

**Design for a Unique Part of Our Multicultural Mosaic:  
Winnipeg's Chinatown**

a practicum  
by **Jie Zhu**

presented to the  
**Department of Landscape Architecture**  
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**DESIGN FOR A UNIQUE PART OF OUR MULTICULTURAL MOSAIC: WINNIPEG'S  
CHINATOWN**

**BY**

**JIE ZHU**

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of  
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree  
of  
MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Issues and Concerns**

Winnipeg's Chinatown is illustrative of the evolution of Chinese society and settlement expressed through the urban fabric of a part of downtown Winnipeg over time. Like other Canadian Chinatowns, Winnipeg's Chinatown today is culturally unique, taking on a distinct character in contrast to its surroundings. Several questions are raised through the examination of Winnipeg's Chinatown: what makes Chinatown a special place? what affects the evolution of Chinatown? can these factors be identified? if so, how can we define the appropriate character for Winnipeg's Chinatown today, and guide change to accommodate and enhance this character in the future? This study tries to provide answers to these questions.

Winnipeg's Chinatown began to establish its distinctive physical character in the early 1900's. Similar to the historic beginnings of other North American Chinatowns, Winnipeg's Chinatown was created by the factors of racial discrimination, cultural and language barriers, and economics. It existed as a place of retreat and escape for the Chinese within the host society. Over time, however, the function of Winnipeg's Chinatown has changed. Most members of Chinese community are no longer living in Chinatown. Thus Chinatown is now viewed as a social and cultural center for the Chinese community, and a place to shop and eat for all.

The public expects Chinatown to be a unique component of the urban fabric of downtown Winnipeg. As a result, there have been efforts to revitalize Chinatown over the past 20 years. The Chinese Cultural Center, the Mandarin Building, the Chinese Gate and

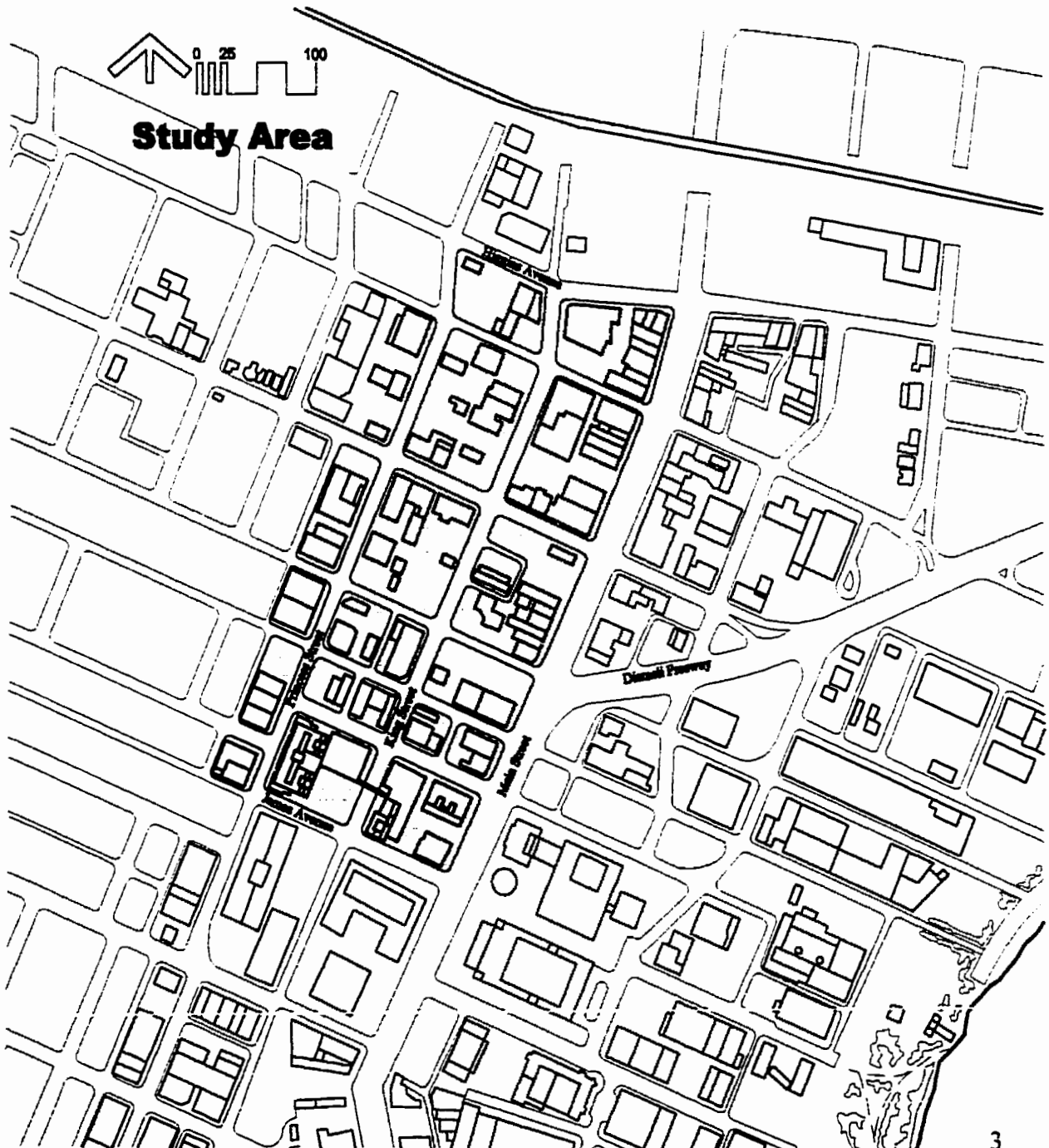
housing complexes were constructed by private developers in co-operation with the Winnipeg Chinatown Development Corporation (CDC) and the City of Winnipeg, under the Core Area Initiative Program. Thus there is more evidence of the Chinese culture; it's visual identity giving expression to the community's behavioral patterns.

Winnipeg's Chinatown, however, does not meet the public's expectations of a socially vibrant environment typical of established North American Chinatowns. Its character has been altered by factors such as functional evolution, shifting population, transportation expansion, and the introduction of sameness. The negative impact of these changes causes the loss, or threatens the loss of the essential quality of Chinatown. Therefore, the identification of its unique character must precede change, and change must be designed to accommodate the preservation and enhancement of that character (Garnham, 1985).

Character is the distinctiveness of objects and spatial ordering that stamp a particular place as truly unique (Jakle, 1987). Christian Norberg-Schultz states that whereas "space" denotes the three-dimensional organization of the elements which make up place, "character" denotes the general "atmosphere", which is the most comprehensive property of any place. It cues what other authors variously refer to as the "spirit of place", "personality of place", or "sense of place". Urban designers must respond to and enhance this character, this "sense of place". It is important for them to realize that their role is not merely to manipulate form to make space, but to create place through a synthesis of the components of the total environment, including the social. In an effort to contribute to the revitalization of Winnipeg's Chinatown, it is proposed that an urban design study of Winnipeg's Chinatown be undertaken.

## 1.2 Study Area

The study area is defined as the 12 blocks bounded by James Avenue to the south, Higgins Avenue to the north, Main Street to the east and the west frontage of Princess Street to the west respectively.



### **1.3 Goal and Objectives**

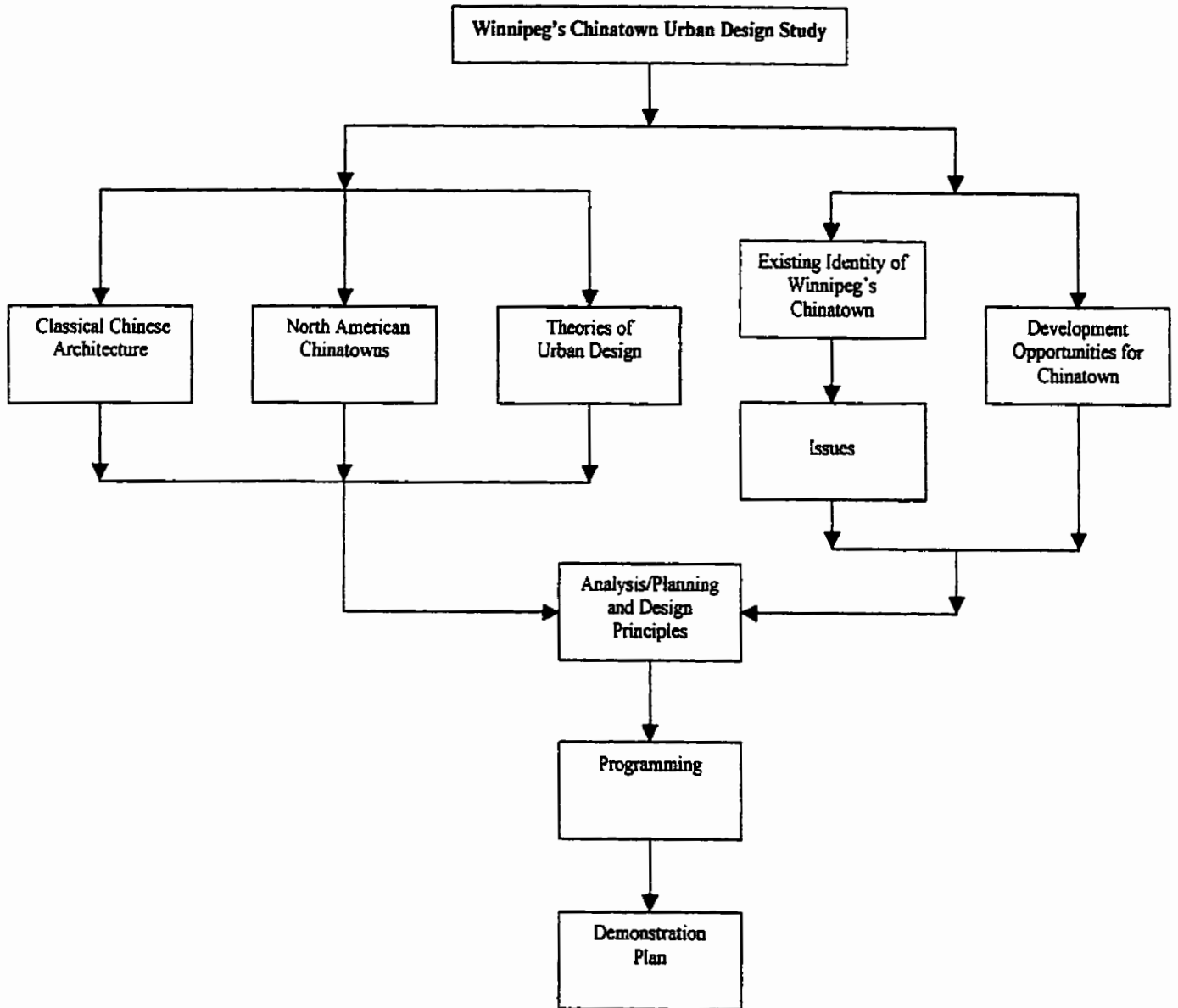
#### **Goal:**

This study is intended to assist the Winnipeg Chinese community in creating an appropriate character for Chinatown, and target a set of planning and design principles for achieving that character.

#### **Objectives:**

1. to examine the character of classical Chinese architecture and the heritage character of North American Chinatowns, to provide background information for understanding what makes Chinatown special;
2. to review urban design literature in order to better understand the nature and scope of urban design from both the theoretical and practical standpoints;
3. to examine the historic development, activities and physical features of Winnipeg's Chinatown in order to define its identity;
4. to identify the issues and needs of Chinatown in order to determine the development opportunities which can be encouraged in the study area;
5. to synthesize this information to develop a set of planning and design principles for Winnipeg's Chinatown, and
6. to test these principles through a demonstration plan for the four blocks bounded by Main and Princess Streets and Rupert and Alexander Avenues.

## 1.4 Methodology



## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Classical Chinese Architecture

The creation and development of national architecture has its roots in the cultural background of any nation (Liu, 1989). Confucianism and Taoism, dual influences on Chinese thought, were two great systems of philosophy. The former tried to reconcile individualism with institutionalism, emphasizing ethics, orthodoxy and man's position in the hierarchy of the social structure, and the latter demanded a complete reversal of the existing order and a return to the natural state, expressing veneration of and man's relationship with nature. The two modes of thought exercised, in fact, a kind of dual or complementary influence, with Confucianism leading and dominant and Taoism in opposition. The city and the building were primarily ruled by Confucian ideas, formality, symmetry, straight lines, a hierarchy of importance, clarity, and a man-made order. The garden and the landscape, however, were based upon the concepts of Taoism, irregularity, asymmetry, curvilinear lines, free and organic spaces, mystery, and the abstraction of nature.

Chinese architecture was also under the influence of *Feng Shui* theory. *Feng Shui* is the notion that alterations to the landscape by man do not simply disturb empty space; they rebound to influence, even control the fortunes of those who intrude. The aim of this concept is to assist people in understanding that they exist as part of nature; therefore they should respect and be in harmony with nature. It can thus be considered as a means of linking man and nature. Although *Feng Shui* is permeated with superstition, it embraces fragments of Chinese ancient philosophy, aesthetics, psychology, sociology,

geology, and hydrology. The traditional *Feng Shui* has been practiced extensively in the site selection of town and village, in urban planning, in architectural design and in construction (Wang, 1992).

On the other hand, architecture is a product of human activities, a mirror of human life. The ancient Chinese city was an administrative and economic center as well as a center of defense. Political and public activities were heavily controlled by the government. Public gathering was restricted, so there was no public square. Residents who lived in the residential quarters were subject to stringent supervision and forbidden to leave the residential quarters during curfew hours. However, since the government derived a large income from commercial taxes, commercial activity was encouraged. The open commercial streets and markets were not only the places for shopping, but also the natural places for socializing, recreating, and gathering. In addition, for the ancient Chinese, worshipping was an important activity of their daily life. They had a primitive concept of religion, and worshipped both nature and ancestors. The sun, sky and earth, responsible for growth, production and good health, were highly revered. Two of the distinct components of a classical Chinese building, roof and podium, symbolized heaven and earth.

In ancient China, philosophy, religious concepts, proto-science and life-style worked together to produce an architecture which differed from the architecture of the rest of the world, and this unique architectural expression continued for almost 2,000 years.

## 2.1.1 City

Ancient Chinese city planning (Figure 1) was based upon a set of principles and practices (Liu, 1989; Boyd, 1962):

2.1.1.1 Walled Cities: the boundaries of all Chinese cities were defined by walls. In China, the word for “city” and “wall”—*cheng*—was the same. It was a fundamental feature of all Chinese cities.

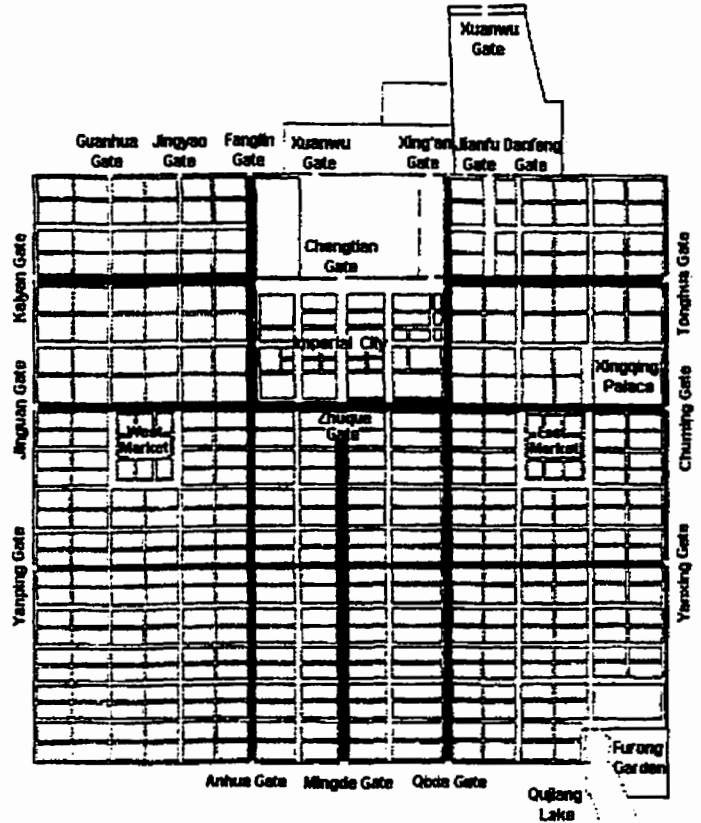


Figure 1

Source: *History of Chinese Architecture*, 1986

Not only was a city walled, the principal internal parts of a city were also walled. Builders aimed at making the city an image of hierarchy, order, and social peace based on Confucian principles. Therefore, the walls were needed for purposes of national “law and order”, rather than purely for the purpose of military defense.

2.1.1.2 Cities Laid Out in Axial Symmetry: Confucianism believed harmony could provide order in the complicated relations between people, thereby creating a



stable social order. So, inside the city, the layout was axial, symmetrical, and very formal. The palace or government building was located at the center of the city, and the small square residential quarters surrounded it. The Ancestral Temple and Altar of Society were placed at the east and west side of the principal street, which ran north-south. The symmetrical planning also expressed ethics and symbolized the dignity of the emperor.

### 2.1.1.3 Cities and Buildings Oriented to

the South: in terms of *Feng Shui* theory, a south-facing gentle slope surrounded on three sides by mountains to the left, right and back, and by an open space in the front, provides a space to concentrate *Qi*, the ethereal life breath of cosmic energy (Figure 2).

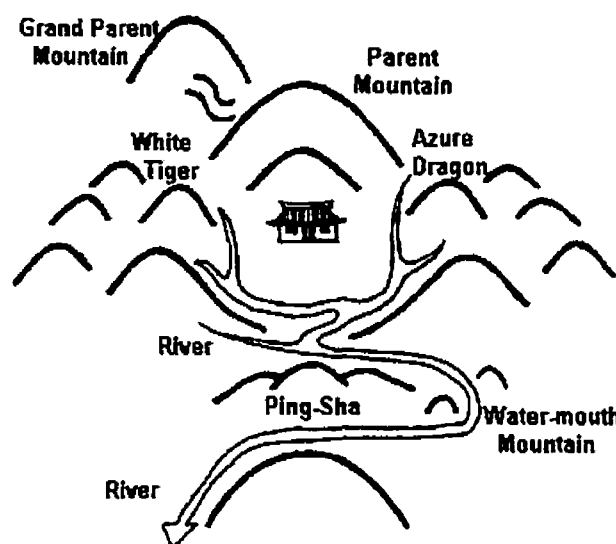


Figure 2

Source: *Feng Shui and Architecture*, 1991

Similarly, buildings facing south onto a courtyard will receive *Qi*. Gradually, *Zuo bei chao nan*, sitting north and facing south, has come to be obligatory for Chinese dwellings, temples, palaces and even cities. As a matter of fact, China is situated north of the equator, so the climate is cold in the winter and hot in the summer, with a prevailing wind from the southeast. The south-facing orientation provides a means for taking advantage of the sunshine and south-easterly winds, while providing protection from the cold winter winds characteristic of eastern Asia's climate. In China, therefore, the horizontal axis of

the rectangular hall of most Chinese buildings was parallel to the east-west axis. Accordingly, the façade of a building, the long side, was then oriented to the south.

2.1.1.4 Cities Square in Form, with Gateways Facing the Four Cardinal Points: the ancient Chinese city was square in plan, symbolizing the “round sky and square earth” concept, with the important building at the center. The roads of a city ran north-south and east-west, dividing it into a rectangular grid. There were gateways in each cardinal direction. According to the orientational requirement of *Feng Shui*, the principal gateway along the primary axis of the city was oriented to the south.

## 2.1.2 Buildings

Basically, the elevation of the classical Chinese building has three distinct components: the expansive roof above; the columns and walls; and the base or podium (Figure 3).

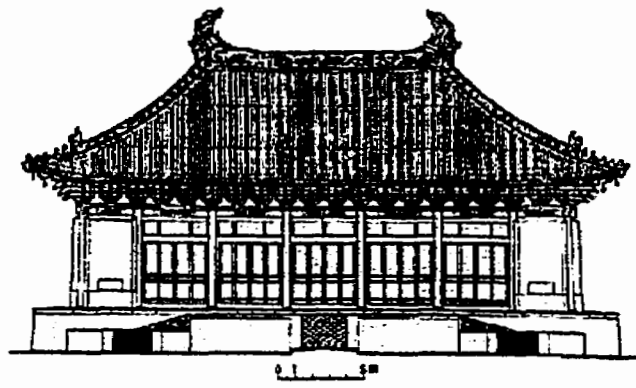


Figure 3

Source: *History of Chinese Architecture*, 1986

2.1.2.1 Roof: the curved roof is the most prominent feature of a Chinese building. Obviously, the function of the curved roof is to shed rain water away from the building foundations, while permitting a maximum amount of light to enter the building. In addition, the roof seems to have been both symbolic and aesthetic

(Liu, 1989). Since the Chinese worshipped heaven, they employed a richly decorated roof symbolizing heaven, the Yang and light.

2.1.2.2 Column: the second feature of the Chinese building is the column. It has never been intended to cover or hide structural elements. The unity of structure and art has been achieved by exposing and decorating these structural elements. The slender columns support the roof and are also the components which divide the façade, giving a rhythmic effect to the building. The function of the wall is as an infill element between columns.

2.1.2.3 Podium: in ancient China, important buildings generally sat on a base or podium. The original function of the podium was to raise the floor and structure of the building above the damp of the ground. Gradually, the podium became an essential element of the building, symbolizing earth, the Ying and darkness.

#### 2.1.2.4 Decoration

- Color: another important feature of Chinese architecture is the decoration of buildings with red, green and yellow and other brilliant colors. In *Feng Shui*, the five directions were represented symbolically: north was the Black Turtle; south the Fire Bird; east the Green Dragon; west the White Tiger; and at the center, the yellow earth. Fire Bird or Scarlet Bird was used to symbolize the sun and the warm climate, bringing animation to all life. The Green Dragon represented rain water, which was indispensable to life. Yellow was used as a color of dignity, because the palace was located in the center. The Black Turtle and White Tiger, however, were thought to be evil and unlucky, symbolizing misery, since the chilly winds coming from the north destroyed crops and impaired health. So, it was natural that the buildings were

decorated with the brilliant colors — red, green and yellow. These colors were, and still are believed to influence the fortune and destiny of a building's occupants.

- **Decorative Elements:** the decorative elements, such as animal motifs, plant motifs and other symbols on a building belong to a well-developed symbolic vocabulary system (Liu 1989).

### 2.1.3 Gardens

The garden and landscape were formed by typically Taoist conceptions: man as a part of nature, with an equal right to live in the universe with animals and the plants, rather than as something unique in nature. So, the basic attitude towards nature in China was that man had no choice but to follow nature.

The chief features of a classical Chinese garden were that it reflected a love of and integration with nature, and created poetic and picturesque settings. At the same time, each garden represented the ideology of both the owner and designer or painter (Figure 4).

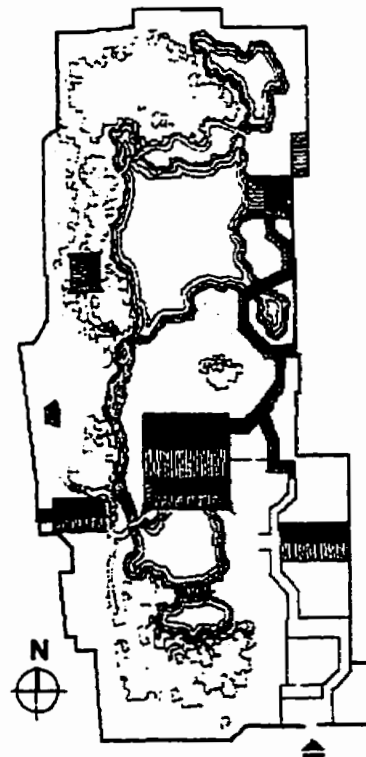


Figure 4

Source: *History of Chinese Architecture*, 1986

The architectural elements of the ancient Chinese garden were walls, gateways or openings, paths and paving, bridges and pavilions. Free and organic spaces were introduced into the general garden plan. Walls around a garden performed a visual

enclosing function; the spatial organization of the garden was, therefore, inwardly focused rather than outward.

There was a romantic symbolism about many plants. The pine, bamboo, and plum were the best known of all, and gave meaning and blessings to the Chinese people.

In summary, the Chinese developed their own unique architecture, satisfying functional needs while simultaneously expressing meaning through a unique symbolic vocabulary. Architecture's specific symbolic language was created to represent the philosophy, character, spirit, feelings and ideas of both the builder and beholder, and through this symbolic language, the Chinese people expressed, experienced, understood and used architecture.

## **2.2 North American Chinatowns**

Chinatown was an ethnic enclave that existed in almost every major urban center that accommodated a Chinese population in the early part of the nineteenth century in North America. Since Chinatowns were physically separated from adjacent neighborhoods for long periods of time, Chinese immigrants could easily maintain their identity, religious practices, language, food habits, and lifestyle. Today's Chinatowns are no longer urban ghettos, and have several distinctive heritage features which are rarely, if ever found in other areas of a city. They offer attractive places for social interaction between all citizens of a city.

Dr. David Chuenyan Lai, Department of Geography of the University of

Victoria's, has surveyed over fifty Chinatowns in North America. His studies are critical to the understanding of the factors which have shaped Canadian Chinatowns. He has devised a theoretical "stage-development model" (Figure 5) and documented the heritage character of those Chinatowns.

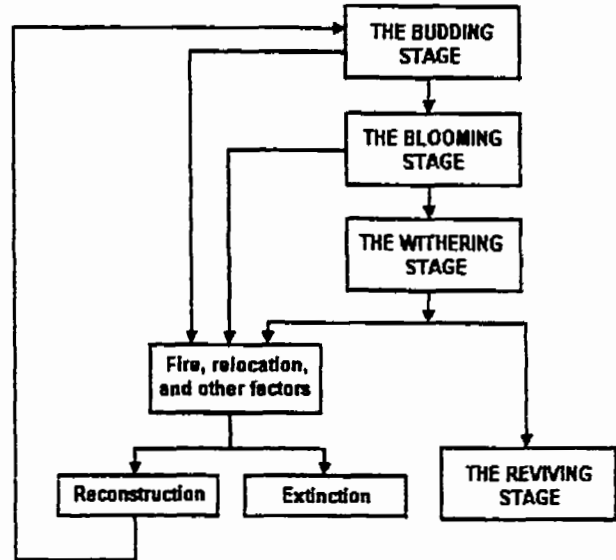


Figure 5

Source: *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada*, 1988

Yoshinobu Ashihara, a noted

Japanese architect, has compared eastern and western townscapes in *The Aesthetic Townscape*, exploring the different approaches of space organization between western and eastern cultures, and defining the characteristics of Asiatic commercial streets.

Over the past three decades, a number of studies of Winnipeg's Chinatown have also dealt with historic background and heritage character. Based on these studies, heritage character is expressed through activities, layout, street closure, signage, gateways, symbolic vocabulary of classical Chinese architecture, gardens, streetscape elements, and building structures. All of these heritage features have helped to develop identity and continuity in Chinatown.

### **2.2.1 Activities**

Chinatowns are usually filled with intense human activity and most areas are devoted to commercial activity. Buildings are often low-rise with multiple uses: retail/commercial at street level with residential uses on the upper floors.

Shopping and dining are the major commercial activities in Chinatowns. Those groups generally frequenting Chinatown include the residents of the Chinatown and areas close by, a specific population from all areas within a city that regularly comes to seek special oriental goods, and tourists from other parts of the region and beyond. For the Chinese, who are the major users of Chinatowns, shopping and dining in Chinatown are the prime ways of socializing and recreating.

Old Chinese cities are characterized by a lack of public open space. Instead, shopping streets and restaurants serve this function. Shopping streets are crowded and merchants usually use their commercial spaces in a very effective and traditional way, by spilling their merchandise onto the public sidewalk. In this way, the streets of Chinatowns are filled with activity, and there is a lively, bustling atmosphere, distinctive to the Chinese.

Chinatown is also a cultural center. The celebration of cultural events is an important part of the cultural heritage of the Chinese. These major cultural events include the Lion Dance during Chinese New Year, the Dragon Boat races during the Dragon Boat Festival, and the lighting of paper lanterns depicting various animals and Chinese motifs during the Mid-Autumn Festival. In addition, the younger generation attends instruction

in disciplines such as Tai Chi, martial arts, calligraphy, brush painting, music, dance, and opera, all provided by various Chinese community groups.

### 2.2.2 Layout

The layout of Chinatowns typically covers several city blocks, with one or more major gateways. Usually there are one or two principal streets. Important buildings, such as the Chinese Associations, the Cultural Centers, and major commercial buildings, are always located along these principal streets. Perpendicular to the principal streets are a number of side streets and narrow alleys, which accommodate other secondary buildings. City blocks within Chinatown usually contain many enclosed courtyards and passageways. On the whole, the various parts of Chinatown integrate hierarchically, and give people a strong sense of place identity.

### 2.2.3 Street Closure

Depth:Height, the ratio of street width to building height, is an important aspect of townscape composition. In most case the D/H of Chinatown streets is 1 or

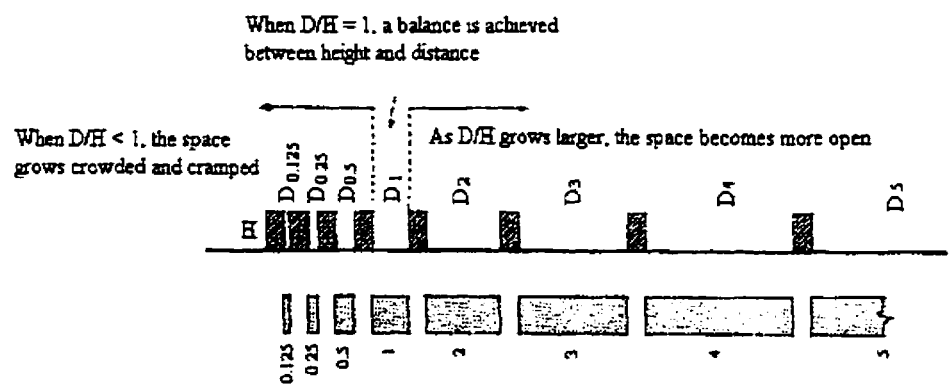


Figure 6

Source: *The Aesthetic Townscape*, 1983

less, giving the streets a sense of intimacy and crowdedness (Figure 6). The W/D ratio (shop façade width /street width) is another decisive component of the Chinatown streets.



Most streets show a W/D ratio of between 0.6 and 0.7, which further strengthens the typically distinctive atmosphere of Asian cities. However, when the D/H and W/D ratios are higher, the streetscape is diluted and the feeling of everyday bustle fades.

#### 2.2.4 Signage

Another aspect of the Chinatown streetscape is the dominance of projecting signage, banners and other elements, hanging from the upper level of building facades (Figure 7).

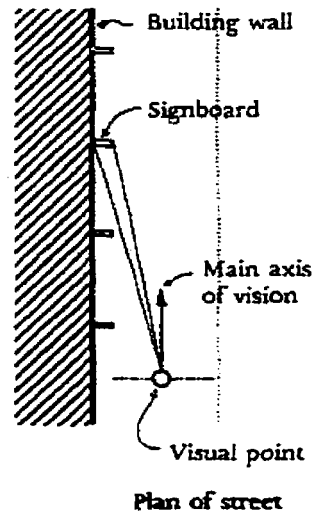


Figure 7

Source: *The Aesthetic Townscape*, 1983

#### 2.2.5 Symbolic Gateway

Across North America, the most prominent landmarks of a Chinatown are richly decorated Chinese arches or gateways. The Chinese call a freestanding gateway *Pai Fang* (Figure 8) which loosely translates as “Chinese arches”.

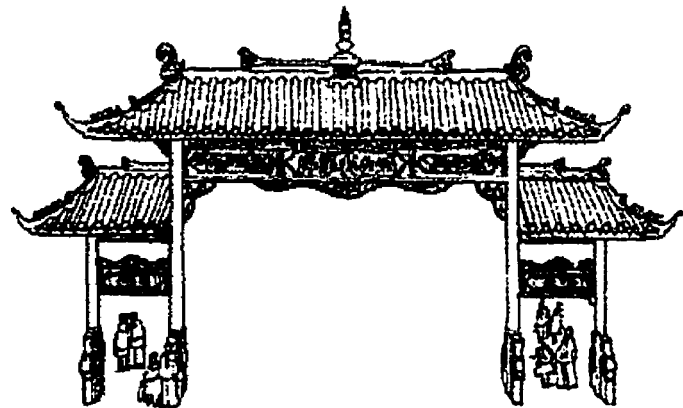


Figure 8

Source: *Building and Rebuilding Harmony*, 1997

*Pai Fang* can be traced to the use of totem poles in ancient clan society. In the past, the Chinese read the city in a far different way than did westerners, because only a

few major streets were named in the old cities. In the absence of precise route identification, people followed visual clues. Gradually, different types of *Pai Fang* began to be utilized as symbolic entrances of neighborhoods, temples, and palaces. In Chinese, *Pai* means “a sign-board or a placard”, and *Fang* means “a ward, or a subdivision of a city”. Thus *Pai Fang* means “a sign-board erected in a neighborhood”.

## **2.2.6 Symbolic Vocabulary of Classical Chinese Architecture**

When the Chinese migrated to North America, they brought with them their unique architecture’s symbolic vocabulary. Architectural symbolism has created a dialogue between the Chinese and Chinatowns. It also has contributed to the “sense of place”.

**2.2.6.1 Curved Roof:** a tiled roof with upturned eaves and corners often occupies a primary position in a Chinatown. The Chinese curved roof is a combination of symbolic, aesthetic, and rational considerations. It is the most striking visual component with Chinese character, and the graceful curve gives a building aesthetic depth.

**2.2.6.2 Color Scheme:** the exterior surfaces of most buildings, window frames, and decorative motifs are painted in red, yellow gold, green and other brilliant colors. In *Feng Shui*, colors are represented by symbolic directions, and each color has its own meaning. To the Chinese, red means joy, festivity, and luck; gold symbolizes wealth, glory, and prosperity; yellow is considered a symbol of mother earth, since ancient Chinese thought China was located in the center of

the world; and green is associated with the wood element, symbolizing growth, harmony, and peace.

2.2.6.3 Motif and Symbol: symbols, animal and plant motifs commonly decorate the facades of Chinatown buildings. Although each motif or symbol has its own meanings, the symbols and motifs are interdependent, rather than independent, and are used to express the deeper meanings of daily life.

2.2.6.4 Chinese Character: Chinese Characters such as *Fu* (happiness or Blessings) and *Shou* (longevity) are commonly used to decorate buildings in Chinatowns.

## 2.2.7 Garden

Many Chinatowns across North America have small Chinese gardens. In these gardens, the principle of axial symmetry is abandoned, and the layouts are free, organic, and natural, reflecting Taoist conceptions. Paths are always winding or zigzagging, trees and flowers are used symbolically, and water, rocks and stones are commonly combined. There are many structures and other architectural elements in the garden. Pavilions, as centers of interest in the garden, are especially important. All the principal structures and vistas are given names, with long poetic associations to pique the visitor's imagination.

## 2.2.8 Streetscape Elements

2.2.8.1 Most North American Chinatowns consist of a unified street vocabulary with a heritage character, reflected in oriental light fixtures, telephone booths, colorful bilingual signs, and trash receptacles. On the sidewalks of some Chinatowns, red paving bricks delineate the artistic forms of Chinese characters.

2.2.8.2 Canopies and awnings attached to building walls are another unique feature in North American Chinatowns. The predominant colors are red, yellow, and green. Canopies and awnings provide overhead protection to Chinatowns' sidewalks and the merchandise, which spills out from the various stores, creating a strong shopping image. Canopies and awnings are highly effective in providing continuity and variety in the streetscape.

### 2.2.9 Building Structural Elements

Recessed or Projecting Balconies in the Front or at the Back of a Building (Figure 9): the upper storeys of Chinatown buildings are dominated by recessed or projecting balconies. A recessed balcony is a common architectural form in subtropical areas of China. It helps keep the building interior cool in the hot summer, and provides a covered place where residents can dry their clothing on



Figure 9

Source: *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada*, 1988

rainy days. During the Chinese New Year, it functions as an alcove in which a household can set up a temporary altar to worship the heaven. The recessed balcony of Chinatowns is a duplication of practices in Hong Kong, Macao, Guangzhou, and other cities in south China.

## **2.3 Theories of Urban Design**

The knowledge of urban design theory is important to an understanding of any urban fabric. First, the theory draws on an accumulation of knowledge and experience. Second, it is useful as a basis for action, because it provides a consistent set of principles upon which ideas and concepts can be developed and organized. However, it has generally been recognized that there is very little pure urban design theory (Lynch, 1984). Most of the influential concepts and ideas have been extended to this field from other disciplines. An important contribution has come from Trancik (1986) who has put forward the three propositions outlined below, and has proposed taking the best characteristics from each perspective to develop an “integrated approach” to urban design.

### **2.3.1 Figure-Ground Theory**

Figure-ground theory is founded on the study of the relative land coverage of buildings as solid mass (“figure”) to open space (“ground”). Thus, the urban environment has an existing pattern of built solids and open voids. The urban pattern, or fabric, is created by these solids and voids: void spaces punctuated by object buildings. Employing this approach in spatial design, it is possible to change the underlying structure by “...adding to, subtracting from, or changing the physical geometry of the pattern” (Trancik, 1986). The purpose of these interventions is to clarify the existing structure of urban space, by establishing a hierarchy of internally organized and enclosed spaces which are ordered in relation to each other.

One of the best illustrations of this approach to urban design is Giambattista Nolli's Map of Rome, drawn in 1748 (Figure 10). It clearly reveals the coherent relationship between built solids and open voids of Rome at that time. Close examination of this map shows that the public space is a figural void which has seemingly been cut out of the dense building mass, conceived as a positive entity in an



Figure 10

*Source: Nolli's Map of Rome, 1748  
from Finding Lost Space:  
Theory of Urban Design, 1986*

integrated relationship with the surrounding solids. The map also graphically illustrates overall coherence, featuring a mesh between the block pattern and individual buildings. Civic buildings are fronted by large public open spaces and are set into the continuous building mass. These buildings are articulated by differentiating between "public" and "private".

Trancik suggests that it is difficult to achieve a successful spatial network when the urban form is predominantly vertical. Generally, tall buildings do not give spatial definition to an environment because they have inadequate ground coverage. The figure-ground theory is very useful in determining how to achieve the spatial sequence between public, semi-public, and private domains. The physical sequences and visual orientation between places are established by the articulation and differentiation of solids and voids. For these sequences to work, it is critical to minimize or eliminate circulation barriers and gaps in continuity. In addition, figure-ground studies help reveal different urban forms, solids, and voids and provide us with a tool for classifying them by type.

In summary, the figure-ground theory focuses on the manipulation and organization of urban solids and voids. In order to operate the spatial network successfully, the relationship of solids to voids must be well balanced. Design of the object should not only consider the “figure” but also evaluate the “ground”. When the object is considered in conjunction with structuring the void, building and space can effectively coexist (Trancik, 1986).

### 2.3.2 Linkage Theory

Linkage theory emphasizes the sense of functional and visual connection and order in the urban environment. These linkages are formed by streets, pedestrian corridors, linear open spaces, and other linking elements. This approach to urban design is useful in organizing a system of connections, or a network which establishes a structure for ordering spaces. Compared with figure-ground theory, linkage theory emphasizes the circulation diagram rather than the spatial diagram.

According to Fumihiko Maki, there are three different linkage types of urban space (Figure 11). Compositional form consists of individual buildings which are composed in a two-dimensional plan. In this type of

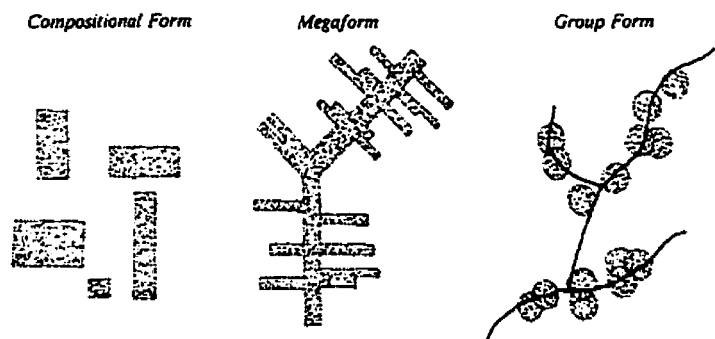


Figure 11

Source: *Finding Lost Space: Theories of Urban Design*, 1986

urban form, linkage is implied instead of overt. The second formal type is the megaform, in which individual components are connected to a larger linear framework in a

hierarchical, interconnected, and open-ended system. In this form, linkage is physically imposed to make the system. The third formal type of linkage space is group form. It results from an incremental accumulation of structures along an armature of communal open space. Here, linkage has naturally and organically evolved as an integral part of the structure. In all three formal types, linkage is the controlling idea for ordering buildings and space in design. This approach reveals several methods of organizing coherent spatial relationships.

Linkage is a very important characteristic of urban exterior space. In the words of Maki, "linkage is simply the glue of the city. It is the act by which we unite all the layers of activity and resulting physical form in the city ... urban design is concerned with the question of making comprehensible links between discrete things. As a corollary, it is concerned with making an extremely large entity comprehensible by articulating its parts."

### **2.3.3 Place Theory**

Place theory is concerned with the development of the historical, social, cultural, and natural physical characteristics of particular city spaces. It represents ways to alter the built environment, and to guide the transition from "space" to "place". Space can become place when it is given a contextual meaning derived from the cultural or regional content (Trancik, 1986).

Space is a three-dimensional enclosed void with the potential of physically linking other elements. Space, as a system of relations, is denoted by prepositions. Christian Norberg-Schultz states: "in our daily life we hardly talk about 'space', but



about things that are 'over' or 'under', 'before' or 'behind' each other, or we use preposition such as 'at', 'in', 'within', 'on', 'upon', 'to', 'from', 'along', 'next.'" Prepositions denote topological relations that present the abstract essence of space. Place, on the other hand, is an object or entity conceptualized in two-dimensional geographical space and it has three-dimensional spatial form, but it is a focus of meaning, character, and identity. The characteristics of place are denoted by adjectives. Christian Norberg-Schultz concludes that whereas "space" denotes the three-dimensional organization of the elements which make up a place, "character" denotes the general "atmosphere" which is the most comprehensive property of any place.

Each place has its own individual special character, identity, and "spirit" which differs from all other places. Christian Norberg-Schultz observes: "We will recall the old concept of 'Genius Loci'. Since remote times man has recognized that different places have a different character. This character is often so strong that it, in fact, determines the basic properties of the environmental images of most people present, making them feel that they experience and belong to the same place."

Kevin Lynch, in his work *Image of the City*, makes the argument that a well-formed image of the city, with its specific identity and structure, is meaningful to city residents, and is employed by them to understand and orient themselves in the environment. He notes: "if an environment has a strong visible framework and highly characteristic parts, then exploration of new sectors is both easier and more inviting." His concepts of legibility, structure and identity, and imageability are of central importance in this regard. Meanwhile, his five elements of city form, paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks provide the important reminder of physical and psychological orientation.

According to Lynch, every city can be broken down into the five components, and its spatial structure analyzed and used as a basis for design (Figure 12).

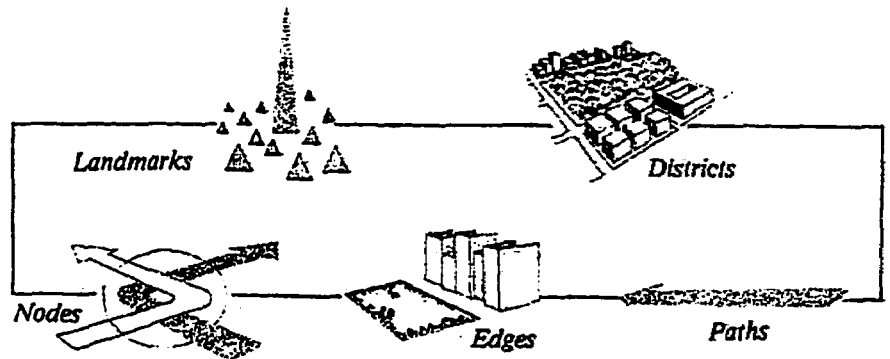


Figure 12

Source: *The Image of the City*, 1960

Lynch also point out that designers should respond to time and place. He writes: “just as each locality should seem continuous with the recent past, so it should seem continuous with the near future. Every place should be made to be seen as developing, charged with predictions and intentions. The concepts of space and time appear and develop together in childhood, and the two ideas have many analogies in their formation and character ... space and time, however conceived, are the great framework within which we order our experience. We live in time places.” Places are historically and physically fluid and mobile. Clearly, for creating truly unique places, it is critical to keep the continuity of time, with successive layers intact.

Peter Bosselman (1987) presents a technique to guide the transition from space to place through small-scale interventions that significantly impact on the experiential qualities of neighborhoods and streets. In his residential street projects, he develops the identity of streets and neighborhoods by improving streetscape elements, so as to enhance the overall quality of the pedestrian experience. This technique, creating “organized

complexity” through development of small-scale elements, can not only satisfy a fuller range of populace needs, but also give a “sense of place”.

Townscape designer Gordon Cullen has attempted to make a space “place” by giving it a contextual meaning. He brought together two-dimensional plans and perspective sketches to illustrate that people could experience the unique sense of place by moving through it. As well, he explored the idea that the sequence in which people encounter urban spaces affects the overall impression which is developed. The principle of “serial vision”, then, is a demonstration of the need to understand and graphically analyze the individual character and sequence of urban spaces (Figure 13).

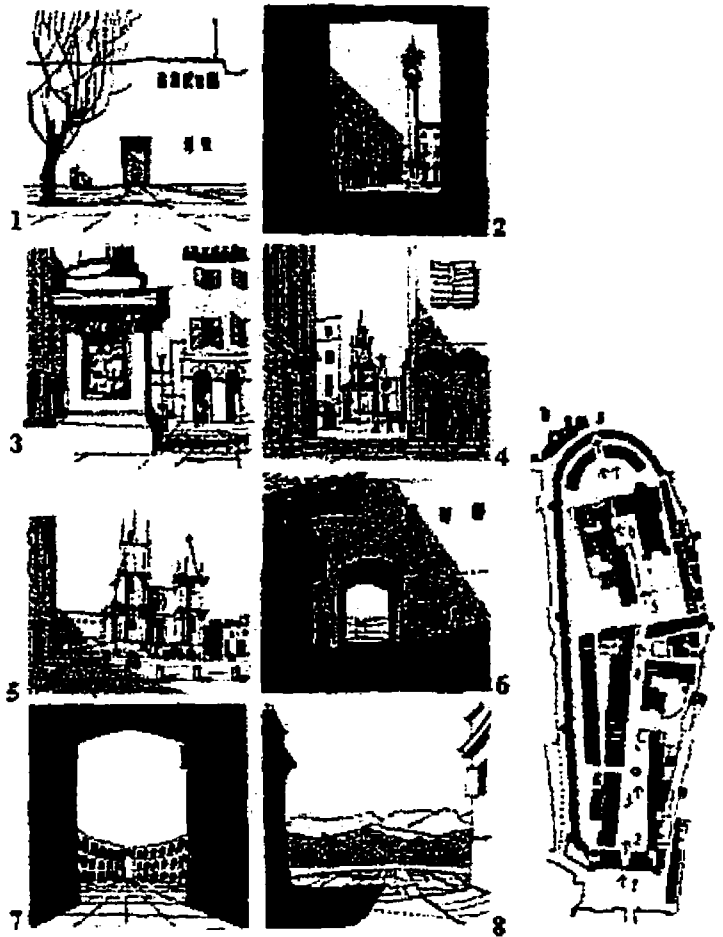


Figure 13

Source: *Townscape*, 1961

Another approach to the understanding of context is found in the work of Donald Appleyard. In *Liveable Streets Project* he analyzes the street as an ecological system and explores the effects of traffic on social contact and living quality. It is crucial for us to understand that the street is a spatial entity for mixed use, an environment for social and personal existence beyond its function for vehicular movement and storage. Street

frontage is the delicate foil between the interlocked public and private lives of urban space (Figure 14).



Figure 14

Source: *Living with Traffic in San Francisco*

To summarize, place theory is based on the understanding of the cultural and human characteristics associated with physical space. It involves the integration of activities, the development of identity, and the recognition of the important natural physical and social/cultural environments of a given urban area. As Trancik concludes, “advocates of the place theory give physical space additional richness by incorporating unique forms and details indigenous to its setting. This response to context often includes history and elements of time and attempts to enhance the fit between new design and existing conditions. In place theory social and cultural values, visual perceptions of users, and an individual’s control over the immediate public environment are as important as principles of lateral enclosure and linkage.”

### 2.3.4 Synthesis

Each of the three urban design theories as they have been presented has its own value. Closer examination, however, reveals that there is an important tie that binds the three theories together as an integrated approach of urban design. Figure-ground theory develops an understanding of urban space through the analysis of relationships between building mass and open space. Linkage theory recognizes the importance of connection and movement as the generators of urban form, and place theory gives physical space additional richness by adding the components of human needs and cultural, historical, and social contexts. Good urban design must be founded on the integration of the best characteristics of each perspective, because the living urban space

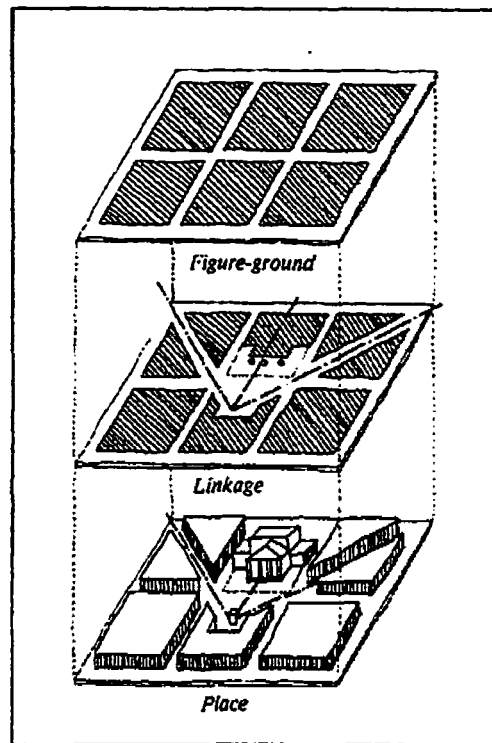


Figure 15

Source: *Finding Lost Space: Theories of Urban Design*, 1986

consists of a layering of elements in each theory (Figure 15). As Trancik writes, “if an urban complex is designed around the linkage theory alone, it falls short because the product becomes nonspatial and therefore nonexperiential. If place theory is applied without regard to linkage and figure-ground, important connections outside the design area and new spatial opportunities within may be lost. Conversely, if the figure-ground theory is exclusively used, the results often become totally spatial and possibly unrealistic

in terms of user needs and implementation. The key, therefore, is to apply these theories appropriately and collectively to each urban project.”

Although an integrated approach that combines the three theories can greatly improve the opportunity for successful urban design, some objectives of the integrated approach should be kept in mind. Trancik states that an integrated approach is not static but, rather, must incorporate change and innovation. The urban designer must integrate new elements with old and give added meaning for contemporary users to express the concept of time. Incrementalism can also achieve integration: small-scale steps toward the renewal of an urban landscape are more effective than total redevelopment because, through gradual infill, new pieces can be effectively brought into harmony with existing spaces and architectural forms. The third objective is that urban space should have mixed or integrated uses. A place with varied uses generally has much greater richness and vitality than a single-use space. So the integrated approach should promote a balanced mix of uses such as housing, working, shopping, schooling, worshipping and recreating. It is also imperative to find new ways of integrating the automobile into the urban landscape without destroying the quality of outdoor space for the pedestrian. Automobile-pedestrian separation may be appropriate in certain instances, but this separation will reduce the public permeability. Thus, most urban spaces will have to accommodate a mix of people and cars. Finally, the issue of how to integrate design quality into the political decision-making process is important. Since functional and economic considerations often override those of design, the urban designer should influence policy makers and the public to make sure that the quality of the public space is not compromised.

In conclusion, the above urban design theories, objectives, and principles are all crucial in the creation of an urban space system, which is both responsive to human needs and expressive of place. They provide the practical techniques and methods that can be utilized by urban designers.

### 3.0 WINNIPEG'S CHINATOWN

#### 3.1 Historic Development

Before 1905, there were three Chinese businesses in the area bordered by Main and Princess Streets to the east and west, and by Logan and Rupert Avenues to the north and south. This was the area that later came to be known as Chinatown (Figure 16). At that time, this area was a mixture of factories, warehouses, and a few rooming establishments and apartments serving transients, minority groups and the working poor (Baureiss and Kwong, 1979). In 1909, there was an expansion in the number of Chinese businesses, and with it an increasing number of Chinese moved into the vacant residences in the area. By 1911, Winnipeg's Chinatown had taken on its distinct character, on the axis of King Street and Alexander Avenue (Figure 17) (Baureiss and Kwong, 1979).

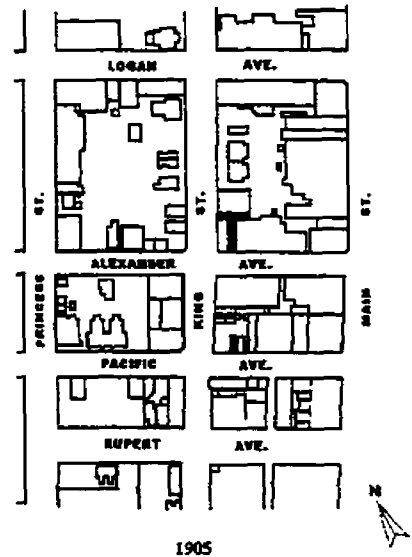


Figure 16

Source: Henderson's Winnipeg Directory, 1906

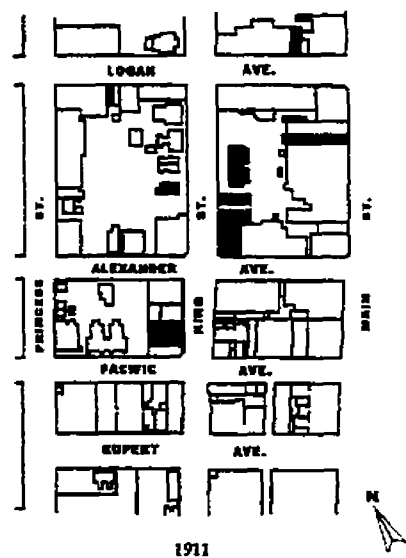


Figure 17

Source: Henderson's Winnipeg Directory, 1912



Winnipeg's Chinatown entered the blooming stage after 1911, and its peak in the 1920s. In 1921, Chinatown extended over a six city block area, bounded by Princess and Main Streets, and Logan and Rupert Avenues, with King Street as its business focus (Figure 18). By 1923 several new businesses had opened and Chinatown had spread further south on King Street. Chinatown provided a physical and social center for the dispersed Chinese community in Winnipeg at that time.

Winnipeg's Chinatown entered the withering stage after the 1920s. The Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 made clear that Chinese were not really considered an integral part of the Canadian mosaic. Whereas previously entire blocks along King Street and Alexander Avenue were solidly occupied by Chinese, in the 1930's this concentration decreased. Then the core of Chinatown shifted from the King and Alexander intersection to the King and Pacific intersection (Figure 19) (Baureiss and Kwong, 1979).

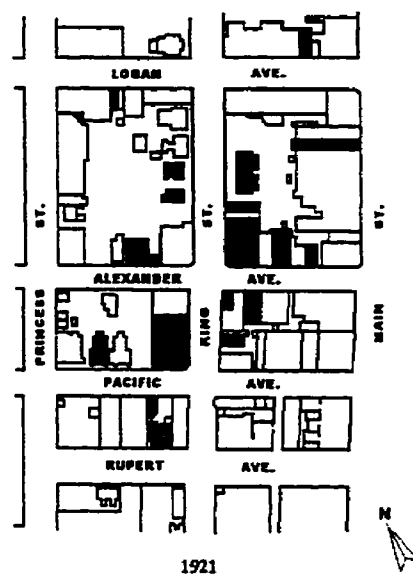


Figure 18  
Source: Henderson's Winnipeg Directory, 1922

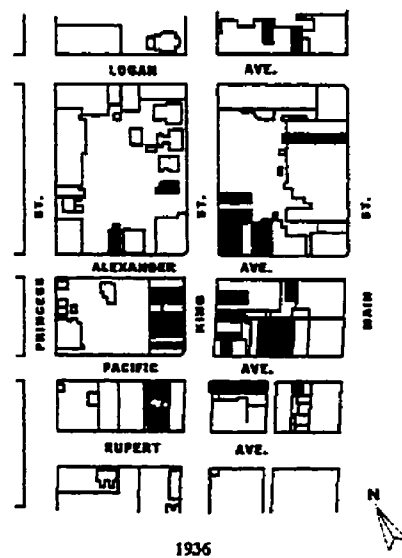


Figure 19  
Source: Henderson's Winnipeg Directory, 1937

The area was increasingly dominated by dilapidated structures, vacant sites, parking lots, and a mixture of Chinese and non-Chinese businesses. Much of Chinatown today still reflects that decline.

There has been some effort to revitalize Chinatown since 1971. Through the leadership of the Chinatown Development Corporation new projects, including a senior citizen's housing block, a low-income family housing complex, a community cultural center, an office building and a Chinese gateway have been built. During this revitalization period, the image of Winnipeg's Chinatown continues to change. Cheap bars, secondhand shops, chop suey-type restaurants, and dingy grocery stores are being replaced by elaborately decorated restaurants, well-lit supermarkets, gift shops, and other new businesses capitalizing on Chinese style and tourists' tastes.

Today, Winnipeg's Chinatown covers 12 city blocks bounded by James Avenue to the south, Higgins Avenue to the north, Main Street to the east and the west frontage of Princess to the west (Figure 20, 21). It is an integral part of city core area and cultural mosaic (Figure 22).

**Chinatown District**

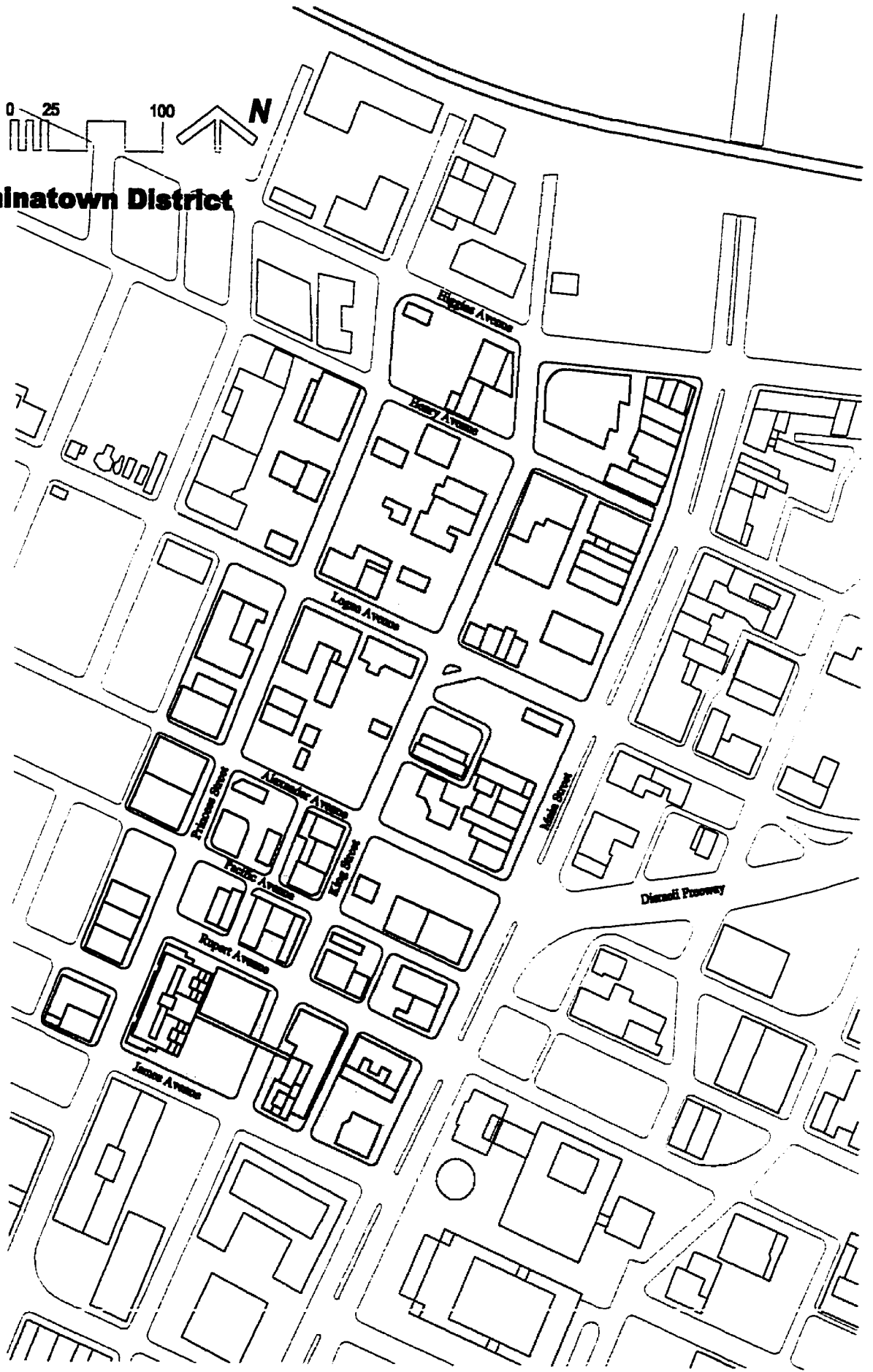
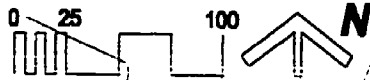


Figure 20

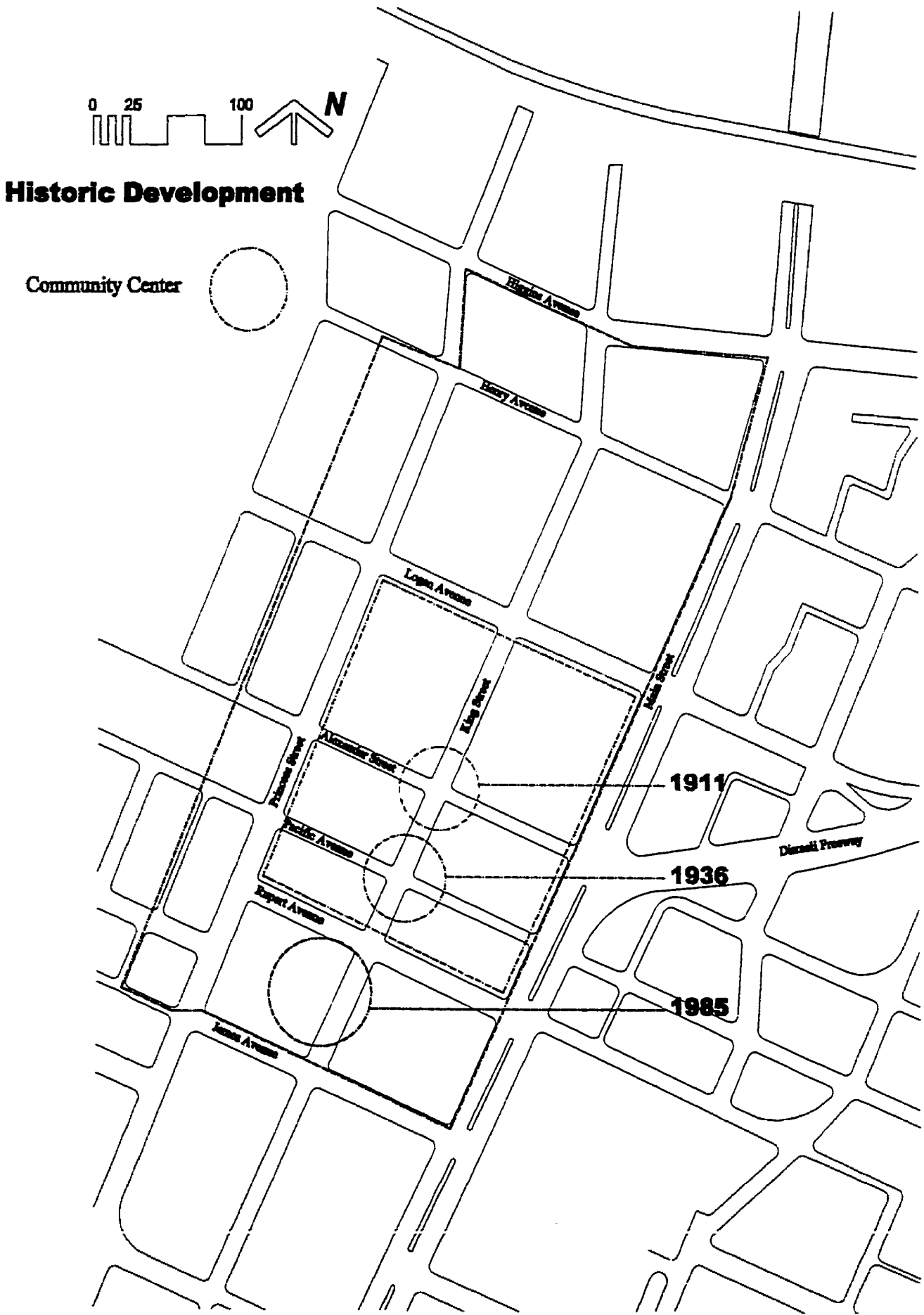


Figure 21

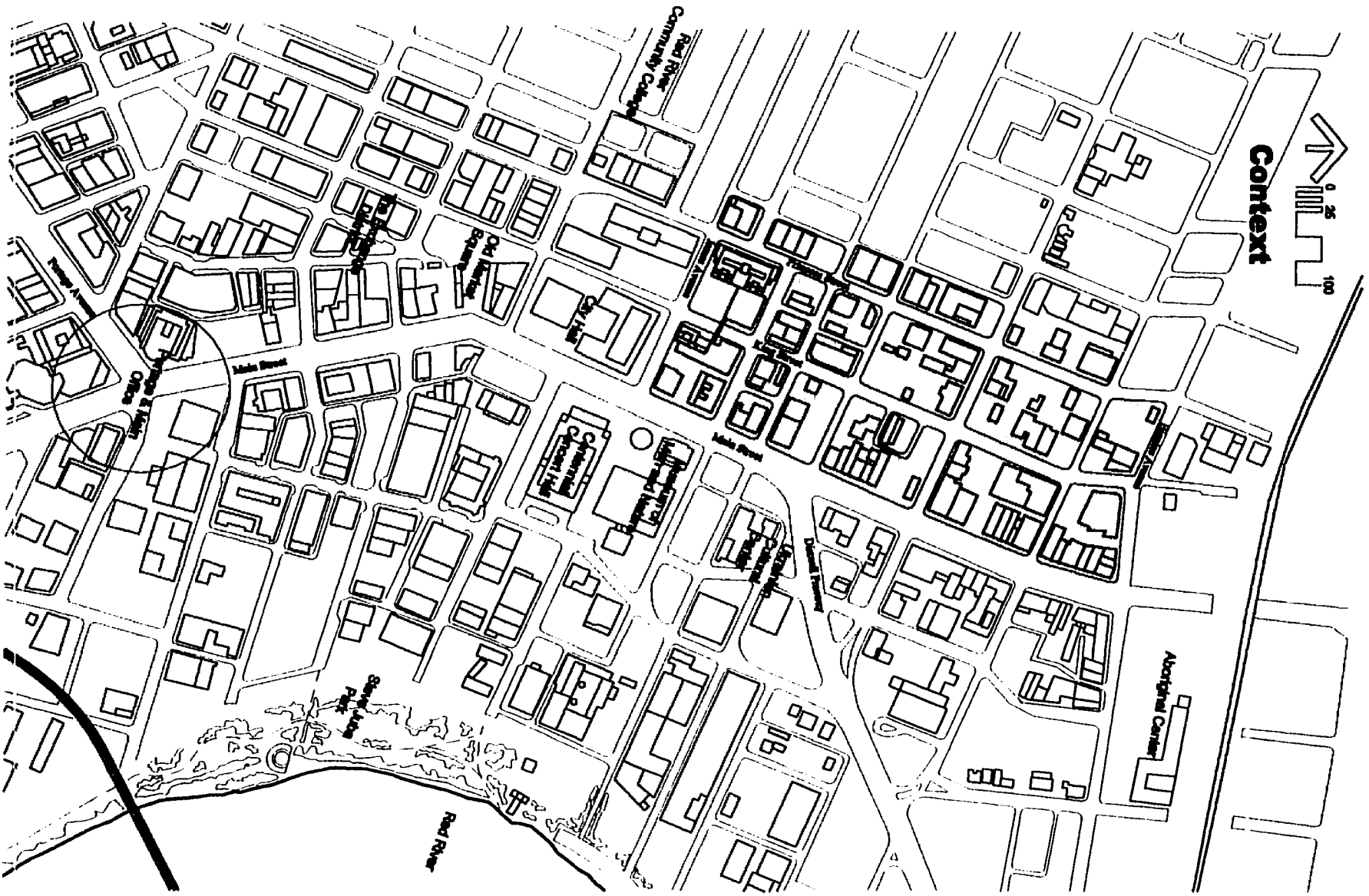


Figure 22

### 3.2 Activities

The main part of this Chinese ethnic district is devoted to commercial activities. Chinese restaurants, Chinese grocery stores, and Chinese gift shops attract people to Chinatown to eat authentic Chinese foods, and to shop for specific Chinese goods that are difficult to find in other parts of the city. The Marigold Restaurant, Kum Koon Garden Restaurant, Grand Garden Restaurant, Oriental Market, Dynasty Eating & Shopping Center and Sun Wah Supermarket can be identified as heavily-used “magnet” restaurants and stores. At the same time, the stores and restaurants in Chinatown serve the people who live or work in Chinatown and the surrounding areas.

Chinatown is thus a social center. As well, people come here to worship, to participate in folk dancing and to meet friends. Public infrastructure such as the Chinese United Church, Ma Seung Christian Education Building and Chinese Dramatic Society produces a high level of social interaction.

The resident population of Chinatown numbers approximately 500. In addition to Chinese elders, many are new immigrants. Although most members of the Chinese community do not live in Chinatown, the district’s social and cultural activities bring them together to share a sense of cultural identity.

The Chinese Cultural and Community Center actively promotes social and cultural activities, including the annual Folklorama, Chinese New Year, and the Mid-autumn Festival. It provides many facilities, such as a Chinese language school, library, theater and recreation room. In addition to the cultural components, the building also contains a travel agency, a small restaurant, professional offices and

other shops. The Chinese Cultural Center, complete with Chinese garden, is close to the high rise apartment building for which it functions as a public meeting place.

### **3.3 Physical Features**

#### **3.3.1 Layout**

Chinatown is characterized by its urban grid pattern. It is clear that the traditional thinking, such as Confucianism and *Feng Shui*, has affected the most recent Chinatown layout. The Chinese Cultural Center and the principal gateway are oriented to the south.

The paths which adjoin and cross Chinatown are King and Princess Streets, and Rupert, Pacific, Alexander, Logan and Henry Avenues.

The important vehicular and pedestrian entrances of Chinatown are the south gateway (King Street and James Avenue), west entrance (Princess Street and Logan Avenue), north entrance (Princess Street and Henry Avenue), and two east entrances (Alexander Avenue and Main Street; Logan Avenue and Main Street). A Chinese Arch, *Pai Fang*, serves as a symbolic entrance to Chinatown from the south gateway. It celebrates the transition to the area with different patterns of use and visual character.

The edges of Chinatown are defined by building frontages to the south and west, a high traffic thoroughfare to the east, and railway tracks to the north. The

Chinese Cultural Center and lavishly decorated Chinese Arch are located on the south edge of the district. They are the prominent landmarks of Chinatown.

In Chinatown, there are four activity nodes which create a high level of personal interaction: the high rise apartment and culture center, the seniors building and the Church; the cluster of restaurants including Marigold, Kum Koon Garden, King's Place and Grand Garden; and the shopping center where the largest Chinese grocery store, Sun Wah Supermarket, is located (Figure 23).



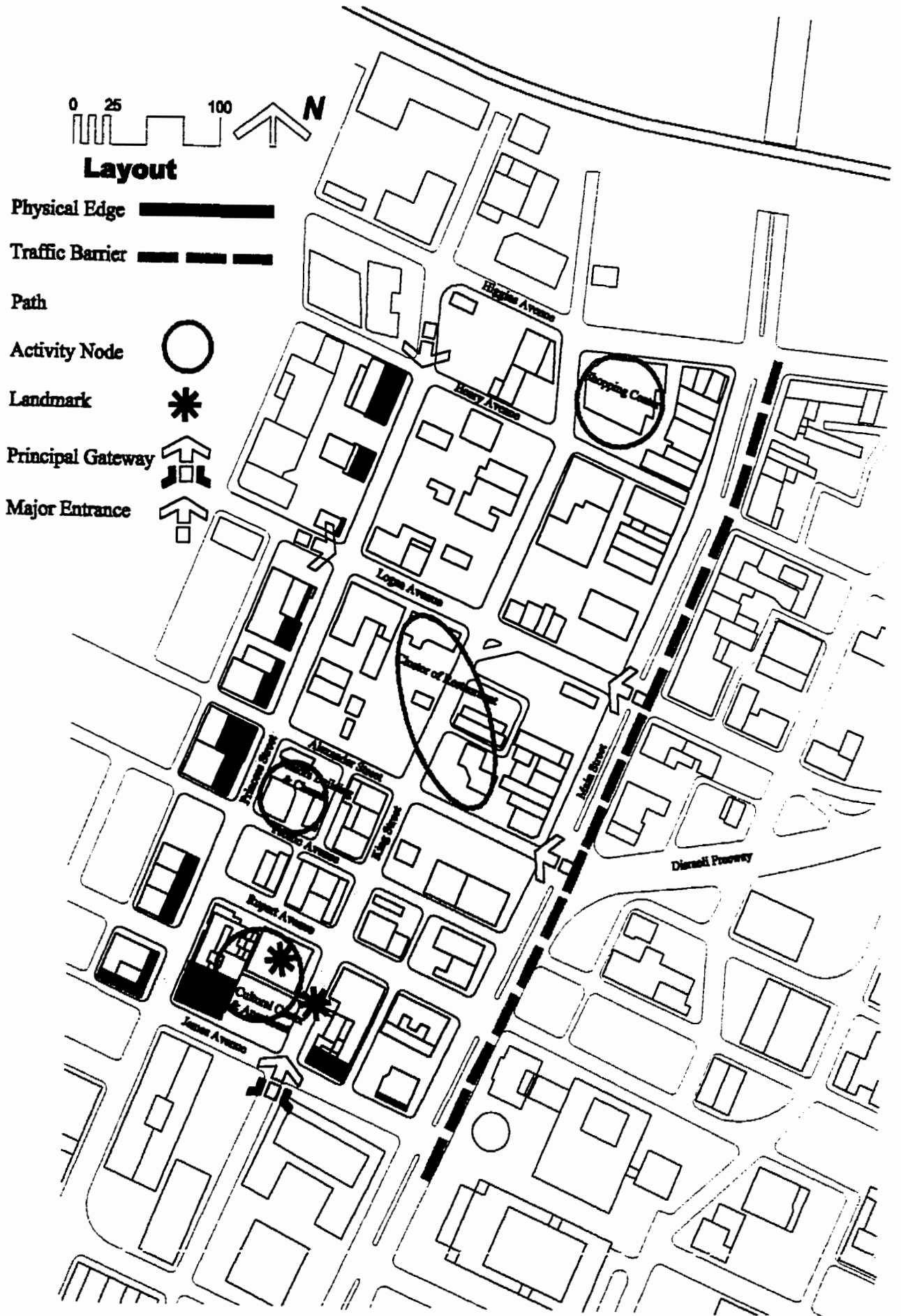


Figure 23

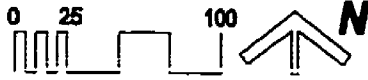
### **3.3.2 Land Use**

Land use in Chinatown is varied, ranging from single family units and multi-family dwellings, through different levels of commercial, public, and institutional uses (Figure 24).









The main part of Chinatown is devoted to commercial activities. There are restaurants, grocery stores, snack bars, gift shops, automotive service shops, etc. Oriental grocery stores and Chinese restaurants are common. Commercial complexes are small, mostly one and two-storey developments. As well, the 500 residents are mostly housed in two high-rise apartment blocks.

The existing public infrastructure includes a cultural center, a church and an education building. Except for the courtyard of the cultural center, there is no pedestrian open space in Chinatown other than the narrow public sidewalks.

Compared to the surrounding areas, both the population and building densities of Chinatown are much lower. Off-street parking in Chinatown is adequate, as evidenced by the many vacant lots.



**Existing Land Use**

-  Residential Apartment
-  Single Family Dwelling Unit
-  Church and Related
-  Commercial/Retail
-  Vacant Building
-  Public Building
-  Hotel & Bar
-  Warehouse

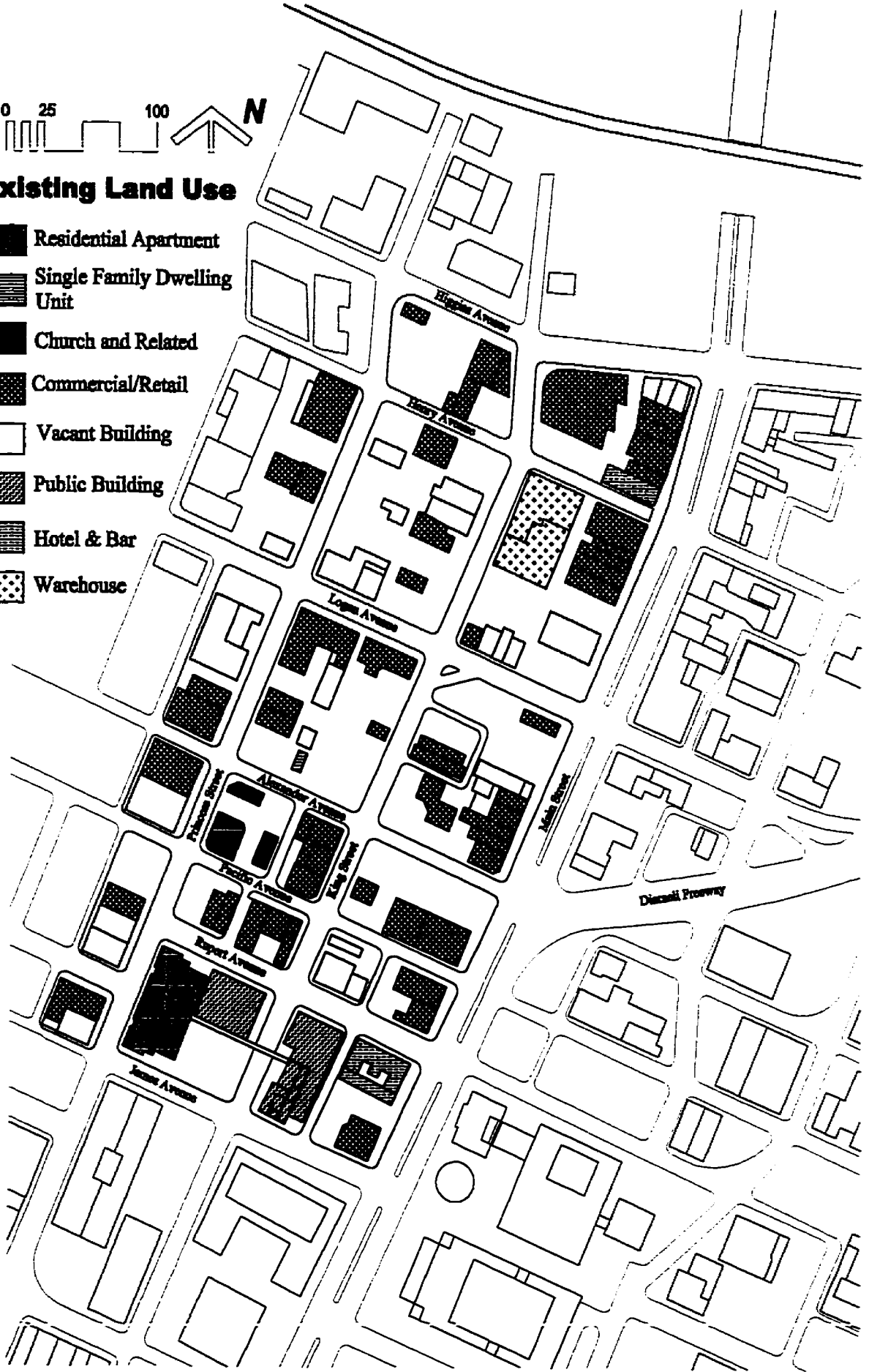


Figure 24

### **3.3.3 Circulation System**

#### **3.3.3.1 Vehicular Circulation**

The main arteries affecting the Chinatown district are Main Street and the Disraeli Freeway. The minor arteries are Princess Street, King Street and Logan Avenue. These arteries provide the primary traffic flows around and through Chinatown (Figure 25).

One of the major traffic flows is northbound along King Street, entering Chinatown from the south through the gateway. The second major flow is southbound along Princess Street. Traffic traveling from the Aboriginal district enters Chinatown along Princess Street in the north. The third major flow is traffic that enters Chinatown via Logan Avenue and onto King and Princess Streets. The fourth flow is the traffic which exits the Disraeli Freeway and enters Chinatown along Alexander Street.

In the study area, traffic flows along King and Princess Streets, and Logan and Higgins Avenues are relatively high. The traffic from the Disraeli Freeway that 'shortcuts' through Chinatown results in moderate traffic flows along Alexander Avenue. Minor traffic flows occur along streets such as James, Rupert, Pacific and Henry Avenues.

#### **3.3.3.2 Parking**

Parking supply is abundant in the Chinatown district. The Cultural Center has 140 units of underground parking, and most businesses have their own off-street parking. Vacant land in the district is presently being used as surface parking.

Parallel on-street parking is available on one side of King Street, and all other streets in the Chinatown district permit on-street parking.

### 3.3.3.3 Pedestrian Circulation

Main, King, and Princess Streets are the principal pedestrian routes, so Chinatown is conveniently accessible to a large day-time work population (Figure 26). During the summer months, lunchtime crowds enter Chinatown along Main, King, and Princess Streets. In winter, the city's transit routes on Main and King Streets, and the underground walkway which links the City's Arts & Entertainment Cluster and Civic Center provide easy access to Chinatown from King and Main Streets.

Each street of Chinatown has sidewalks which vary from 7'~15' in width. The majority of pedestrians enter Chinatown from King, Main and Princess Streets. Along King Street, the important pedestrian crossings in Chinatown are located at intersections with Rupert, Alexander, and Logan Avenues. On Princess Street the primary pedestrian crossings are located at intersections with James, Alexander and Logan Avenues. The main pedestrian crossings on Main Street are located at the Disraeli-Main-Alexander intersection leading into Chinatown, and the intersection with Logan Avenue.

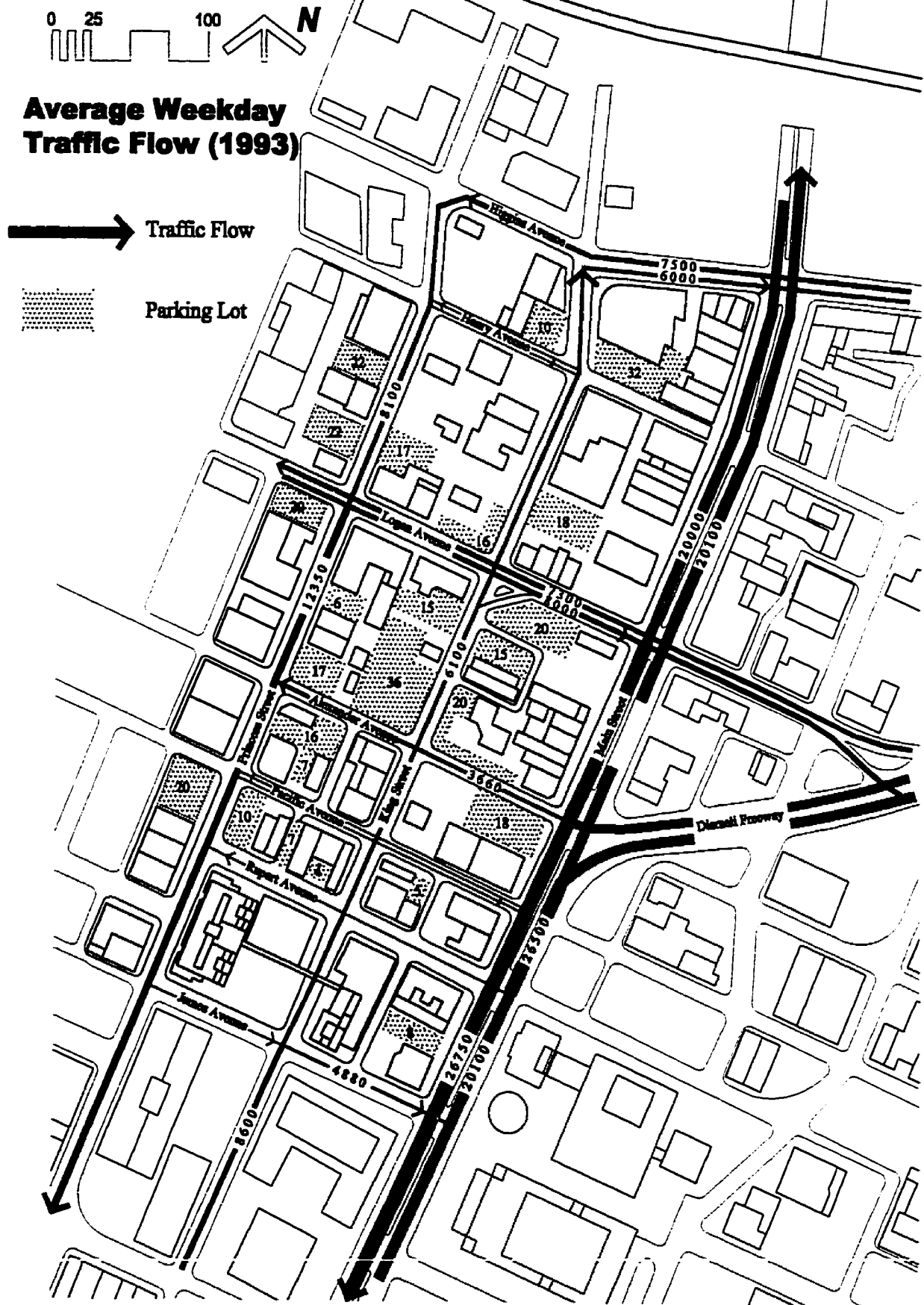
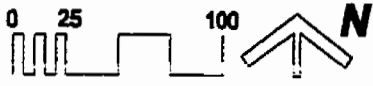


Figure 25



**Pedestrian Routes** .....  
.....

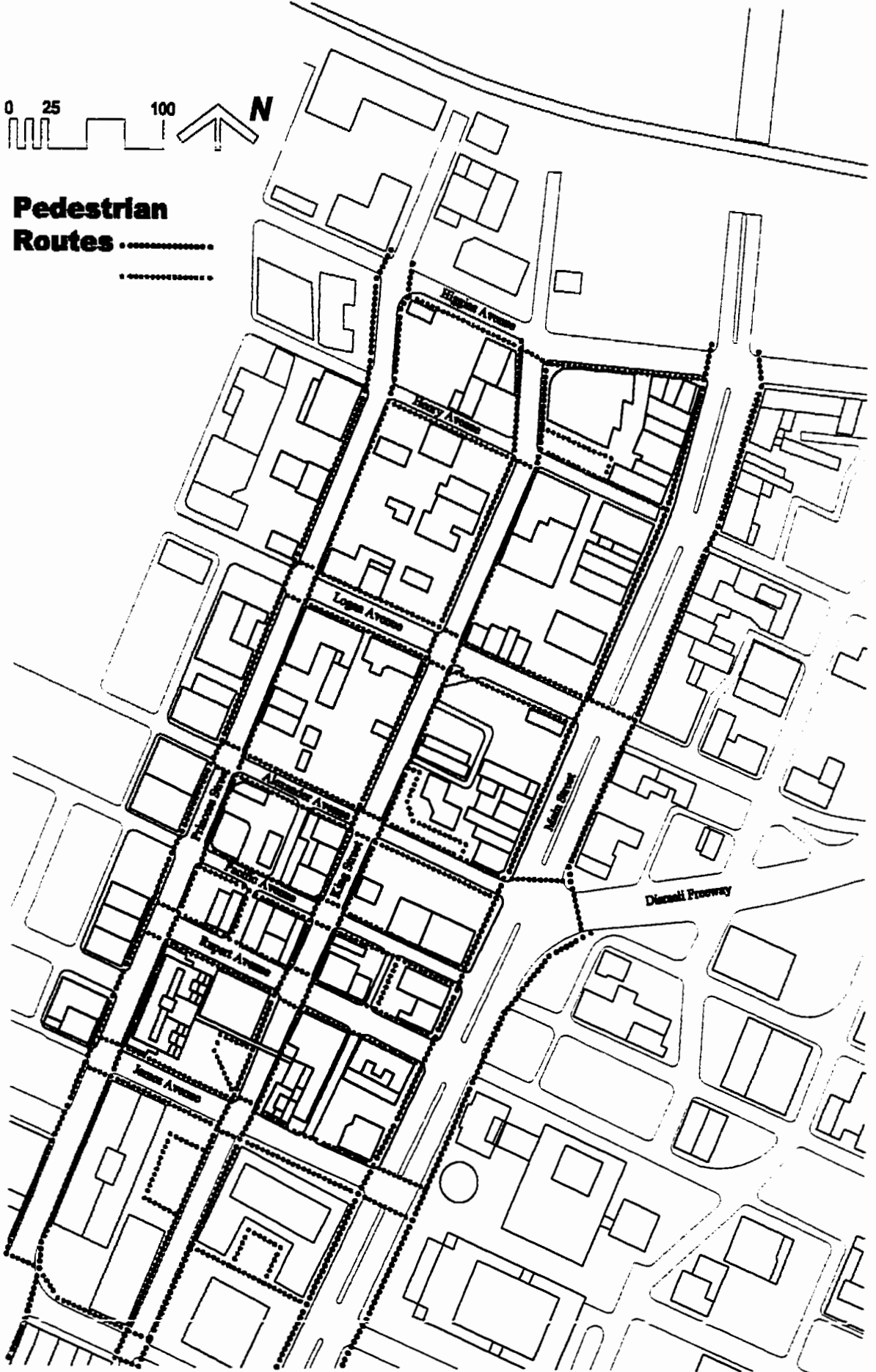


Figure 26

### **3.3.4 Streets**

#### **3.3.4.1 Street Characteristics**

- King Street, the major vehicular and pedestrian corridor in Chinatown, connects all the major restaurants, stores and public buildings of Chinatown.
- Princess Street is a busy vehicular corridor with some pedestrian activity, and its west frontage forms the western edge of Chinatown.
- Pacific and Rupert Avenues have relatively small volumes of traffic, and are associated with the key social, residential and commercial components of Chinatown.
- Alexander and Logan Avenues are busy traffic corridors, with little pedestrian activity.
- Henry Avenue is the major pedestrian and vehicular link between King and Princess Streets.

#### **3.3.4.2 Street Spatial Qualities**

The figure-ground diagram shows Chinatown both lacks the land coverage and building frontage continuity necessary for strongly articulated spatial definition (Figure 27).

Street Enclosure:

- King Street between the Chinese Arch and Pacific Avenue, Princess Street between James and Rupert Avenues, and Princess Street between Pacific Alexander Avenues achieve strong spatial enclosures, due to their height/width ratio (Figure 28).
- Rupert and Henry Avenues, between Main and King Streets, and Princess Street between Alexander and Logan Avenues have partial spatial enclosure.



**Figure-ground Drawing  
of Study Area**



Figure 27

# Path Enclosure

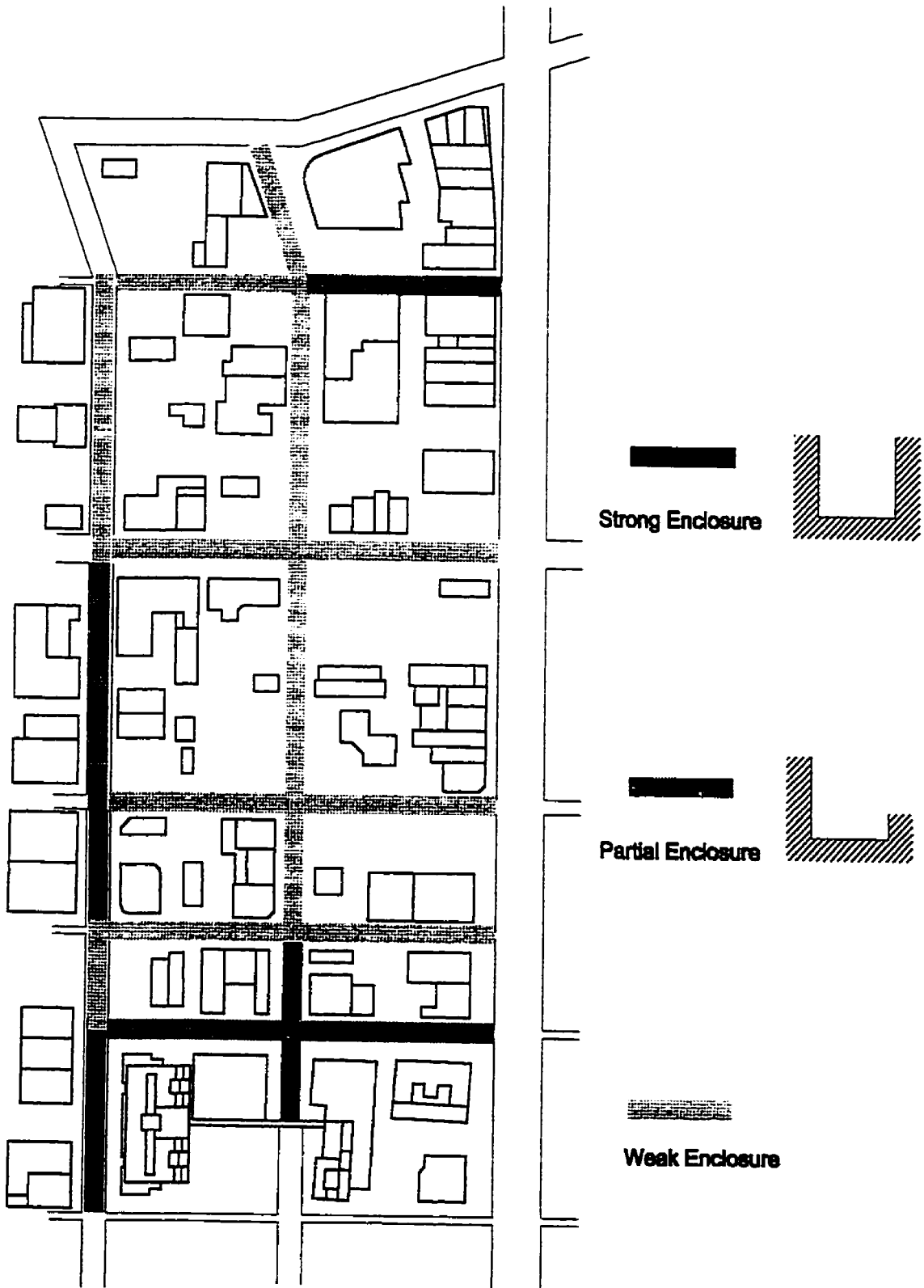


Figure 28

- The remaining streets in Chinatown have so many gaps that spatial enclosure is inadequate.

### **3.3.5 Buildings**

#### **3.3.5.1 Building Styles**

The new Chinese Cultural Center has two distinct components of a classical Chinese building, the podium and the large curved roof. As well, it is characterized by its moon-shaped door and oriental colors. The Chinese Arch, *Pai Fang*, on the south gateway, is in the Chinese traditional style. Most Chinatown buildings were originally constructed in a western style with Chinese decoration detail added when the Chinese community moved in during the 1920's.

#### **3.3.5.2 Building Façades**

A façade gives a building its expression of architectural quality and character. Spatial façade characteristics are important for path identity, and also strengthen the character of places.

- **Entrance:** The curved roof is the most prominent feature of a Chinese building. The entrances of Kum Koon Garden Restaurant, Grand Garden Restaurant, and Dynasty Eating & Shopping Center have curved roofs, which enhance the entrances, the focal point of the storefront, serving to attract pedestrians to the restaurants.
- **Windows:** Windows are usually framed with bright traditional Oriental colors.
- Only a few stores have display windows, and most buildings have large areas of blank walls.
- **Animal Motif:** the facades of the Mandarin Building, the Sun Wah Supermarket, and the Marigold Restaurant are decorated with the dragon motif.

- **Colors:** The exterior surfaces of most buildings between James and Logan Avenues are painted with traditional Oriental colors such as red, green, and yellow.

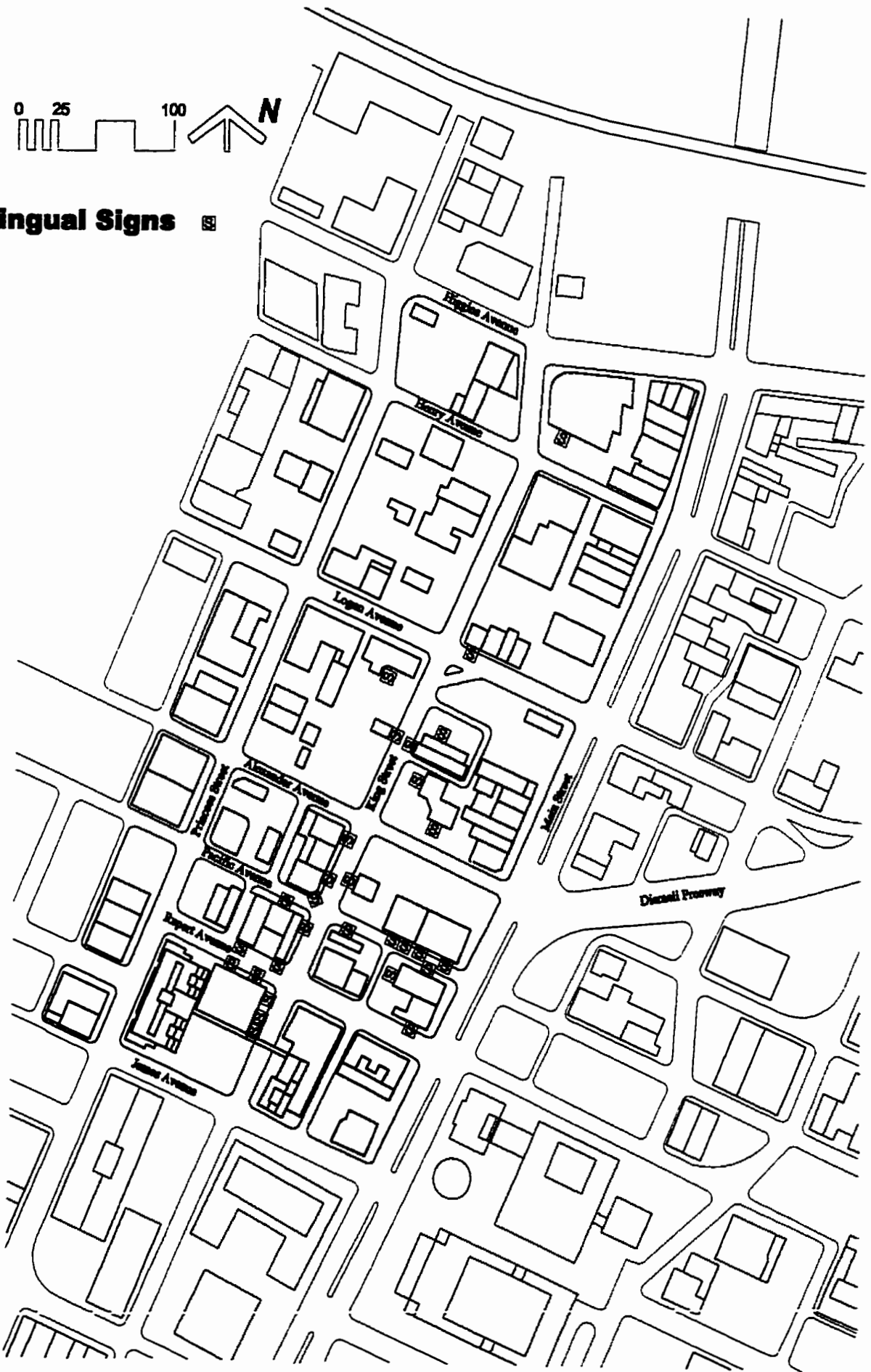
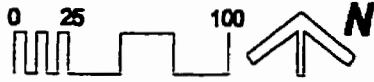
### **3.3.6 Signage**

Most Chinese shops have horizontal oriented storefront signs. Messages on signs usually are in both English and Chinese. These bilingual signs contribute significantly to the overall character of the district (Figure 29).

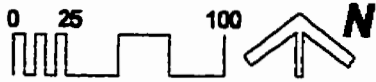
### **3.3.7 Street Furniture**

There is some streetscape furniture such as oriental phone booths, oriental light fixtures and bilingual street signs in the district. However, they are limited to King Street between James and Logan Avenues (Figure 30).

**Bilingual Signs** 



**Figure 29**



**Street Furniture**

- Oriental Light Fixtures •
- Oriental Phone Booths ■

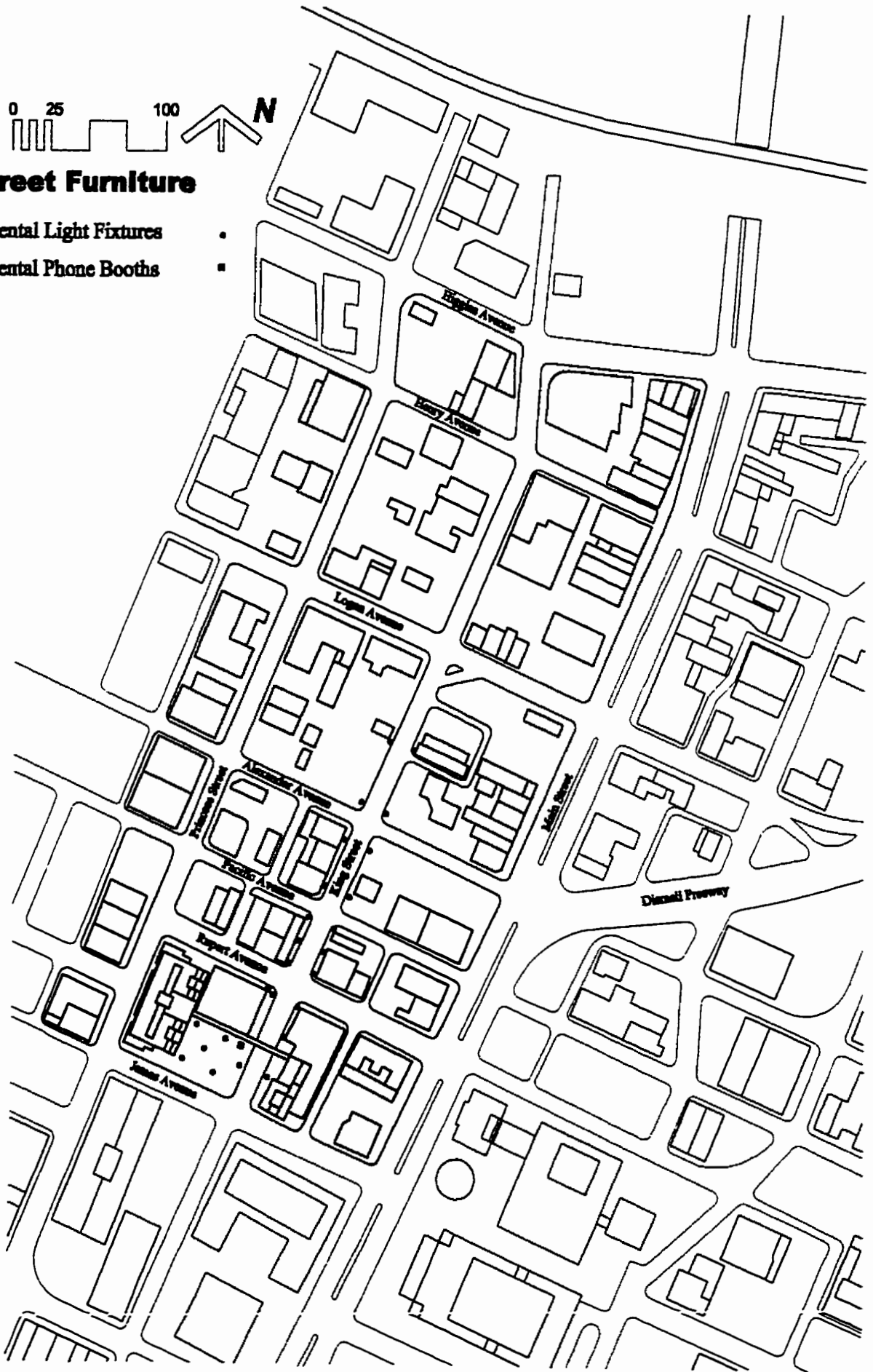


Figure 30

### **3.4 Existing Community Structure**

For purposes of clearer graphic presentation, the diagrams of each community component have been prepared, and then have been overlaid to produce an overall structure of the community.

#### **3.4.1 Hierarchy of Streets (Figure 31)**

Main Street is the main artery of Winnipeg. Logan Avenue is a major east-west route in the city. King and Princess Streets are the cross-town north-south one way pair. Higgins is a main trucking route to the Logan/McPhillips industrial area, and Alexander Avenue is the western extension of the Disraeli Freeway. The rest of streets have relatively small traffic flows.

#### **3.4.2 Commercial Component**

The commercial component is very important in Chinatown. It consists of restaurants, stores, hotels, automotive service shops and a bank.

##### **3.4.2.1 Restaurants (Figure 32)**

##### **3.4.2.2 Stores (Figure 33)**

##### **3.4.2.3 Bank, Hotels and Garages (Figure 34)**

#### **3.4.3 Residential, Cultural and Social Components**

These components include two high-rise apartment buildings, a single family dwell unit, a Chinese Cultural Center, an office building, a church and an education building (Figure 35).

### **3.4.4 Structure**

By overlapping the five diagrams at the same scale and format, the existing community structure is revealed (Figure36).

### **3.4.5 Sub-districts of Chinatown**

There are three sub-districts in Chinatown, recognizable as having some particular identifying character (Figure 37).



# Existing Hierarchy of Streets

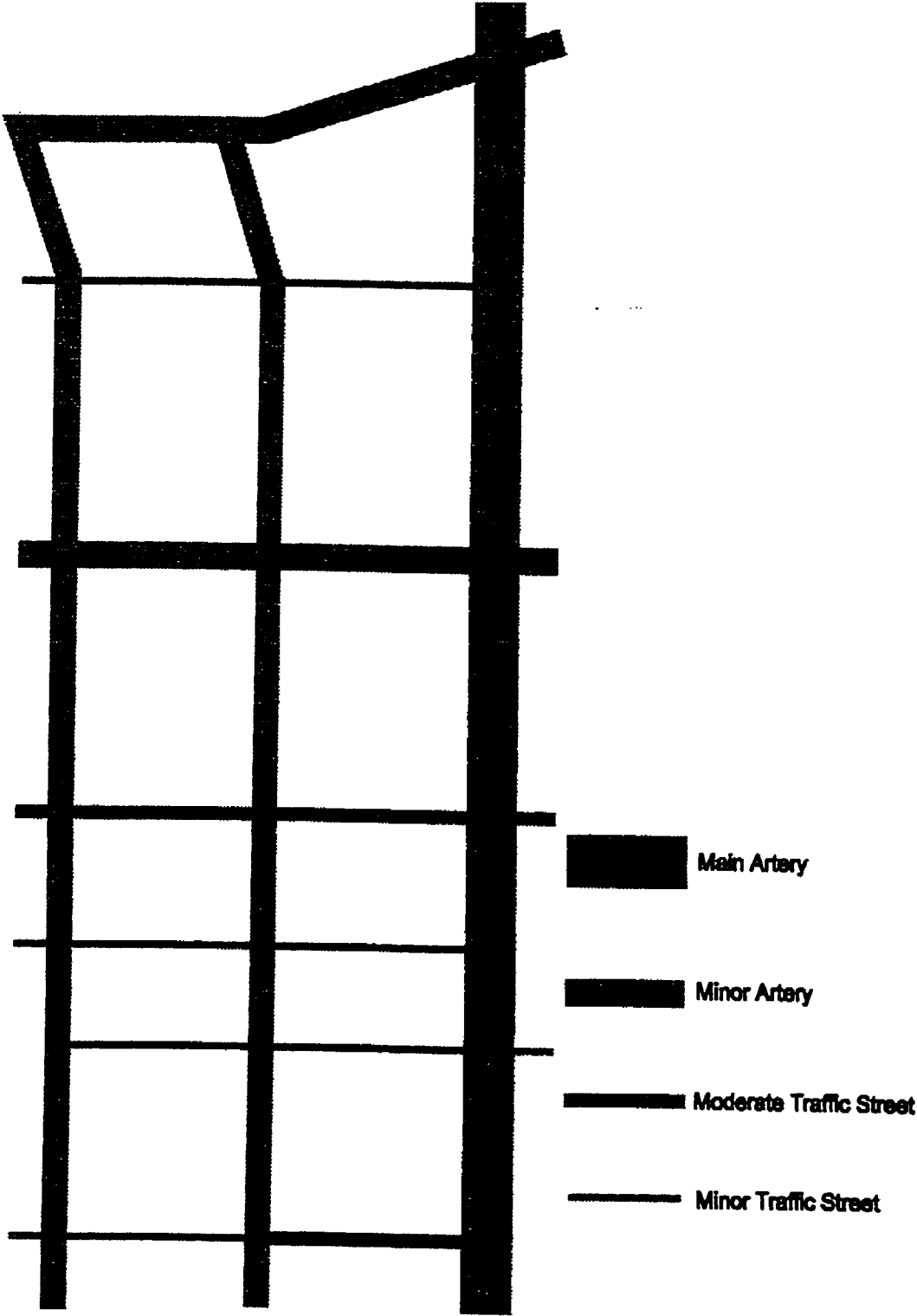


Figure 31

# Existing Restaurants

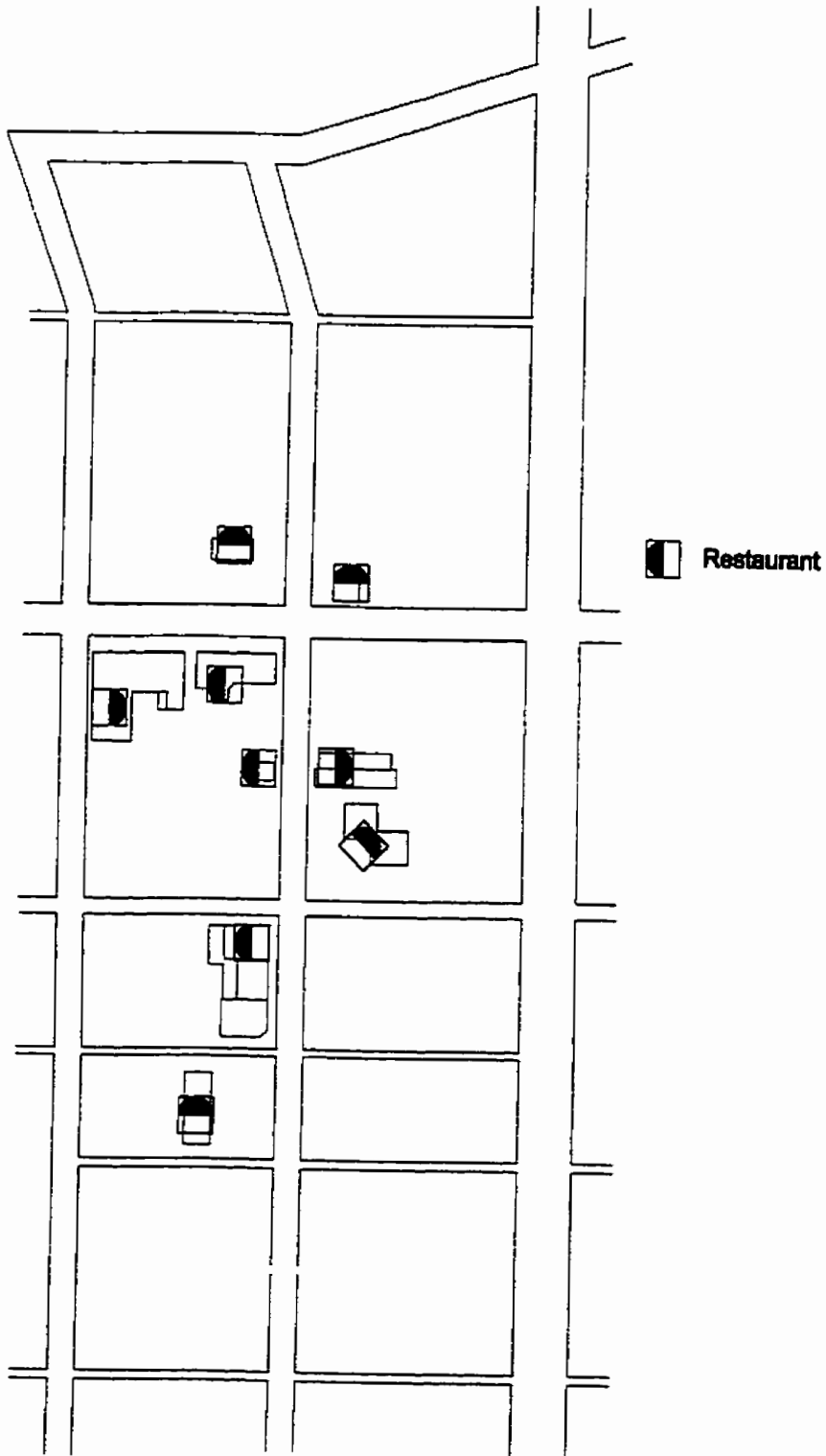


Figure 32

# Existing Stores

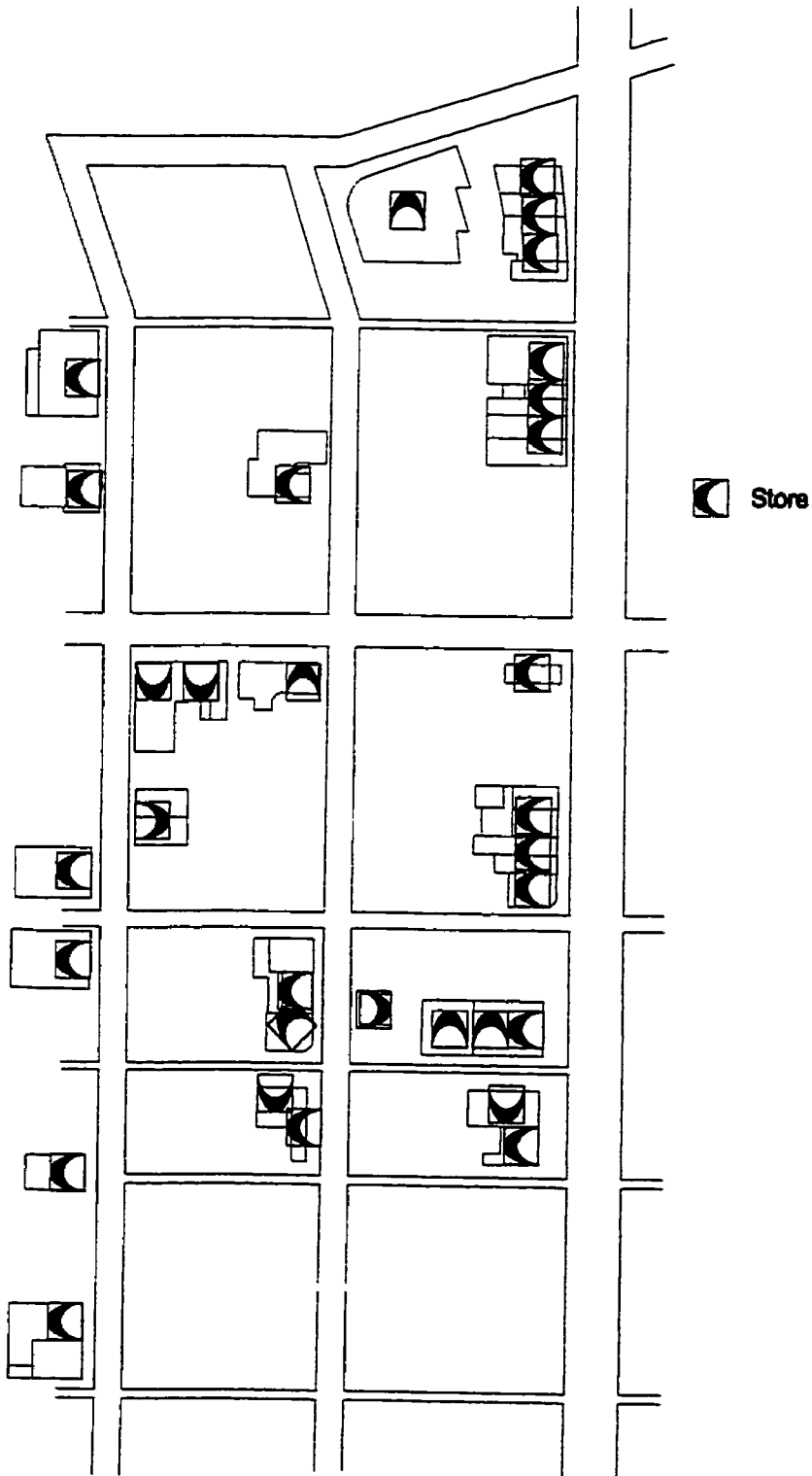


Figure 33

# Existing Bank, Hotels and Garages

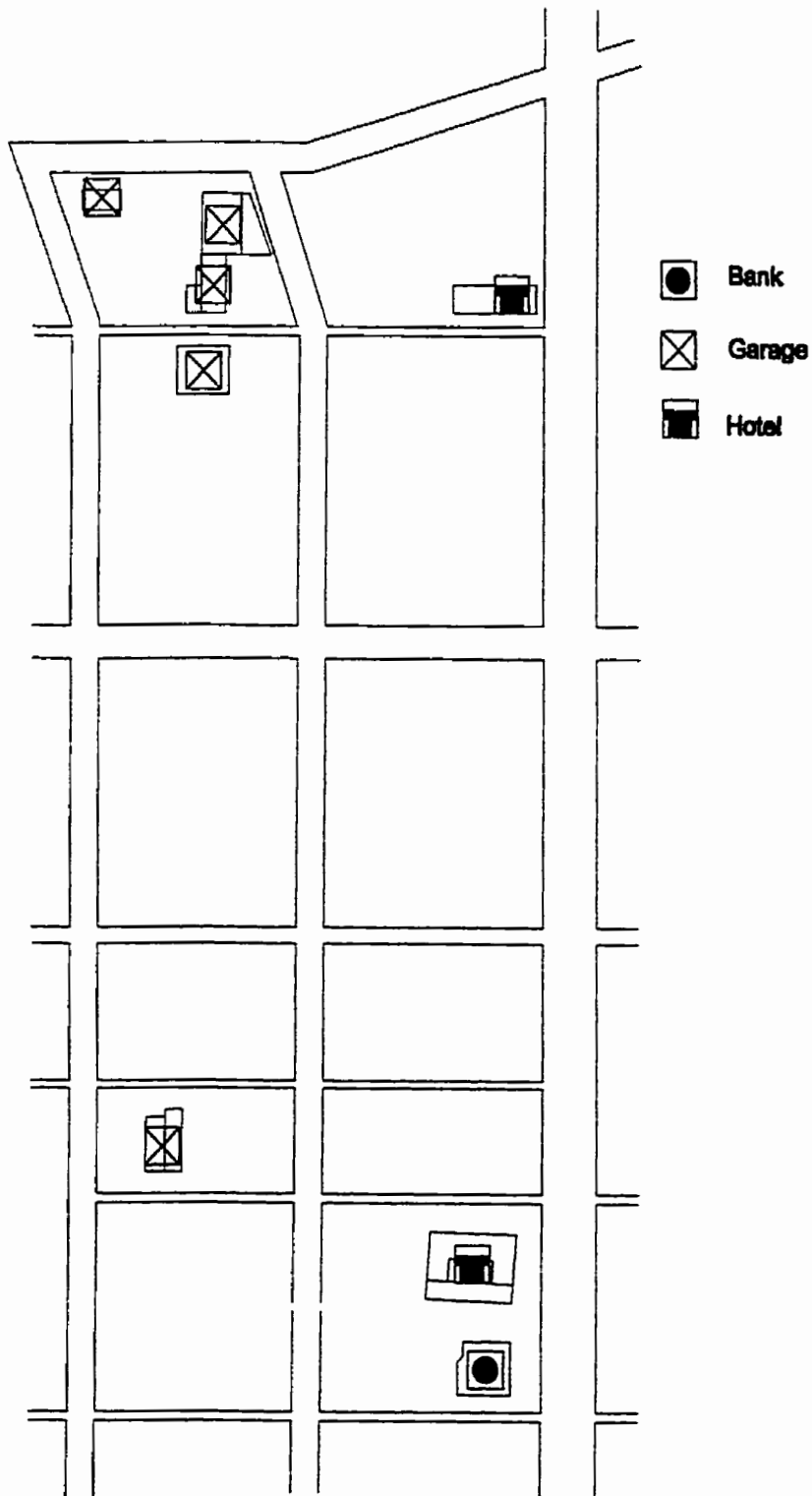


Figure 34

# Existing Residential, Cultural, Social Components

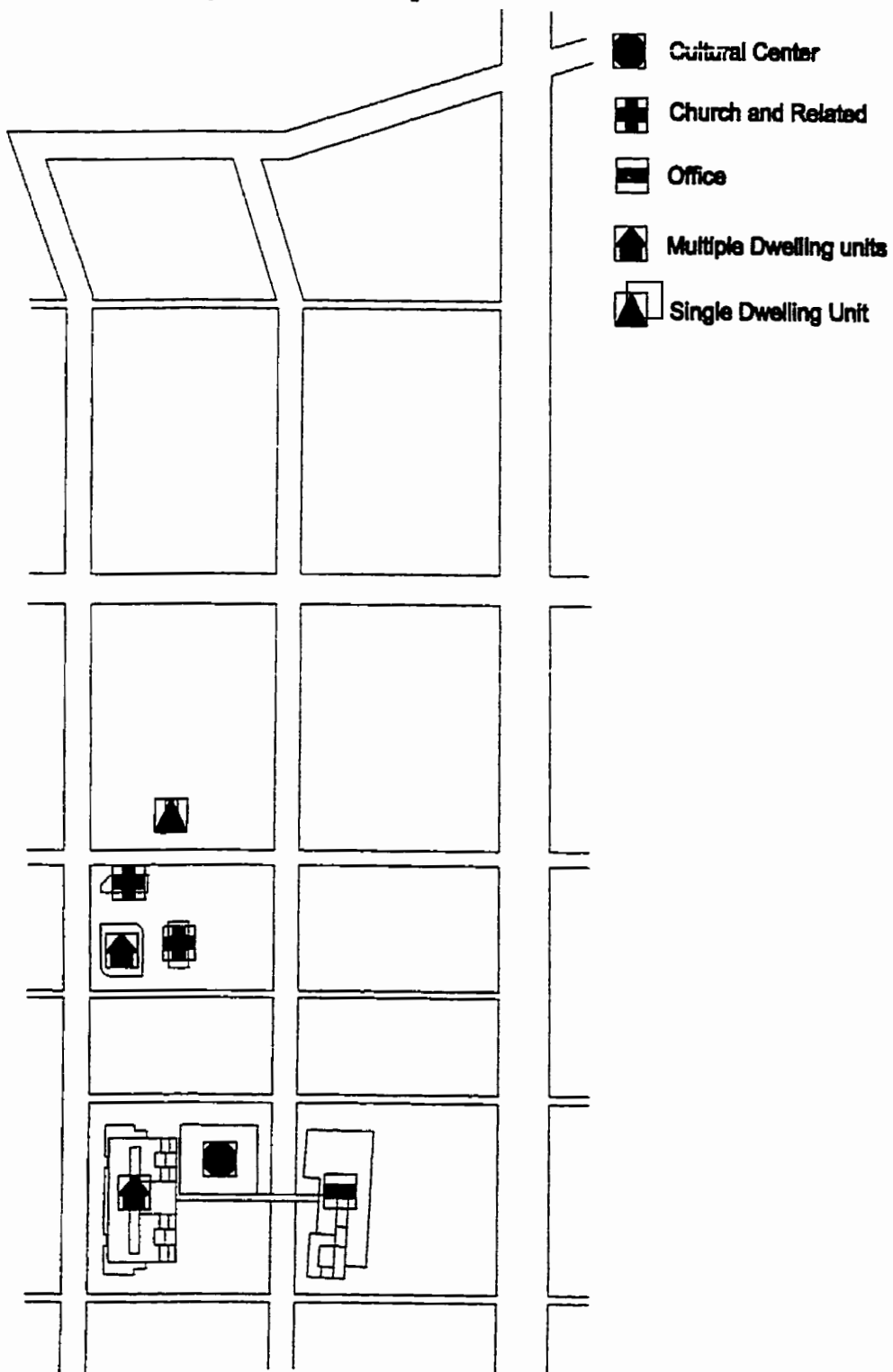


Figure 35

# Existing Community Structure

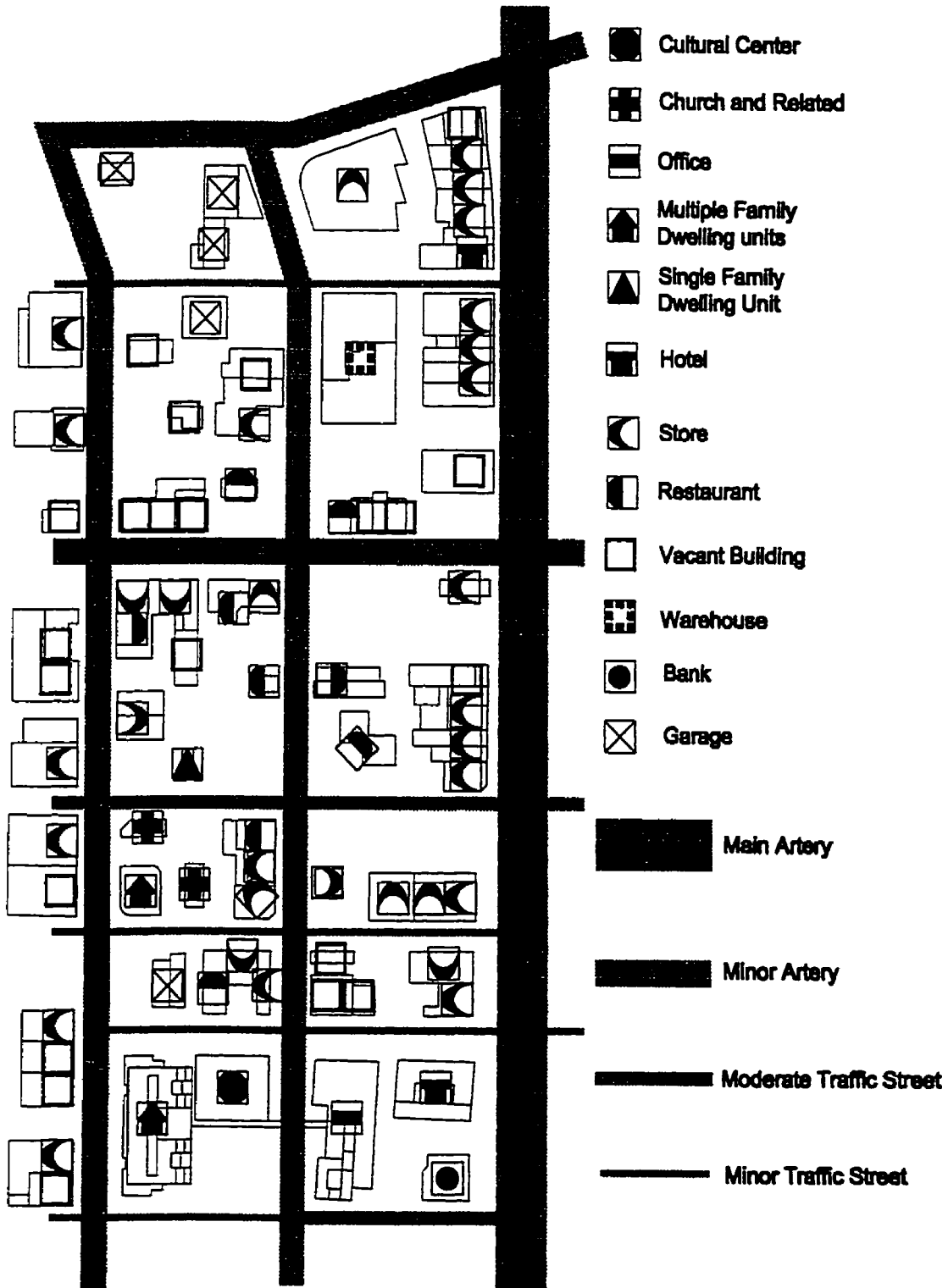


Figure 36

# Sub-districts of Chinatown

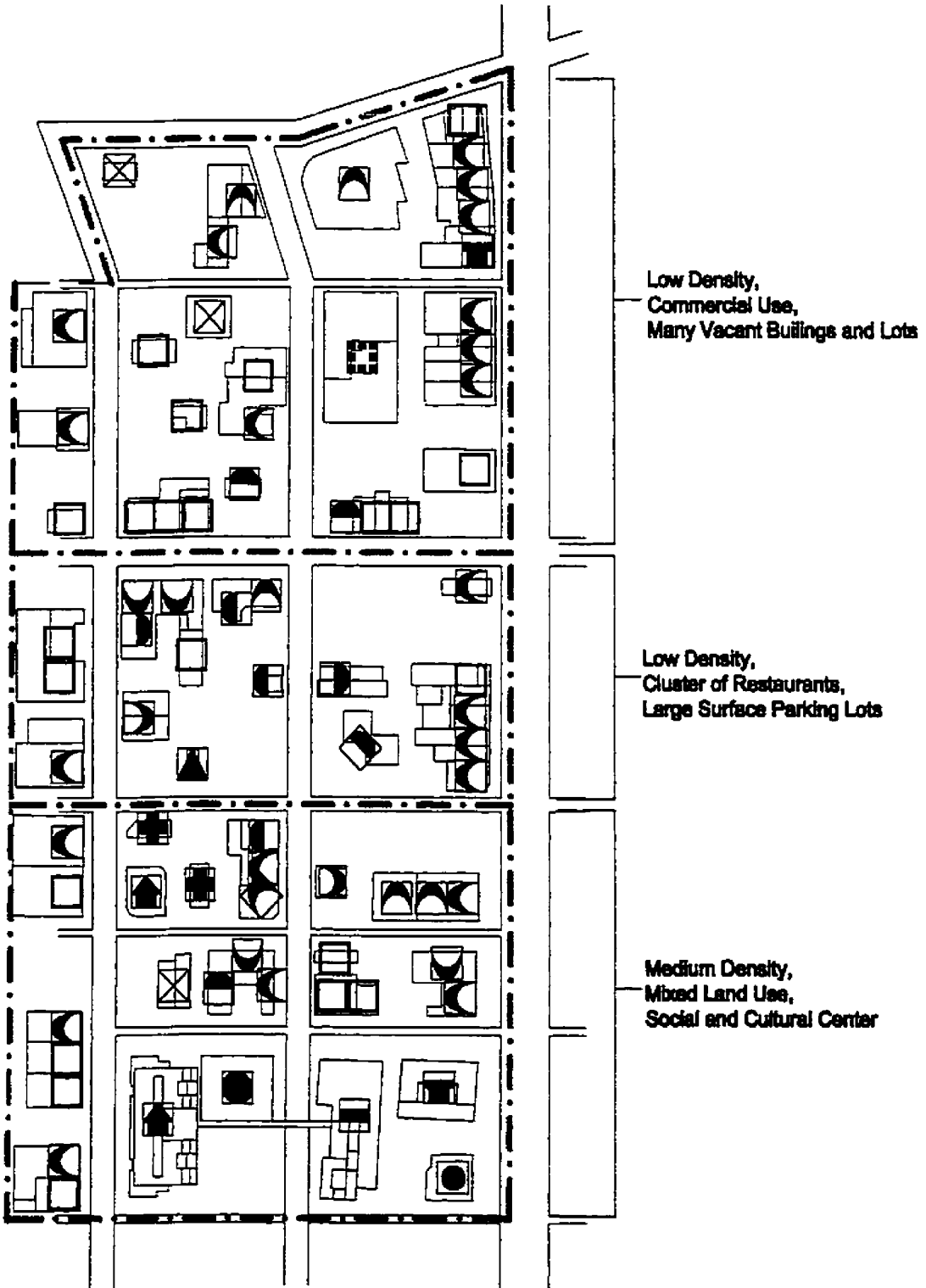


Figure 37

### **3.5 Issues**

Based on the examination of the Chinatown district, the following issues have been identified.

#### **Layout**

1. At the north, west and east entrances, there are no distinct senses of entry to Chinatown.
2. The west edge to the Chinatown district could be improved with infill developments.
3. The district is characterized by the underutilization of land. Empty lots are used mainly for surface parking. In the north sub-district, there are many vacant buildings and lots. The quality of the environment is impaired because the building fabric is so incomplete.

#### **Land Use**

4. The district lacks population and desirable mixed land uses.
5. The existing warehouses and garages contribute little to the street life.
6. There is one single family housing unit located in the block bounded by King and Princess Streets and Logan and Alexander Avenues. This is incompatible with the general use and character of the area.

#### **Circulation System**

7. In the district sidewalks are narrow, which will restrict any proposed increase in pedestrian activity.
8. The uncoordinated array of service roads, loading areas and surface parking lots are the cause of considerable visual degradation across the entire district.



9. In the central sub-district, large gravel parking lots create environmental problems in the summer month.

### **Streets**

10. All the streets are considered in terms of traffic flows only. There are no pedestrian open spaces or seating areas.
11. There is a lack of continuity of occupied storefronts. Surface parking, service roads and underdevelopment lots reduce spatial enclosure along most streets.
12. In the central sub-district, parking lots proliferate along King Street, making the street's role ambiguous, and detract from the desired experiential continuity.
13. Unscreened facilities for storage, trash removal and related services are incompatible with Chinatown's role as a shopping and dining district.

### **Buildings**

14. Most restaurants do not have adequate pedestrian crush space.
15. Many shop entrances are flush with the front façades.
16. A few shops have display windows, but most of these are of modest dimension.
17. Most buildings have large areas of inhospitable blank walls.

### **Signage**

18. Most shops have horizontally oriented storefront signage, rather than traditional projecting, or vertically oriented signage.
19. In the central and north sub-districts, large gaps between signs weaken their overall ability to contribute to character and continuity.

## **Street Furniture**

20. Street furniture is limited to a small part of Chinatown, and the vocabulary of street furniture is also limited.

## **4.0 GENERAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

### **4.1 Commercial Facilities**

Chinatown is mainly a commercial district, and is becoming well known for its restaurants and oriental grocery stores. In general, the growth of Chinatown's commercial facilities will be supported by increasing consumer demand.

In the near future, more than 2000 Red River Community College students and staff will occupy five historic buildings on Princess Street, located within easy walking distance of Chinatown. The placement of Red River Community College on the west edge of the Exchange District will, unquestionably, have a positive impact on Chinatown. It is clear that there is potential demand for more commercial facilities, such as restaurants, bookstores, clothing stores, gift shops, and other retail outlets in the Chinatown district.

### **4.2 Housing**

Chinatown presently has a small residential component. Recently, the requirement of residential development in Chinatown has been recognized by the Chinatown Development Corporation. A survey of housing demand conducted by that Corporation (August 2000) indicates that new Chinatown residents will mainly consist of the members of Chinese and other Asian communities. There is, as well, a

potential demand for further housing development within Chinatown due to the proposed Red River Community College campus immediately to the south.

#### **4.3 Recreation Facilities**

Recreation facilities in Chinatown are minimal. In the foreseeable future, however, more recreation facilities will be required to meet the needs of an increasing local population.

There are three categories of users which require recreation facilities in Chinatown: the members of Chinese community and other Asian communities; workers in the surrounding area; and students of the Red River Community College. Chinatown should provide a wide range of recreation facilities to meet a broad segment of users' needs. These facilities might include a comprehensive recreation center and teahouse.

#### **4.4 Pedestrian Oriented Shopping Streets**

In the Chinatown district, streets are considered only as corridors for traffic flows rather than stages for daily life. There is not a street where shopping and dining remains a social experience and the pedestrian has priority over the car.

For the residents of successful Chinatowns in North America, streets are not only for circulation but also for living. The streets which have a relatively small volume of traffic and are associated with the key commercial, social and residential components

of Chinatown should be transformed to pedestrian oriented streets, characterized by intense human activities and a distinct Chinese cultural atmosphere, to facilitate shopping, socializing and dwelling.

## **5.0 PLANNING AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

A set of design principles has been derived from the examination of the district's historical context, existing identity and future requirements. They are grouped under seven major headings: Layout, Land Use, Circulation System, Streets, Buildings, Signage, and Street Furniture. Future development can serve to reinforce and enhance further the character of Chinatown through adherence to these planning and design principles.

### **5.1 Layout**

5.1.1 All new development should help to establish a cohesive order and unified image for Chinatown.

5.1.2 The north, west and east entrances to Chinatown should be articulated.

5.1.3 The west frontage of Main and Princess Streets should be developed to form distinct edges to the Chinatown district.

5.1.4 Urban infill should be the prime strategy for the creation of a successful urban environment in the district.

### **5.2 Land Use**

5.2.1 Infill and mixed-use residential/commercial developments should be encouraged in the south sub-district.

5.2.2 The concentration of restaurant facilities should be developed further in the central sub-district.

5.2.3 Future residential development should be located on the west frontage of Princess Street, and in the north sub-district, along the northern face of the block bounded by King and Princess Streets and Henry and Logan Avenues.

5.2.4 Recreation facilities should be encouraged in the north sub-district, and the existing warehouses in the area should be converted to recreation and other use.

### **5.3 Circulation System**

5.3.1 The moderate and minor traffic streets and related parking areas should be rationalized and consolidated to reduce their presently disruptive effect on the community.

5.3.2 Sidewalks should be widened on Rupert and Pacific Avenues to better accommodate pedestrian use and activities.

5.3.3 In the central and north sub-districts, existing and future surface parking, wherever possible, should be located at the rear of development and accessed from mid-block locations.

5.3.4 All existing and future surface parking must be paved and screened by appropriate fencing and plantings.

## **5.4 Streets**

- 5.4.1 Continuous building frontage should be established along Pacific and Rupert Avenues, and west Princess and Main Streets.
- 5.4.2 Stores on both sides of Pacific and Rupert Avenues should have direct and immediate access from the streets.
- 5.4.3 Pedestrian open spaces on Pacific Avenue should be integrated with the street environment, to facilitate socialization and recreation.
- 5.4.4 Commercial frontage should be strengthened on Alexander and Logan Avenues and King Street between Pacific and Higgins Avenues.
- 5.4.5 All facilities for loading, trash removal and related service must be effectively screened from streets.

## **5.5 Buildings**

- 5.5.1 New buildings should respect the scale, building heights and character of the existing buildings in the area.
- 5.5.2 New building facades should better express the symbolic vocabulary of classical Chinese architecture.
- 5.5.3 New street-related buildings should have their primary face to the street.
- 5.5.4 Existing large blank walls should be lighted and decorated with either Chinese characters or murals.
- 5.5.5 New restaurant buildings should be encouraged along King Street in the central sub-district, and should provide adequate crush spaces along the street frontage.



5.5.6 Existing restaurants with front parking lots, should wherever possible, be reorganized to create pedestrian crush spaces, and those spaces should be well connected to the public sidewalks.

## **5.6 Signage**

5.6.1 Vertically oriented projecting signs should be encouraged.

5.6.2 Signs should be in both Chinese and English, with emphasis on the former.

## **5.7 Street Furniture**

5.7.1 Street furniture, including paving materials, lighting, seating, and other street furniture should reflect and reinforce the heritage and ethnic character of the district.

5.7.2 Street furnishing elements in the district should function to unify the streetscape.

## **6.0 WINNIPEG'S NEW CHINATOWN**

The evolution of Chinatown is directed by internal and external forces. Through a general overview of the potential requirements of Chinatown, there is reason to believe that a great opportunity is presented to the Chinese community for the revitalization of Chinatown, since the internal and external forces are working together. The study of urban design, therefore, should determine those forces which have form generating capabilities to build a new Chinatown. Winnipeg's new Chinatown can have a distinct character, and be more responsive to the needs and aspiration of both the Chinese community and the public at large.

### **6.1 Proposed Projects of Chinatown (Figure 38, 39)**

#### **6.1.1 Project A**

Goals and Objectives:

- The overall goal is to develop a commercial/residential vital mixed-use urban area.
- The area should be developed as a place which has a balanced mix of activities such as shopping, socializing, recreating, and dwelling.
- The area should develop pedestrian oriented streets that offer a rich and intense shopping experience.

### **6.1.2 Project B**

#### Goals and Objectives:

- The goal is to reinforce the restaurant cluster in the area, and encourage the continuity of restaurant frontages along King Street.
- Restaurants should have good visual and functional connection with the streets, and surface parking lots should be well organized.

### **6.1.3 Project C**

#### Goals and Objectives:

- The goal is to build continuous frontage to form the distinct west edge of Chinatown.
- Commercial and residential activities should be encouraged on Princess Street.

### **6.1.4 Project D**

#### Goals and Objectives:

- The overall goal is to transform the north sub-district from underutilized parking lots, vacant buildings and warehouse buildings to a vibrant mixed-use commercial, residential and recreational urban area.
- Commercial, residential and recreational development should be organized so as to contribute to the vitality of street life.

## **6.2 Proposed Community Structure (Figure 40)**

By overlaying the existing buildings, the proposed projects, and hierarchy of streets, a proposed community structure is shown in Figure 40.

## **6.3 The New Chinatown**

Winnipeg's new Chinatown will be a functional and socially vibrant place. The planning and design principles set out in Section 5 lead to the development strategies by which the unique character is expressed in the physical form and patterns of use.

All the facilities in the new Chinatown accommodate the functions required. New Chinatown has distinct edges, strong path enclosure, small and intimate social spaces, landmarks-symbolic entrances, projecting signs, oriental street furniture, and building facades associated with the symbolic vocabulary of classical Chinese architecture. Those key physical elements constitute the skeleton of Chinatown's image. They develop a unique Chinese character and clear sense of the physical form of the place.

In addition, the tight public spaces in the new Chinatown provide an urban context that is both expressive and supportive of very intense public life. The busy street activities such as dining, shopping and socializing create genuine Chinese "bustle". In Winnipeg's new Chinatown, distinct physical form and activity patterns complement one another. In this way, a strong sense of place, the "character" or "atmosphere" of Chinatown, is better experienced.

# Proposed Hierarchy of Streets

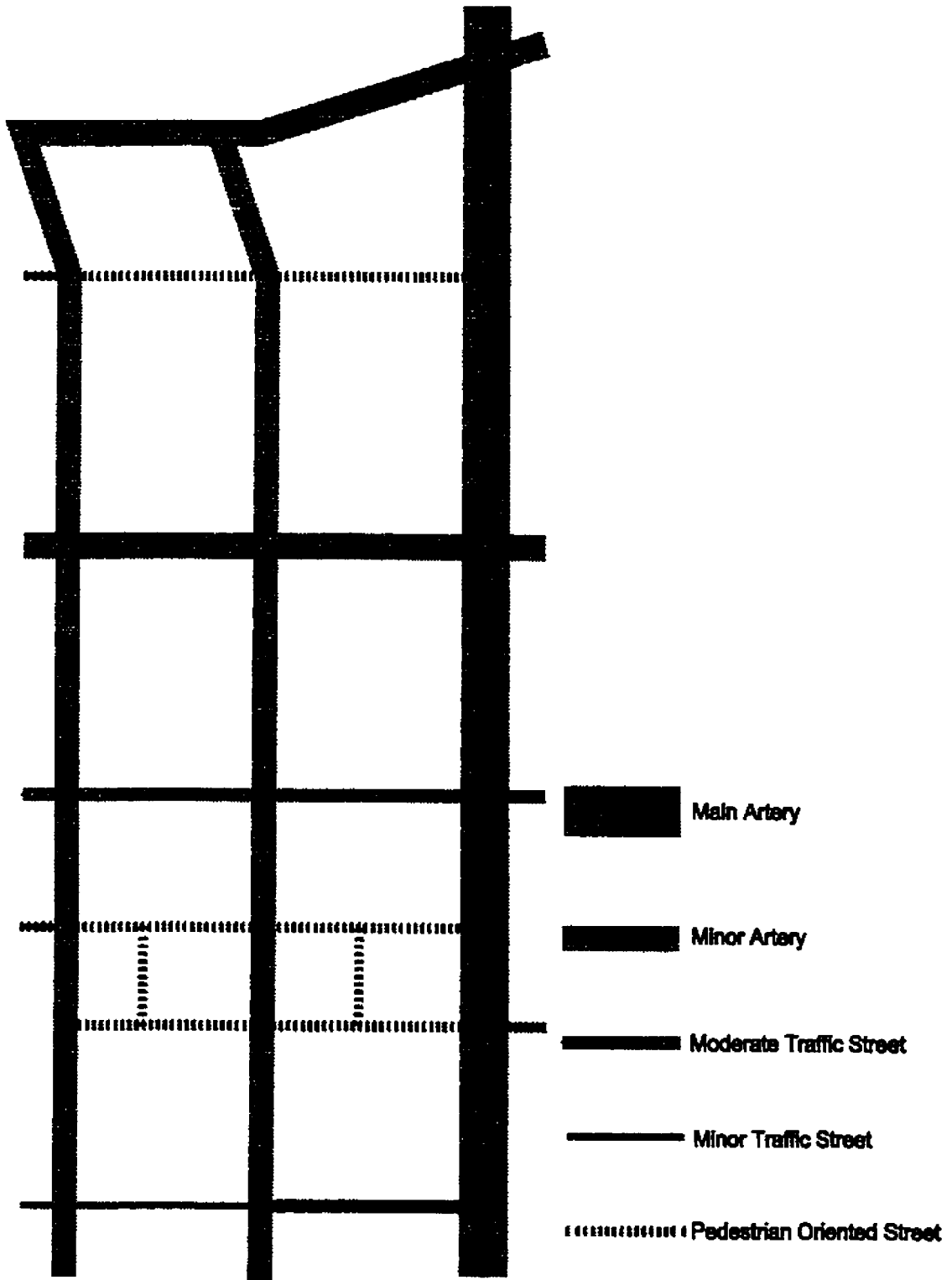


Figure 38

# Proposed Projects

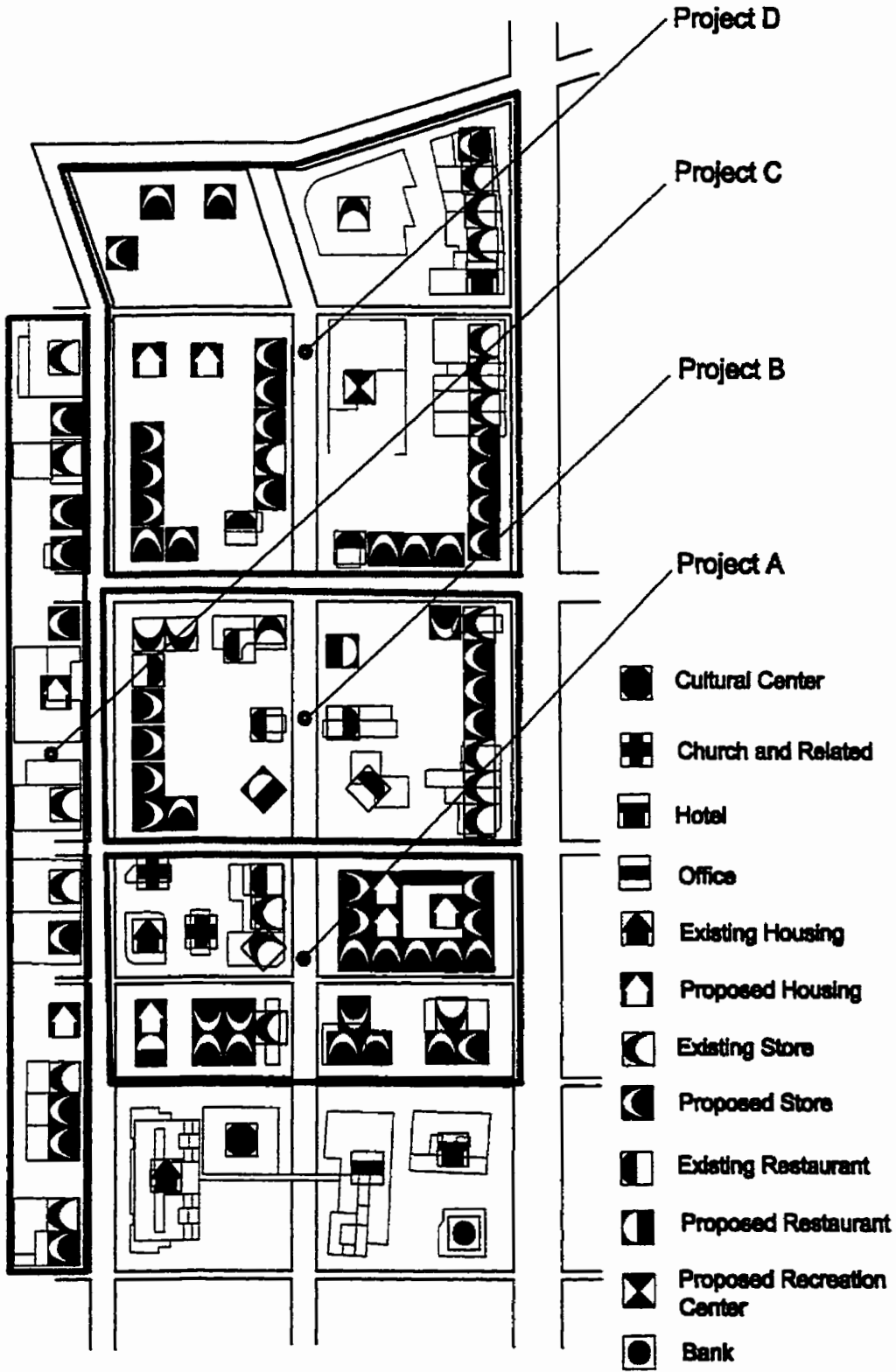


Figure 39

# Proposed Community Structure

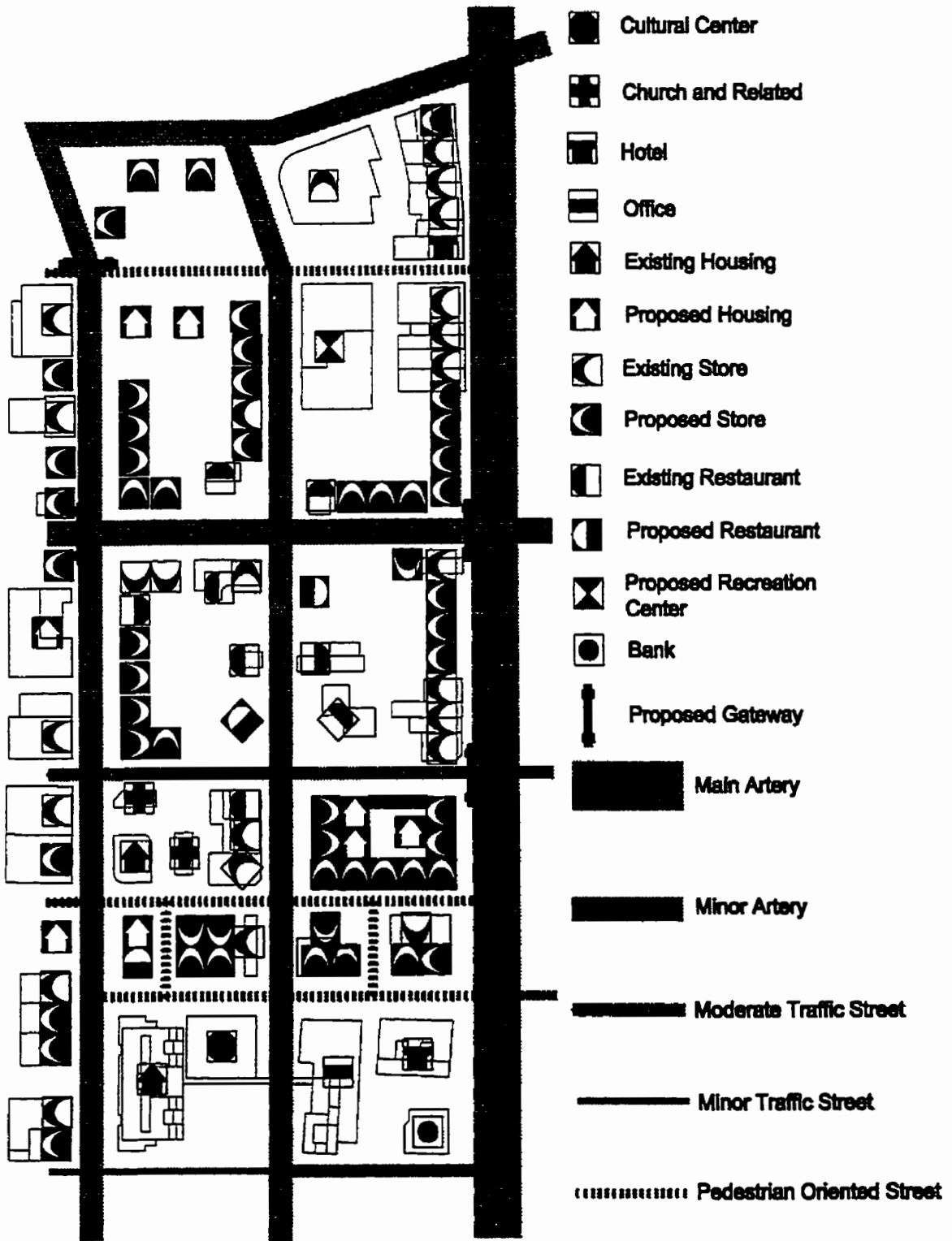


Figure 40

## 6.4 Demonstration Design of Project A

The design area is a core area of Winnipeg's Chinatown, which consists of the four blocks bounded by Main and King Streets and Rupert and Alexander Avenues (Figure 41).

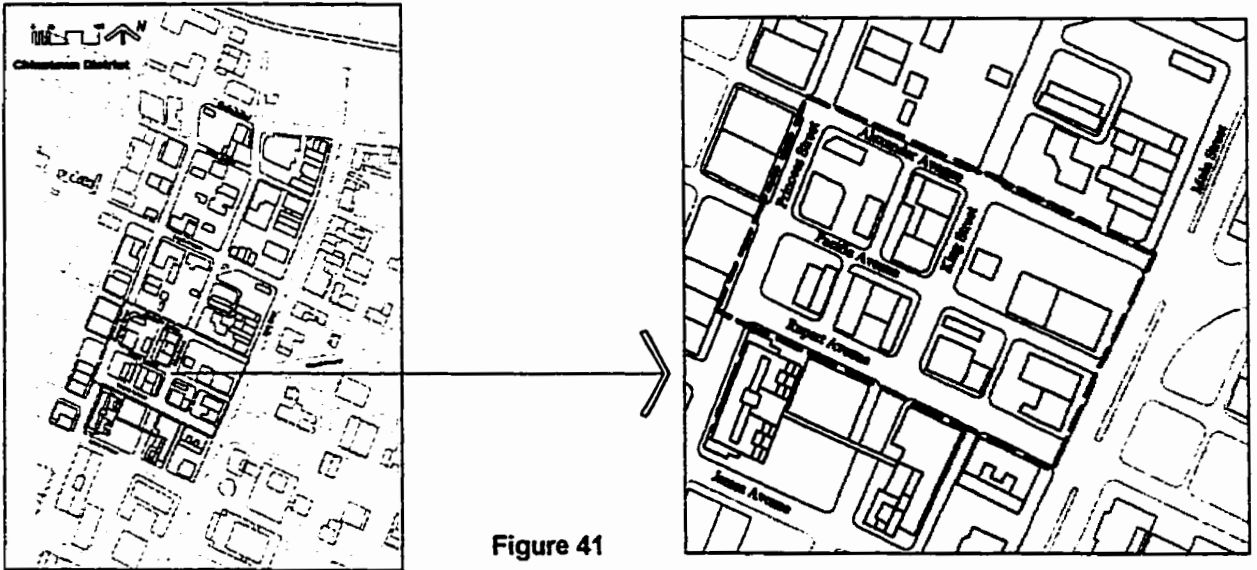
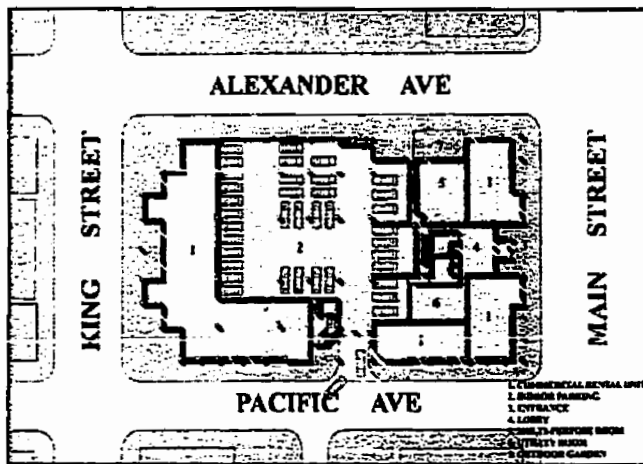


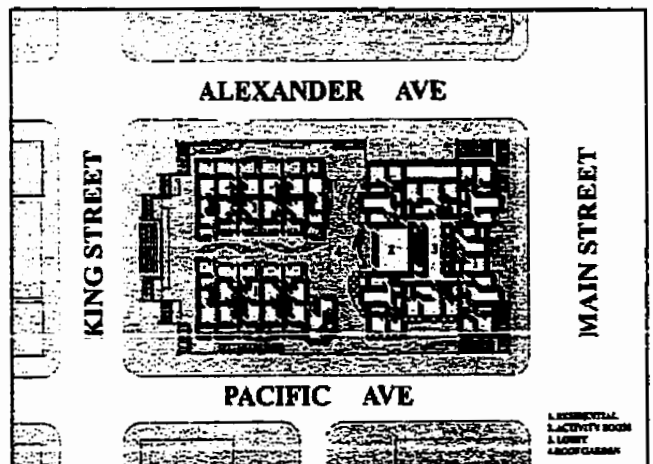
Figure 41

Since an arson fire on December 8<sup>th</sup> 1999 destroyed approximately ½ of the entire block between King and Main Streets, and Alexander and Pacific Avenues, a long term mixed-use proposal consisting of small retail/commercial spaces, family housing and secured parking has since been recommended by Raymond S. C. Wan Architect. This design proposal has been accepted as a part of the existing context in the project A (Figure 42, 43).



Ground Level

Figure 42



First Floor Level



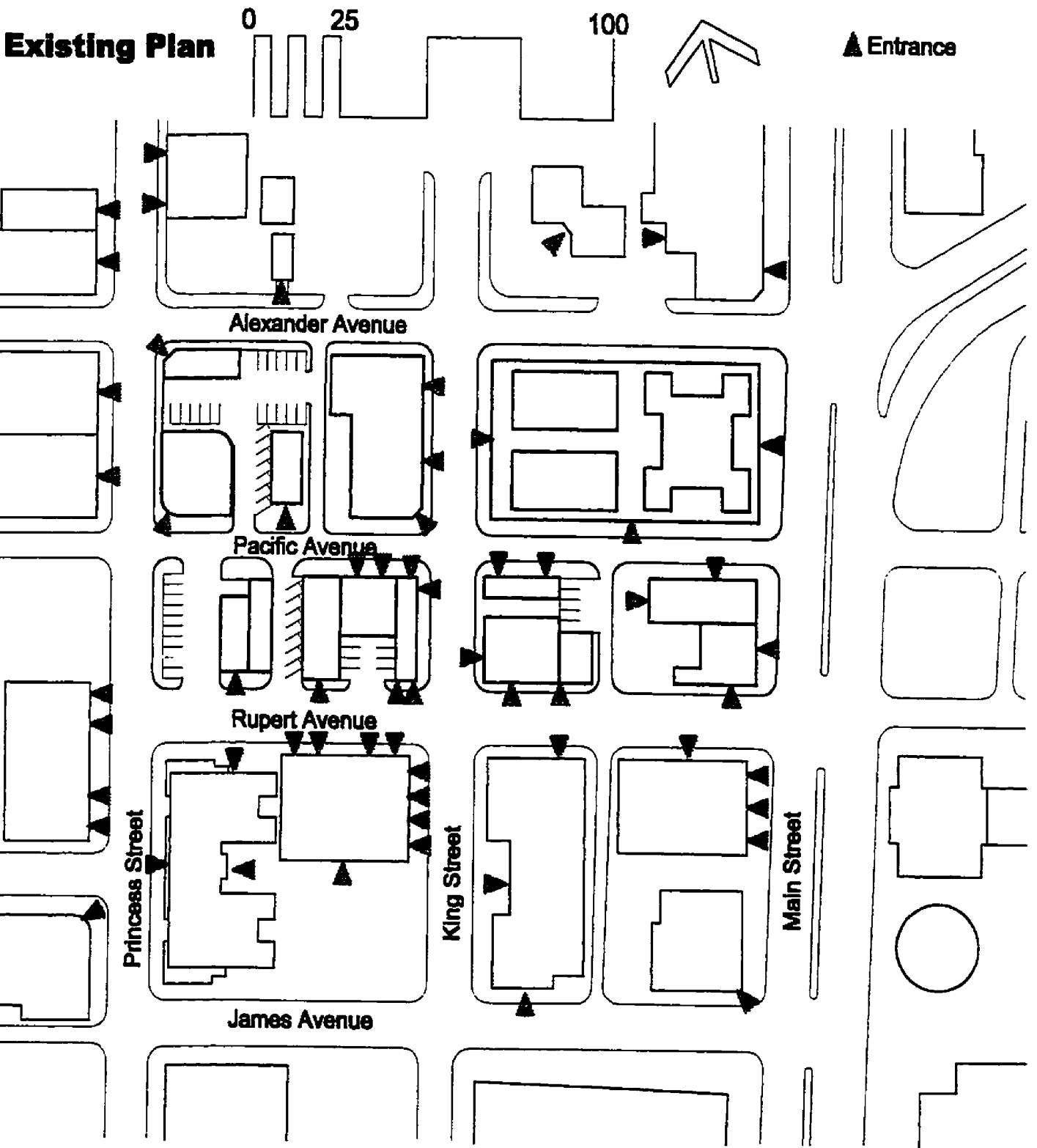


Figure 43

## 6.4.1 Programming

Programming is a three-step procedure: to establish goals, to identify weaknesses and to determine needs.

### 6.4.1.1 Goal

The Goal is to develop a vital mixed-use urban area



Balanced mix of activities

Efficient land and space use

Positive image with Chinese character

### 6.4.1.2 Weaknesses:

#### Activities

1. Lack of concentrated business mix (Figure 44)
2. Lack of social places(Figure 45)
3. The existing garage contributes little to the street life

#### Land and space use

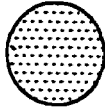
4. Low building density (Figure 46)
5. Many gaps in the building fabric(Figure 47)
6. Mid-block vacant buildings (Figure 48)

#### Image

7. Many buildings in poor condition (Figure 49)
8. Many blank walls (Figure 50)
9. No vertically oriented projecting signs
10. Lack of street furniture (Figure 51)

**Lack of Concentrated Business Mix**

Commercial (Retail and Restaurant)



Heavily-used Dim Sun Restaurant and Grocery Store

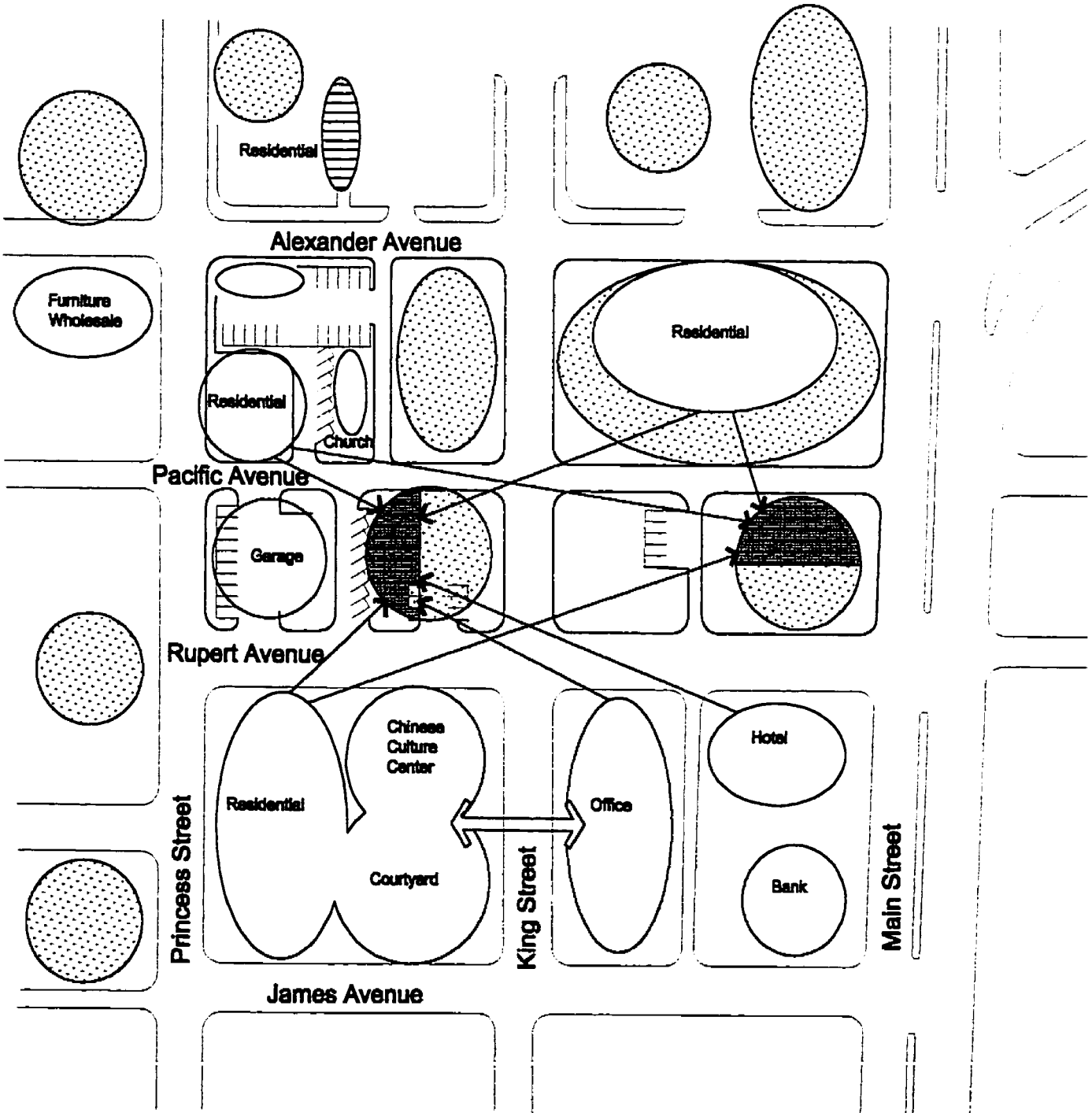
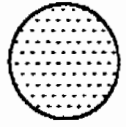


Figure 44

**Lack of Social Places**

Commercial (Retail and Restaurant)



Residential

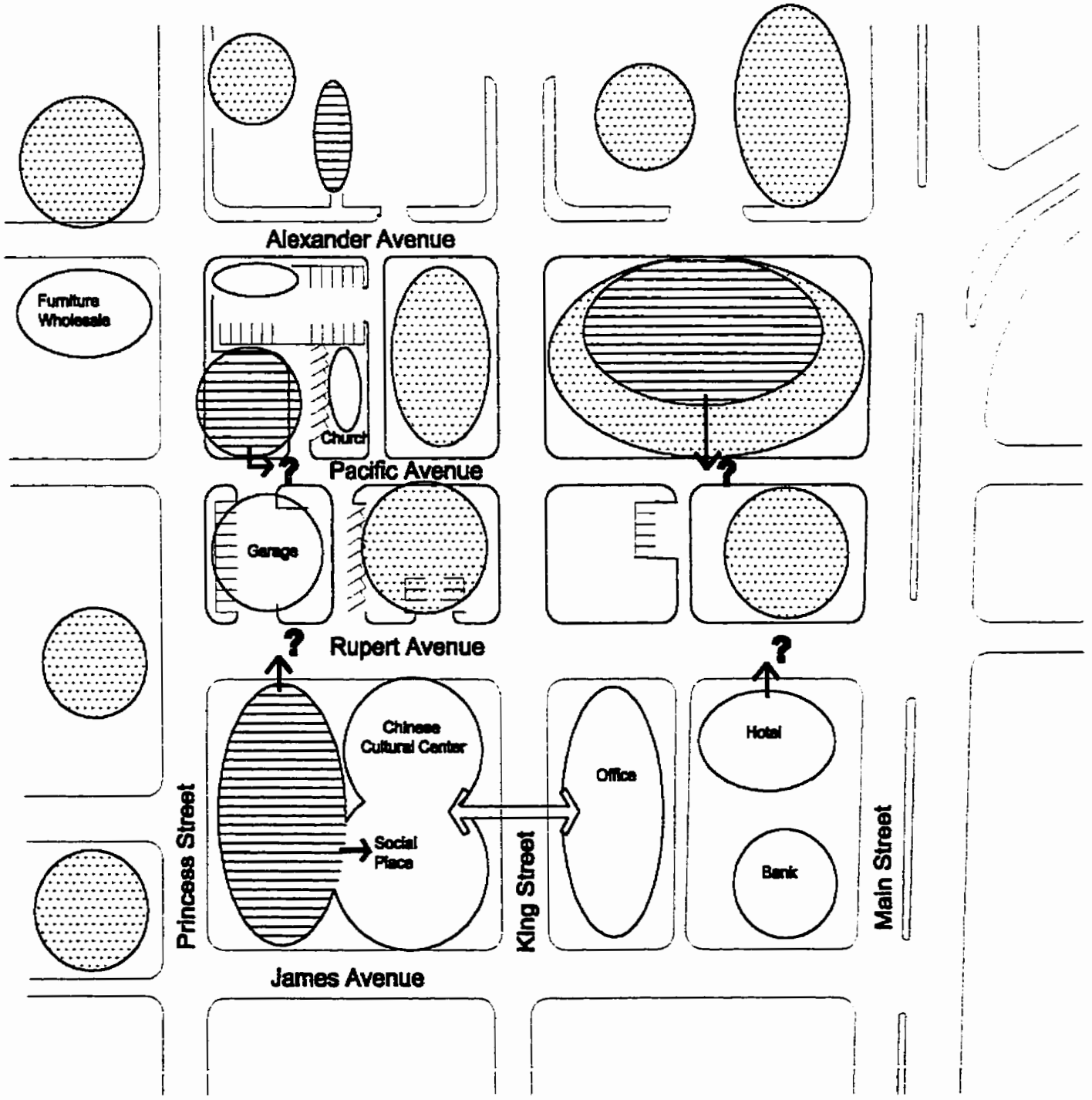
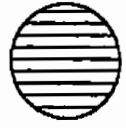


Figure 45

**Low Building Density**

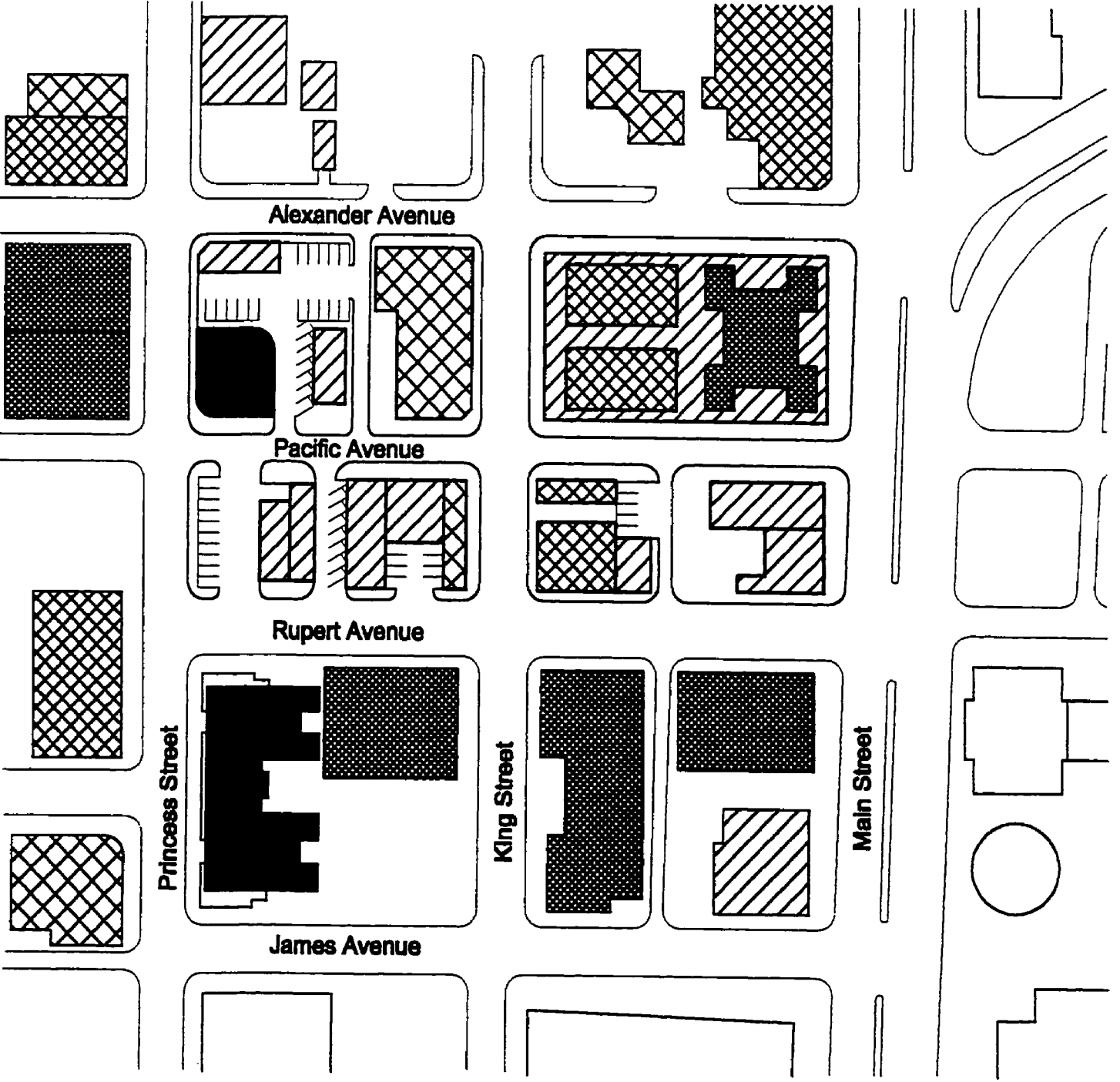
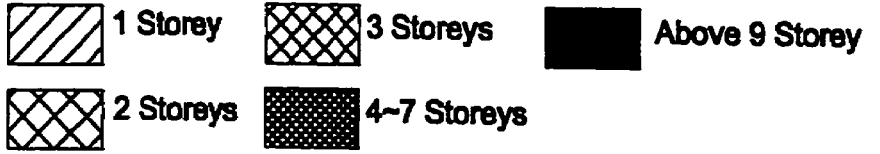


Figure 46

# Many Gaps

Study Area Buildings

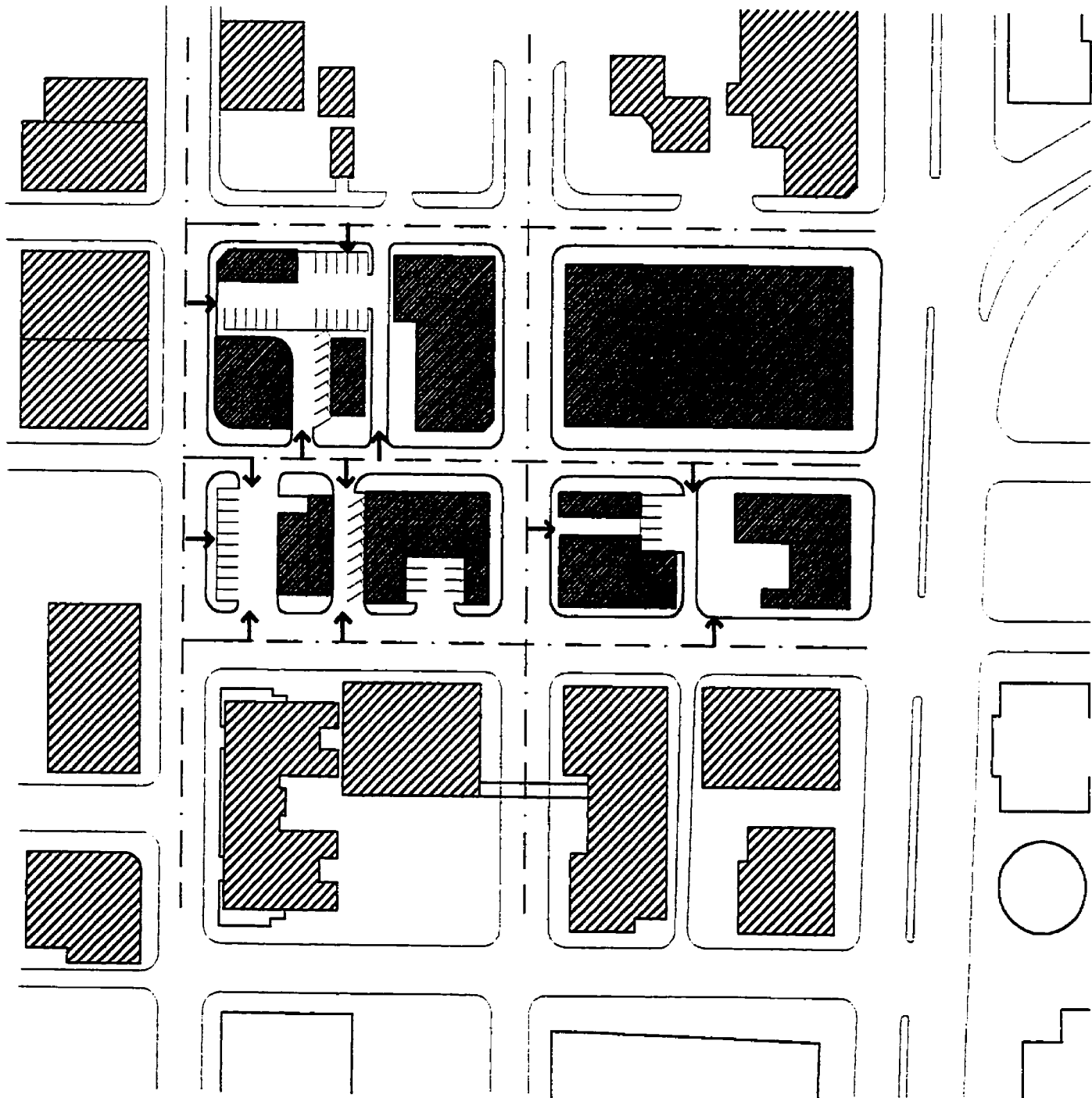


Figure 47

# Mid-block Vacant Buildings

Vacant Building 

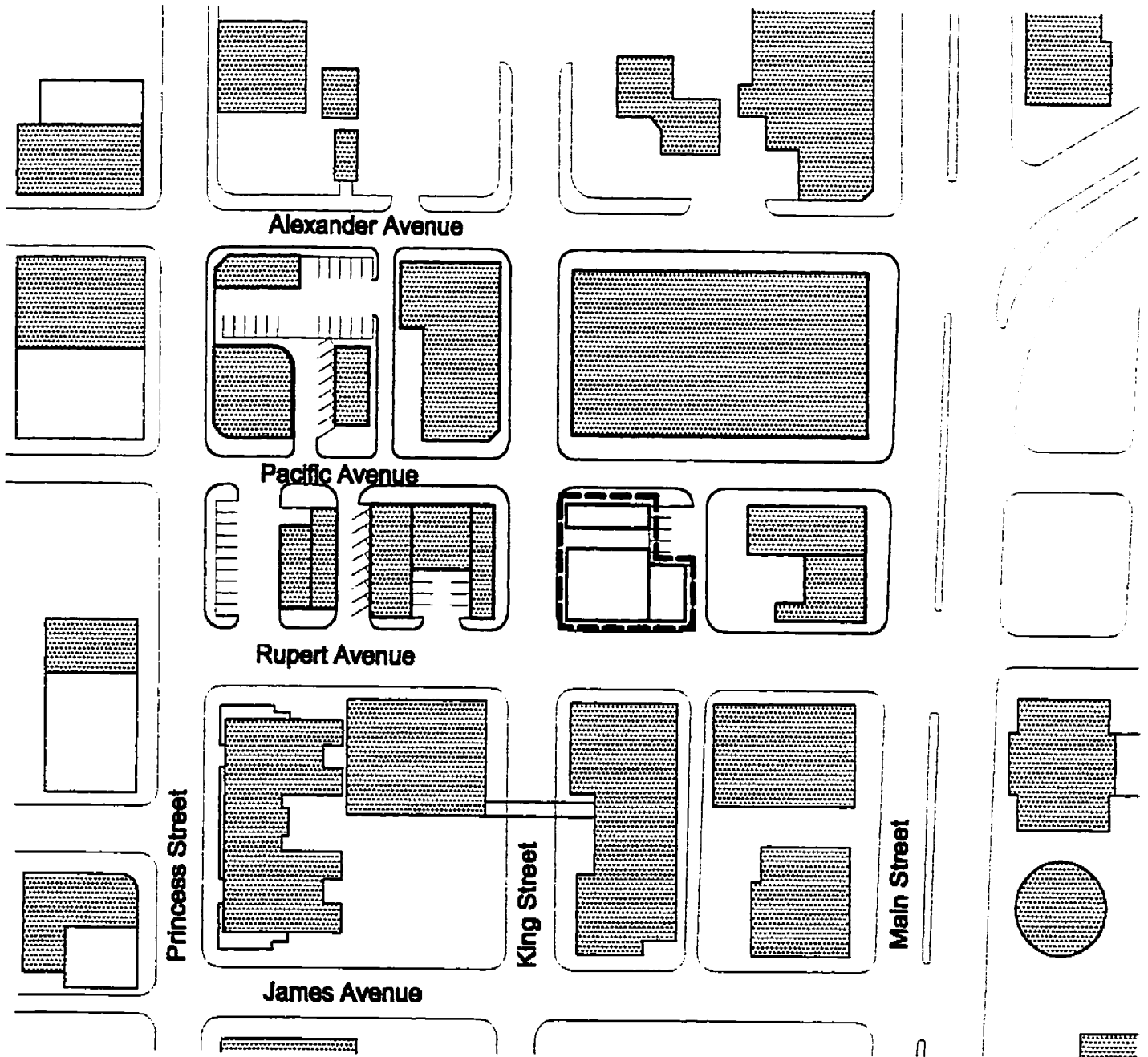


Figure 48

**Condition of Buildings**

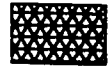
Source: Chinatown Development Corporation



Good



Satisfactory



Poor

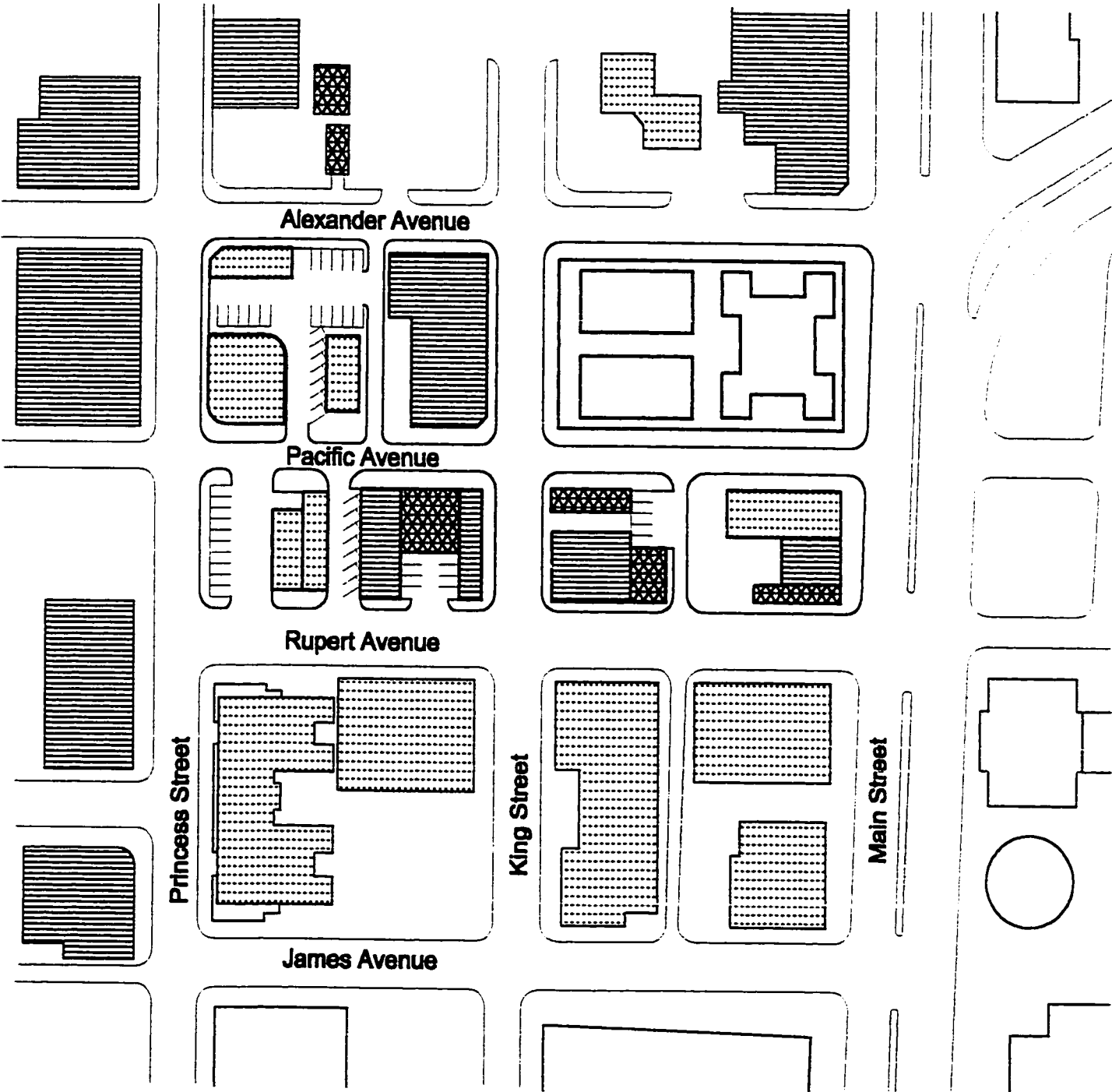


Figure 49



**Blank Walls**

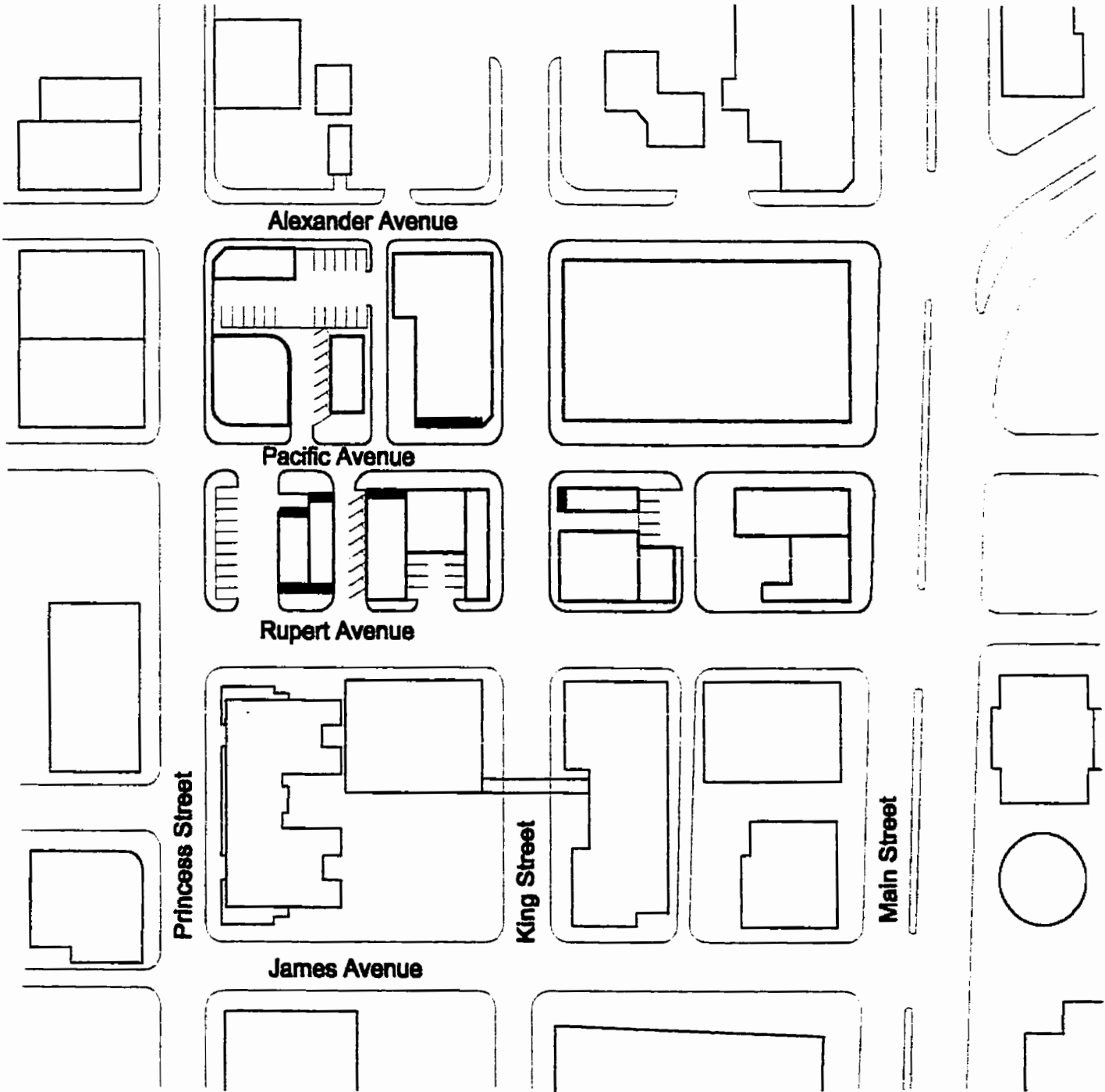


Figure 50

# Existing Street Furniture

Oriental Light Fixtures ○

Oriental Phone Booths ☒

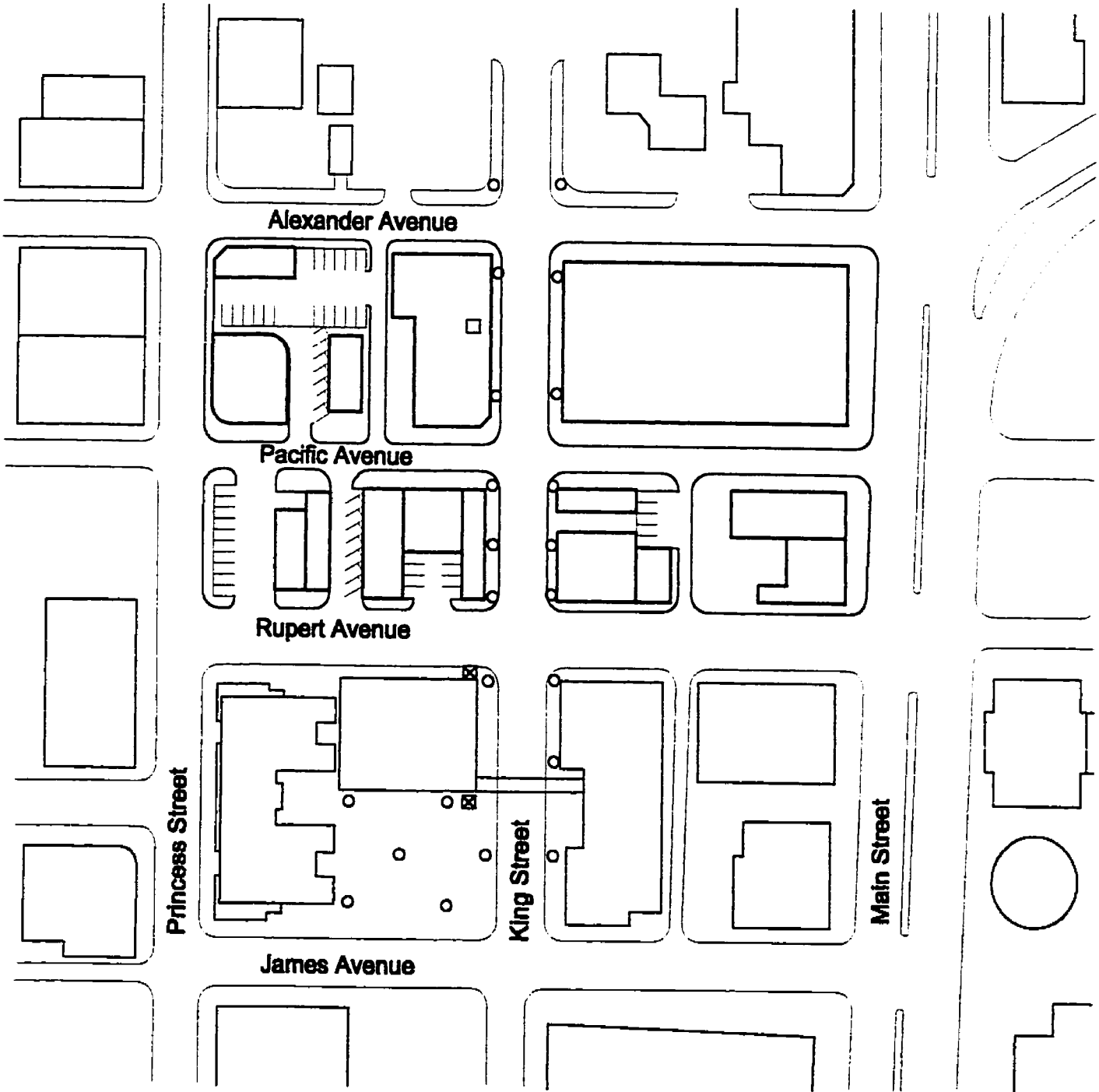


Figure 51

### 6.4.1.3 Needs

#### Social Facilities

1. Tea House (Tea and Snacks; Old Chinese Associations)
2. Residential Open Space
3. Outdoor Restaurants and Seating Areas

#### Commercial Facilities

4. Books Store
5. Clothing Store
6. Grocery Store
7. Convenient Store
8. Arts & Crafts Shop
9. Video Shop
10. Tailor Shop
11. Barber Shop
12. Café
13. Bar & Snacks
14. Expansion of the Dim Sun Restaurant and Gift Shop

#### Housing

15. Small-scale Residential/Commercial Project (for new employees in the design area)

#### Street Furniture

16. Paving, Pedestrian Lighting, Banners and Planting Beds, and Chinese Heritage Character Signs

### 6.4.2 Relationship of Three Components

Chinatown mainly consists of three components: a commercial component, a residential component and a social component. In Chinatown, some commercial facilities accommodate not only for shopping and dining, but also socialization. Mixed-use developments and street level commercial use, with residential use on the upper floors,

are common. The social component includes the commercial streets, outdoor restaurants and open space adjacent to the residential components (Figure 52).

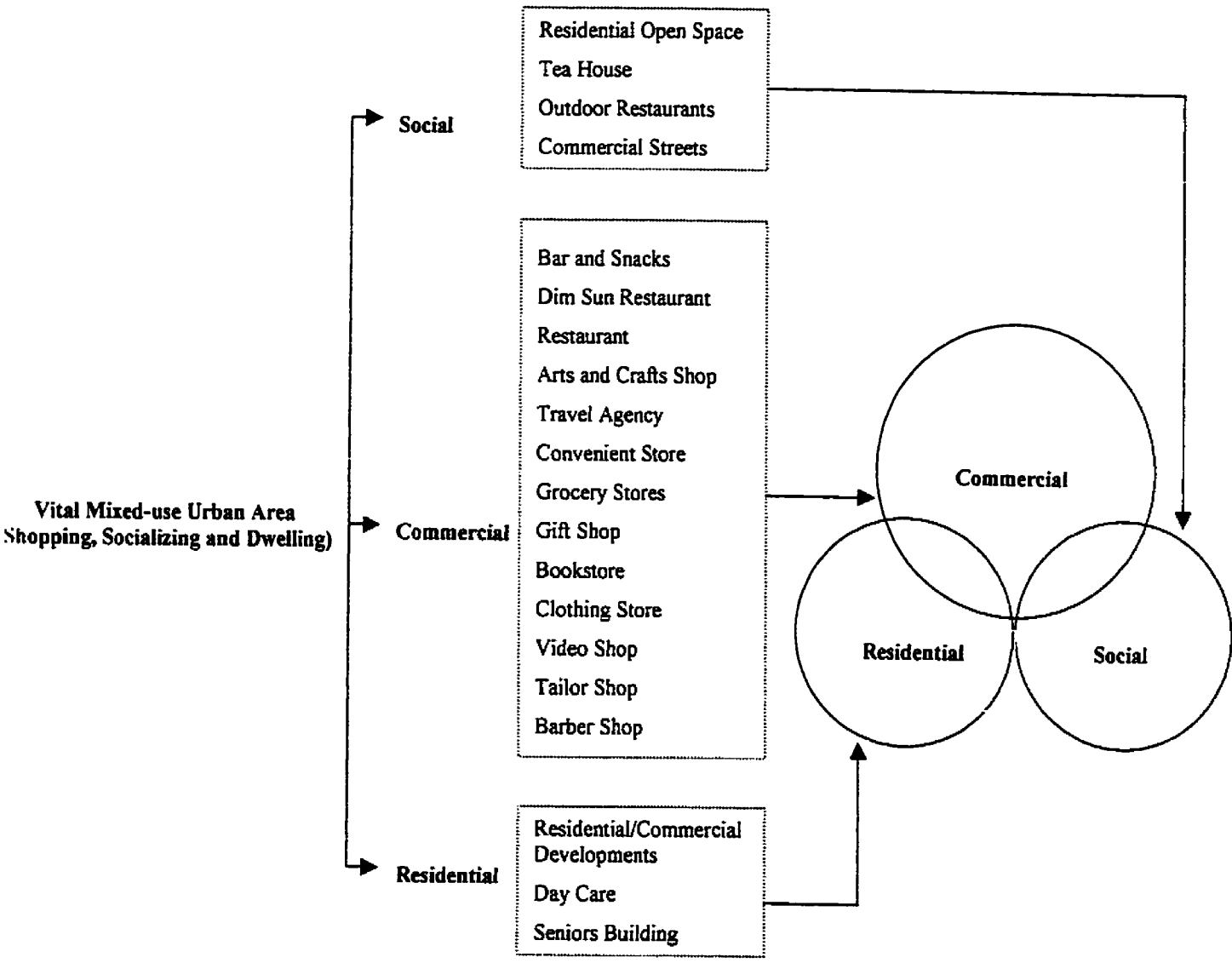


Figure 52

### 6.4.3 Demonstration Plan

In the plan (Figure 53), the basic access and use functions which have generated the Demonstration Plan are summarized. The emphasis has been on the reinforcement of the commercial and social facilities and pedestrian activities in the two blocks bounded by Main and Princess Streets and Rupert and Pacific Avenues. This area provides a focal cluster space which can become the new commercial and social heart of Chinatown.

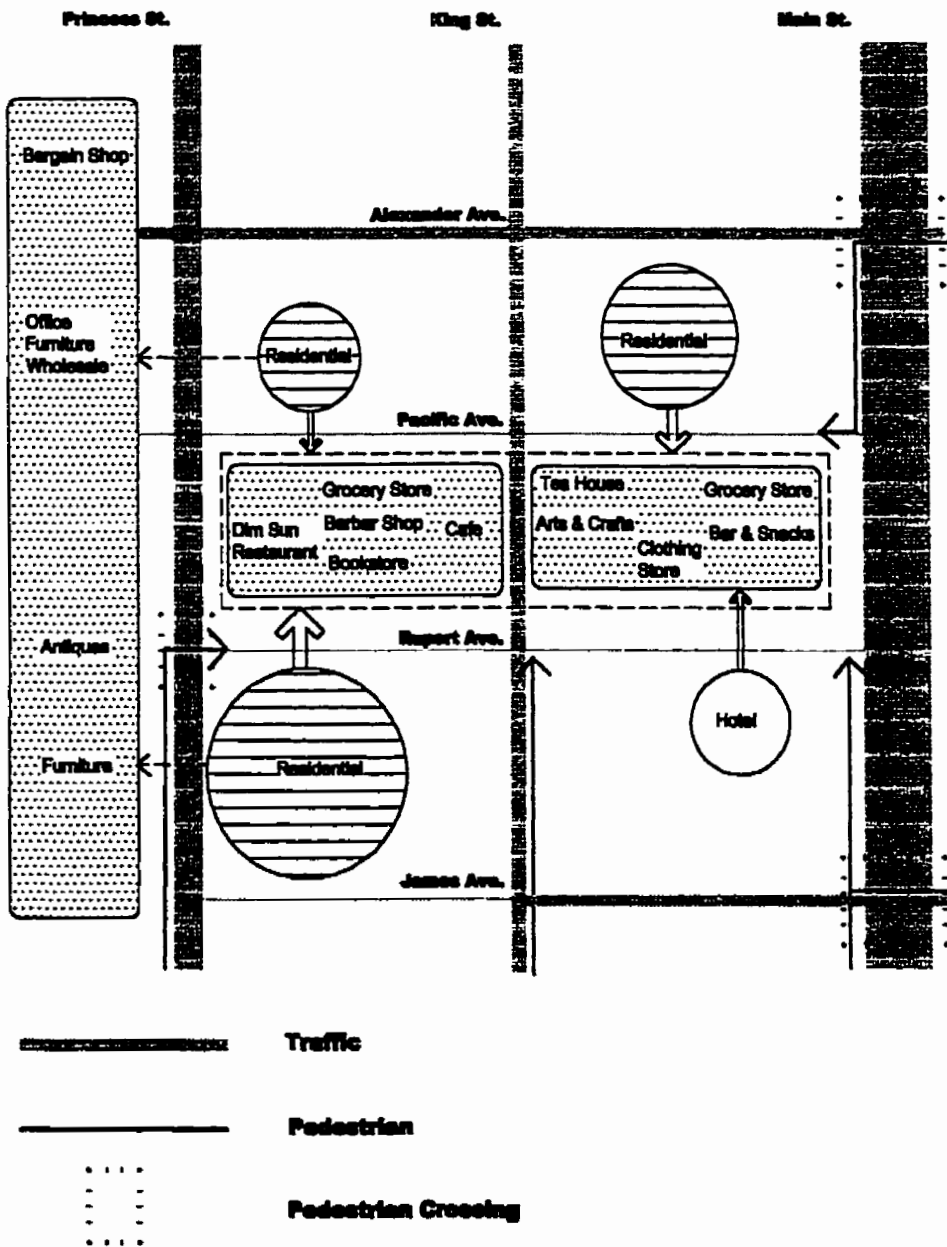


Figure 53

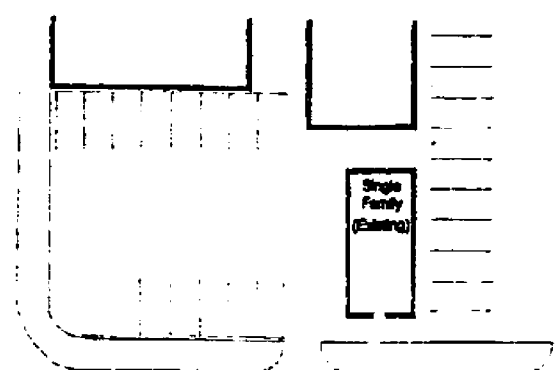
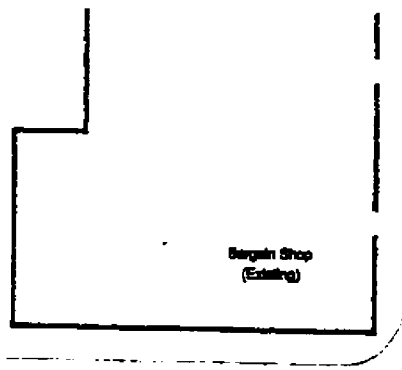
In the Demonstration Plan (Figure 54), the planning and design principles set out in Section 5 have been followed. Infill developments repair and strengthen the urban fabric by eliminating gaps created by vacant lots and surface parking. Along Pacific and Rupert Avenues, continuous frontage has been established. Public spaces are small and intimate in scale, providing a strong sense of enclosure (Figure 55, 56). Building facades and street furniture reflect the Chinese heritage character.

The shopping streets, Rupert and Pacific Avenues, offer much more than simply retailing. They exude the life of Chinatown with visible and tangible signs of vitality. These shopping streets are intensively fronted with experiences associated with a lively street: restaurants, stores, teahouse, arts and gifts shops, bars, outdoor sitting areas, sidewalk sales and a myriad of other activities. They attract and retain people at all hours (Figure 57, 58).

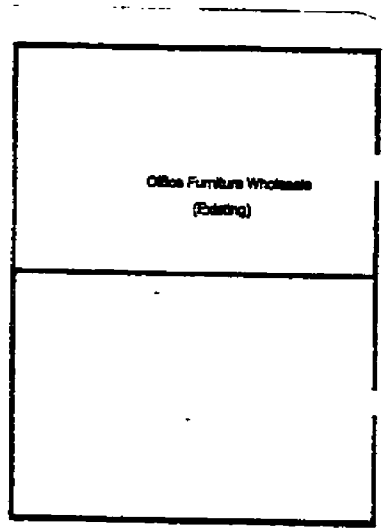
## **6.5 Conclusions**

In undertaking this study, five steps were identified: literature review, site inventory and analysis, identification of development opportunities, establishment of planning and design principles, and the preliminary design of a sub-district of the study area. This final section is intended to demonstrate how the planning and design principles might be implemented. Based on this approach, it has been possible to arrive at a vision of Winnipeg's Chinatown which respects traditional Chinese cultural values while accepting the contemporary western built environment. With the support of the Chinese

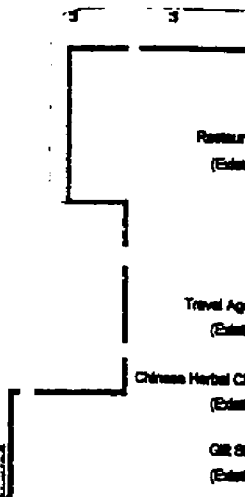
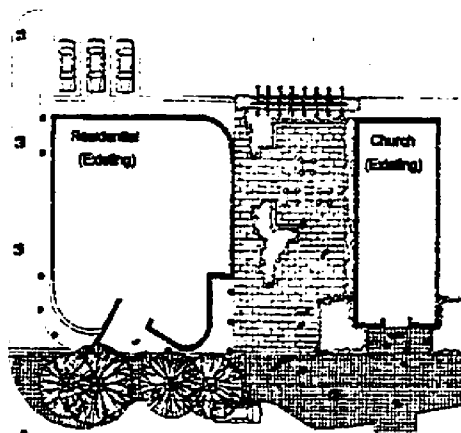
Development Corporation and the City of Winnipeg, such a vision can become reality in the not too distant future!



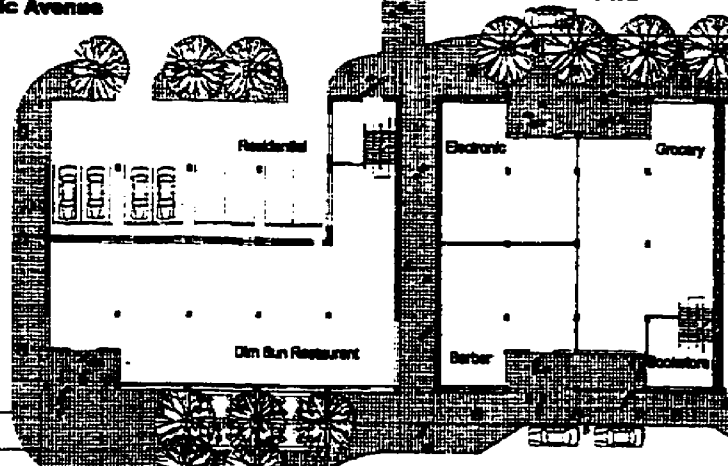
Alexander Avenue



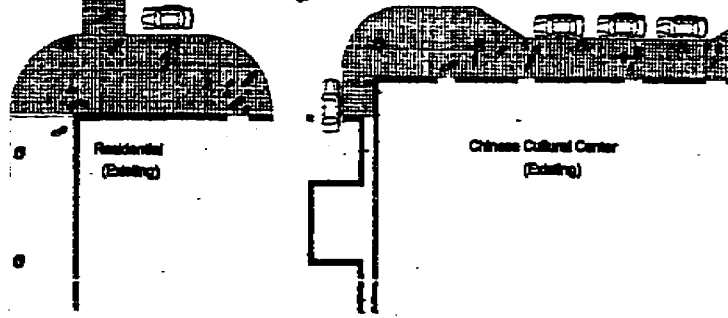
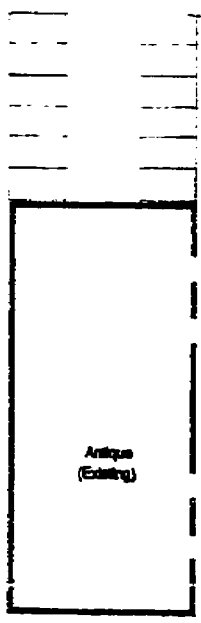
Princess Street



Pacific Avenue



Rupert Avenue







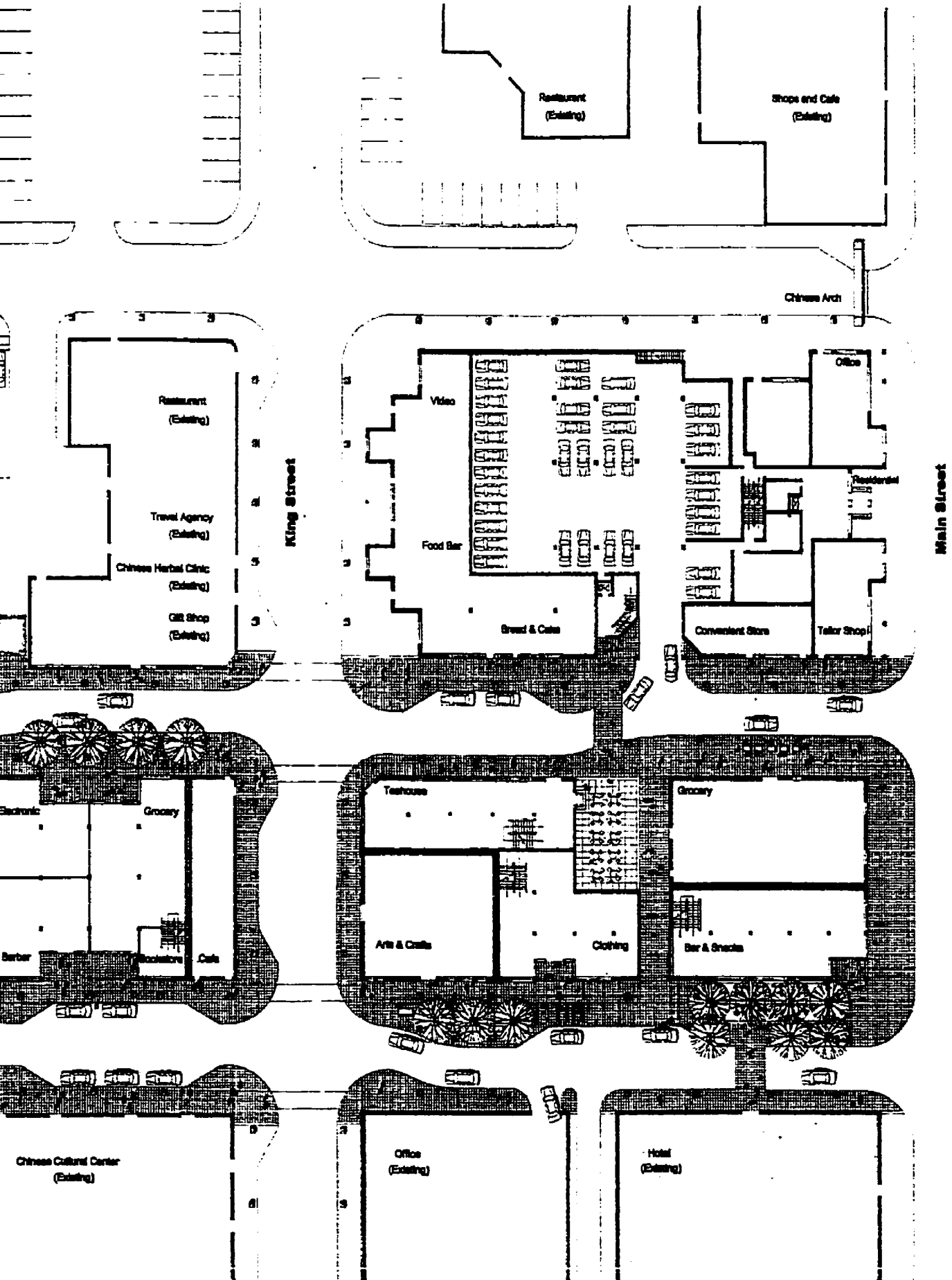
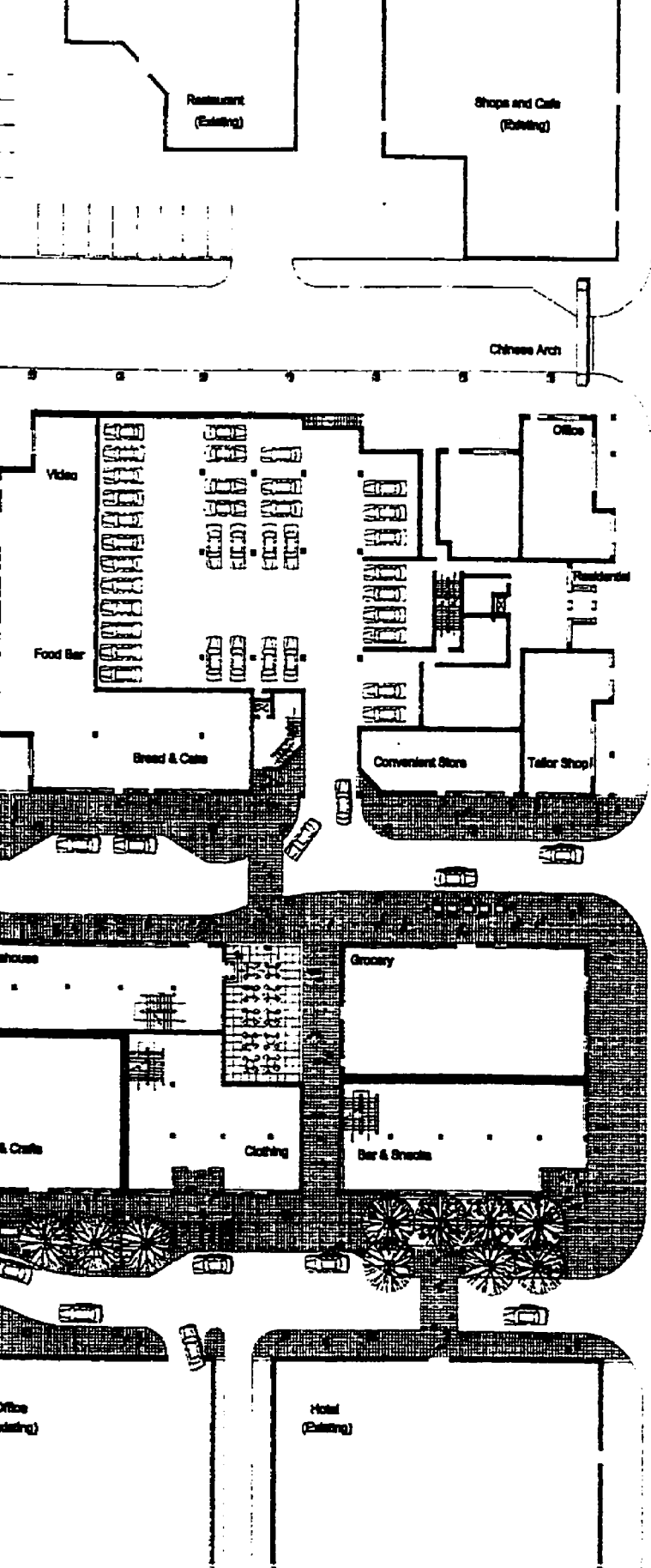
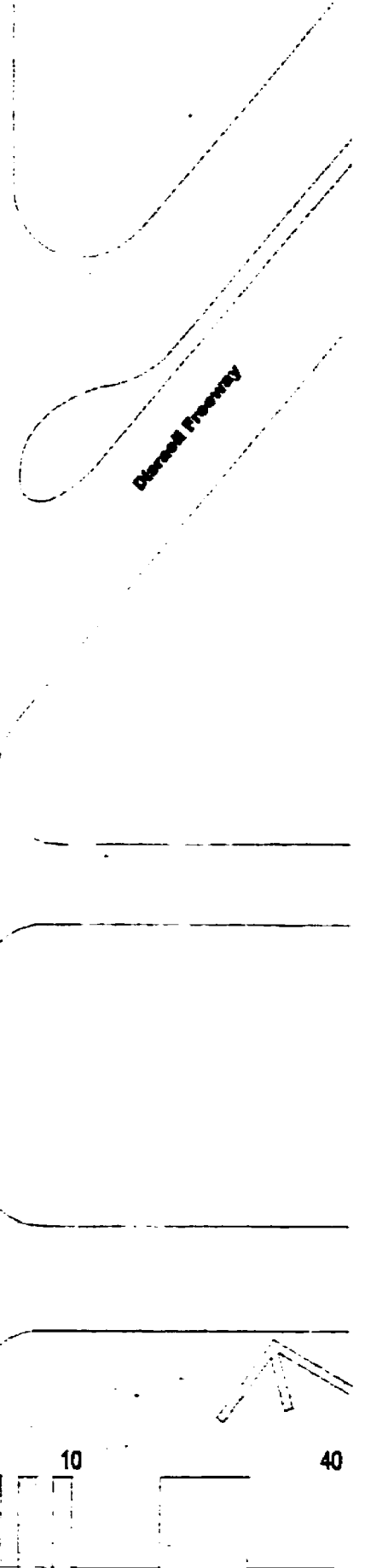


Figure 54

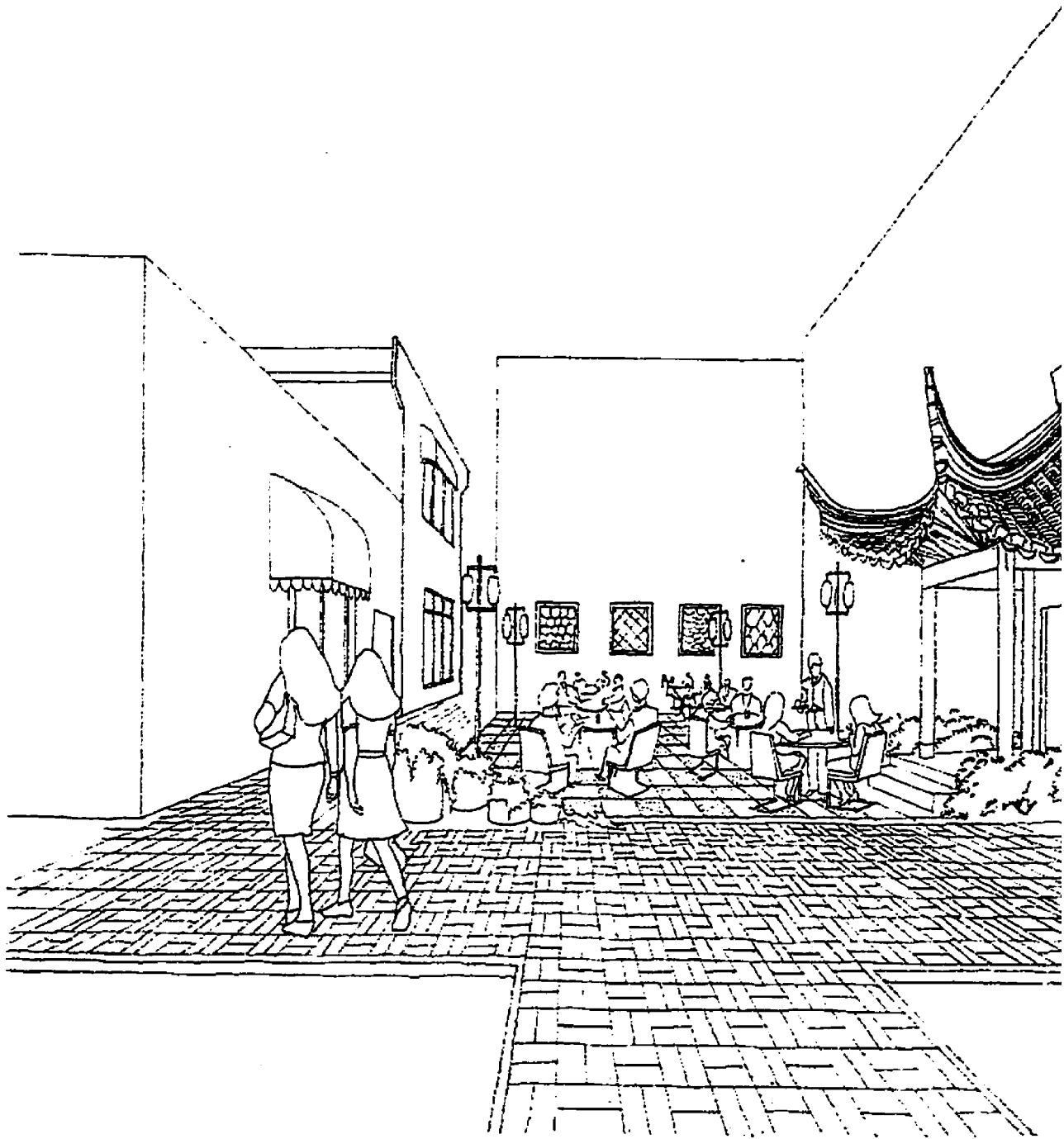




Main Street



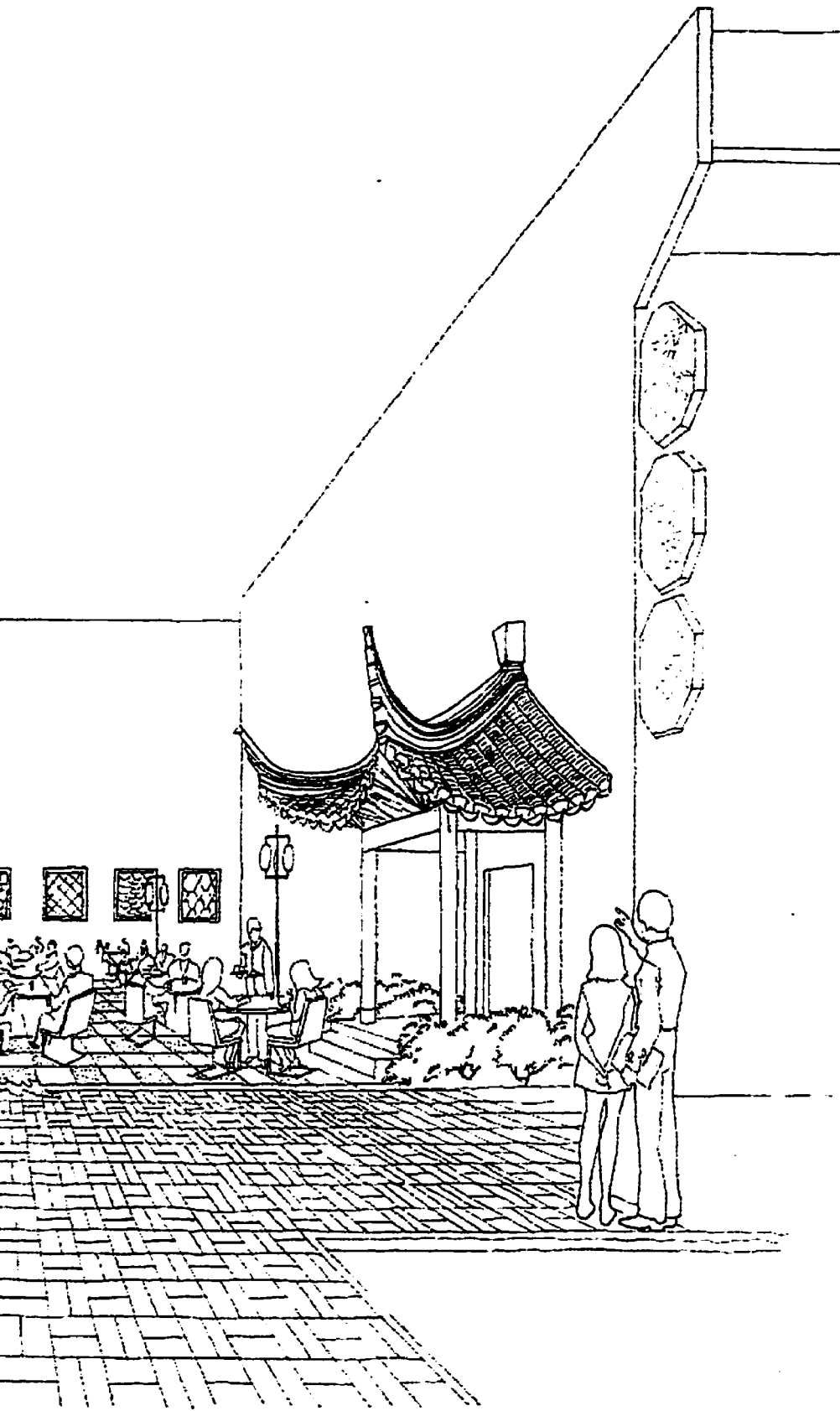




Teahouse Outdoor Room

Figure 55



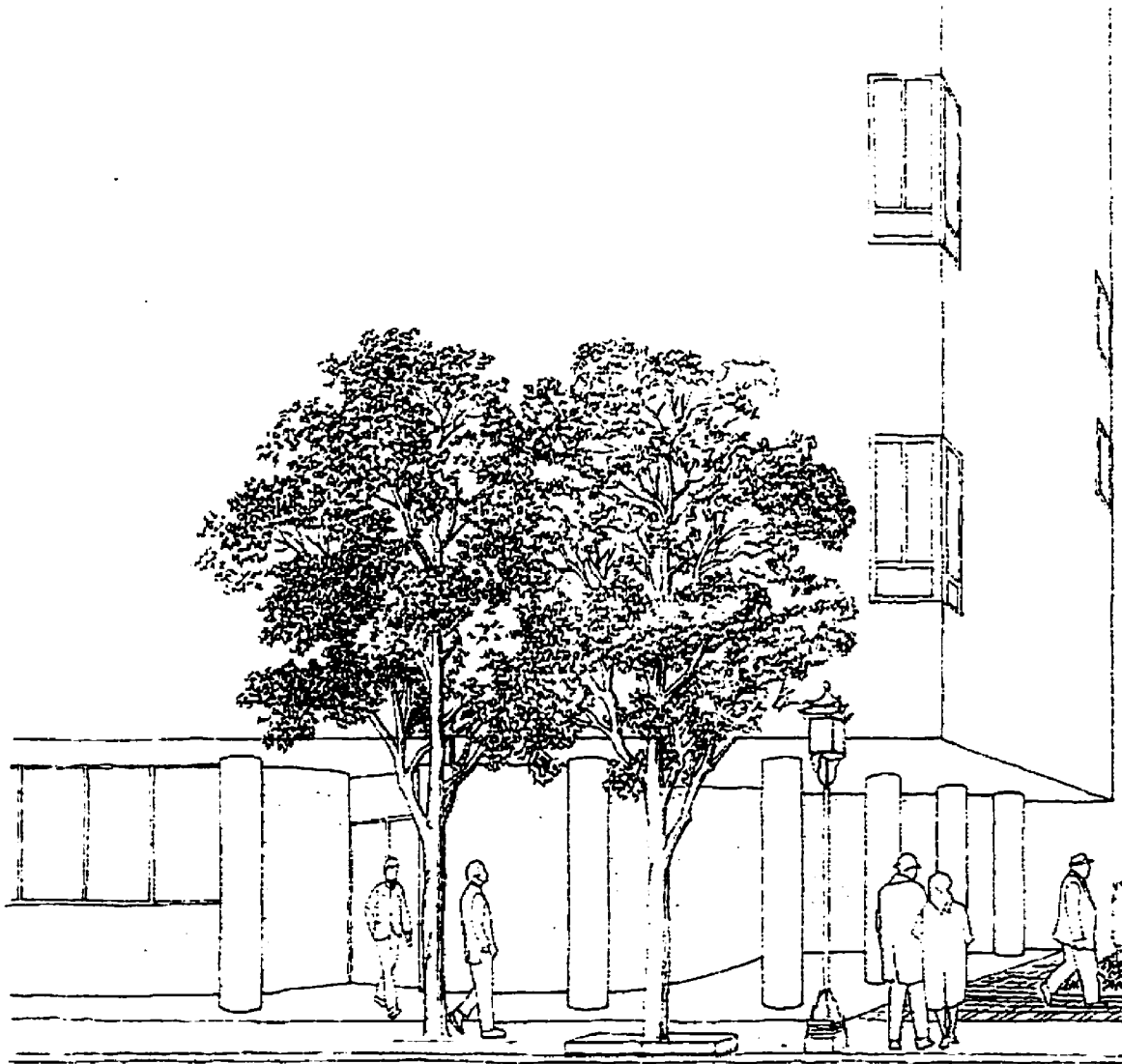


Teahouse Outdoor Room

Figure 55

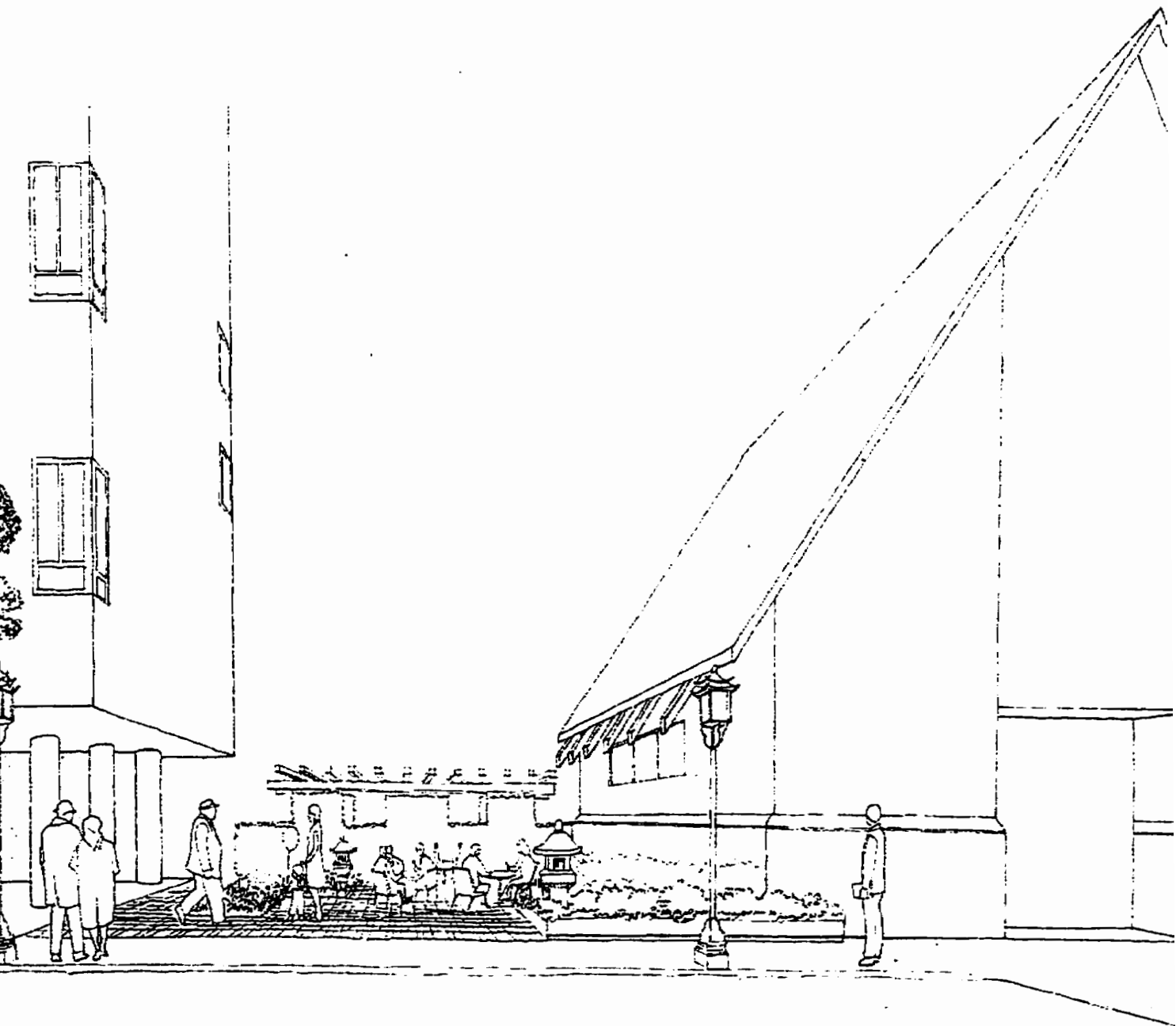






Residential Op

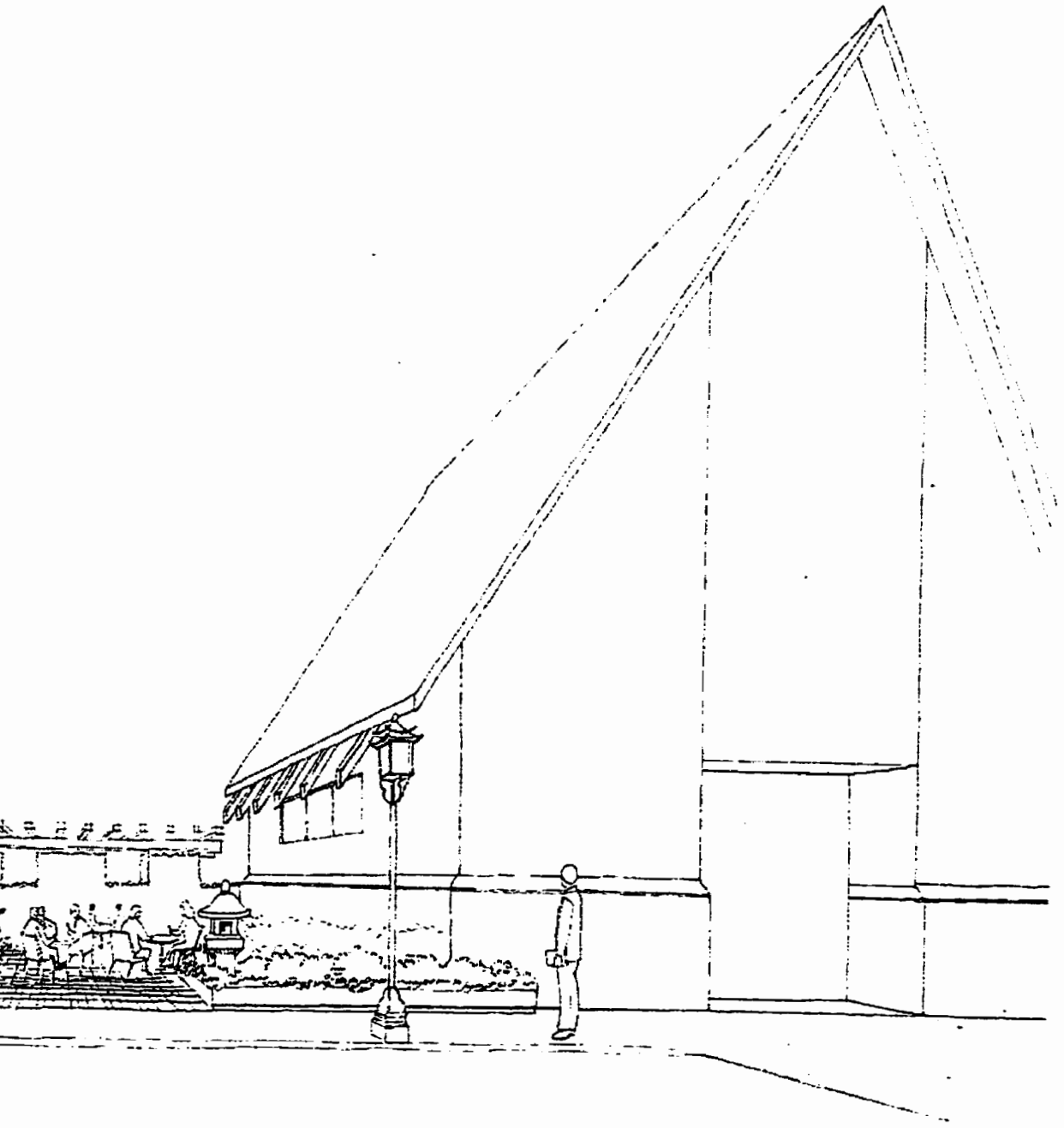




**Residential Open Space on Pacific Avenue**

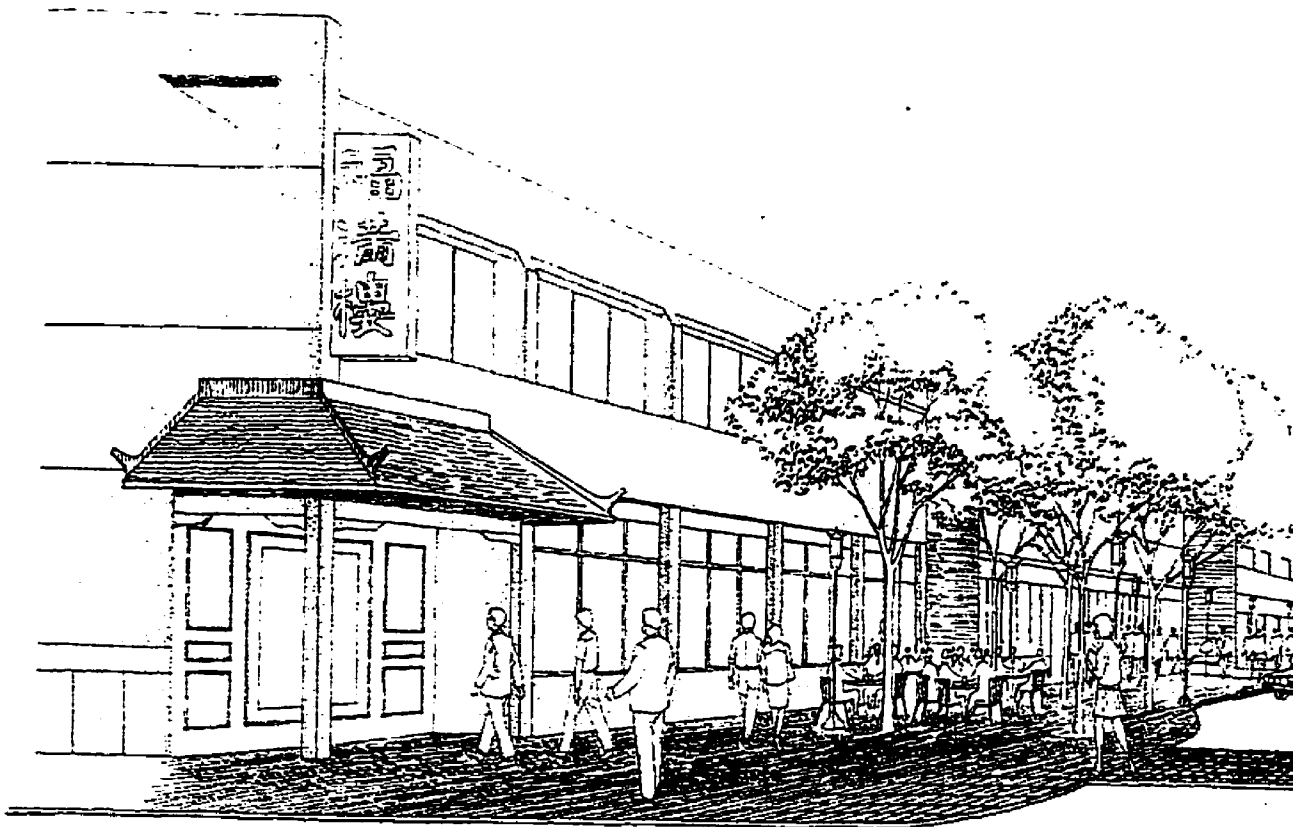
**Figure 56**





n Pacific Avenue

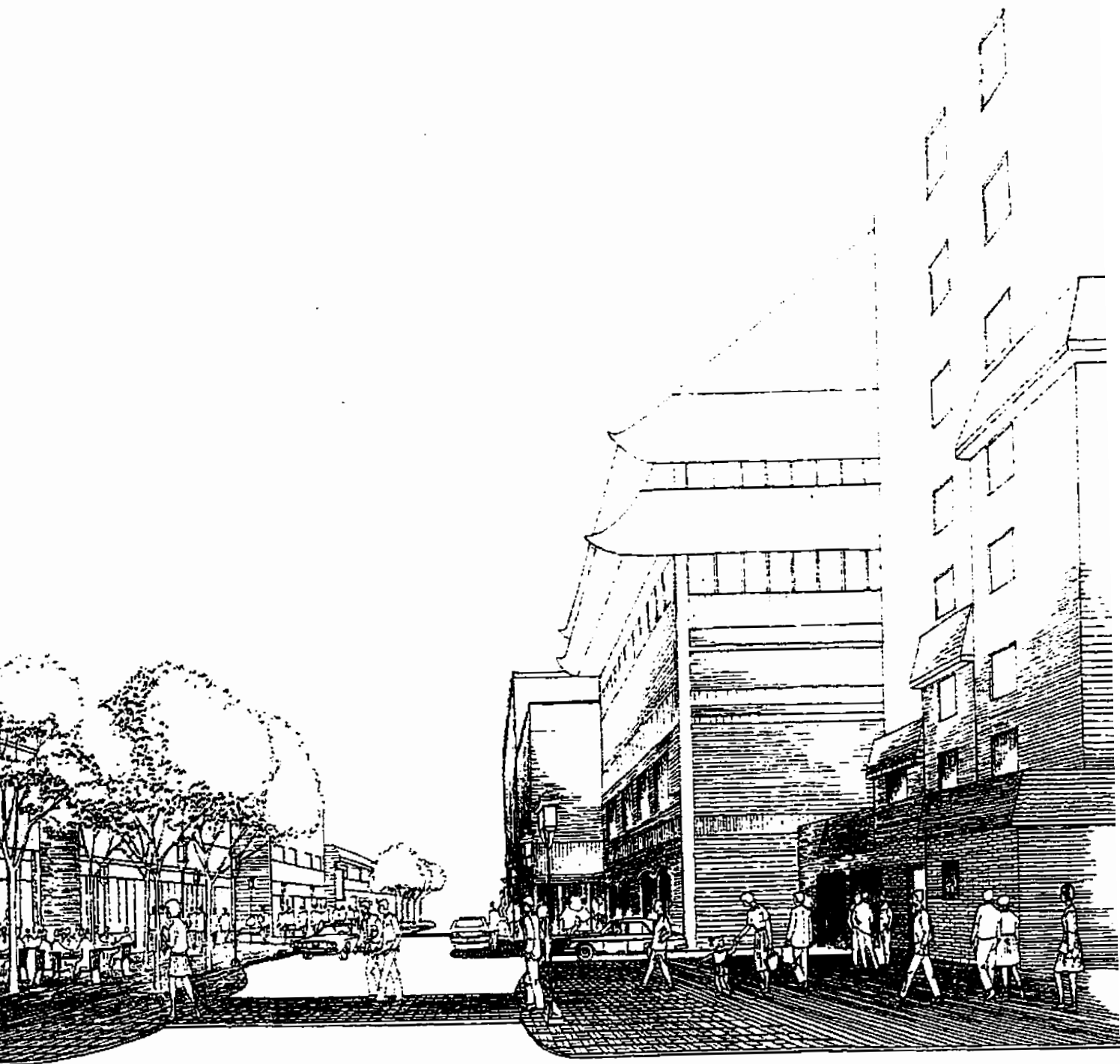




Perspective of Ru







**Perspective of Rupert Avenue Looking East**

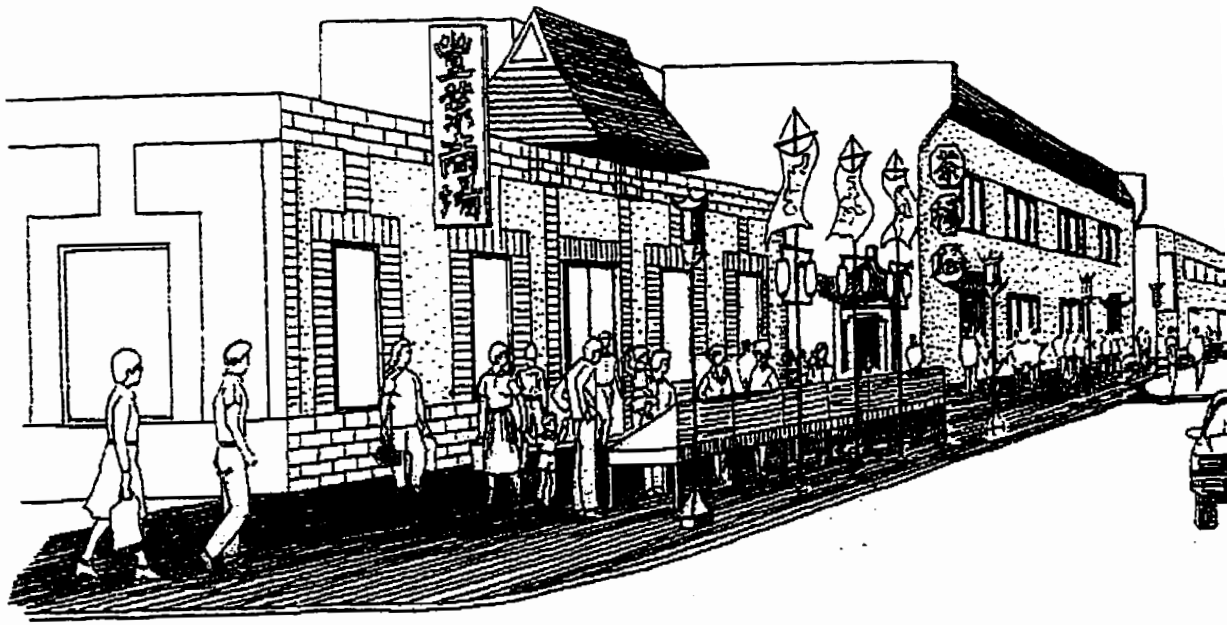
**Figure 57**





Avenue Looking East

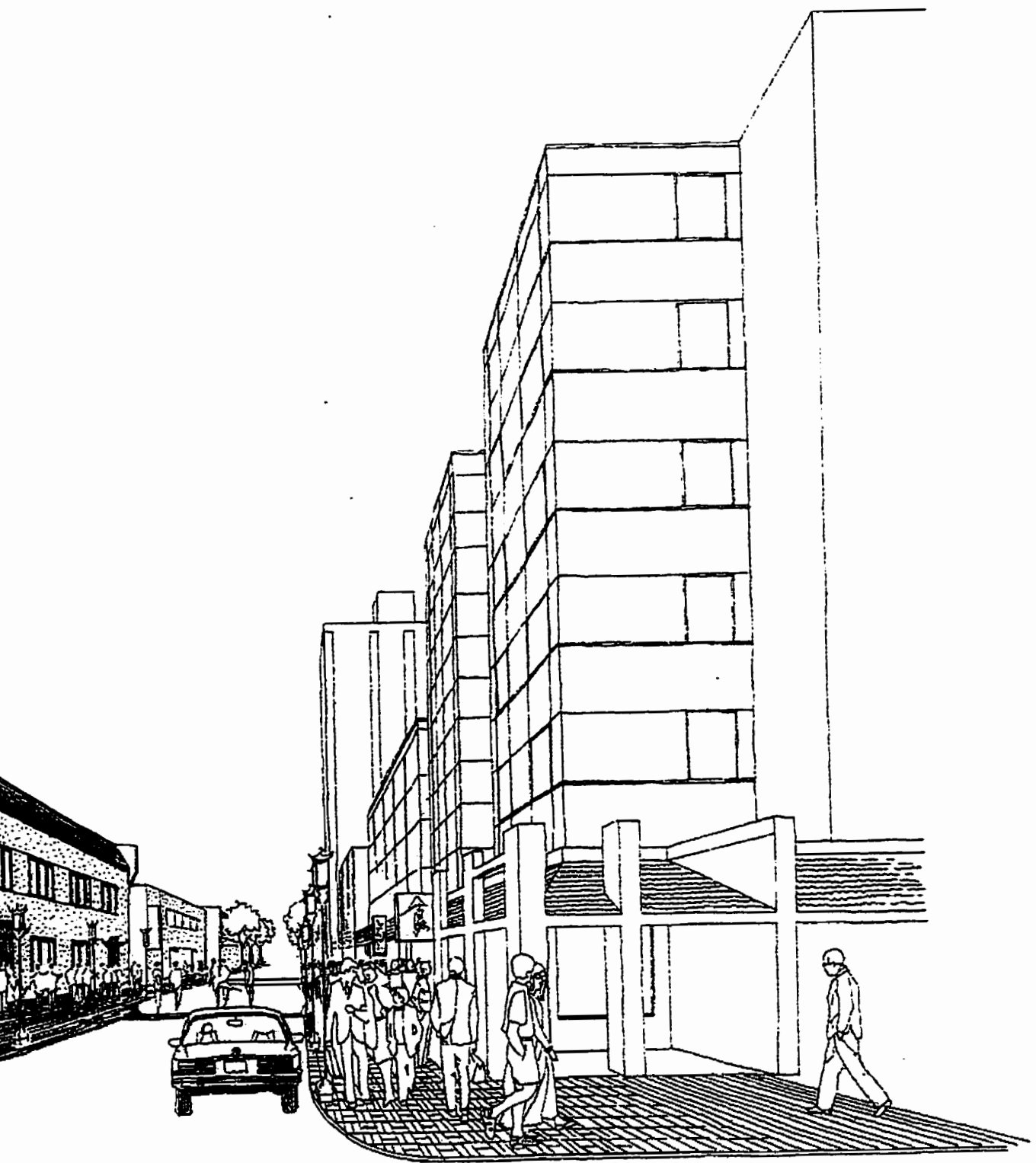




Perspective of Pacific Avenue

Figure 58



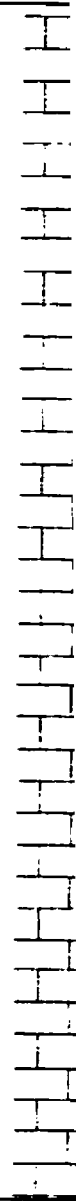
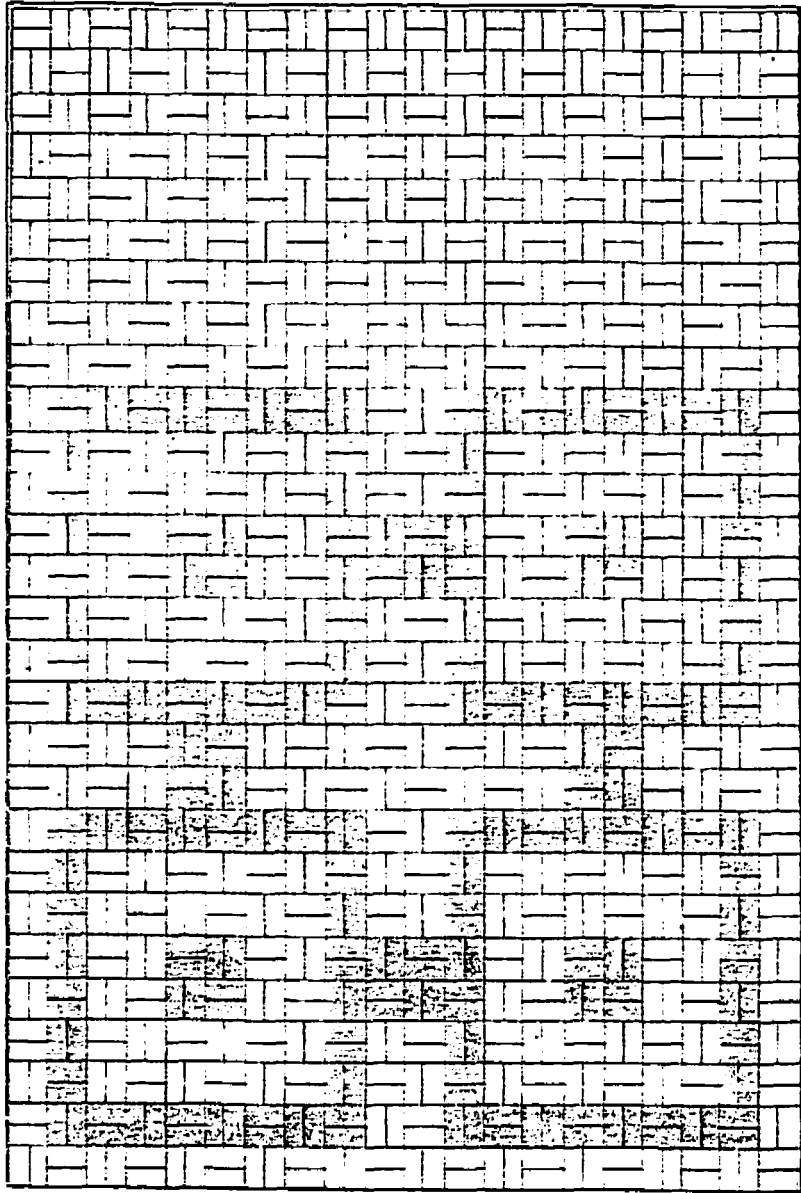


View of Pacific Avenue Looking West

Figure 58

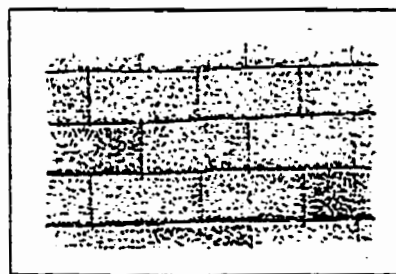
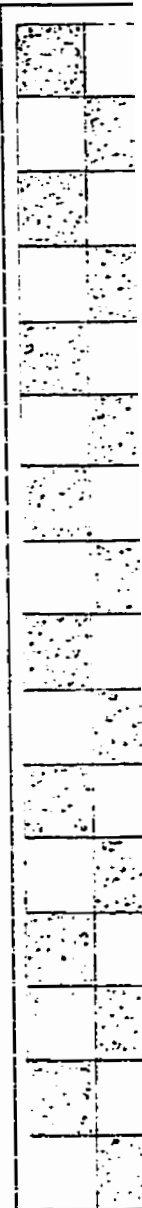
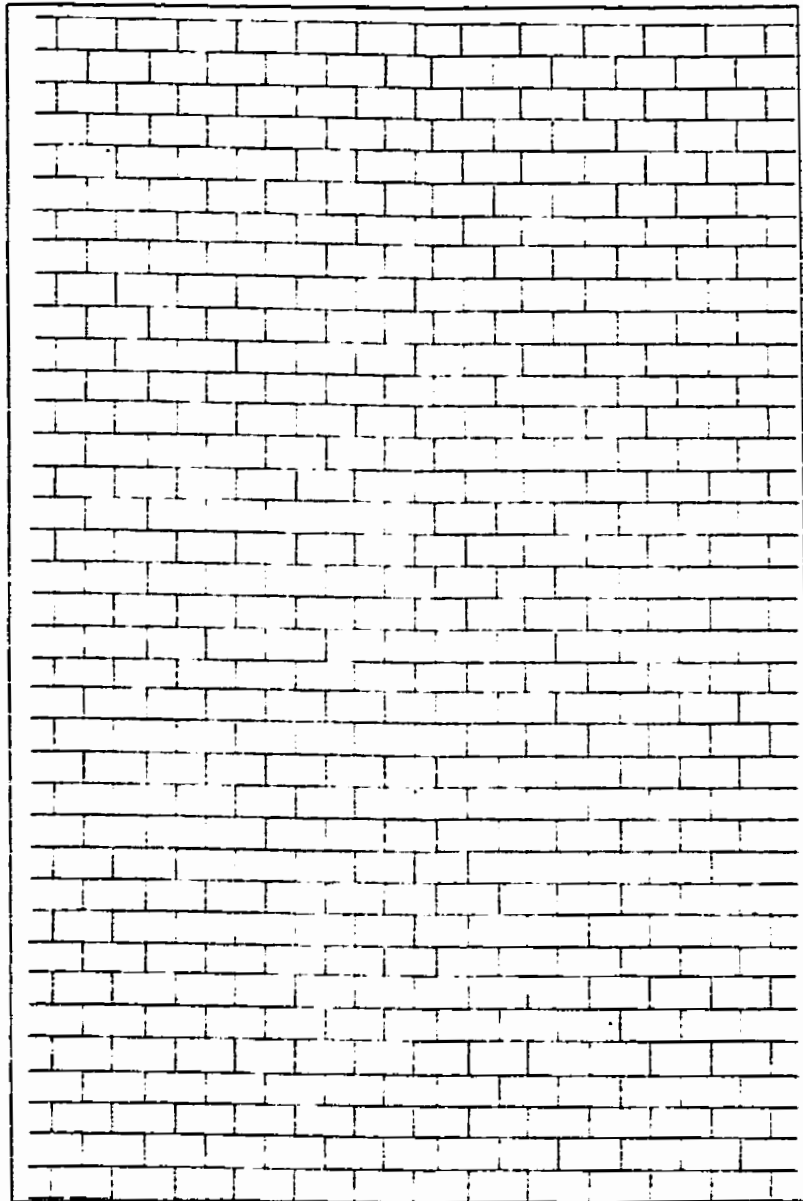
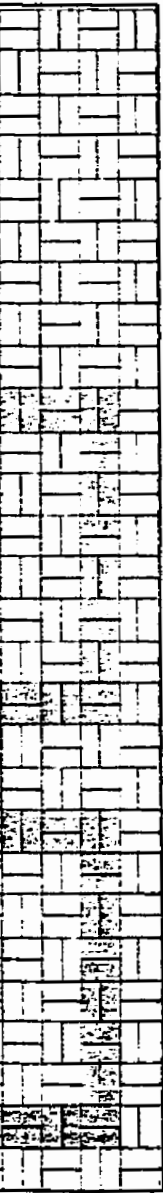






**Street Paving: Brick**

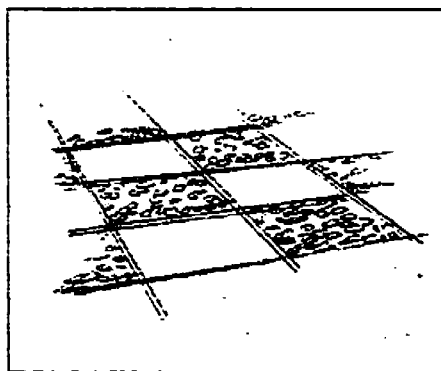
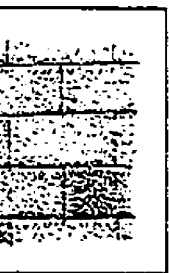
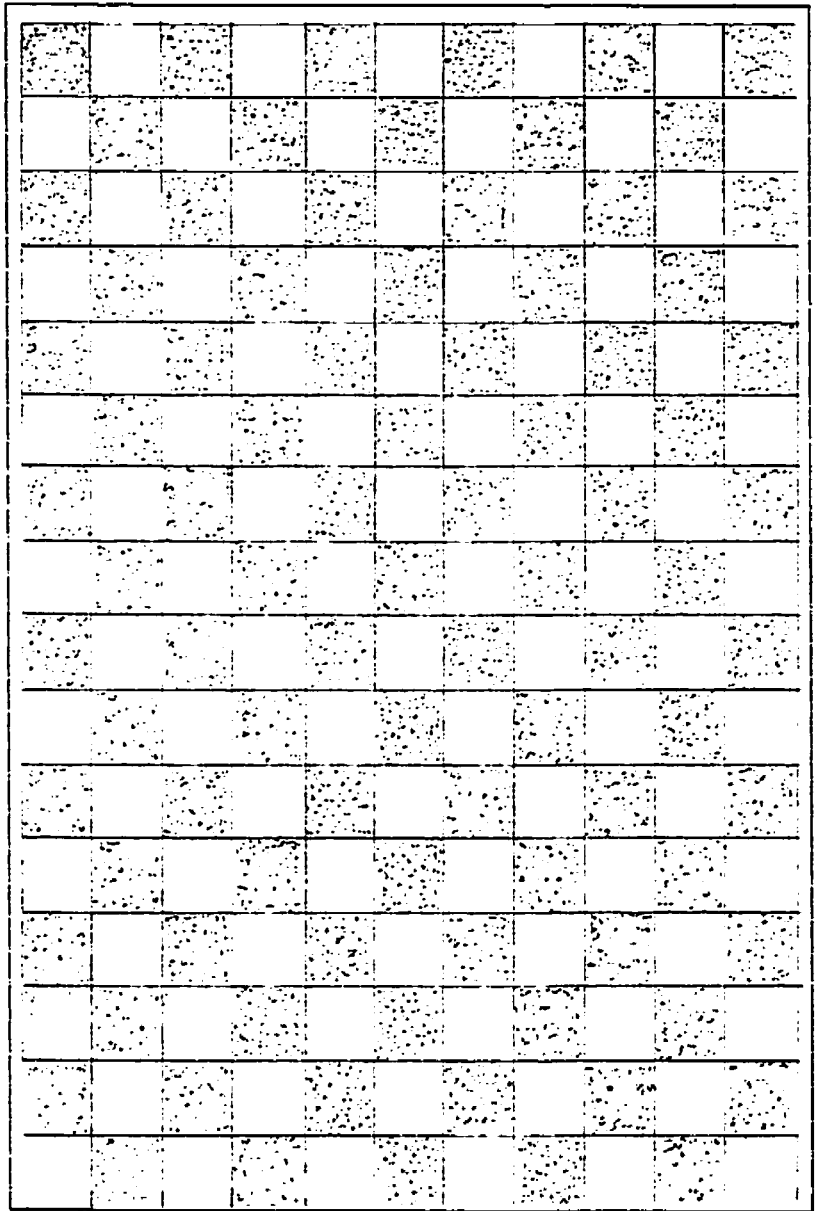
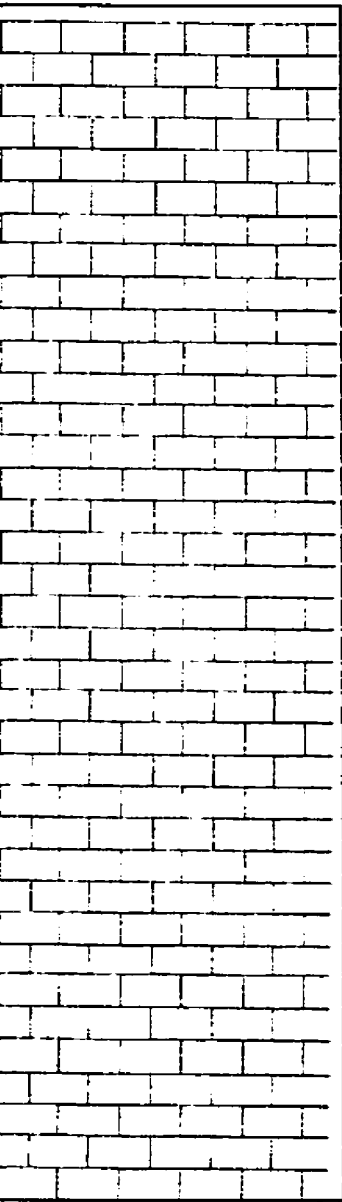




Residential Open Space Paving: Stone 6"X12"

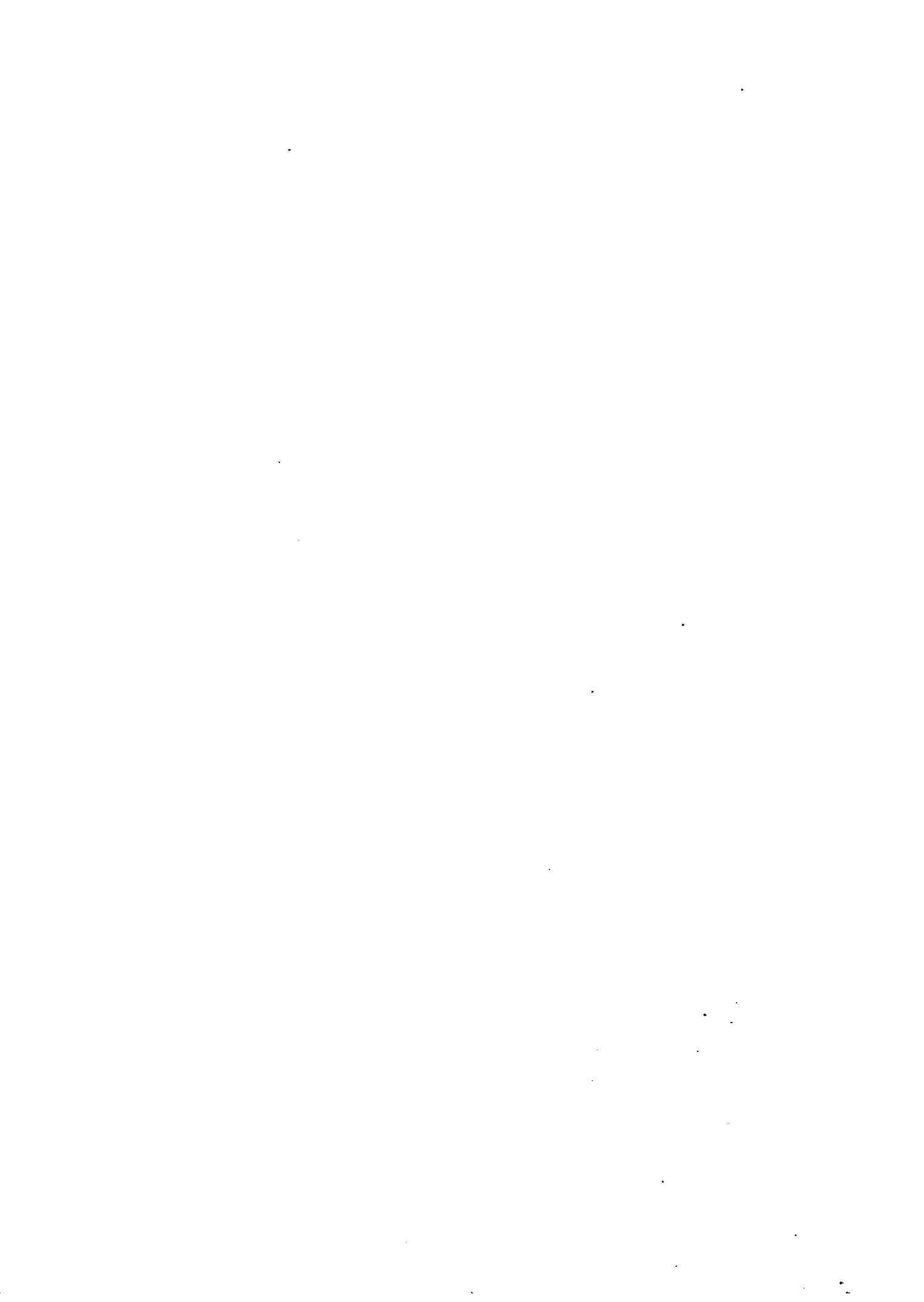
Figure 59





**Paving: Stone 6"X12"**

**Teahouse Outdoor Room Paving:  
Riverstone and Granite 14"X14"**



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