a third of the schools in Chinatown are located. Although the majority of the business in Chinatown serves Chinatown residents, tourists also make use of this block. Cable car lines run along Powell Street and turn onto Jackson. Among the four streets, Stockton is heaviest on commerce. Businesses on this block serve mostly locals and Chinese from other neighborhoods. The block sells produce, poultry, pastry, ginseng and other dried edibles, household items, medical services products, automotive services, snacks, and drinks. (Look at Appendix for details of each unit)

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

After interviewing business owners of AMD Trading Co. and Wan Cheung Ginseng, on Stockton Street, they all agree that price competition is their major challenge. Although they've been renting out the space for a couple decades now which allows for their rent to be relatively low compared to its present value, many of who we interviewed manage their own store, cannot afford to hire anyone else, and are making just enough to break even. Variety shops and stores that sell ginseng and herbs are noticeably struggling on Stockton St

### Assessments

After much discussion, we have decided that the best way to have this street expansion project is in 2018, when the Central Subway line is completed. Since our goal is to create more walking room, this project will accommodate the expected increase in pedestrian traffic flow around the Central Subway Station.

- Business Consulting to boost business for mom and pop shops
  - o Online marketing
  - o Web design
  - o Identify market trends
  - o Develop strategies in response to market changes
- Creating an information Booth for visitors on Powell Street where it can conveniently attract tourists who get on and off at the cable car stop.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Open Space Opportunities

Open space has always been a challenging pursuit for a neighborhood as dense as Chinatown. As home to nearly 15,000 residents, primarily elderly and recent immigrants, San Francisco Chinatown is the densest neighborhood west of Manhattan<sup>10</sup>. Chinatown's housing stock is comprised mainly of small, single-resident rooms known as single room occupancy (SRO) units. The need for open space in Chinatown is important considering the neighborhood's dense living conditions. Furthermore, the few recreation sites available are Woh Hei Yuen Park, Portsmouth Square, Willie "Woo" Playground, and the Chinese Recreation Center. Alleyways have thus become an innovative solution to Chinatown's limited land space. Planners must look to alleyways and future development projects for increased open space opportunities.

Our block has three alleyways: Stone Street, Trenton Street, and James Street. For this recommendation, we will look primarily at Stone Street. First, the street has a low volume of cars passing through and indicates its potential as a safe site to develop open space on. The alleyway cuts through the block, from Washington Street to Jackson Street and contains several residential units, with entrances on the west side of the street. We propose creative usage of the large wall façade on the alleyway's east side for murals and other art displays. Situated on our block are historic landmarks such as Chinese Hospital and Gum Moon Women's Residence that have served Chinatown and the

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<sup>10</sup>Mixed Use. General Plan: Chinatown Area Plan. San Francisco Planning Department.

# . OPEN SPACE

greater Chinese community in a time of civil injustice. Public art displays on this street should then commemorate the block's historical significance. With residential agreement, alleyway improvement projects may be implemented to further the quality of these outdoor areas for open space use.

Secondly, it is important to expand upon open space opportunities when available. The zoning code requires all developers to consider open space into the project's total square footage. Currently, the Chinese Hospital has made proposals to fulfill their requirement by landscaping the hospital's front entrance on Jackson Street and potentially James Alleyway<sup>11</sup>. If the proposal follows through, the landscaped Jackson Street and James Alleyway will add a total of 2,605-sq.-ft. of open space for Chinatown. In this block study, we have observed elderly Chinatown residents occupy the benches located in front of the hospital on Jackson Street as a form of outdoor, open space. With shade and protection from the congested streets of Stockton, Jackson Street has great potential as open space for locals. As for James Alleyway, if adjacent tenants agree to the proposal then Chinese Hospital will renovate the alleyway as another landscaped open space. Future maintenance will be handled by the hospital. Opportunities for open space must be pushed for when possible.

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<sup>11</sup>Chinese Hospital Replacement Project. Notice of Preparation of an EIR/Initial Study. San Francisco Planning Department page 3.



**Figure 7.1.** Open space opportunities within our block. The three alleyways in addition to Jackson Street.

Original plan provided by San Francisco Planning Department, Chinese Hospital Replacement Project Environmental Impact Report

## Stone Street Existing Conditions

**Figure 7.2.** Broken windows and graffiti on a building in the middle of the alleyway



**Figure 7.3.** Trash bins filled to the rim and left out all day



## Stone Street Improvements

Before



After



**Figure 7.4.** Recommendations to improve Stone Street Alleyway, using the alleyway to display public art commemorating the block's historical significance.

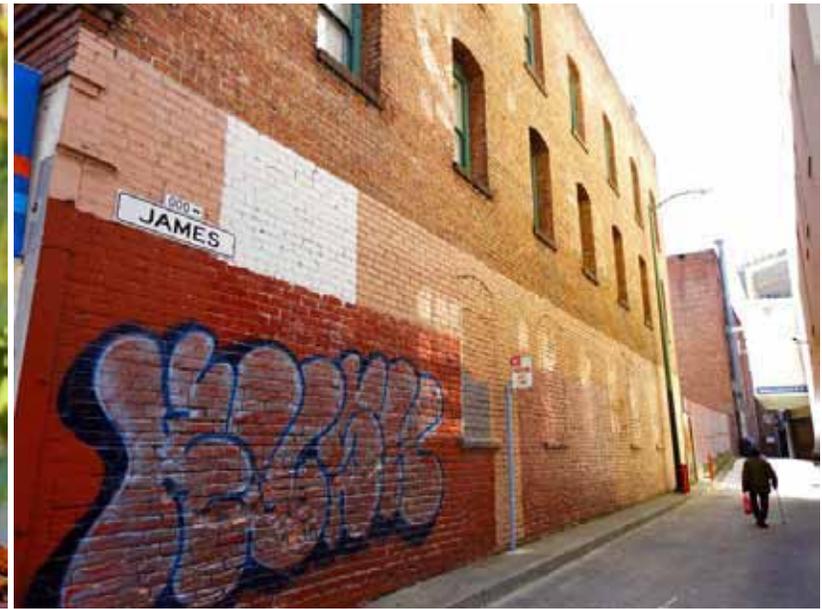
# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Chinese Hospital Redevelopment Project

# . OPEN SPACE



**Figure 7.5.** Current use of Jackson Street. Shade and planters are elements seen successful for this open space.



**Figure 7.6.** Current conditions of James Alleyway. This alleyway is both an entrance to a residential unit behind Chinese Hospital and to the hospital's parking structure on the right.

## James Alleyway Improvements

Before



After



**Figure 7.7.** Recommendations for James Alleyway, a street that will be used by Chinese Hospital as well as adjacent tenants such as the residents of the building on the left.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Open space is vital for all communities, but for Chinatown, that need has hardly been met. The neighborhood's total open space amounts to 0.45 acres per 1,000 residents – a large contrast to the city-wide average of 9 acres per 1,000 residents<sup>12</sup>. There must be continuing effort to improve and create more open space in Chinatown. However, the high needs of this neighborhood may be overlooked as the Recreation and Park Department adjusts their efforts in light of budget challenges. What can then be done to further advocate for improved open space in Chinatown? As city officials look into capitalizing on public space through private events<sup>13</sup>, Chinatown must then create an agenda to entice stakeholders. Given the success of Noodle Fest, Arts in the Alleyway and Chinatown as a major tourist attraction, the neighborhood has great potential in drawing visitors for such events. Meeting the needs of open space in Chinatown will not only serve residents, but create economic opportunities as well.

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<sup>12</sup>Mauney-Brodek, Karen. Letter to Recreation and Park Commission concerning North Beach Library Master Plan. San Francisco Recreation & Parks. 25 April 2011.

<sup>13</sup>Seltenrich, Nate. "SF parks advocates worried city's open spaces will become less public." San Francisco Examiner. 26 June 2011.

# . OPEN SPACE

## Assessments

- Push for open space opportunities through the Chinese Hospital Renovation project
  - o Jackson Street and James Alleyway landscaping – funded and maintained by Chinese Hospital
- Implement alleyway improvement projects on Stone Street
  - o Create designs commemorating the history and significance of community institutions found on this block: Chinese Hospital, Gum Moon Women's Residence in Stone Alleyway
  - o Allow community participation by inviting local artists and talents to participate in the redesign, possibly hosting a contest
  - o Implement aesthetic elements that require low maintenance such as wall murals, arches, and plaques
- Maximize use of the playgrounds situated in Commodore Stockton Child Development Center during non-school hours

# CONCLUSION

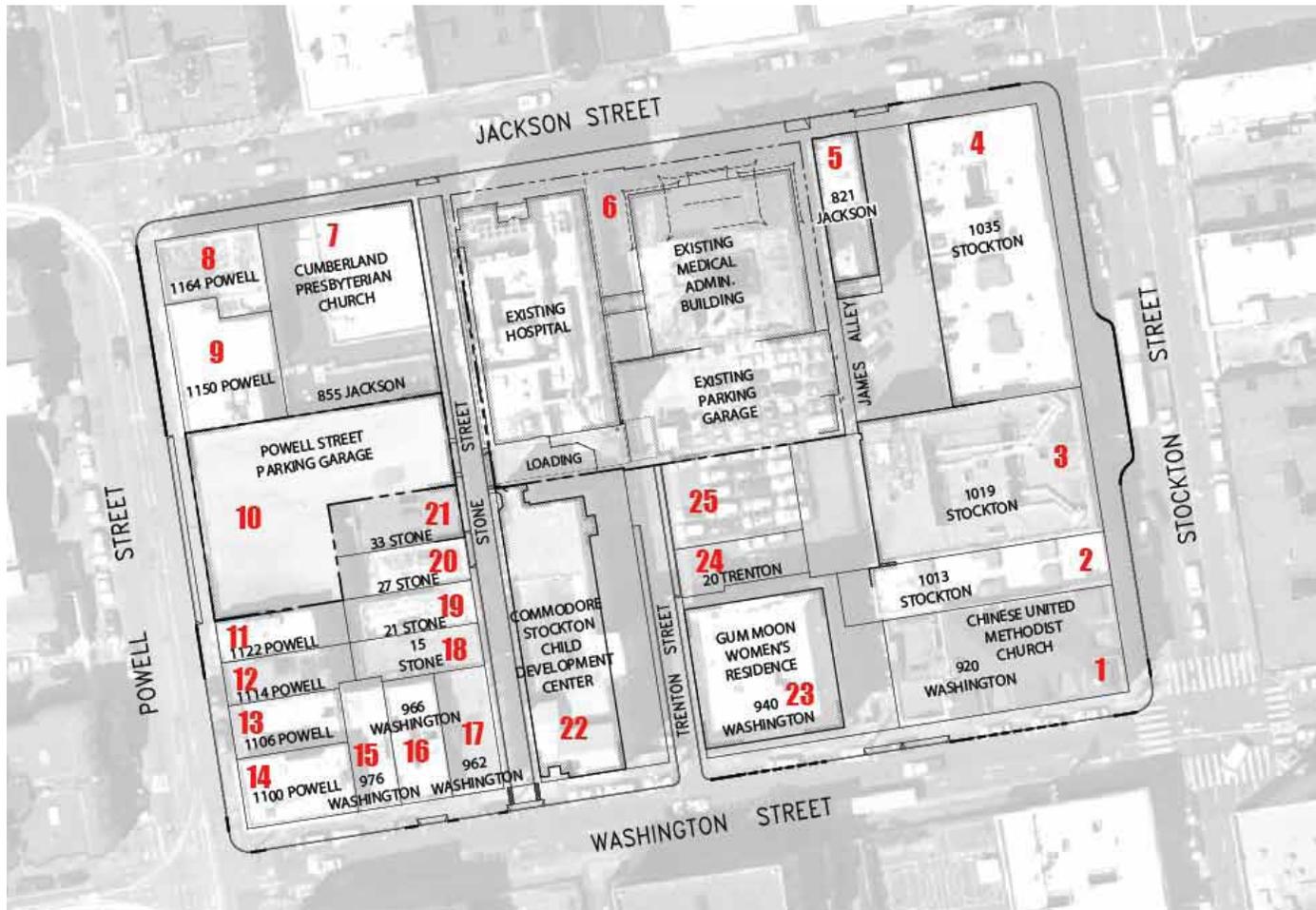
This block has many historically significant cases like the struggles for Asian American rights to a fight within the community for the future of Chinatown. These various struggles led to many changes such as the future development of the Chinese Hospital and the creation of CTA. The history of this block and Chinatown led to the creation of buildings that are mixed-used where the bottom is for commercial usage and housing is on top. The lower level contains commercial businesses where store owners sell localized goods such as grocery. These buildings also have housing on the upper levels largely consisting of either SROs or flats. This block is home to over 146 residents. The high concentration of residents per block must be taken into consideration by future commercial developers. Since land in Chinatown is always being reused, it shows that land usages are important in Chinatown. Secondly, transportation is an important issue to investigate. Residents of Chinatown rely heavily on public transit to travel out of Chinatown. These modes of transportation include buses on Stockton Street and a cable car on Powell Street. This block offers many uses that fit into the daily life patterns of Chinatown residents and meets all types of needs from health care to housing and food.

In the near future we want to implement new changes such as having more open space on this block. Possible methods include pushing for open space within the future Chinese Hospital replacement project. Other possible improvement is implementing public artwork that correlates with the history of the block. To encourage community participation, the artwork will be created by local artists and talents. Also important is creating new

safety precautions that protect the high volume of pedestrian usage on our block. One way will be to have an expanded sidewalk so those pedestrians have more space to walk. Another way would be by having specific times for loading so that space can be allocated more efficiently for stores. Also getting a business consultant for this block would also improve the productivity of this block since, the business consultant can help stores help find possible products to sell or find ways to help advertise stores to increase the amount of the customer.

# APPENDIX

## Block Demographics



# APPENDIX

## Block Demographics

Building #	Business Name	Address	Commercial/Residential	Type of Business/ Residential
1	Chinese Methodist Church	920 Washington Street	Public Institution	Religious Organization
2		1013 Stockton Street	Residential	Hotel-Other
	Wells Fargo	1015 Stockton Street	Commercial	Financial Services
		1017 Stockton Street	Residential	
3		1019 Stockton Street	Residential	Apartment
	AMD Trading CO. Incorporated	1021 Stockton Street	Commercial	Clothing and Personal Accessories
	Bank of the Orient	1023 Stockton Street	Commercial	Financial Services
	Hop Hop Ginseng CO.	1027 Stockton Street	Commercial	Herbal Medicine
4		1035 Stockton Street		
	Yue Fung Grocery	1037 Stockton Street	Commercial	Food and Beverage Store, Fresh Produce
	Good MongKok Bakery	1039 Stockton Street	Commercial	Food and Beverage Store, Bakery, Patisserie
	New Golden Daisy	1041 Stockton Street	Commercial	Food and Beverage Store, Chinese BBQ Chicken Restaurant
	Wan Cheong Ginseng	1043 Stockton Street	Commercial	Herbal Medicine
	Gourmet Delight B.B.Q.	1045 Stockton Street	Commercial	Food and Beverage Store
		1047 Stockton Street	Residential	

# APPENDIX

	Napoleon Super Bakery	1049 Stockton Street	Commercial	Food and Beverage Store, Bakery, Patisserie
	Gourmet Kitchen	1051 Stockton Street	Commercial	Food and Beverage
	Wellman's Pharmacy	1053 Stockton Street	Commercial	Pharmacy
	Nissan Market	1055 Stockton Street	Commercial	Specialty Foods: Fruits, Vegetables, and Fresh Produce
	Sandy's Lucky Bamboo and Florist	803 Jackson	Commercial	Floral
	Chinatown Medical Pharmacy	821 Jackson Street	Commercial	Pharmacy
5	Chinatown Medical Pharmacy	823 Jackson Street	Residential	Apartment
6	Chinese Hospital	845 Jackson Street		Medical Administrative Building
7	Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church	855 Jackson Street	Public Institution	Religious Organization
8	Quickly's	1170 Powell Street	Commercial	Food and Beverage Services, Residential
		1164 Powell Street	Residential	
9		1150 Powell Street	Residential	
10		1140 Powell Street		
11		1122 Powell Street	Residential	Apartment
	Global Export Trading Co.	1122 Powell Street	Commercial	Garage, Automotive Service
12		114-118 Powell Street	Residential	Flats, Duplex

# APPENDIX

13	Burma Overseas Friendship Association	1106 Powell Street	Member Organization	Association
	Quong Ming Buddhism & Taoism Society	1104 Powell Street	Member Organization	Association
14	Vacant (USE AS INFO BOOTH)	1100 Powell Street		
		1100 Powell Street	Residential	
15	Fung Lun Association	976 Washington Street	Association	Association
16		968 Washington Street	Residential	Apartment
17		962 Washington Street	Residential	Apartment
18		15 Stone Street	Residential	Flats, Duplex
19		21 Stone Street	Residential	Flats, Duplex
20		27-29 Stone Street		Flats, Duplex
21		33 Stone Street		Apartment
22	Commodore Stockton Child Development Center	954 Washington Street	Public Institution	School, Civic Institution
23	Vacant	950 Washington Street		
24	Vacant	20 Trenton Street		



Sacramento | Clay  
Stockton | Grant

# ASSESSOR'S BLOCK 225 STUDY

Urban Insite | HANA

UI Advisors: Deland Chan, Judy Kuang, and Angelina Yu  
Authors: Henry Pan, Adrienne Tran, Nora Chin, and Allen Lu



Chinatown Community  
Development Center

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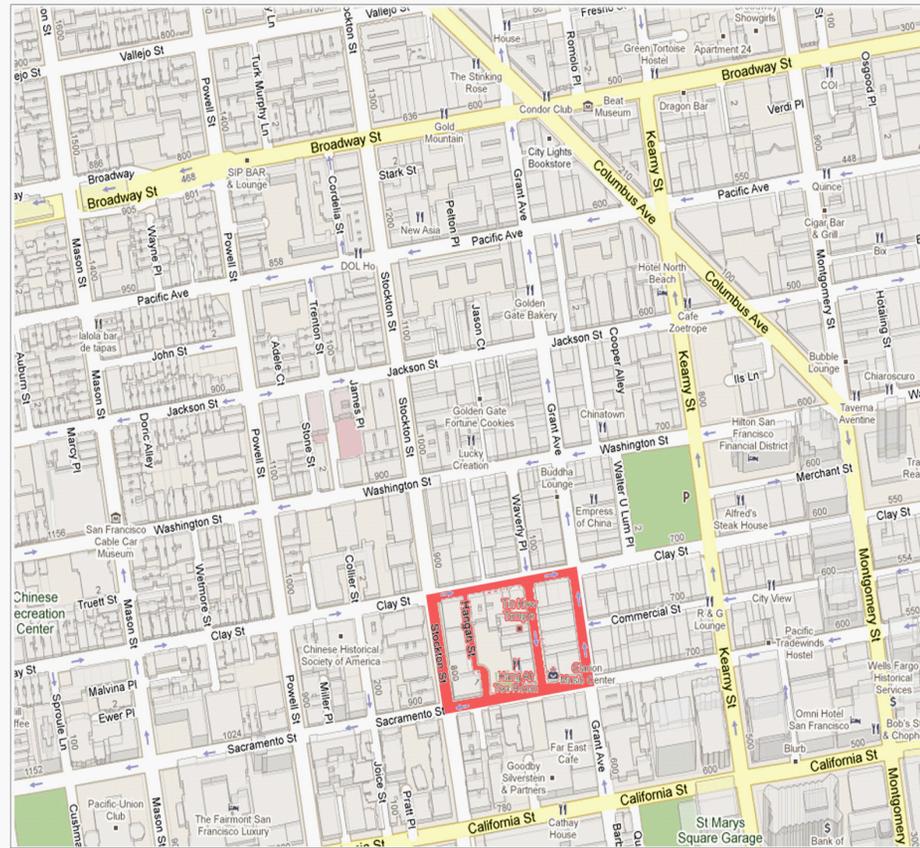
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# Assessor's Block 225



## Executive Summary

Assessor's Block 225, composed of Stockton, Clay and Sacramento Streets and Grant Avenue is one of Chinatown's most active and densest blocks. Block 225 also includes Waverly and Hang-Ah Alleyways as well as Willie "Woo Woo" Wong Playground. It is commercially diverse, heavily frequented by pedestrians, residents, tourists and MUNI bus commuters. Stockton, Clay and Sacramento Streets and Grant Avenue share similar issues and challenges stemming from overcrowding, narrow sidewalks and roadways, a large elderly pedestrian and public commuter population, and a historically car-centric culture. Block 225 has outgrown itself in many facets, which requires planners, politicians, and policy makers to reassess and adjust to the changing needs and growth of the block's residents and tenants. Through our analysis of Block 225's history, conducting of site and pedestrian flow analyses, merchant and tenant interviews, research of open space, a study of transportation with respect to pedestrian mobility, and knowledge of the block's economic development have revealed advantages in adopting the proposals indicated in this study. While this report particularly focuses on improving open space usage and alleviating car-pedestrian issues, our recommendations will inevitably impact the people occupying the residences and businesses in the area. ■

# History

Block 225 has a complex and significant history. The population grew quickly which impacted the design and implementation of open spaces including Hang Ah and Waverly Alleyways and Willie “Woo Woo” Playground, the role of public transportation as well as the diversity of commercial businesses.

## Hang Ah Alley (aka Pagoda Alley)

There are two historical perspectives of “Fragrant Alley,” depending on where one hears the story. The popular and well-accepted perspective is summed up by the Chinese and English descriptions ingrained on the colored cement: Pagoda Alley adopted the Chinese name, Hang Ah Alley, in the 1840’s when a German chemist opened a perfumery on site. Empress Yee and other locals in Chinatown, however, share a second perspective. Yee explains that the alley was named after the fragrant lotus flower perfume worn by exotic ladies during the evening as they entertained men in the brothels that bordered the alley during the mid-19th century when areas of Chinatown, North Beach, Jackson Square, and the Financial district were deemed the then red-light district. Hence, some claim that Hang Ah was named after a specific lotus scent. Prepared by the Special Committee of San Francisco’s 1885 Board of Supervisors, the map on the side demonstrates some of the notorious gambling, prostitution, and crime that took place on this block in San Francisco’s Barbary Coast days. While the alleyway may not smell as great today with people leaving their trash aside the path, it is still used by locals and tourists alike. Therefore, there is great potential for this path to better connect people as well as its

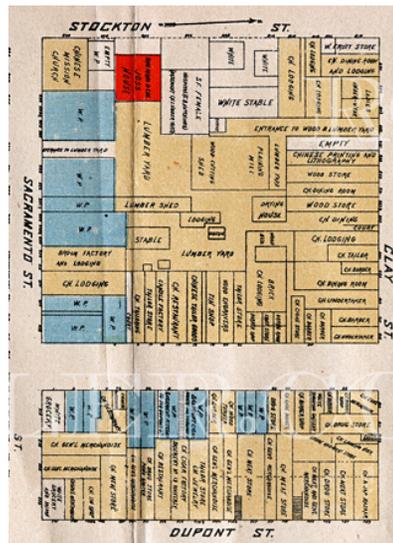


Figure 1: 1885 Board of Supervisors Map

neighboring use, Willie Woo Playground.<sup>1/2</sup>

## Willie “Woo Woo” Wong Playground

Most notable of Block 225’s complexity is its serious land use and community struggles with adequate open space. Chinatown offered 17 acres of public recreational space for 68,000 residents or an average of 10 square feet per person --a large contrast to the minimum standard of 90 square feet per person. Historically, parks in Chinatown have been poorly maintained, with significant complaints about the inefficient use of park space. Many studies and surveys were conducted, resulting in the construction of Willie Woo Woo Playground (formerly known as the Chinese Playground) in 1973.

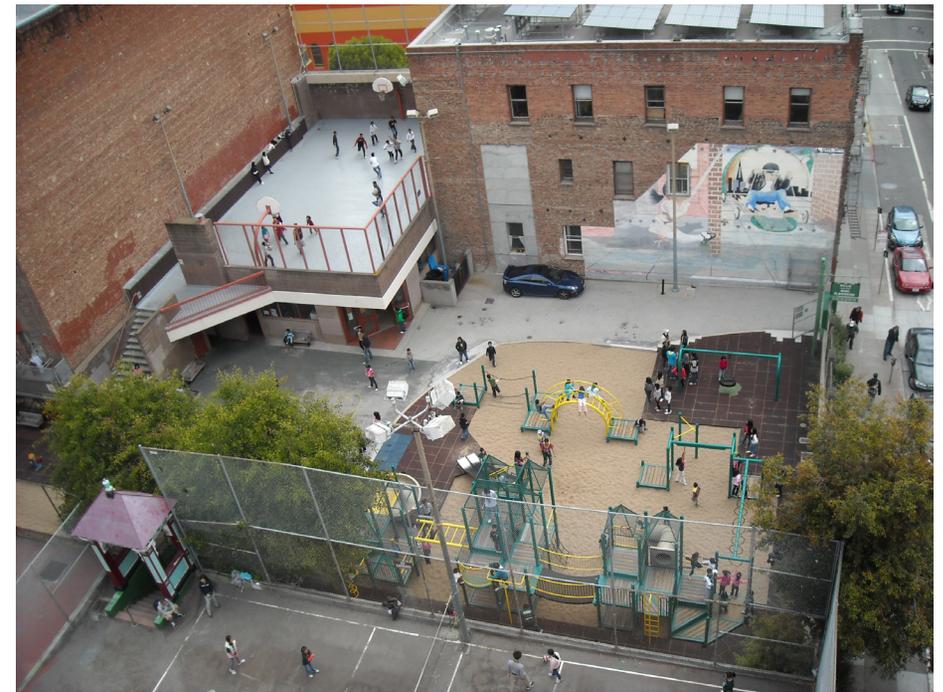


Figure 2: Willie Woo Playground Aerial View

Built in 1900 and previously named Chinese Playground, the playground was renamed after the first Chinese American professional basketball player to play in the National Invitation Tournament (NIT) at Madison Square Garden. The basketball court in the playground was where Willie Wong, who shared a flat across the street with his

family of 9 and another family, went to practice his shots. Today, the playground offers two sandbox areas for children, three sports areas (basketball, tennis, and volleyball), an indoor recreational facility, and a gym. Many after school and summer school programs use the facility as an activity and play area.

As one of four open spaces in the densest neighborhood of San Francisco, the preservation of this open space is important to the city and Chinatown inhabitants. Since Hang Ah alleyway borders the western side of the park, a better integration between these two open spaces can better serve the Chinatown community. Our recommendations contain creative ideas about how to link the park and Hang Ah alley, but Waverly Place (the second alleyway on this block) has an interesting story as well.

## Waverly Place



Figure 3: Waverly Place

Waverly Place is the widest alleyway in Chinatown, measuring at 31 feet. It mainly consists of Chinese Temples and offices, with retail on the ground floor. There are three residential apartments, each consisting of eight units or less. There is also a church and the back entrance to Willie “Woo Woo” Wong Playground. The remaining buildings on this block were all built sometime between after the 1906 earthquake and 1911.

## Grant

Formerly known as Dupont Avenue, Grant Avenue is the oldest street in San Francisco. It is also among the narrowest at 35 feet wide. Before the 1906 earthquake, the block consisted of gambling parlors, restaurants, dried goods stores, and washhouses.<sup>3</sup> In 1908, the street was renamed from Dupont to Grant. The block consists of mainly three to four story brick buildings, built shortly after the 1906 earthquake, and is mostly of office use. The Chinese New Year Parade used to happen along Grant Avenue, but was relocated to Market Street in 1965 due to a change in fire code.<sup>4</sup> Bilingual street signs were installed on this street in 1968.<sup>5</sup> At the time the Chinatown Historic Survey was written in 1979, there had been an influx of banks opening along Grant Avenue. These banks threatened the vitality of commercial activity on the corridor as they have displaced small businesses and residents.<sup>6</sup>

## Public Transportation

The role of transportation on Block 225 plays an important role in the frequency of accidents as well as a way for us to understand the passengers who utilize these intersections. The history of Clay/Stockton/Sacramento’s transportation is revealing in that, despite the incline of Clay and Sacramento, certain innovations in public transportation were designed to adapt to Clay and Sacramento’s unique geography. Moreover, that standard is still applicable to this day, the 1-California bus stops are situated on Stockton and California and Sacramento Streets.

The streets of Clay, Stockton, and Sacramento were and still remain

today major arteries for public transportation as well as vehicles. Although Clay Street was only 49 feet wide from building to building, it was very dense and was a central street in San Francisco. In 1873, the Clay Street Hill Railroad was implemented to adapt to a variation of metropolitan railroading limitations including the need for an obstruction free street, ban of locomotive steam engines and extremely steep hills that horses found difficult or nearly impossible to traverse. Most importantly, cable cars could transfer twice as many people twice as fast.<sup>7</sup>

The Clay Street Hill Railroad operated on Clay and Sacramento Streets between Kearny to Leavenworth, covering the intersections of Kearny to Dupont (currently Grant), Dupont to Stockton. In 1888, the Clay Street Hill Railroad was absorbed into the Ferries and Cliff House Railway and began service on Sacramento Street.<sup>8</sup> By 1944, the 55-Sacramento replaced operations on the Clay Street Hill Railroad. In 1981, the 55-Sacramento was converted to trolley bus operation, and a year later the 55-Sacramento had consolidated with the 1-California to create the current 1-California line.<sup>9</sup> In 1960, sidewalks were reduced to nine feet to accommodate vehicular traffic.<sup>10</sup> ■

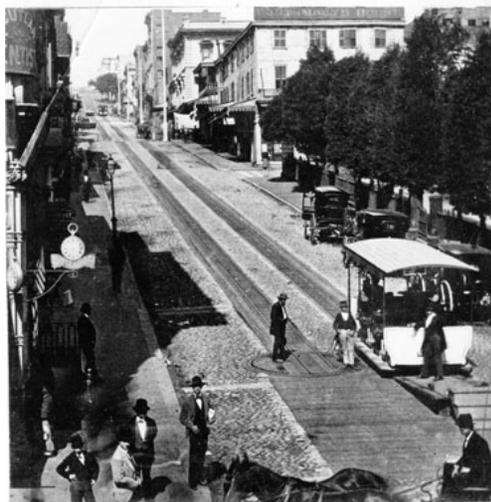


Figure 4: Clay Street Hill Railroad

financial district. Zoned as CRNC (Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial), the buildings west of Waverly Place are primarily three and four stories with residential units on the upper floors and various commercial and institutional uses on the ground floor. Districts zoned as CRNC serve locals providing fresh produce, meats, and fish while keeping tourist-related uses out. This is especially visible when compared to the uses east of Waverly Place, which are designated as a CVR zone. The CVR district focuses on appealing to visitors and is the primary area for tourism.<sup>11</sup>

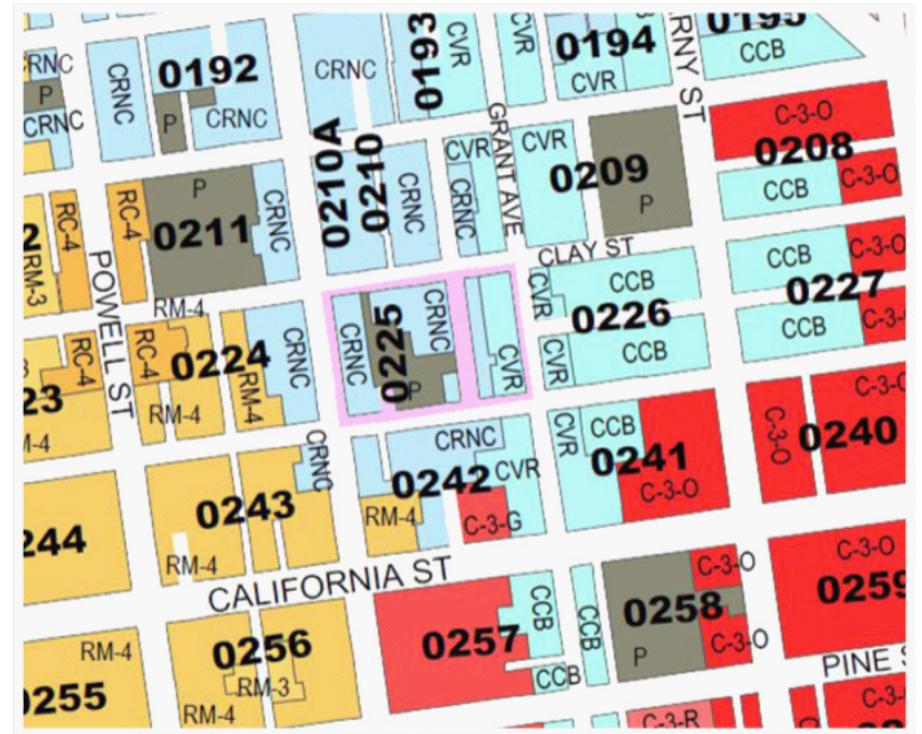


Figure 5: Zoning Map

As a result, there are major differences in commercial uses when comparing those located on Stockton Street and Grant Street. Most of the stores facing Grant Street on this block are geared toward tourists: jewelry stores, gift stores, a bazaar, Bank of America, a restaurant, and a kite shop. On the other hand, the stores on Stockton Street attract more locals; these consist of dried goods retail, an entertainment (DVD,

## Land Use/Zoning

Like its counterpart blocks in the rest of Chinatown, the Stockton-Clay-Grant-Sacramento block contains buildings that are small scaled, especially when compared to the development in the neighboring

# Housing Study

CD, etc) store, a bakery/restaurant, hair salons, and a community memorial hall. Commercial uses on Clay Street are very similar to Stockton Street, directed towards the community. Sacramento Street has entrances to some commercial and institutional uses, but also opens up Willie Wong Playground to the street.<sup>12/13</sup>

A large part of this block is also designated as open space. As mentioned, Willie Woo Playground is one of four designated open spaces in Chinatown. It serves as a community gathering area where activities for children are held, where the residential elderly folks can exercise, and where many people use to meet up because it appears to be a popular landmark with the Chinese community. Due to the limited amount of spaces available for public gatherings in Chinatown, Willie Woo Wong Playground plays a significant role as another public living room for Chinatown visitors and residents.

Lastly, there are two alleyways on this block serving as alternate pathways running north-south, connecting Clay and Sacramento. Waverly St., immediately west of Grant Street, has been recently rehabilitated as part of Chinatown’s Master Alleyway Plan. The architecture and commercial uses along this path receives a fair amount of people, especially after the recent streetscape improvements.

However, Hang Ah Alley, also called Pagoda Alley, is still awaiting improvements. With a restaurant, a Mah Jong room, gated entrances to residences, and a raised brick wall on one side of the alley, and a fence (to the park) attached to an extended façade on the other side, the existing alley is a prime location for pigeons, transients, and idlers. We offer some design proposals that will help incorporate this path into Chinatown’s much needed open space. ■



Figure 6: Hang Ah (Pagoda) Alley

The 800 block of Stockton Street has three residential buildings. None of the residents interviewed gave input. 850-856 Stockton Street contains 58 Single Room Occupancy units. Residents range from the elderly to immigrant families. The building was known as the Celadom Building as it used to have a restaurant on the ground floor. Around the time of the Loma Prieta Earthquake, the building had fallen into disrepair that the city of San Francisco had to put a lien on the building.

There was a noted land use battle at 814-828 Stockton Street, a one-story over basement commercial building. Plans were made by the Ning Yung Family Association in 1969 to demolish the existing building in favor of 32 condominiums. The proposed project would have cast a shadow upon Chinese Playground. This contributed to the passing of the Sunlight Ordinance, also known as Proposition K. Eventually, the Ning Yung Association withdrew the project.<sup>14</sup>

This was also a proposed site for the Chinatown Station of the Central Subway. This was no longer the case as it was reported it would displace 10 businesses and have shadow impacts over Willie “Woo Woo” Wong Playground.

The Unit Block of Waverly consists of seven residential buildings. There are four residential buildings on the east side of the block and three on the west side of the block. 2-12 Waverly, 16 Waverly, and 18 Waverly contain 8 units, 3 units, and 5 units respectively, and are located on the east side of the block. 28-35 Waverly, 37-39 Waverly, and 41-45 Waverly are located on the west side of the block, and have 13, 3, and 20 units respectively. The majority of residents are low-income Chinese immigrants and elderly. ■

# Merchant Perspective Study



Figure 7: Merchant Locations

We arranged an interview with the Hang Ah Tea Room after we acquired data from previous interviews in CCDC’s Anchor Business Report. Following the structure designed by CCDC (see Appendix), we made the following observations after analyzing a total of five businesses: Hang Ah Tea Room, Four Seas Restaurant, Mary Jang Accounting Services, Clarion Music, and Chinatown Kite Shop. Results are organized based on the types of business: restaurants, retails, and services.

## Restaurants (Full Service)

The two restaurants (Hang Ah Tea Room and Four Seas) in this study have tourists as the primary clientele who make up a large part of their customer base. After operating for more than twenty years, both restaurants acknowledged the tough financial times as they strive to survive through the current economic toll. Their main concerns regarding improvements to the area include cleanliness and wanting more promotional events to attract people to their restaurants (and the area).

Concerns	
Hang Ah	Four Seas
Alleyway Cleanliness	Advertisement
Graffiti	Utilizing Internet as a Resource
Recommendations	
Hang Ah	Four Seas
Alleyway Streetlights	Promotional Events
Alleyway Promotional Event	More nightlife
Improve overall alleyway conditions	New uses: bars, night cafes, theatres, opera houses.

Chart 1: Restaurants Merchants’ Concerns and Recommendations

## Retail

Clarion Music Store and Chinatown Kite shop are two unique retailers who have customers visiting San Francisco as well as those living in the city. The following chart illustrates the concerns these businesses have for the area and suggestions for improvements. The primary concerns can be summed up into cleanliness, safety, and lack of advertisement.

Concerns	
Clarion Music Store	Chinatown Kite Shop
Lack of parking repels customers	No Advertisement for Chinatown (only Pier 39)
Pricing of meters	Too many similar uses = more competition = less \$\$
Graffiti	Politics killed projects (Night market)
Cleanliness	Utilizing Internet as a Resource
Unsafe at night (after 6 pm)	Increase of crimes at night (robberies)
Recommendations	
Clarion Music Store	Chinatown Kite Shop
Graffiti removal	More marketing/advertisement
More trash receptacles/ recycle bins	Ongoing promotional events
More trash pick up times	Nightlife like Hong Kong
	Improve Streetscape/ Improve facades (lighted windows)
	Lights in windows
	Police Patrol at night
	Sunday Streets + Night Mall on Grant Ave.

Chart 2: Retail Merchants’ Concerns and Recommendations

## Service (Accounting)

Mary Jang Accounting Services, which serves the Bay Area, was very concerned with the safety of the neighborhood. The interviewee gave more than a couple accounts of robberies in her office as well as other

incidents in the area. An interesting remark raises a cultural issue, “Chinese bystanders tend to not help assail running thieves who try to escape down the street.” This comment suggests that there is a need for community building. Recommendations for the area include a Neighborhood Merchant Watch program and increased police patrol. Specific to this business, the interviewee mentions that improved advertisement and signage may help increase business. ■

<b>Concerns</b>
<i>Mary Jang Accounting</i>
<b>Safety</b>
Increased accounts of robberies
Lack of Pedestrian assistance in crime prevention
<b>Recommendations</b>
<i>Mary Jang Accounting</i>
Neighborhood Merchant Watch
Increased Police Patrol
Improved advertisement/signage

Chart 3: Service Merchant’s Concerns and Recommendations

## Pedestrian Flow Study

The purpose of the pedestrian flow study is to determine the typical itinerary of pedestrians in Chinatown. This included recording where people were walking to and from, where idlers were standing, if there were people biking, etc. This survey was conducted at three locations: At the southeast corner of Stockton and Clay, At the northeast corner of Stockton and Sacramento, and on Hang Ah Alley. The survey was conducted on a Friday and a Sunday. Both were conducted between 11:20am and 11:30am. (See Appendix for Pedestrian Flow Maps)

The southeast corner of Clay and Stockton contains a MUNI bus stop, where the majority of pedestrians’ journeys originate. On a weekday,

### ASSESSOR’S BLOCK 225 STUDY

most of the pedestrians off board the 1-California at this corner. From there, most of the people head north on Stockton Street. Some cross the street before heading northward. A few people head across the street to the Chinatown Post Office. Those already heading south on Stockton Street from further north continue to head south towards Sacramento, and do not appear to change direction.

Hang Ah Alleyway serves as a vital corridor for the locals, especially for those accessing Mah Jong parlors and Benevolent Associations in the area. Locals tend to access the alleyway from Clay. From there, they usually enter the Mahjong parlor, one of the more popular destinations among locals. Some tend to loiter around the entryway to the parlor. In addition, some locals watch tennis and volleyball games at nearby Willie “Woo Woo” Wong Playground. Residents also generally use the alleyway to access their residences. Tourists, on the other hand, tend to access the alleyway from Sacramento; Tourists access the alleyway for the purpose of visiting the Hang Ah Tea Room. Many bystanders were also observed smoking in front of the Benevolent Associations. In addition, a homeless person had created makeshift living quarters along the center of the alleyway.

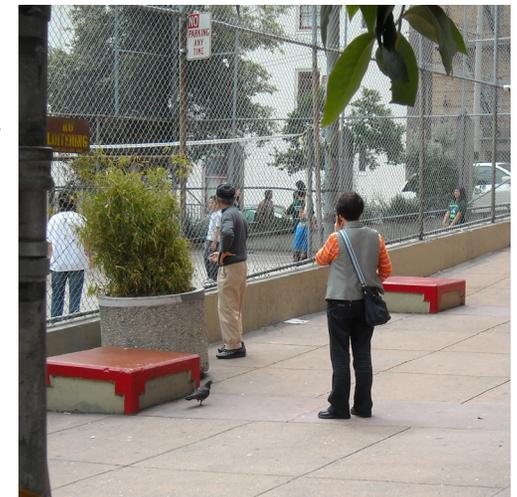


Figure 8: Hang Ah Bystanders

Most pedestrians appear to originate from off-boarding the 1-California. From there, most pedestrians continue north on Stockton Street. A few cross the street before heading north. Some pedestrians originate from west of the intersection but continue to proceed north on Stockton nonetheless. Pedestrians originating from north of the intersection continue south towards Sacramento Street.

For four minutes during this study, a funeral march passed through this intersection, temporarily disrupting pedestrian traffic.

The corner of Sacramento and Stockton was busy with traffic from both cars and pedestrians. Not many pedestrians were observed going up or down the hill on Sacramento St; however, many were observed coming in and out of the Stockton tunnel to enter and exit Chinatown. The high traffic in this intersection necessitates that more precautions be taken to increase pedestrian safety. This issue will be further discussed in Part II's policy recommendations. ■

## Transportation Research

Upon observation, the corners of Clay and Stockton, Waverly and Clay, and Hang Ah and Clay are heavily frequented by pedestrians, cars and traffic. Stockton is a congested transportation artery with vehicular, transit and pedestrian activity. Many pedestrians appear to be stepping off and onto the 1 California MUNI bus inbound line. Clay Street's sidewalk is extremely crowded whilst the 1-California bus is operating at full capacity. This corner is the first stop in Chinatown for many passengers commuting from districts outside of Chinatown. Clay Street's sidewalk is extremely crowded with pedestrians whilst buses On Clay Street, traffic flows one-way towards the Financial District. Another element of Clay Street is its vicinity to the Portsmouth Square Parking Garage. The unpredictability of traffic --with its stop and go, often makes driving difficult for both regular car drivers and MUNI bus drivers. Despite Clay Street being only 49 feet from building to building, the street allows for limited parking.

The MUNI's 1 California inbound route begins in the Outer Richmond District at Geary and 33rd Avenue. It passes through the Inner Richmond, Laurel Heights, Pacific Heights, Nob Hill and finally, Chinatown and the Financial District. It loops around at Drumm Street and traverses its way up Sacramento past Stockton. During certain peak hours of the day, the majority of passengers on the 1 California

bus inbound are largely older Asians making their way to and from Chinatown.

Not surprisingly, the majority of transportation issues arise at these congested intersections. According to the San Francisco Planning Department's WalkFirst study, many pedestrian accidents occur at the corners of Clay and Stockton and Sacramento and Stockton,



Figure 9: Walkfirst Study

Sacramento and Hang Ah and Sacramento and Waverly. Between 2005 to 2009, nearly 6-10 pedestrian accidents occurred at the corner of Clay and Stockton where the 1 California bus drops off its passengers. While not as severe, one accident and one severe accident occurred near the intersections of Clay and Hang Ah and Clay and Waverly, respectively. Although the alleyways are used as pedestrian shortcuts, it is deduced that car drivers occasionally drive through Waverly and Hang Ah Alleyways. Without adequate traffic indicators for both pedestrians and drivers, the chance of injury can occur at these corners.<sup>15</sup>

Even more telling are the frequency of pedestrian injuries on the intersection of Sacramento and Clay and Clay and Stockton. Like Clay and Stockton, Sacramento and Clay serves as the last stop in Chinatown before the 1 California bus outbound makes its way towards Nob Hill. According to the San Francisco Police Department’s Collision (SFPDH) and Fatality Data, over 10 pedestrian-vehicular collisions frequently occur on the intersection of Sacramento and Stockton between 1999

to 2009. Further, the SFPDH performed a Pedestrian Environmental Quality Index (PEQI), which revealed the quality of pedestrian safety, traffic, street design, perceived safety and land use. The analysis noted the poor pedestrian conditions (scores and 21-40 and 0-20) for the intersections of Stockton and Sacramento, Hang Ah and Clay, Waverly and Clay, Grant and Clay, Sacramento and Waverly and Sacramento and Stockton. The poor pedestrian conditions of Block 225 indicate that the width of the sidewalks, overpopulation, streets traditionally designed for vehicles create safety hazards for pedestrians and residents.<sup>16</sup> ■

## Recommendations

Through interviews, research and data collection, similar design and policy flaws in transportation, safety and sanitary issues often presented itself. Perhaps most significant in the block study was the heavy-use of Clay, Stockton, Waverly and Hang-Ah Alleyways and Grant Avenue, but often, there appeared to be lack of self-ownership of the block on the parts of the community that resided or used those public spaces.

### Hang-Ah Alleyway

Hang-Ah Alleyway or Pagoda Alleyway is adjacent to Willie “Woo Woo” Playground. And though the playground was rehabilitated within the past 10 years, the adjacent alleyway seems to have had no improvements from the transformation. Vehicles using Hang-Ah as a thru-way appear to be infrequent and pedestrians tend to use this space as a short-cut from Sacramento to Clay. Merchants continue to dump their trash in the alleyway and there often appears to be an element of loitering in the alleyway with the presence of cigarette



Figure 11: Hang Ah “Dump Site”

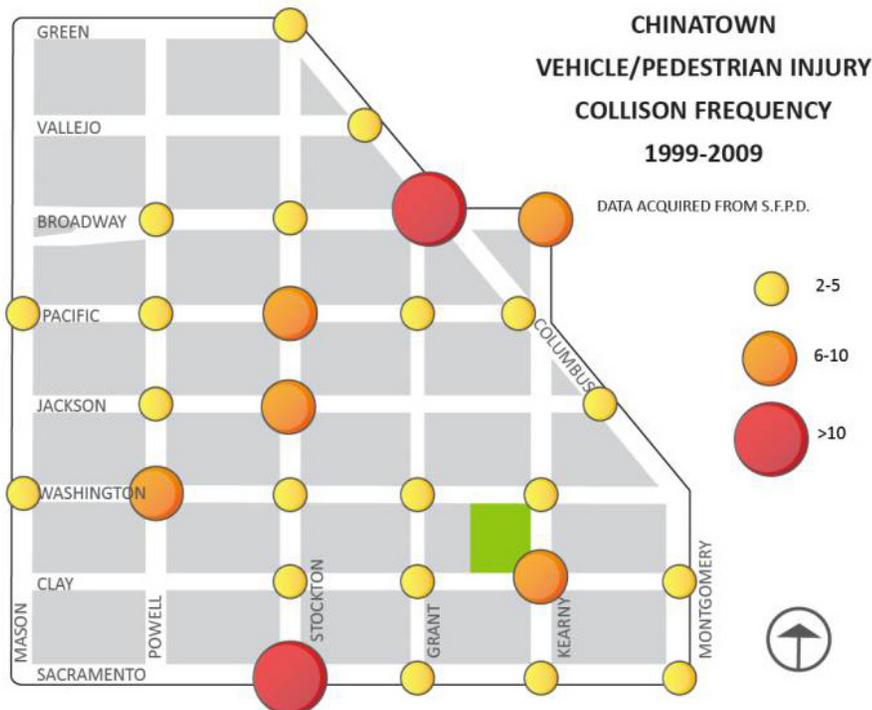


Figure 10: SFPDH Collision and Fatality Data

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Figure 12: Exercise Machines

butts and trash. In order to build a sense of self-ownership and care, it is recommended that Hang-Ah/Pagoda Alleyway be restricted to pedestrians only. Moreover, to deter merchants and residents from dumping in the alleyway, fines and taxes can be applicable. Perhaps the best way to build a sense of pride in public space is to create a space of health and positive activity.

Much like Beijing, China, the community in Chinatown is dense and overpopulated. A culturally sensitive design element that works best in Beijing may work well in a

similar environment in Hang-Ah Alleyway in Chinatown. The implementation of public exercise equipment as well as the installation of street lamps in Hang-Ah could be an avenue that would transform Hang-Ah into more than a dirty alleyway. Providing that San Francisco Park and Recreation agree to oversee the long-term maintenance of the equipment, the addition of a mural for the elderly residents to view while using the proposed public exercise equipment would not be a stretch.<sup>17</sup> As an extension of Willie “Woo Woo” Playground, the public exercise



Figure 12: Artistic Light Piece

equipment promotes health and activity as well as a sense of ownership and community. Furthermore, the addition of pedestrian lights or street lamps would brighten up the alleyway in the evenings. Installation of an artistic light piece would make the alleyway safer at night. It would also contribute artistic value to the alleyway and help revitalize nearby businesses, both currently struggling because of current conditions on the alleyway, and would activate the underutilized alleyway. A study by Cambridge University’s Institute of Criminology has concluded that,

“sensitively deployed street lighting can lead to reductions in crime and fear of crime, and increase pedestrian street use after dark.”<sup>18</sup>

## Waverly Place



Figure 13: Waverly Before and After

While Waverly Place was recently rehabilitated, the WalkFirst study indicated that accidents were occurring at the alleyway’s exit onto Clay Street. Upon visiting the alleyway, we observed the existing street design and how cars exited the street. The following pictures shows an existing image and a proposed image with two new traffic calming elements: a blinking pedestrian crosswalk and a yield sign. These two ideas do not necessarily have to be installed together, but are provided in a single rendering to see how these design elements can work together to prevent accidents.

## Increasing pedestrian safety on Stockton Street

In addition to our pedestrian flow study, CCDC’s Chinatown Pedestrian Safety Plan also outlines similar conclusions, asserting that increasing pedestrian safety at intersections is especially important, since 50% of collisions occur at intersections.

Transportation issues arise as a result of the narrow width of Clay and Sacramento Streets, the rush of traffic coming out of the Stockton Street Tunnel, elderly pedestrians and the MUNI buses’ general route. In order to create a more visible intersection for drivers exiting the tunnel, we propose the implementation of a textured crosswalk at Sacramento and

Stockton Street. The Manual on Uniform Control Devices provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation explains that marked crosswalks should be placed at points where there is an appropriate amount of pedestrian concentration. “Crosswalks should be marked at all intersections where there is substantial conflict between vehicular and pedestrian movements.” The intersection of Stockton and Sacramento is marked by high pedestrian traffic. Therefore a practical place to install a patterned crosswalk. A report by VA Transportation Engineer Lance E. Dougal indicates that marked crosswalks should not be used at all intersections. “If used extensively, many marked crosswalks would be underused and motorists would tend to be desensitized to their presence.” Hence, a textured crosswalk that varies from the yellow striped (scramble) crosswalks at Clay, Washington, Jackson, and Pacific streets will keep drivers aware of the street and its users.<sup>19/20</sup>

In addition to textured crosswalks, we also propose flashing pedestrian lights on the crosswalk, similar to those that have been placed in front of San Francisco’s City Hall. We feel that this would increase pedestrian visibility and encourage cars to slow down near crosswalks, thus avoiding accidents.

A study conducted by the Rensselaer Policy Institute concludes that crosswalk striping and flashing warning light systems reduce the mean speed at which vehicles approach the crosswalk as well as reduce the mean number of vehicles that pass over the crosswalk while a pedestrian is waiting. Although it is noted that one of the negative aspects is that these effects diminish over time, it is important to address the issue of pedestrian safety in Chinatown, where only 17% of households own cars, compared to the city-wide average of 29%.<sup>21</sup>

Clay and Sacramento Street are very narrow. This often creates congestion for vehicles traversing up and down Sacramento and Clay. In fact, pedestrian accidents and issues come about as a result of oncoming traffic at the corners of Clay and Stockton and Stockton and Sacramento. It is suggested that Stockton Street’s sidewalks be widened from nine feet to 15 feet from Broadway to Sacramento in order to

accommodate the impact of heavy pedestrian foot traffic. A successful implementation for Stockton Street would allow pedestrians to safely walk along the widened sidewalks in Chinatown. A portion of sidewalk on Stockton Street between Jackson and Pacific was widened five feet in 2007 and is currently utilized as a waiting area for pedestrians. The widened sidewalks would accommodate the merchants’ grocery stands as well as its customers and passer-bys.<sup>22</sup>

As a result of widening the blocks, an entire traffic lane will be eliminated in the southbound direction to downtown. Traffic lanes would be converted to one southbound lane and one northbound lane. Existing sidewalk bulb-outs at bus stops should be widened by six feet to 21 feet and lengthened from today’s 85 feet to 105 feet. In addition, to eliminate traffic caused by delivery vehicles, deliveries would only occur during off-peak hours. Currently, this takes place from 8AM to 2PM.<sup>23</sup>



Figure 13: Stockton St. Rendering

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Though these recommendations are quite plausible, more research and a feasibility assessment needs to be thoroughly performed. ■

## Conclusion

Through our study of Block 225's history, interviews with residents and commercial tenants, pedestrians and analysis of pedestrian and vehicular safety, we were able to make an assessment about the open space, transportation and pedestrian needs of our residents in Chinatown's Block 225. The history of Clay-Stockton-Sacramento revealed to us some of the reasons why particular streets and spaces are currently used in certain ways. With the understanding that the population of Chinatown is ever changing and growing, action and plans need to be made on the part of planners, policy makers and politicians. Our study emphasized the importance of open space and pedestrian safety –by reactivating Hang-Ah Alleyway and implementing design changes to increase ease of walking. Ultimately, we hope our study will positively contribute to the preservation of Chinatown's characteristics. ■

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