The Historical Journey of San Francisco Chinatown's Urban Resilience

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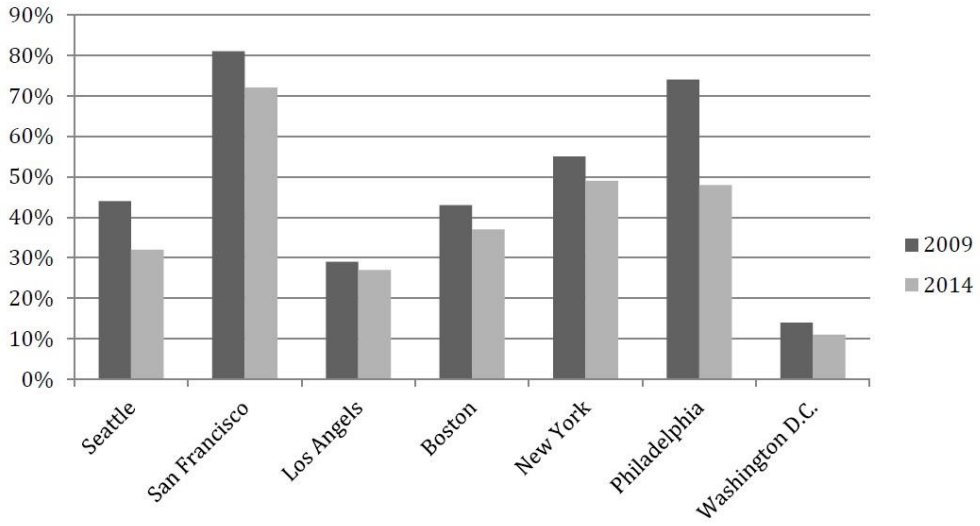
Abstract

This thesis examines how and why the ethnic enclave of San Francisco's (SF) Chinatown persisted to this day, despite continuous forces of urban shrinkage and gentrification in the past decade, that has seen other Chinatowns in the United States gradually disappear. The rich history of SF Chinatown battling a diversity of forces intruding on its survivability, has transformed and acclimatized the neighborhood to have social, political and economic mechanisms to adapt and mutate to an ever-changing ethnic urban landscape. A chronological approach has been applied to highlight major events within SF Chinatown's history that reveal significant factors and mechanisms that amalgamate in the neighborhood's current urban resilience. The story begins with colonial expansion that attracted many Chinese laborers to America, where increasing racial hostility forced Chinese immigrants into ethnic enclaves like SF Chinatown in 1850. The development of district Associations created a cohesive and self-sufficient community that protected itself from continued racial hostility. The 1906 earthquake and fire, built a foundation of oriental tourism that solidified Chinatowns permanence, creating a mutually beneficial relationship with the hegemonic white society. Increased urban redevelopment of the financial district during the 1960s, inspired civil rights movements that mobilized and empowered the Chinese American population to renegotiate their rights. The aforementioned historically rooted mechanisms accompanied with new community initiatives, enables SF Chinatown to continuously adapt and mutate to internal and external forces of change, which has and will continue to cement its place in the heart of the city.

Content

Introduction

The phenomenon of Chinatowns is global, occurring from Australia, Europe to North America, each with their unique purpose and beginnings. The oldest Chinatown's were founded in the 19th century, acting as segregated ethnic pockets that created a safe haven for new arrivals to assimilate and transition into society. Traditional North American Chinatowns originate from colonial expansion that attracted many Chinese laborers to gold mines, clearing of agricultural lands and building of railroads. With the closing of mining companies and completion of the Central Pacific railway, many Chinese fled to urban areas for employment but were met with discrimination by white laborers.[1] Due to such circumstances many took refuge in Chinatowns, one of which was the San Francisco (SF) Chinatown assumed to be one of the oldest ethnic enclaves in the US with over 150 years of history. SF Chinatown is located in the central business district and has expanded through the years, Bounded by Jackson Square in the east, downtown shopping center on the north, financial district in the south, and Nob Hill and Russian Hill resident districts on the west. The role of Chinatown is multifaceted and has shifted and adapted in space and time, starting off as an ethnic enclave into its current roles as a residential neighborhood, cultural center for the Chinese ethnic group, tourism, commercial district and many more.



Graph 1: 2009-2014 proportional changes of ethnic Chinese population in historic Chinatowns in United States (Xie 2019).

Through SF's Chinatown history, it has experienced several instances challenging its survival, beginning with Anti-Chinese movements in mid-19th century due to socio-economic competition between Chinese and White laborers. This was further compounded with xenophobic policies that dramatically limited the economic freedom of Chinese immigrants, marginalizing them into the ethnic neighborhoods like SF Chinatown. Moreover, Chinatown was threatened with multiple instances of relocation as it resided within an economically favored location. The 1906 earthquake that decimated Chinatown, offered a clear opportunity for relocation but was ultimately preserved for its Pacific-trading opportunities and emerging curiosity towards the exotic. To secure its survival, Chinatown leader rebuilt neighborhood as an oriental city, catering to touristic aspirations of the

[1] Bernard P. Wong and Chee-Beng Tan, *Chinatowns around the World: Gilded Ghetto, Ethnopolis, and Cultural Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 3.

white demographic.[2] In the subsequent years, the ethnic urban landscape of Chinatown faced several urban renewal movements due to the growing financial district, which continuously shaped its built environment through constant shifts and changes in socio-political power relationships [3]. Many ethnic neighborhoods were demolished in this process of urban redevelopment, but the increase of civil rights movements enabled Chinatown to resist such external forces of change. Today SF's Chinatown has become a thriving tourist attraction, but also a symbol for the ethnic Chinese community. However, once again in contemporary times, Chinatown is facing forces of urban shrinkage and gentrification that threaten its survival. The phenomenon of urban shrinkage is especially prevalent in Chinatowns throughout the United States, showing a trend of decline in the ethnic Chinese population. In the period of 2009-2014, the proportion of ethnic Chinese in SF Chinatown declined from 81% to 72%, in Philadelphia 74% to 48% and in some cases declined to all or most as shown in Washington being 11% (Graph 1)[4]. With continued pressures of gentrification and an aging urban fabric, will Chinatown cease to exist?

This begs the question: how and why has the ethnic enclave of San Francisco's Chinatown persisted despite continuous forces of urban shrinkage and gentrification in the past decade? The rich history of SF Chinatown battling a diversity of forces intruding on its survivability, has transformed and acclimatized the neighborhood to have social, political and economic mechanisms to adapt and mutate to an ever-changing ethnic urban landscape. The urban resilience of Chinatown began with its internal district Associations that created a cohesive and self-sufficient community that protected itself from continued racial hostility. The 1906 earthquake and fire, presented a significant opportunity to re-establish its socio-political relationship with the dominant society in the form of an oriental city. The foundation of tourism solidified Chinatowns permanence, creating a mutually beneficial relationship with the hegemonic white society. Increased urban redevelopment of the financial district during the 1960s, inspired civil rights movements that empowered the Asian American community to fight for their rights. This gave rise to increasing community organizations such as the CCDC that continue to preserve, rehabilitate and improve Chinatown's future. The aforementioned historically rooted mechanisms accompanied with new community initiatives, enables Chinatown to continuously adapt and mutate to internal and external forces of change, which in turn allows the neighborhood to persist and thrive.

This study will utilize a variety of methods in capturing a holistic story behind the mechanism behind Chinatown's sustainability beginning with literature reviews detailing the history of SF Chinatown, research reports that involve voluntary associations within SF and statistical data drawn from government databases. Furthermore, archived photos, newspaper articles, and maps will be studied to understand the racial prejudice and historic urban fabric of SF Chinatown. To delve more into the social aspects of Chinatown resident interview, organization interviews and Instagram will be utilized to grasp a first-hand understanding of the community's and public's perspective of SF Chinatown in contemporary times.

[2] Chuo Li, "Chinatown and Urban Redevelopment: A Spatial Narrative of Race, Identity, and Urban Politics, 1950-2000" (dissertation, IDEALS, 2011), pp. 1-307, 170.
[3] Jing Quan "San Francisco's Chinatown- A History of Architecture and Urban Planning" (The University of Arizona, 1994), pp. 1-158, 111.
[4] Shuyi Xie and Elena Batunova, "Shrinking Historic Neighborhoods and Authenticity Dilution: An Unspoken Challenge of Historic Chinatowns in the United States through the Case of San Francisco," *Sustainability* 12, no. 1 (2019): p. 282, https://doi.org/10.3390/su12010282, 2.

The paper begins with contextualizing the discriminatory origins of SF Chinatown's in mid-19th century, that led to a transformation of its urban fabric post-earthquake in 1906. The next chapter highlights the socio-political foundation of SF Chinatown that persists to this day, due to a shift in the relationship of the Chinese minority and the dominant white society in post-quake SF Chinatown in early 20th century. The third chapter reveals the longevity and adaptability of SF Chinatown despite subsequent forces of urban redevelopment and the encroachment of the growing financial district, due to the civil rights movement that mobilized and empowered the Chinese American population to renegotiate their rights. The final chapter captures the issues of urban shrinkage and gentrification threatening the survival of SF Chinatown today, and how the historically rooted mechanisms enable the ethnic urban landscape to persist.

Chapter 1: Origins of San Francisco Chinatown (Mid-19th Century)

Figure 1: Area that the Ethnic Chinese concentrated in mid-19th century (Li 2011).

The first Chinese immigrants of SF arrived around 1850 that sought wealth more than permanent settlement, hence giving SF the nickname "金山" meaning Gold Mountain. The majority came from the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong Province and held a strong ethnic bond due to their unique culture and dialect. The impoverished state of the Guangdong province in 1850s due to overpopulation and lack of agricultural land led to socio-political disorder, causing many to seek better opportunities overseas.[5] In the beginning the Chinese settled throughout SF, but began to concentrate above Sacramento Street which was initially named "Little China".[6] However, in late 1860s the California economy was met with a severe depression, causing serious employment issues. Increased competition between Chinese and white workers agitated racial hostility in 1860s and 70s, such as a three-day anti-Chinese riot in 1877 that burned buildings occupied by Chinese, saw many forcibly removed and displaced into Chinatown.[7] The culmination of the anti-Chinese Movement in the 1870s was the 1882 Exclusion Act that severely limited socio-economic opportunities for the Chinese. The racial and political movements, exemplifies Edward Said's theory in the occident's role in construction and reconstruction of the "other" and "orient" as inferior.[8] In this instance Chinese immigrants were scapegoated for the economic pressures felt in California and provided solid ideological ground for future racial aggression. This essentialized view is further rationalized and weaponized in the form of xenophobic policies to gain direct control and power over the Orient. The Chinese population were segregated into an extremely dense and contained area surrounding Portsmouth Square, bounded by Sacramento, Kearny, Pacific and Stockton Street (Figure 1). At its core is Dupont Street, now Grant Avenue, a crucial transportation corridor from Market Street to the

[5] Quan, "San Francisco's Chinatown- A History," 12.
[6] Soulé Frank, *The Annals of San Francisco* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854), 345.
[7] Christopher Lee Yip, "San Francisco's Chinatown: An Architectural and Urban History" (dissertation, University of California, 1985), pp. 1-440, 61.
[8] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2019).

North side that served as the commercial hub of the neighborhood. The east and west streets became the primary paths for its residents, containing services, activities that served daily life. Soon, Chinatown became a city within a city, a self-sufficient homogeneous ethnic community, with limited exchange with its host city.

A crucial aspect in maintaining and preserving this tight knit community is the emergence of the Chinese Association. These associations grew naturally, as informal organizations in local governance already existed within Chinese society. Each association was based on locality of origins, kinship and clanship, serving as spokesperson of their respective ethnic community and easing their transition into American society by providing residence and jobs. The first association was the Kong Chow Association in 1850, which was initially meant to represent all immigrants from Guangdong, however it soon split into two associations due to dialect and district association. By 1852s there were five main associations, which in 1862 formed the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association known as the Chinese Six Company today[9]. This larger group served a major role as the central coordinating body and representative for the SF Chinese community. With the continued growth of Chinatown through the late 19th century, more exclusive and specific organizations grew to fulfill the needs that the pre-established associations could not. The plethora of associations and organizations grew into a complex network of interrelated associations where membership overlapped, which further bonded the Chinese Community together. These interlocking relationships serve as the socio-political foundation, that enable Chinatown to persist and survive despite continued racial hostility and pressures of removal.

Figure 2: The Streetscape of SF Chinatown pre-earthquake & fire (Scene of San Francisco).

In spite of the rich culture reflected in Chinatown's internal networks, the architecture of late 19th century Chinatown was much less diverse, consisted mainly of two to three story high brick Italianate Victorian buildings infilled with wooden structures. The brick structures were simple rectangular masses lacking any ornamentation or decoration in its façade (Figure 2). Every possible space was occupied, in which the site coverage approached 100%. The programs of the buildings

[9] Erica Ying Zi Pan, *The Impact of the 1906 Earthquake on San Francisco's Chinatown* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 30.

were diverse, such as: commercial, industrial, entertainment and residential, as everything was so densely packed. The street frontage mainly consisted of shops, while the back contained offices, storage and living for its owners. The top levels were mainly residential but also contained commercial programs[10]. The density, overcrowding and lack of order led to unsanitary living conditions, which were disease and pest ridden. Despite such unfavorable conditions, the Chinese population still found it more favorable than China. Chinatown was described by the *San Francisco Municipal report 1884-1885* as "filthy in the extreme" and was due to the "peculiar habits of this people"[11].

There are two major reasons for these poor conditions, firstly the buildings in Chinatown were not owned by Chinese, as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act restricted Chinese immigrants from the right to own land. Instead, they took long leases of 3 to 12 years from White landlords and sublet the properties, hence in 1873 only 10 out of 153 properties in Chinatown were Chinese owned[12]. The uncertainty of their future and desire to return home led to many accepting the overcrowded conditions. The second reason was the discriminatory landlords that capitalized on the high demand, as the Chinese were forced to live within the confines of Chinatown and were willing to pay double the rent.[13] To maximize profits every square footage was used and no improvements were made to the property as it was unnecessary. The restrictions of the built environment led to the Chinese accepting the existing chaotic urban fabric, contrasting to the homogeneity of its ethnic community. As characterized by the observer at the time Chinatown was "neither picturesque nor Oriental…the majority of the buildings are of brick…the architecture is thoroughly American".[14] The of lack architectural identity further exacerbated its dislike by the white community, where its uniqueness was attributed to its filth and illegal activities, like a permanent stain in their urban fabric. This highlights how the original racial segregation of the Chinese, heightened these poor living conditions, limiting their expression of culture within the built environment, creating a continued cycle of racial hostility.

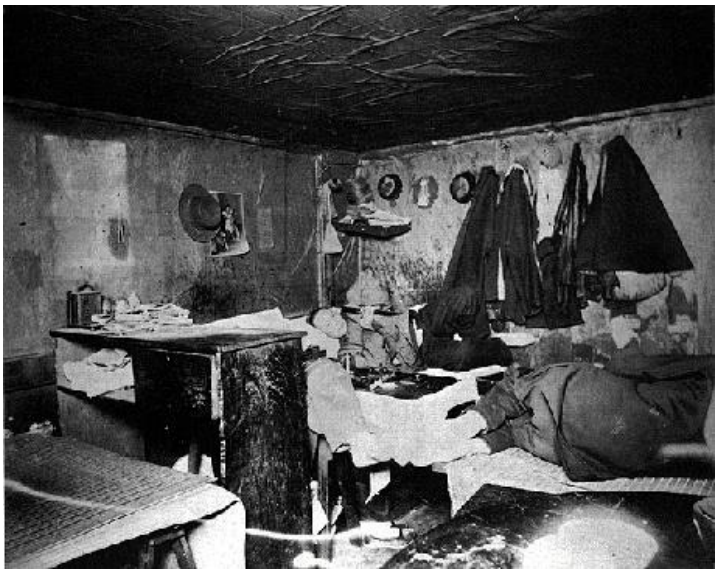


Figure 3: Typical Opium Den, 1900 (Chinatown's Opium Dens).

[10] Quan, "San Francisco's Chinatown- A History," 32.
[11] "San Francisco Municipal Report 1884-1885" (San Francisco, California: Board of Supervisors, 1860), 165.
[12] Quan, "San Francisco's Chinatown- A History," 50.
[13] Yip, "San Francisco's Chinatown," 118.
[14] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *Essay & Miscellaneous*, vol. xxxviii (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890), 310.

The 1882 Exclusion Act blocked Chinese immigration into the United States and saw a massive decline in Chinese American population, from 107,488 in 1980 to only 61,639 Chinese population in 1920.[15] The initial Chinese immigrants were men and such policies further diminished the chances of bringing in their wives or families.[16] The US. Census indicated that there was twenty-one Chinese men for every Chinese woman in 1880, as result the population growth was halted which only strengthened community cohesion. As a consequence of the large bachelor demographic, they found entertainment from four main sources: opera, gambling, prostitution and opium smoking.[17] Chinese gambling houses appeared as early as the early 1850s with large numbers on the east side of Dupont Street. More than three-fourths of brothels were located on the north end of Chinatown and Opium dens were locate in basements concentrated in the west side of Duncombe Alley.[18] The existence of so many illegal businesses in Chinatown can be attributed to the exclusion of the Chinese from: mining, civil services, teaching medicine and other professional fields by the Federal and State law; in which they strategically chose fields that were non-competitive with the white population. This instance once again highlights how Chinatown's urban fabric is rooted and shaped by the discriminatory policies and unbalanced socio-political power dynamics of the White dominant society.

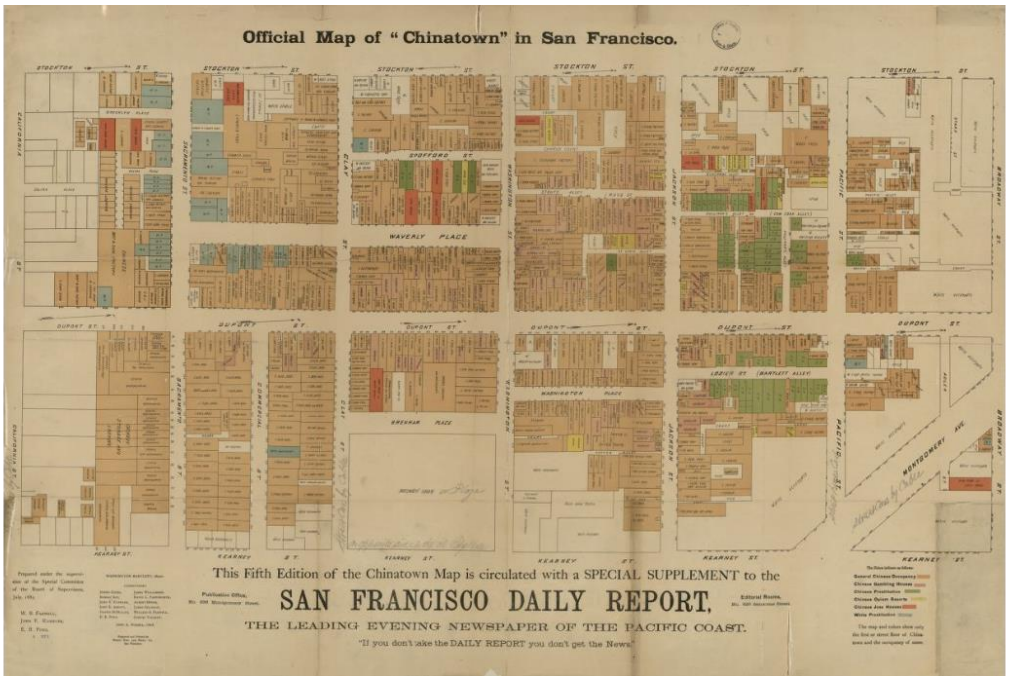


Figure 4: Official map indicating the locations of opium dens, gambling halls and brothels (Taken from San Francisco Municipal Report, 1885) (Farewell).

The weaponization of such racially generated conditions, is clearly exemplified in the 1885 map of SF Chinatown that specifically focused on locations of opium dens, gambling halls and brothels (Figure 4). The map once again continued the narrative of the Chinese minority as "other" and different from their hegemonic White culture. This further perpetuated the Chinese bachelor society as an

[15] Kenneth S. Y. S. Y. Chew and John M. Liu, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Global Labor Force Exchange in the Chinese American Population, 1880-1940," Population and Development Review 30 (March 2004): pp. 57-78, 60.
[16] Lawrence W. Crissman, "The Segmentary Structure of Urban Overseas Chinese Communities," *Man* 2 (June 1967): pp. 185-204, 187.
[17] Pan, "*The Impact of the 1906 Earthquake*," 110.
[18] Quan, "San Francisco's Chinatown- A History," 38.

immoral and dangerous force encroaching on the domesticity of White society. The example of the map, was only one of the many attempts at marginalizing the Chinese community, in which ideas of relocating the Chinese began as early as 1853 in the local newspaper Daily Alta California. The article labeled central Dupont Street as the "most desirable in the city for retail stores and family residences" and ultimately suggesting for Chinatown's relocation.[19] The article's Dehumanizing descriptions of the Chinese further encapsulate the perspective of Chinatown as the antithesis of American society, as shown "it seems a pity that so fine a street should be occupied with so much filth and nastiness as Dupont Street now is".[20] The collective disgust of Chinatown was further capitalized by politicians in 1880s and 1890s by stating their anti-Chinese position, such as slogans "Chinese Must Go". In 1882 plans of removing Chinatown were proposed, placing the Chinese to government reservations or to a tent city near the city cemetery. In 1890 the City of SF abruptly declared Chinatown to be a public health hazard in which its citizens were asked to relocate in 60 days, but was ultimately nullified when it was deemed unconstitutional.[21] In 1904 a plan to beautify SF was presented by architect Daniel Burnham, where the existence of Chinatown was absent, instead a vision of straight and broadened roads was presented, but was once again cancelled due to economic costs.[22]

Figure 5: White women touring SF Chinatown in late 19th century (Berglund).

Why were all these attempts at removing Chinatown ultimately unmaterialized? Despite the overwhelming desire to villainize Chinatown, there were clear consequences in its relocation. Firstly, would be the economic cost of removing such a large and complex community and the political undertaking. There were also clear economic advantages of SF Chinatown as a node for pacific trade and the oriental colours it has added to SF's urban fabric. The Anti-Chinese movement slowly diminished, as the Chinese population posed little threat as its population halved in the following

[19] *Daily Alta California*, November 21, 1853.
[20] *Daily Alta California*, November 21, 1853.
[21] Pan, "*The Impact of the 1906 Earthquake*," 44.
[22] Pan, "*The Impact of the 1906 Earthquake*," 46.

decade. Moreover, its increasing integration into the government system by early 20th century, had Chinatown recognized as a legitimate community, and had them gaining diplomatic and legal methods of counteracting such forces of removal. Another major reason was the pre-existing American fascination with Chinese culture, originating in early 19th-century, described as "patrician orientalism" by John Kuo Wei Tchen. The obtainment of Chinese luxuries among American elite's, became "one of the forms of currency for gaining cultural distinction"[23]. The decline of Chinese empire gave rise to "commercial Orientalism" in 1825-1865 that catered to American consumers curiosity regarding exoticism. This growing infatuation with the Oriental and exotic was reflected in SF Chinatown, in which Americans would purposely visit Chinatown and participate in tours to view its illegal activities (Figure 5).[24] In the perspective of the Chinese, there was a clear benefit in integrating and interacting with hegemonic White culture, as seen from the aforementioned cases of institutional protection and tourism. When the 1906 Earthquake levelled Chinatown, the once secluded ethnic community jumped at the opportunity of rebranding and removing its shameful past; creating an outwardly oriental Chinatown that catered to the dominant white society and ensured its future survivability.

[23] Tchen, John Kuo Wei. *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882*. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2001, 13.
[24] Yip, "San Francisco's Chinatown," 193.

Chapter 2: Rebuilding the socio-political foundation of Chinatown Post-earthquake & Fire (1906)

Figure 6: SF Chinatown after the 1906 earthquake and fire (Robertson).

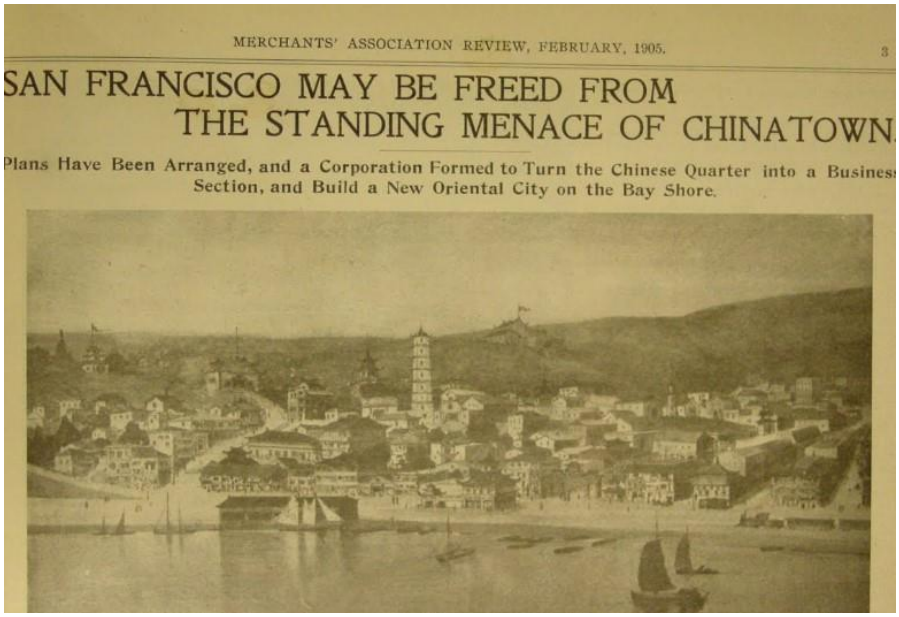
The SF earthquake and fire of 1906, was a major turning point in Chinatown's identity and socio-political relationship with the dominant society, a dynamic that still persists to this day. The earthquake was devastating to SF, where almost all buildings in the area were leveled (Figure 6). The aftermath displaced 2000 Chinese, whom relocated permanently to Oakland, while another hundred residing in SF were constantly transferred in fear of their permanent residence.[25] Even within this great tragedy, newspaper publications found relief through their racially charged messaging, such as the Greensboro Daily News headline "San Francisco's Chinatown Problem Solved at Last".[26] Another example by the Washington Star stating "the only gratifying feature of the San Francisco horror is the fact that Chinatown has been destroyed. That pestilential community is no more".[27] The discriminatory practice directed towards the Chinese persisted despite dire times, which fully encapsulates the divide and unsustainable relationship between the two societies.

This tumultuous relationship and uncertainty in Chinatown's future, presented an opportunity for the hegemonic white society to finally realize their plans of relocation. Following the earthquake, a committee chaired by Boss Ruef proposed the relocation of Chinatown to the bay shore south of SF.[28] The original location would be built in a similar fashion as Daniel Burnham's proposal, with the widening of Dupont Street that serves as an extension of the central business district and middle-class residential area. In spite of the overwhelming hatred for the Chinese community, there was an allure in keeping Chinatown around SF to satisfy the exotic cravings of white society. This reflected in the rebuilding plans of Chinatown as "an oriental city with paved streets, schools and all the essentials of modern life…with the features of Chinese city, with its pagodas and its temple".[29] This

[25] Armentrout-Ma L Eve McIver Ballard and Jeong Huei Ma, *The Chinese of Oakland: Unsung Builders* (Oakland, CA, 1982), 29.
[26] "San Francisco's Chinatown Problem Solved at Last," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 6, 1906, p. 9.
[27] Philip L. Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906: How San Francisco Nearly Destroyed Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 294.
[28] Yip, "San Francisco's Chinatown," 173.
[29] Francis Dyer, "Rebuilding Chinatown," *World To-Day 8*, May 1906, 554.

oriental proposal emphasizes that despite the overwhelming racial hostility, there was an underlying understanding of the value in maintaining this ethnic community, which ultimately led to the downfall of Ruef's plans.

There were three reasons for the rebuilding of Chinatown, that further reveals the complex relationship with the dominant society. The first reason was Chinatown's political connections through pacific trade, that served as a symbol to strengthen ongoing and future trade with China. The removal of the Chinese population would disrupt such economic opportunities and have serious repercussion on the city's plan as a financial base. The next major reason was Chinatown's contribution to SF's economy through tourism, in which its exotic qualities attracted many visitors nationally and globally from Europe.[30] Chinatown became a valuable asset to the economy of SF and through relocation would greatly hinder the city's tourist trade. Lastly white land owners of Chinatown strongly opposed the relocation, as they highly benefited from the high rents and low maintenance through the years.[31] Here we notice an interesting symbiotic relationship between the white tenants and Chinese in which each respective side used one another for leverage but with completely different intentions. The clear benefits of Chinatown were not only felt within SF, but in many west coast cities such as Seattle and Los Angeles, that welcomed the displaced population to rebuild a new Chinatown in their location.[32] With immense social, political and economic pressure, Ruef had no choice but to dismantle the relocation committee, which also marked the beginning of rebuilding Chinatown. The aforementioned conditions further highlight the complicated relationship between the Chinese minority and dominant society, where its boundaries are at constant flux to negotiate power relations with various stake holders.


MERCHANTS' ASSOCIATION REVIEW, FEBRUARY, 1905. 3

SAN FRANCISCO MAY BE FREED FROM THE STANDING MENACE OF CHINATOWN

Plans Have Been Arranged, and a Corporation Formed to Turn the Chinese Quarter into a Business Section, and Build a New Oriental City on the Bay Shore.

Figure 7: Menace of Chinatown article showing oriental city rendering for relocation plans, Merchants Association Review, 1905 (Menace of Chinatown Article).

The question becomes, what form and identity will this new Chinatown undertake? There was a clear direction that city officials envisioned, being outwardly oriental and full of exotic imagery.

[30] Yip, "San Francisco's Chinatown," 193.
[31] Pan, "*The Impact of the 1906 Earthquake*," 114.
[32] Mae M. Ngai, "How Chinatown Rose from the Ashes," The New York Times (The New York Times, April 17, 2006), https://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/17/opinion/how-chinatown-rose-from-the-ashes.html.

Moreover, the city also hoped to transform Chinatown away from its illegal activities and unsanitary conditions, through recomposing its streetscape. This manifested in the widening of all roads, but most notably Dupont Street that now connected to the newly developed 30-meter-wide Grant Avenue.[33] This integration marked the beginning of Chinatowns assimilation into the larger city, that faded its physical boundaries as an isolated enclave. There was a clear desire to improve the standard of Chinatown by white officials, not directly for the well-being of the Chinese, but rather driven by touristic aspirations. A new Chinatown in which its allure was no longer its slum-like conditions but for its oriental nature. This idea of an "oriental and artistic" appearance was further perpetuated by the San Francisco Real Estate Board, that believed all properties of the area should have a Sinicized appearance.[34] There was clear awareness by the Chinese leaders of the oriental narrative perpetuated by the hegemonic white society, at which the built environment became a clear source of ethnic empowerment and identity formation that would secure Chinatown's survival.

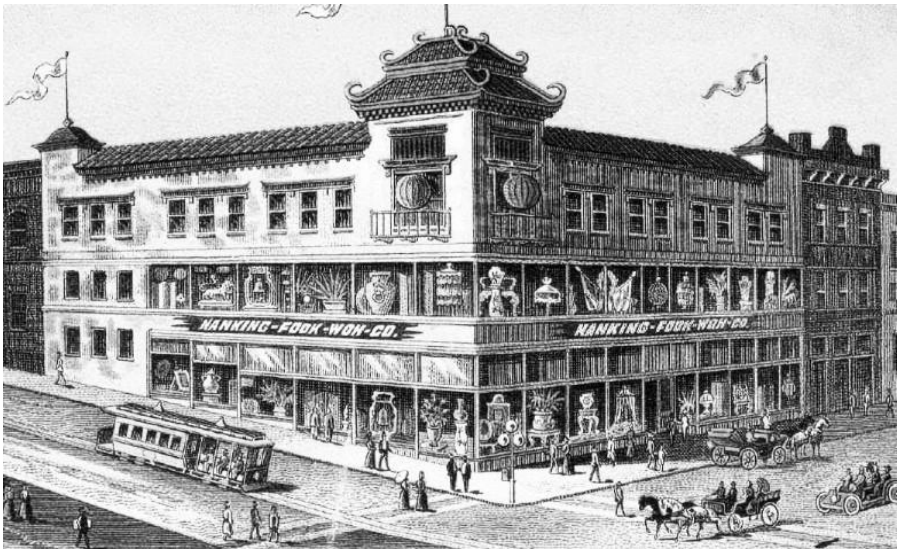


Figure 8: Nanking Fook Who Co building etching, exemplifying oriental style with corner pagoda, 1910 (1910 NankingFookWohCo).

Interestingly the Sinicized appearance did not manifest itself in traditional Guangdong typologies that the immigrants came from, as they were difficult to adapt to the SF's rectangular brick typologies. The rural houses in the Guangdong Province were usually low-lying brick houses that served a nuclear family, while the highly dense SF buildings were multi-purpose and served a male demographic. Another major reason was the lack of knowledge in Chinese vernacular architecture by SF white architects, which was limited to the major monuments of Beijing.[35] The 1893 Chicago World's Fair served as a strong inspiration to the hybrid "oriental" style of SF Chinatown, at which Chinese ornamentation and motif can be transposed onto standard western facades (Figure 8).[36] This adaptable style was ideal for SF Chinatown as most building sites only had one exposed façade towards the street or alley. To coordinate the future appearance of Chinatown, Clarence R. Ward established an institution that included various architects to review such oriental building designs.

[33] Chuo Li, "Chinatown and Urban Redevelopment," 166.
[34] Yip, "San Francisco's Chinatown," 215.
[35] Quan, "San Francisco's Chinatown- A History," 41.
[36] Chuo Li, "Chinatown and Urban Redevelopment," 167.

Figure 9: Sing Fat Building (Left) and Sing Chong Building (Right) penny postcard (Fisher).

This style was adopted by successful Chinese Entrepreneur Look Tin Eli, whom was the manager of Sing Chong Bazaar and founder of the Canton Bank. He hoped to transform Chinatown into an area of "veritable fairy palaces", which manifested itself in his design for the Sing Fat and Sing Chong building (Figure 9).[37] The building designs were assisted by architect T. Patterson Ross and engineer A. W. Burgren of the two corner sites facing one another in Grant Avenue, creating a symbolic gateway to the community.[38] Its most iconic element would be its pagoda-like towers in each corner of the building, with its street facades ornamented in Chinese Motif. These decorations included terra cotta motifs, yellow pressed brick, curved eaves in windows and roofs. Color also became an important element in representing its unique visual quality, with vibrant red, yellow and green used on its façade. The buildings served as iconic templates in future Sinicized architecture throughout Chinatown, in which five other bazaars gradually developed near the two buildings, creating an early core. In 1925 the main street of grant avenue was further decorated in street lamps for the SF Diamond Jubilee celebration, with its pole imitating bamboo and a pair of dragons coiling towards a lantern. The lanterns were a symbolic moment in Chinatown and was proudly expressed in the press as a "distinctive landmark" and "pin point[ed] Chinatown in the four corners of the earth".[39] This moment encapsulates the Chinese community's establishment of a unique identity that was neither exclusively American nor Chinese, but a synthesis of the two. It was an early permutation in the hybrid quality of Chinatown and foreshadows its increasing fusion of western ideas.

[37] "In Celebration of a Community, 1906-2006," CHSA (Chinese Historical Society of America), accessed March 31, 2022, https://www.chsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Chinatown_Rising_Timeline.pdf, 3.
[38] Quan, "San Francisco's Chinatown- A History," 45.
[39] H K Wong, "The 'Dragon's Glow," *San Francisco Chinatown on Parade*, 1961, 59.

Figure 10: (Left) YWCA building, now the Chinese Historical Society of America building (About CHSA).
Figure 11: (Right) Internal courtyard of YWCA building (Drueding).

Between the world wars from 1920s to 1940s reflected a demographic shift and Americanization of Chinatown. The Chinese Exclusion Act limited further immigration in which the male population began to decline, while the relative proportion of families grew. This trend reflected itself in the built environment of Chinatown, which constituted the adoption and assimilation into modern westernized ideas. The most notable example is the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) building on Clay Street designed by Julia Morgan in 1932, serving as an education and recreation center for young Chinese women (Figure 10).[40] The building consisted of a residence hall in one end and women's center in the other, with a courtyard connecting the two. The residence hall was designed with Chinese architectural elements such as Chinese wallpaper, marble fireplace and painted false-windows with scenes of landscapes. Similarly, the recreation center showed careful detailing, with a diamond pattern ribbed arched roof and use of various Chinese motifs for its interior. At its center is a courtyard derived from traditional Chinese architecture with a tranquil garden, in which each opposing building has strategic window openings and entryways framing the scenery (Figure 11). The exterior is equally impressive, with its entryway adorning glazed geometric patterns and circular stone lattice work. Moreover, its presence is further emphasized by two protruding octagonal towers with green glazed clay tiled roofing and concrete block unions with Chinese detailing. Morgan's building underlines the gradual Americanization of post-earthquake Chinatown, in the form of social organizations.

Figure 12: SF Chinatown Chinese Hospital opening in 1925 (The New Hospital).

[40] Chuo Li, "Chinatown and Urban Redevelopment," 174.

Another major development was a hospital with western medical treatment. The overcrowded conditions of Chinatown and limited access to healthcare, resulted in self-diagnosis and the practice of Chinese medicine brought by immigrants. Through the collective support of fifteen community organizations, the hospital was opened in 1925 (Figure 12).[41] The design also reflected the amalgamation of the west and east, through its inspired design of the hospital Rockefeller Foundation in Peking. The building is symmetrical in design, in which its beige façade is Sinicized with curving eaves, Chinese balustrades, decorative windows and tiled roof. Similar to Morgan's YWCA building, the Chinatown hospital reflected an adoption of modern American infrastructure and services while retaining its unique oriental character.

Furthermore, this process of Americanization was reflected in the character of business buildings, that catered towards the Americanized tastes of the American born Chinese (ABC) and first-generation immigrants of Chinatown. This was exemplified by the Eastern Bakery opened in 1923, that was the first shop to serve Western baked goods. Likewise, the Fong Fong bakery in 1930 was opened by Philip Fong and his cousin Charlies after working in an American Cafeteria, which produced both Chinese and American goods.[42] Both bakery's had neon signs projecting from its façade, in which the Eastern Bakery even included an oriental touch to its signage. The two bakeries exemplified the growing hybrid Chinese American culture, as first-generation immigrants became acclimatized to American culture and the emerging needs in changing demographics of ABCs.

The 1906 Earthquake was instrumental in establishing a socio-political relationship between the SF Chinese community and hegemonic white society. The collective interest in an "oriental city" secured Chinatown's survivability and decreased racial hostility through the mutual benefits of tourism. Chinatown's rebranded external identity being clean and oriental, faded boundaries of the once segregated enclave and increased cross-cultural interaction. Furthermore, as mentioned by journalist Louis Stellman, the 1096 fire was "the most powerful westernizing agency ever applied to the Chinese" and heightened Chinatown's process of Americanization. In the subsequent years, Chinatown and its changing family orientated demographic enabled an adaptation of American values and social institutions. However it is important to note that even with the adoption of such American virtues in the form of social institutions, there was an underlying understanding of representing the community's difference and identity through its unique oriental appearance. The Dichotomy of Chinatown being connected and separate from its host society is constantly being negotiated, not only for strengthening the community's bond, but as to not encroach on the pure American domestic life. By being outwardly oriental and adopting American values, Chinatown is no longer seen as a threat but a thriving community assimilating into American life. Chinatown's oriental appearance, is not a static preservation of traditional culture, but a reinvention of ethnicity and culture for tourism, that reflects the community's resilience. The foundation of tourism and established socio-political relationship with the dominant society, enables Chinatown to be adapted, negotiated and compromised in future forces encroaching on its survivability. This force came in the form of urban development after World War 2, in which its neighboring financial district invaded neighborhoods of ethnic minorities. Once again Chinatown's survival came into question.

[41] Yip, "San Francisco's Chinatown," 285.
[42] Quan, "San Francisco's Chinatown- A History," 65.

Chapter 3: Policy and Immigration Changes, Urban Redevelopment, Growing Financial District (Postwar Chinatown)

After World War 2 (WW2), the stability brought about significant political changes to Chinatown. As China was an ally of the United States, changes to immigration and policies were made towards the Chinese, that further opened the boundaries between the two ethnicities. The catalyst for such radical changes was the US Congress repealing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 in 1943, that opened more economic opportunities for the Chinese. Within the same year the Displaced Person Act, enabled the Chinese to become naturalized citizens.[43] These policy changes opened employment opportunities, in which the Chinese were able to participate in technical fields, business and government jobs. Higher education opportunities also increased for Chinese Americans that served in the war. This amalgamated in the increase of second and third generation Chinese American population entering the middle-class job market. With increased economic freedom and decreased racial tension, some Chinese began seeking residential housing outside of Chinatown such as Oakland and the suburbs. Simultaneously, the loosening of immigration laws for women, created significant demographic changes in SF. Based on the US. Census, the ratio of Chinese men to women was 3 to 1 in 1940 and shifted to 1.4 to 1 by 1960.[44] The increase in families, created increased housing shortage in Chinatown, in which many chose to relocate within the suburbs for better conditions. These socio-political changes marked a dramatic change in physical boundaries of the SF Chinese population, where they were no longer restricted within the boundaries of Chinatown. Furthermore, the financial freedom brought about a suburban middle class that did not solely rely on Chinatown as a means of economic survival. This highlights the role of Chinatown and its Chinese community slowly shifting from an enclave to a symbol for the Chinese American community.

Figure 13: Ping Yuen Resident Improvement with Sinicized Gate on Pacific Avenue (Koeppel 2016).

Chinatown became a space in which Chinese culture and traditions can be represented, which manifest itself most notably in the yearly Chinese New Year celebration with a parade and fireworks that still occurs to this day. This begs the question, who are the individuals that still use Chinatown in the 1960s? Is it solely for tourism and occasional cultural activities? Did people still live within

[43] Lisa Redfield Peattie, "Pressures on Congress: A Study of the Repeal of Chinese Exclusion," *American Journal of Sociology* 57, no. 1 (1951): pp. 96-97, https://doi.org/10.1086/220878.
[44] Quan, "San Francisco's Chinatown- A History," 84.

Chinatown? In spite of increased social and residential mobility, Chinatown was still a crucial gateway for new immigrants to assimilate into society. Moreover, many elderlies and the less economically fortunate relied on Chinatown's housing. The demand for housing never depreciated and with increasing number of families, the overcrowded conditions continued. The bleak housing conditions was fully captured in a report by the Chinatown-North Beach Economic Opportunity Commission, where "60 percent of the housing lack separate bathrooms… Depending on the building and its location, 50 to 100 people may have to be served from one common kitchen".[45] In response to these housing issue, city officials organized the construction of the Ping Yuen public housing project, that consisted of three 6 story high buildings.[46] The influence of the Modern Movement can be noticed within the Ping Yuen housing design, at which the common brick construction is replaced with concrete. The buildings were still adorned with Chinese motifs, such as dragon decorations, yellow tiled roofs and a Sinicized gate (Figure 13). Other residential projects sprung up around Chinatown such as the Buk Ping Yuen building that was twelve story high in 1958.[47] The scale of these new developments contrasted strongly to the existing brick structures, causing the urban fabric to be increasingly heterogeneous. The new concrete developments with Chinese motifs serve as a metaphor for Chinatown's future and its continuous negotiations with the dominant society, that is continuously assimilating and adapting to American values, while simultaneously balancing its Chinese identity and oriental allure.

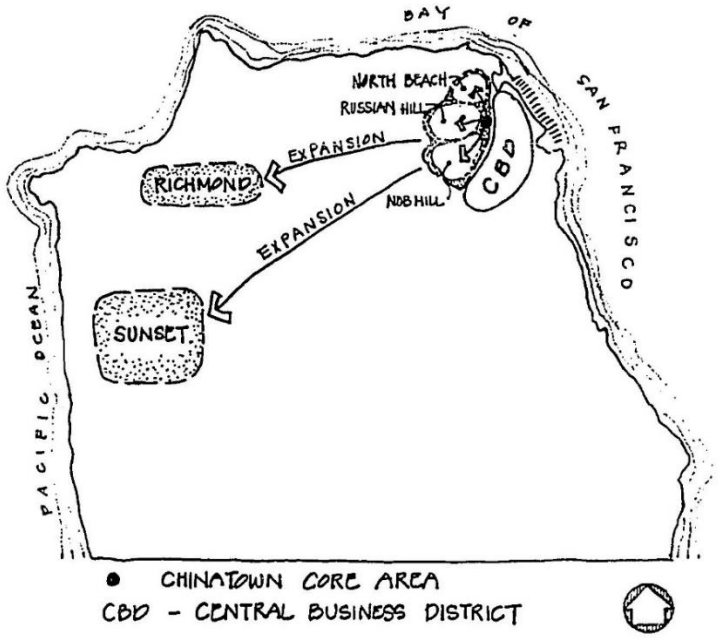


Figure 14: Diagram showing SF Chinatown satellite effect to Richmond and Sunset District (Yip 1995).

These internal forces of change, in social mobility and demographic changes during the 1940 to 1960s, gradually shifted Chinatown's role to become a symbol for the Chinese, and more importantly serving new immigrants and the economically unfortunate individuals. The 1965 Immigration Act and subsequent policies further opened American borders and began another large-scale immigration from the East. In 1965, around 4,749 Chinese immigrants entered the United

[45] Baccari Alessandro, "San Francisco Chinese Community Citizens' Survey and Fact-Finding Committee Records," 1969, 53-54.
[46] Yip, "San Francisco's Chinatown," 312.
[47] Yip, "San Francisco's Chinatown," 316.

States and by 1967 it increased to 25,000 immigrants.[48] The effects of such a surge were felt by SF Chinatown where the new population of Chinese immigrants took over existing businesses and further exacerbated housing supply. This dramatically altered the streetscape of Chinatown, beginning with the opening of bank branches throughout Grant Avenue, as there was an increasing demand for investing and saving by new immigrants. The many banks also used Sinicized facades existing within the urban fabric, to blend into the street frontages. Another major reason for the diversification of commercial programs, was the wide plethora of areas in and around China that the new immigrants came from, bringing in different expertise and cultural practices. This brought in a broader selection of cuisines and other common commercial programs in Asia such as Jade stores.[49] Moreover, this influx of migrants further exhausted housing stock and increased property prices as new immigrants bought property as a form of investment. The pressures of increasing rent caused many commercial services and shops serving local residents to move into the fringes of Chinatown. The overcrowded conditions and unfavorable prices caused many to seek property outside of Chinatown such as North beach and Telegraph Hill. Other satellite Chinatowns also sprung up in San Francisco such as Richmond and Sunset District (Figure 14).[50] The new wave of immigrants further heightened the internal changes felt by Chinatown during the 1940s, as a space specifically inhabited by new immigrants and the elderly. Moreover, Chinatown's increasing role as a core for the Chinese community, highlights how despite being outwardly unrepresentative of their culture, it held the collective memory and authentic experiences of the Chinese Community.

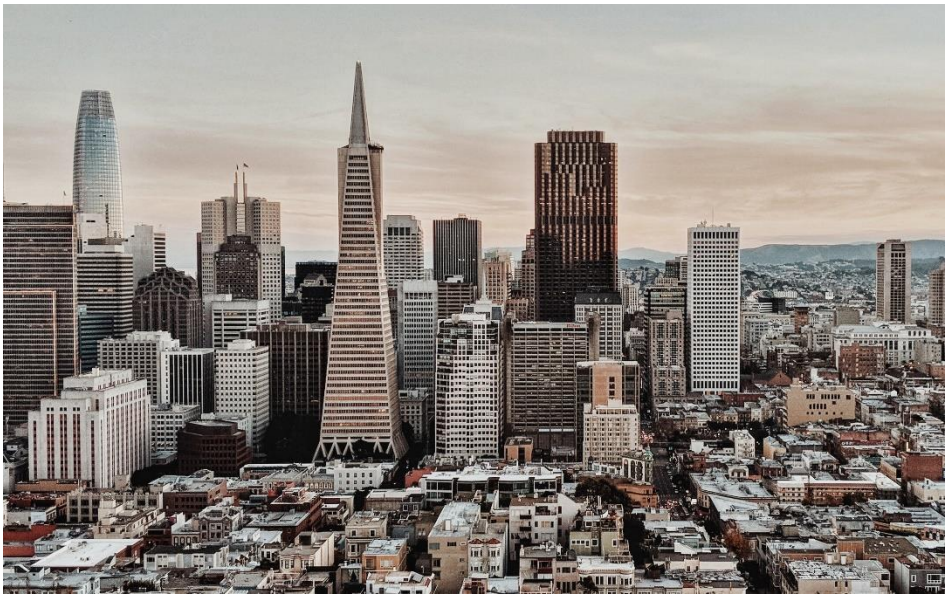


Figure 15: Contemporary photo of downtown San Francisco, with Transamerica Pyramid built in 1972 during urban redevelopment looming over SF Chinatown (Downtown San Francisco).

Simultaneously, while Chinatown's internal relationships were being altered, a dramatic external force of urban redevelopment took over the main area of SF around the 1960s. This began with the formation of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency that conjured the initial city's plans of postwar urban renewal in 1949.[51] There was a clear direction of national economic transformation

[48] *"1970 U.S. Census ," United States Census Bureau, accessed April 10, 2022, https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/overview/1970.html.*
[49] Quan, "San Francisco's Chinatown- A History," 107.
[50] Bernard P. Wong and Chee-Beng Tan, *Chinatowns around the World*, 16.
[51] Chuo Li, "Chinatown and Urban Redevelopment," 30.

from manufacturing to a service industry, and strengthening the West Coast port into a global service and corporate center. SF was already a crucial trans-Pacific trade node in America in which city planners strategized the development of the downtown business district to further maintain its economic dominance. This came in the form of new modern office space and infrastructure, to attract transnational corporations and sustain financial services. These changes significantly altered the skyline and landscape of SF, with much taller buildings and an estimated 36 million square feet of new office space been constructed between 1965 and 1983 (Figure 15).[52] The South of Market area became a prime location for such downtown expansion, as it had low land values and low density. As with most urban development, it often comes at the cost of old neighborhoods occupied by low-income population and racial minorities. As Chinatown is centrally located near the growing financial district, its survival once again came into question and reflected new socio-economic and political changes.

Figure 16: International Hotel Street Frontage plastered with protest banners (Notice how it's written in both Chinese and English) (Glass 2008).

A crucial example of this process in demolition and displacement was Manilatown in Kearny Street, sandwiched between Chinatown and the financial district. The fight for preservation of the International Hotel (I-Hotel) was especially pertinent as it was one of the last remaining buildings of the neighborhood. The three-story residential hotel was built in 1854 and rebuilt after the earthquake in 1907, which was used by Filipino and Chinese seasonal workers for affordable housing.[53] By the late 1960s Manilatown was gradually replaced with high-rise office buildings and other commercial and infrastructural developments. The I-Hotel became a candidate for redevelopment into multilevel parking in 1968. The subsequent years, saw a continuous battle for I-Hotel's survival, serving as symbol for the political empowerment and insurgent citizenship of Asian Americans. These plans sparked controversy, in which the petition of a multitude of actors such as the United Filipino Association, private organizations and civic institutions, persuaded the owner to

[52] Richard C. Collins, Elizabeth B. Waters, and Anthony Bruce Dotson, *America's Downtowns: Growth, Politics & Preservation* (Preservation Press, 1999).
[53] Chuo Li, "Chinatown and Urban Redevelopment," 48.

sign a 3-year long lease in 1969.[54] Sadly, as the lease was ending in 1972, the I-Hotel was bought by the Four Seas Investment Corporation and later asked its tenants to vacate the building.[55] The eviction once again sparked public outrage, in which protests were held in Chinatown demanding for the preservation of the Hotel (Figure 16). Within the next few years, a constant legal battle between demolition and preservation ensued, in which support was even provided by the City's Human Rights Commission and National Register of Historic Places. With the uncertainty of the Hotel future, many tenants moved out, where only 80 out of 130 tenants remained in 1976. Sadly, the tenants of the Hotel were finally evicted in 1977 and eventually demolished.[56] In spite of the failure in preservation, the I-Hotel was a significant catalyst for the ongoing political empowerment of the Asian American community.

There was a nationwide support of the I-Hotel, as it was seen as a "struggle of all Chinese who are forced to live in ghettoes like Chinatown" and "what would become a symbolic fight against capitalism and the plight of urban removal".[57] The significance of the I-Hotel, was not only supported by SF Chinatown, but also other Chinese immigrants in America, as shown by the financial support and petitions through New York's Chinatown. Furthermore, this battle was part of the larger civil right movement that saw other minorities fighting for citizenship and equality. Based on Holston and Appadurai's theory, in the past citizenship was a mechanism that subordinates and coordinates the diversity of cultures into a national uniform body of law.[58] This historic concept was termed formal citizenship, that presented the ideas of liberty and universal equality of rights. With modernity and increased democratic rights, the principle of formal citizenship came into question, as it ignored existing local hierarchies, statuses and privileges. With globalization and increased immigration, saw cities becoming increasingly multi-cultural, where minorities demanded difference-specific rights to their citizenship.[59] Holston and Appadurai coined this new membership as substantive citizenship, where the city became a crucial strategic arena for such political movements. The I-Hotel underlines this fight for substantive citizenship of the Asian American community, which mobilized and empowered the Chinese to redefine and renegotiate their membership, rights and entitlements in a hegemonic white society.

Though Chinatown remained, it was not immune to the changes of urban renewal, as 1,700 housing units were converted into office use.[60] However the core area of Chinatown remained untouched by urban redevelopment, due to its pre-established socio-economic position and land use patterns. The land value of Chinatown was extremely high and continued to inflate to the point that it had increased to 300% 400% around the 1980s, making it extremely costly for developers. This was reflected in the rent of a Herb Store, which increased dramatically from $500 to $4,700 over the years, eventually forcing its closure.[61] Moreover, the fragmented ownership of land, made it extremely difficult to acquire large pieces of land for redevelopment. The land was often divided into small parcels owned by different associations, in which its profits trickled down to its many

[54] Shorenstein Will Listen, "Filipinos Battle to Save Hotel," *The San Francisco Examiner*, May 24, 1972, 19.
[55] Carol Pogash, "New Move to Wreck International Hotel," *The San Francisco Examiner*, January 22, 1975, 3.
[56] Chuo Li, "Chinatown and Urban Redevelopment," 52.
[57] Chuo Li, "Chinatown and Urban Redevelopment," 53.
[58] James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, "Cities and Citizenship," *Public Culture* 8, no. 2 (January 1996): pp. 187-204, https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-8-2-187, 187.
[59] James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, "Cities and Citizenship," 193.
[60] Hartman, Chester, and Sarah Carnochan. *City for Sale: The Transformation of San Francisco*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
[61] Yip, "San Francisco's Chinatown," 361.

members.[62] To obtain land, developers would have to obtain the collective agreement of all association members. The internal networks and outwardly unique identity of Chinatown, created a strong barrier which secured and maintained its survival during this period of urban renewal.

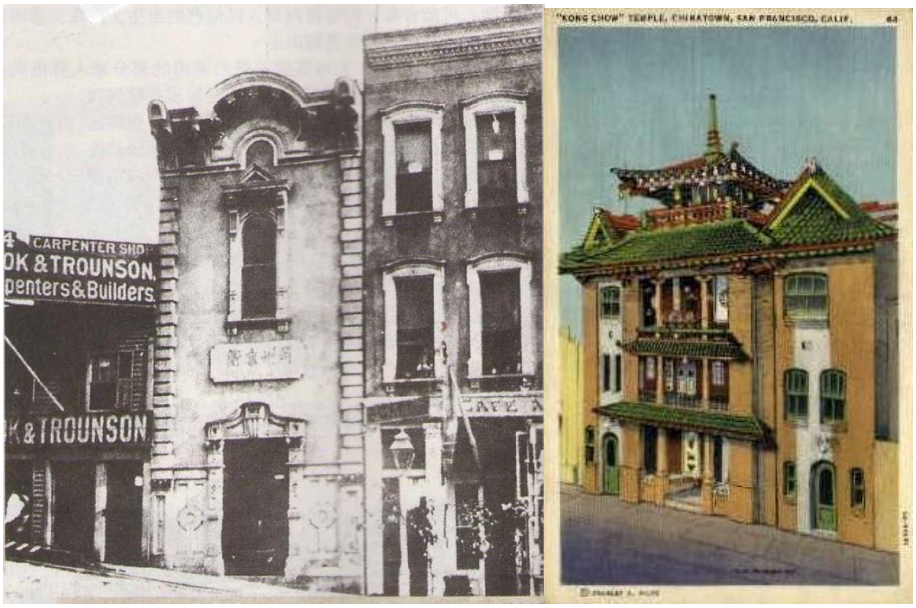


Figure 17: (Left) Kong Chow Temple before 1906 earthquake (The Unshakable)
Figure 18: (Right) Kong Chow Temple rebuilt in same location after earthquake, with oriental motifs (Kong Chow Temple).

Even when redevelopment occurred, a complicated legal battle ensued as seen from the example of the Kong Chow Temple. The Temple was first built in 1857 in 520 Pine Street, serving as the association headquarters (Figure 17). After the earthquake, the temple was rebuilt on the same plot in 1909, with Sinicized elements such as curved tiled roofs seen throughout Chinatown (Figure 18). In 1969, the association decided to sell the property to Title Insurance and Trust Company for $630,000 and received a demolition permit by the city in March.[63] This announcement sparked outrage from its community members, but specifically Charlotte Chang whom was the daughter of the original land donor. Chang argued that her fathers prescribed the land to be used, solely for the purpose of a Temple. Moreover, Chang believed the temple was integral to her parents' legacy, serving "as a living symbol of the goals and principles for which her father fought".[64] More than her family, Chang believed the preservation of the Temple served as a statement against the encroachment of the financial district. Through the continuous efforts of Chang, the temple's demolition was delayed and even nominated as a historic landmark by the City Landmark Board. Unfortunately, similar to the fate of the I-Hotel, the temple was eventually demolished in the 1970 for a high-rise office building.[65] Similar to the I-Hotel, the Kong Chow Temple reflected the Chinese communities fight against forces of gentrification, in defining symbolic boundaries and substantive citizenship.

[62] Quan, "San Francisco's Chinatown- A History," 121.
[63] Christopher L. Yip, "Association, Residence, and Shop: An Appropriation of Commercial Blocks in North American Chinatowns," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 5 (1995): pp. 109-117, https://doi.org/10.2307/3514249.
[64] Gary C Sala, "Chinatown's Oldest Temple Near End," *The San Francisco Examiner*, November 8, 1968.
[65] Chuo Li, "Chinatown and Urban Redevelopment," 58.

The Kong Chow Temple also reflected shifting socio-economic and political values in Chinatown, being the internal conflicts of gender roles, economic interests and heritage preservation. The male dominated power dynamics of Chinatown associations, follows the common patriarchal tradition of China. These gender imbalances were felt by Chang, in which she remarked in a local newspaper that being a woman caused her advice to be overlooked by the Kong Chow board members. In spite of the failed attempt at preservation, her actions underline the changing gender roles within the Chinese community and the increasing voice of woman in an once bachelor dominated community. Another major change is the evolving economic interest of Associations, as they owned around half of the properties in Chinatown. Associations found it increasingly hard to ignore the economic profit of redevelopment, in which newer and larger buildings would bring significantly more money to its members. This growing internal tension and struggle regarding heritage and development, brought about uncertainty in the future of Chinatown? Were the mechanism and organizations that once protected SF Chinatown, still authentic to the interests of the community? Are the historically ingrained mechanisms counteracting SF Chinatown's destruction and dilution enough to maintain its livelihood in the future? The internal and external forces once again came into play in 21st century SF Chinatown, facing forces of urban shrinkage, gentrification and urban revitalization.

Chapter 4: Urban shrinkage, Gentrification, Urban Revitalization & Future Sustainable Initiatives

Chinatown continues to persist in the urban fabric of SF, serving as an immigrant gateway, area for affordable housing, symbolic capital for the Chinese community, and for tourism. The Chinatown core remains as a mixed-used neighbourhood with 14,000 residents and 900 small business.[66] More importantly Chinatown serves as safe haven for the Chinese community providing social services and institutions, creating a vibrant and tight knit community. Unfortunately, there have been recent studies highlighting the nationwide decline of Chinese population in Chinatowns known as the phenomenon of urban shrinkage. In the period of 2009-2014, the proportion of ethnic Chinese in SF Chinatown declined from 81% to 72%, and in some cases declined to all or most as shown in Washington being 11%.[67] These issues of decline are further compounded with external and internal forces of change, being continued gentrification, urban revitalization and ageing housing supply. This begs the questions, what pre-existing and new mechanisms enable SF Chinatown to persist in the present and future?

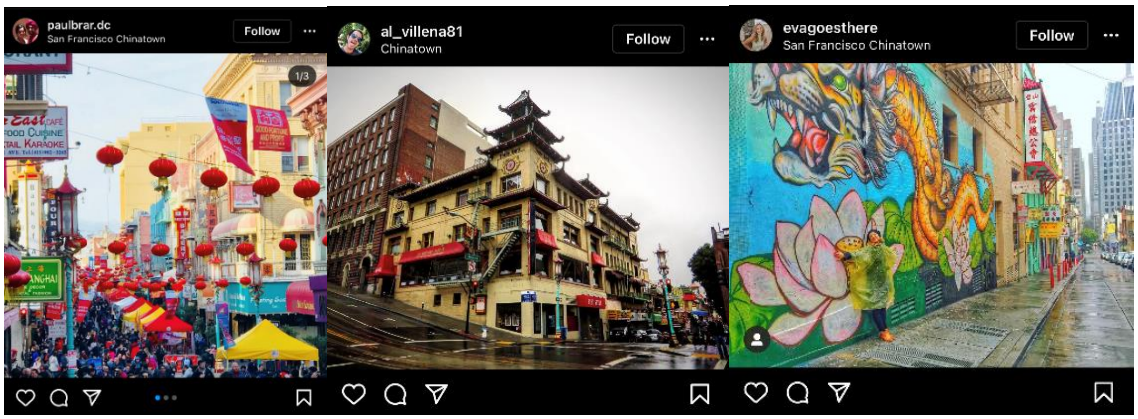


Figure 19: Instagram photos with #sanfranciscochinatown,
showing continued allure for the oriental (paulbrar.dc 2018) (al_villena81 2018) (evagoesthere 2018).

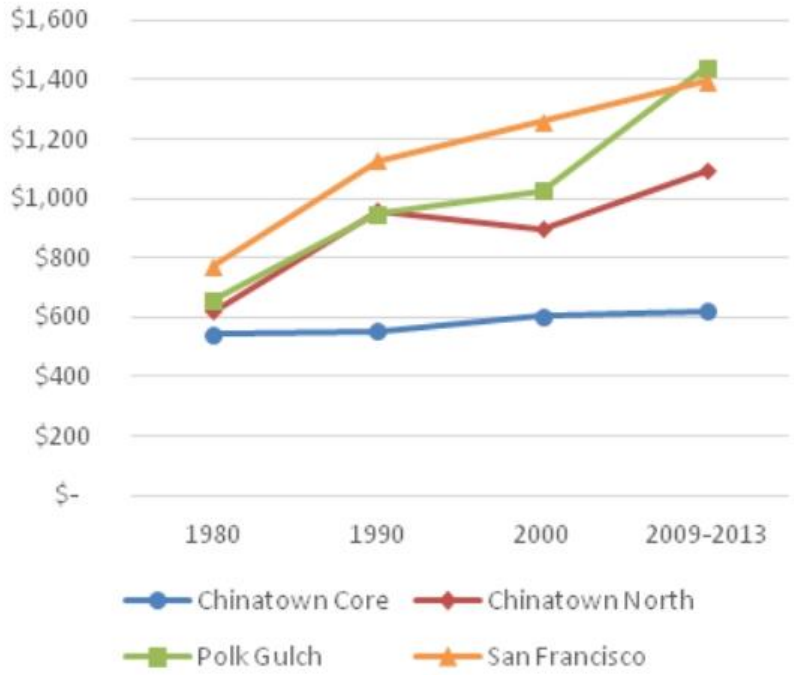
A strong reason for the continued survival of Chinatown, is its pre-established role and relationship with the city of SF as an oriental city, satisfying the touristic cravings of American society. Today SF Chinatown continues to be a major tourist spot, being the third most visited destination in the city.[68] Iconic elements like the Chinatown gateway, pagodas of the Sing Fat Building and Sing Chong Building and Sinicized street lamps have stood the test of time and continue to attract visitors for its unique oriental design (Figure19). The street frontages of Grant Avenue are lined with a plethora of shops from touristic t-shirt and trinket shops to historic businesses like the Eastern Bakery. The foundation of tourism built after the 1906 fire continues to cement Chinatown's importance in SF. However there have been emerging trends of huge banquet hall restaurants being replaced by upscale establishments, as a sign of looming gentrification in Chinatown. Banquet halls hold tremendous cultural value to Chinatown, not only serving food but also functioning as community centres. In the past, five major banquet halls served the community, but only two remain being the

[66] "Strategies for a Sustainable Chinatown" (San Francisco: sustainablechinatown, 2017), pp. 1-132. 4.
[67] Shuyi Xie and Elena Batunova, "Shrinking Historic Neighborhoods", 2.
[68] "Chinatown: San Francisco, California," American Planning Association (APA), accessed April 14, 2022, https://www.planning.org/greatplaces/neighborhoods/2013/chinatown.htm.

Far East and New Asia establishments.[69] One of these new developments is the China Live complex opened in 2017, that includes a $225 tasting menu. George Chen the chef and owners of the establishment, comments on the outdated concept of banquet halls and the diminishing demand by second and third generation Chinese Americans. Furthermore, he admits to the pricier menu of China Live, but offers 20 percent discount to Chinatown residents and comments "We're not trying to create a place where rich people can feel like they're slumming it in Chinatown".[70] Other changes to the streetscape of Chinatown include urban revitalization in the form of murals, plastered throughout Chinatown. Are these changes to the urban fabric of Chinatown truly impeding on its cultural authenticity? Just as Chinatown has adapted to changing tastes in the form of western bakeries in the past, current changes are simply adjusting to new demands of next generation Chinese Americans. Moreover, the added murals have enlivened the degraded facades of Chinatown and attracted younger visitors as being instagrammable (Figure 19). SF Chinatown continues to reveal its versatility in catering to the shifting tastes of American society and adopting new trends to secures it longevity.

Another crucial mechanism is the aforementioned emergence of substantive citizenship during the civil rights movement, that empowered and catalysed the Chinese American community to fight for their rights. Soon after the protests for the I-Hotel the Chinatown Community Development Centre (CCDC) was founded in April 1977 that became an integral community organization protecting Chinatown.[71] The CCDC reflected the growing importance of voluntary organizations in representing the interests of the Chinatown community, which was once the sole responsibility of associations. The CCDC was instrumental in protecting infringing developers during the urban redevelopment of the financial district. The organization saw the unsustainability of a project-by-project approach and instead fought for policy changes to the neighbourhood's land use.[72] Interestingly, during these moments the CCDC and Chinese Chamber of Commerce collaborated on the "Chinatown Community Plan", which would inspire the city's 1986 Chinatown Rezoning Plan.[73] This rezoning plan protected the core areas of Chinatown, by downzoning the neighbourhood through setting lower height limits and restricting future proliferation of office development. The influence of the 1986 Rezoning Plan continues to secure Chinatown's mixed land use and protect the single-room occupancy (SRO) housing stock that is integral to its low-income residents.

[69] Janelle Bitker, "SF's Chinatown Community Fears Incoming Restaurant Could Bring Gentrification," San Francisco Chronicle (San Francisco Chronicle, February 21, 2020), https://www.sfchronicle.com/restaurants/article/SF-s-Chinatown-community-fears-incoming-15061663.php.
[70] Luke Tsai, "Gentrification Fears Mount in SF's Chinatown as Another Spendy Newcomer Nears Its Debut," Eater SF (Eater SF, February 18, 2020), https://sf.eater.com/2020/2/18/21142624/empress-by-boon-sf-
[71] "Chinatown: San Francisco," American Planning Association (APA).
[72] Nicole Montojo, "Community Organizing amidst Change in SF's Chinatown," *Case Studies on Gentrification and Displacement in the San Francisco Bay Area*, July 2015, pp. 13-23, 8.
[73] "Chinatown: San Francisco," American Planning Association (APA).



Graph 2: Median Rent in Chinatown and San Francisco, 1980 to 2009-2013 (Montojo 2015).

Other than the socio-economic benefits of Chinatown, its affordable housing is crucial to the economic susceptible demographic being immigrants, low-income families and elderly. Around one-third of Chinatown residents are over 60 years old, and 62 percent are linguistically isolated which is four times higher than city average. Moreover, the neighbourhood has the lowest level of educational attainment in the city and an extremely low household median income being $19,950 while the city average is $78,710. Under such circumstances, the residents of Chinatown rely heavily on the affordable housing stock, with 94% of residents being renters and 52% in SRO hotels.[74] A recent report by the University of Berkley in collaboration with the CCDC has found that the greater area of Chinatown has faced increasing pressures of gentrification, where rent has doubled from 1980-2013. Luckily the core area of Chinatown has seen less dramatic change, as a high percentage of housing is rent controlled and SRO units. The median rent of Chinatown's core has only increasingly slightly from $490 to $575 per unit, compared to its surroundings area being $1455 (Graph 2).[75] Nonetheless, the anxiety of displacement looms over the majority of residents facing rent or mortgage burdens, in which even small increases can lead to relocation. Moreover, many residents living around Chinatown rely on the close proximity and familiarity of the core, but have begun facing issues of eviction. This problem was experienced by Owen Wang, a resident of the Hotel Astoria paying $300 a month for rent. When returning home, Wang found the hotel's new management had changed the locks on his door without warning and threatened other residents with eviction notices written in English only.[76] In recent trends the Chinatown North and Polk Gulch communities have begun experiencing increasing occurrences of evictions, which include Ellis Act and Owner-Move-In evictions. Census also reflect the changing demographic of surrounding neighbourhoods, with declining Asian households and increasing number of white households. To

[74] "Strategies for a Sustainable Chinatown," 64.
[75] Nicole Montojo, "Community Organizing amidst Change," 7.
[76] Stephanie Martin Taylor, "San Francisco's Chinatown Residents Fear Evictions and Gentrification," KQED (KQED, July 28, 2015), https://www.kqed.org/news/10619857/san-franciscos-chinatown-fears-evictions-and-gentrification.

counteract such emerging forces of eviction, the CCDC and other tenant groups, have secured eviction protection for seniors and residents with disabilities. The collaboration between community organizations in political engagement is key to Chinatown's continued resistance to gentrification, which simultaneously strengthens the social networks of Chinatown's community.

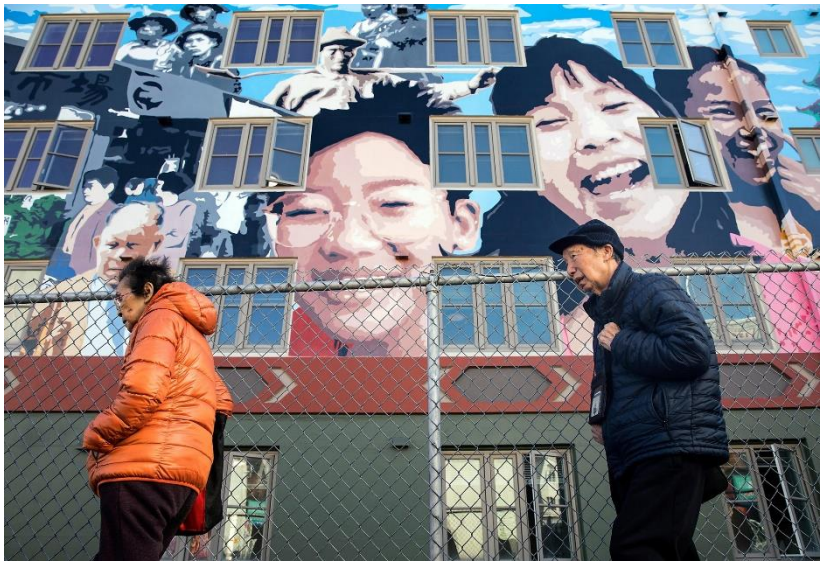


Figure 20: Urban revitalization in the form of a mural on the Ping Yuen Public Housing (Wu 2018).

The aforementioned cases, exemplify reactionary campaigns to continued gentrification, but what is being planned to further sustain and improve SF Chinatown's future? This comes in the form of the Sustainable Chinatown initiative of 2014, which is a cross-sector partnership between public agencies such as the San Francisco Planning Department and CCDC. This collective has outlined three major areas of improvement being: to maintain affordability of housing, sustain the community's unique culture and history, and to improve the neighbourhood's environmental and health performance.[77] The first goal of affordable housing has been a concurrent issue within Chinatown, in which the aforementioned policies to a large extent have protected Chinatown's housing stock. However, many buildings are showing deterioration, with minimal maintenance and are decades behind current building standards. Health and safety violations are nearly double the city average and overcrowding is 4 times higher, which further heightens existing housing issues.[78] If the aging building stock continues to be ignored, accompanied with pressures of gentrification, can lead to the incentivization of owners to sell or convert buildings for more profitable means. Understanding such pressures, the CCDC hopes to transform the Ping Yuen housing developments into a model of sustainable housing rehabilitation and catalyse improvements throughout Chinatown (Figure 20). The Ping Yuen Public Housing continues to be an anchor in the community and is the largest residential development with 1000 residents. In the end the CCDC was able to secure funding for a number of green improvements such as LED, insulation, new high-efficiency windows, insulation, Energy Star appliances and a $1.5 million solar PV system. The CCDC hopes to continue to preserve affordable housing and conduct strategic outreach with building owners, as seen from its latest acquisition of the 462 Green in 2016 for rehabilitation.[79]

[77] "Strategies for a Sustainable Chinatown," 2.
[78] "Strategies for a Sustainable Chinatown," 26.
[79] "Strategies for a Sustainable Chinatown," 20.

Figure 21: (Left) Ross Alley before housing brothels and gambling dens (The Street of the Gambers).
Figure 22: (Right) Ross Alley today where 41 Ross Gallery is located (Ross Alley).

In terms of sustaining the community's character, many organizations have already begun programs engaging various community stakeholders to further deepen cultural and historical connections. One of these is the Chinatown Alleyway Tours, which provides guided tours around Chinatown to better understand and experience its cultural significance. These tours are led by high school students that grew up in Chinatown, that also strengthens their personal bond to the historical neighbourhood, as seen from volunteer Kwok's remarks "In the past, I was ashamed… grew up in Chinatown. However, since joining this program… I am very proud as a member of this neighbourhood".[80] Another program also aiming to disseminate Chinatown's culture is the 41 Ross Gallery space located in one of the oldest Alleyway's of Chinatown (Figure 21). The exhibition space provides a platform for local artists, non-profit organizations and journalist to share the unique character of Chinatown (Figure 22).[81] These two programs underline the organization's goals of presenting Chinatown as something more than an oriental city, which is embedded with rich culture and historical significance.

Figure 23: Group exercise in Portsmouth Square (Thompson 2016).

[80] Shuyi Xie and Elena Batunova, "Shrinking Historic Neighborhoods", 14.
[81] Melissa Hung, "Chinatowns Across The Country Face Off With Gentrification," NPR (NPR, March 15, 2017), https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/03/15/515792846/chinatowns-across-the-country-face-off-with-gentrification?t=1642373801579.

The last goal of improving the neighbourhood's environmental and health performance, has been a consistent issue within Chinatown. Chinatown has the City's lowest amounts of park and open space per capita, which can be attributed to its overcrowded and dense urban fabric. The most notable public space being the Portsmouth Square that is colloquially known as the "living room", reveals the importance of such spaces as generators of community bonding (Figure 23).[82] Unfortunately, public spaces like the Portsmouth Square are overused, under maintained and have outdated amenities. To preserve and increase the already limited green space, several publics projects are scheduled within Chinatown, such as the Willie Woo Woo Wong Playground renovation, the New Chinatown Central Subway station open space and the Portsmouth Square Improvement Project.[83] These initiatives will add much needed green space to Chinatown, improving quality of life and bringing new vibrancy into the neighbourhood. Other than the vitality of public space, improvements have also been made to public institutions that serve the Chinatown community. The historic Chinese Hospital constructed in 1925 was a monumental event in the SF Chinese community, galvanizing future healthcare developments. The lifting of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 increased residential mobility, which inspired the opening of three primary care clinics outside of Chinatown to satisfy expanding needs. Furthermore, a funding campaign began in 1998 for a new Patient Tower to replace the original 1925 hospital building, as it severely fell behind contemporary standards of healthcare. In 2016 the 8-story Patient Tower was completed, meeting the latest seismic requirements and retrofitted with the highest quality medical equipment.[84] The continued efforts of institutional development, reveal Chinatown's historical and continued drive to provide the highest quality services to an economically vulnerable population.

The aforementioned factors reveal Chinatown's continued importance as a mixed use-district, that is provides socio-economic benefits and affordable housing to the economically vulnerable. In spite of its poor and overcrowded conditions, residents are resilient and enjoy the comfortability of the neighbourhood, which can be attributed to strong social and cultural organizations, family associations, non-profits, institutions and other social services. Furthermore, even with decreasing Chinese populations in the neighbourhood due to increased residential and social mobility, Chinatowns serves as an integral cultural capital to Chinese American population. The pre-established role of tourism continues to persist as a stabilizing force in relation to the larger hegemonic white society. The changing urban fabric in the form of restaurants and murals, reveals Chinatowns commercial mutability. Though the 1986 Rezoning Plan to a large extent secured SF Chinatown's future, the Sustainable Chinatown initiative of 2014 reveals the community's willingness for continued improvement of the neighbourhood. While other Chinatown's have disappeared due to their static quality, SF Chinatowns historical and continued ability to negotiate internal and external relationships reflects its versatility in the face of encroaching forces; which has and will continue to cement its place in the heart of the city.

[82] "Strategies for a Sustainable Chinatown," 40.
[83] "Strategies for a Sustainable Chinatown," 40.
[84] "The New Hospital," Chinese Hospital.

Conclusion

In conclusion, San Francisco's Chinatown continues to thrive in spite of current forces of gentrification and urban shrinkage, due to its historically rooted mechanism and new initiatives that enable a continuous adaptation and negotiation with internal and external forces of change. Moreover, the chronological recount of major events in SF Chinatown's history reveals various significant factors and mechanisms that amalgamate in the neighborhood's current urban resilience.

This began with colonial expansion that attracted many Chinese laborers to America, where increasing racial hostility forced Chinese immigrants into ethnic enclaves like SF Chinatown in 1850. The racial and political movements scapegoated the Chinese for economic failures during the depression, labeling them as inferior. The marginalization of the community as "other" was further strengthened by xenophobic policies. Chinatown's urban fabric, rooted and shaped by the discriminatory policies and unbalanced socio-political power dynamics of the White dominant society, generated poor conditions, limited economic freedom resorting in illegal activities and lack of cultural expression in the built environment. The racially generated conditions were further weaponized to segregate the Chinese community, creating an endless loop of racial hostility. Luckily the interlocking relationships built by a plethora of associations created socio-political stability within the Chinese community, that counteracted such forces of racial aggression. However, the emergence of commercial orientalism in the form guided tours, foreshadowed a new Chinatown that catered to the American consumers curiosity of the exotic.

The SF earthquake and fire of 1906, was the most significant driver of change that enabled Chinatown's community to re-establish its identity and socio-political relationship with the dominant society. The narrative of an oriental city perpetuated in the plans of relocation, became a source of ethnic empowerment and identity formation that would secure Chinatown's survival. Moreover, the examples of the Sing Fat and Sing Chong building reveal the establishment of a unique identity with hybrid qualities. Decreasing racial hostility also enabled increasing Americanization of post-earthquake Chinatown, in the form of social organizations, exemplified by the YWCA building and Chinatown Hospital. The foundation of tourism and established socio-political relationship, enables Chinatown to adapt and compromise in future forces encroaching on its survivability.

After World War Two, the lifting and easing of xenophobic policies towards the Chinese, decreased racial boundaries and increased residential mobility to suburban areas. This also highlights the gradual shift of Chinatown from an enclave to a symbol for the Chinese American community. The urban fabric also saw changes in new concrete developments that contrasted strongly to the existing brick structures, causing the urban fabric to be increasingly heterogeneous. Another key moment was the dramatic external force of urban redevelopment due to the growing financial district in the 1960s. This expansion came at the cost of old neighborhoods occupied by low-income population and racial minorities, which included SF Chinatown. The adjacent Manilatown's I-Hotel became symbolic in the fight for substantive citizenship of the Asian American community and galvanized the Chinese to redefine and renegotiate difference-specific rights. Furthermore, the demolishment of the Kong Chow Temple reveals the continued fight for rights, but also the shifting socio-economic interest of associations and changing gender roles in an once bachelor dominated community.

Today, Chinatown continues to serve as an immigrant gateway, area for affordable housing, symbolic capital for the Chinese community, and for tourism. Tourism continues to be a key factor in stabilizing Chinatown, through attracting visitors for its iconic oriental features and satisfying the

oriental cravings of the dominant society. Though the replacement of historic businesses and the altering of the streetscape through murals may suggest looming pressures of gentrification, these changes may simply signify Chinatown's adjustment to shifting tastes and trends of the dominant society. Another key mechanism is the increasing responsibility of voluntary organizations in representing and fighting for the substantive rights of the Chinatown community. To a large extent, SF Chinatown's core has resisted urban shrinkage and gentrification due to the CCDC's efforts in the 1986 Chinatown Rezoning Plan and more recent success in securing eviction protection for senior and residents with disabilities. Lastly the Sustainable Chinatown initiative of 2014 and its various goals in housing, cultural development and quality of life, reveals the community's drive for continued improvement of the neighbourhood.

The aforementioned factors adding to Chinatown's urban resilience, culminates in a thriving ethnic neighborhood that engages and improves city life. The future initiatives of SF Chinatown, presents an opportunity to serve as a sustainable model for other ethnic neighborhoods facing external forces of change. SF Chinatown has transformed itself from an unwanted ethnic enclave, to an irreplaceable vibrant neighborhood entrenched with cultural and historical significance.

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