

From Invisible to Visible:

Creating a Model of Alley Revitalization by Studying Canton Alley in Seattle Chinatown- International District

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Abstract

Alleys are often ignored and unwelcoming spaces to most people. Despite this perception, many alleys have great potential as public spaces and pedestrian connections. The Chinatown Historic Alley Partnership (CHAP) is a project that aims to revitalize the Canton Alley in Seattle's Chinatown-International District (CID). A Schematic Design Report has been recently created that details the physical improvements required to revitalize the alley. However, no schematic has been created for what I call the "invisible changes" that are needed to transform the space from an attractive alley into a vibrant public space. In order to fill this need, my senior project identifies and records the history of the alley and its buildings as cultural and social spaces. By understanding the activities that have taken place in the alley over many generations, I am able to recommend new uses for Canton alley that are historically and culturally appropriate. Moreover, by comparing the revitalization of Canton Alley to other alley revitalization projects in the US, I am able to create a model of general alley revitalization process of transforming these unwanted spaces into useful and lively public spaces.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Alley & Alley Revitalization

An alley is defined as a “public highway not designed for general travel” and “used primarily as a means of access to the rear of residences and business establishments.” (RCW 46.04.020) One common public perception of alley is an unwelcome space that rough or unpaved road and big dumpsters that smell bad. (Pickford, 2010) The poor physical condition, high boundedness and low prospect created by walls of buildings on both side give people feelings of fear and discomfort as a walking environment. Together with bad reputation of high crime rate, the alley has become an unwelcome space as stereotype since long time ago. Alley revitalization is a process of changing this stereotype, by redefining the physical environment as well as the psychological identity of the alley. The great potential for increasing human encounters and community gatherings in this space enables the alley to become an additional public realm of the city. The major tools of alley revitalization are physical improvement and community activities.

In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs argues that the physical environment can have big influences on people’s perceptions of crime and its prevention. The busy and clean street, clear division of private and public space, diversity of use and high level of pedestrian activity can make people feel safer when walking. (Jacobs, 1961) As a public space, planning and policy are critical to improve the physical condition, such as removing dumpsters from the alleys and maintaining clean alleys through governmental regulation. In order to revitalize alleys and

bringing back the public activities on the street, it is important to keep the alleys clean and clear, as well as creating a better division of private and public through urban design in order to allow a better use of alleys for both building residences and passengers.

In addition to the improvement of urban spaces through urban planning and design, community activities, such as art exhibition, music festival and night market are also necessary for drawing people's attention to changes of the alleys, making them realize the potential of alley space and triggering public to get involved in this revitalization process. The ongoing public activities are essential to keep the alley alive and meaningful, which is the eventual goal of alley revitalization.

Alley Revitalization in Seattle

There are 217,500 square feet of alleys in Seattle, and 85% of them are underused. If we could revitalize and activate the alley spaces, we could increase public space by up to 50%. (Fiako and Hampton, 2012) The major effort that is greatly contributing to alley revitalization in Seattle is the Clear Alley Program (CAP), led by City of Seattle. In partnership with local waste collection companies, CAP aims to create a cleaner, safer business district by removing big dumpsters from the alleys. Big dumpsters are removed from the alleys and method of individual household garbage collection is replaced instead in many neighborhoods. By increasing the attractiveness for pedestrian use and allowing better alley access for business services, the desired result is to reduce illegal activities and the increase the potential to expand commercial activities. (City of Seattle, 2009) When it was launched in 2009, the program covered Belltown, Downtown and Pioneer Square



Figure 1: Map showing CAP area. Yellow area collected by CleanSpaces; Purple area collected by WasteManagement.
Seattle Public Utilities, 2009

neighborhood. In April 2013, the International District CAP program was added and implemented to the overall scope. The Pioneer Square neighborhood projects, Nord Alley, the Alley Network Project and the Alley Art Project, have all played a significant leading role in generating alley revitalization movement in other neighborhoods such as Chinatown-International District and University District.

Canton Alley Revitalization

Choosing Canton Alley as the case study site for creating my model is due to its complex historical background and the inspiring meaning of alley revitalization to the neighborhood revitalization. Canton Alley is one of the only two alleys that have names in the neighborhood. Located between the East and West Kong Yick buildings, it used to be the most busy and prosperous place with restaurants, hotels, groceries, contractor office and communication station in the center of Chinatown area. Near by the Chong Wa Benevolent Association building, Canton Alley used to be the most popular place for kids to play after their Chinese language school. However, since 1970s the neighborhood greatly suffered from loss of residents and

deterioration, the Kong Yick buildings has also inevitably lost its renters dramatically became almost vacant for a long time. The moving-in of Wing Luke Asian Museum in 2008 to the East Kong Yick building has brought a favorable turn to the alley.

Offering of Chinatown Discovery Tours and exhibiting apartment no. 6 on Canton Alley has allowed more the public to know about the history of both the buildings and the alley. Jamfest, the non-profit summer monthly music festival holding by the museum, has also bring big groups from both local residents and other neighborhoods to the alley and showing the great potential of the alley spaces for community gathering activities and commercial storefront using.

Chinatown Historic Alley Partnership (CHAP), founded by Seattle Chinatown-International District Preservation and Development Authorities (SCIDpda), is in charge of the Canton Alley revitalization movement. The first neighborhood art walk in Canton Alley was in 2009. Storefronts were repainted during Spring Clean of that year. In 2011, the program got \$93,800 match grant from Neighborhood of Seattle for alley renovation and event planning. A schematic design report for physical improvement in Canton and Maynard alley has been produced in July 2012 followed by three big alley events with Jamfest and a series of other activities in local community. While more events and outreach are happening, more and more people know about this project and get interested and became more active in the alley revitalization events. In addition, making CID as one of the implementation neighborhoods in 2013, CAP has greatly push the efforts of creating a clean and dumpster free environment in Canton Alley. Under this great time and opportunity of changing, to revitalize the Canton Alley means more than just reactivating a space. It

would be a starting point to recall the memory and pride of glory among local residents and reactivate the entire neighborhood.

Goal of Creating Model

The goal of creating a model for alley revitalization is to allow public to have an easier and faster way to learn about alley revitalization through straightforward illustration and short word interpretation. The model defines alley revitalization as a successive process that requires multiple phases and encourages public involvement in this process.

There are two existing publications closely related to Canton Alley revitalization. One is the *Canton Alley and Maynard Alley Historic Alleys in Seattle's Chinatown: Schematic Design Report* issued by SCIDpda in July 2012, which is created specifically for Canton and Maynard alley based on their history and local condition, covering design of lighting, paving, signage, landscape, gateway, opening, and potential future activities. The other one is the *Seattle Integrated Alley Handbook: Activating Alleys for a Lively City* issued by University of Washington. It is a handbook preparing for the public who want to revitalize their alleys. It explains what is alley revitalization, analyzing existing alleys' condition in Seattle, categorizing the types of alleys and making recommendations on potential changes to the alleys. Both of them are non-professional friendly publications. They are similarly design-oriented, emphasizing more on the physical improvements of alleys.

In this project, I want to fill the gap of these existing reports, emphasizing on the continuity of alley revitalization by creating an easily understanding model illustration for the public. The most important information I want to pass on to the

public is alley revitalization is a continuous process with public engagement instead of one step of physical improvement. Not being spectators, public should rethink about alleys and realize their important role as leading actors, instead of the government or NGOs, in this process of alley revitalization. The visualized model should be the fastest way of showing people the procedure of alley revitalization and emphasizing their role in this procedure.

Chapter 2: Methodology & Limitation

Literature review is the major method of this project. This includes reviewing of the existing reports, studies, books of history and related policies, as well as cases studies of alley revitalization around US, and for sure the Canton Alley. There are three sections of my literature review: the historical research, the case studies of other cities' alley revitalization, and the case study of Canton Alley revitalization. At the end, I am going to interpretate my model in detailed.

Historical Research

In this section, I study the history of both Chinatown-International District and Canton Alley in order to understand the importance of Canton Alley to the neighborhood, and the future possible activities and physical changes around the alley as reflections and recall of its history. I also review the development of preservation and reactivation in CID. This allows me to understand the current and potential stakeholders, as well as existing policies that could have big influences on the alley revitalization process and results. This is an important step of knowing what could be and should be done for the alley in the neighborhood under present policies.

The major books and research studies have been used in this section include: *Seattle's International District: the Making of a Pan-Asian American Community* by Doug Chin, *the Process of Seattle's Clear Alleys Program* by Michael Pickford, *Metamorphosis of Chinatown International District* by Marilyn Chu, *Passage to Chinatown: Managing the Sense of a Place – Chinatown-International District* by Huei-His Hsu, and *Kong Yick Building East: Historic Narrative* by Shannon Gee.

Since the historic narratives could be subjectively biased, this section tries to track the most possible history and policy changes related to alley revitalization by comparing and combining ideas from different studies. However, some limitations are still unavoidable, which this section might not be able to cover the most comprehensive history.

Case Studies of Other Alley Revitalizations

In this section, I explore the revitalization efforts of other alleys in other cities. I chose Nord Alley in Seattle, Belden Place Alley in San Francisco, Blagden Alley in Washington DC and Nanluoguxiang in Beijing for studying which are different types of alleys with different strategy of revitalization. Studying them allows me to broadly understand the roles of different elements such as history, culture, commercial influences, policy control and tourism in alley revitalization. By finding the common factors of alley revitalization could help me to study Canton Alley, as well as layout out the model later.

One of the limitations of case studies is that only several cases could be selected in this paper, which means the result generated from studying these cases might not be able to cover all the conditions of alley revitalization. To avoid this problem as much as possible, I choose the cases in most diverse conditions such as they are all in different cities and are very different types of alleys using as different functions. Another limitation is that the resources available for each case are very limited and I am not able to collect the first hand resources by going to each site. Therefore, the study of each case could be subjectively biased due to different living

background of different literature authors. I pick at least two resources for each study in order to compare different perspectives and lowering the biases.

Canton Alley Study

In this section, I study the timeline, strategies, physical improvements and community events that have been done for Canton Alley revitalization in the past in detailed. Studying what has happened in Canton Alley allows me to have a thorough understanding of alley revitalization process and able to create a model of alley revitalization based on the Canton Alley. Sources and literatures for this sections are mainly gathered from IDEA Space collections which is the design lab that runs the CHAP program and leading the Canton Alley revitalization process. The limitation of this section is that the ways to categorize treatments of alley revitalization could be different from mine according to different perspective of looking and different resources of studying. It is important to recognize the possible variety of ways of how a model could be developed from studying Canton Alley revitalization.

Model Interpretation

This is the result section showing the model of alley revitalization and explaining it in details. I also list some alleys in Seattle that could be potential sites of applying this model, which helps reader to further understand how this model could be used. The final product of my senior project is this research paper and an educational flyer with model and interpretation for digital distribution.

Chapter 3: Historical Context

History of Chinatown-International District

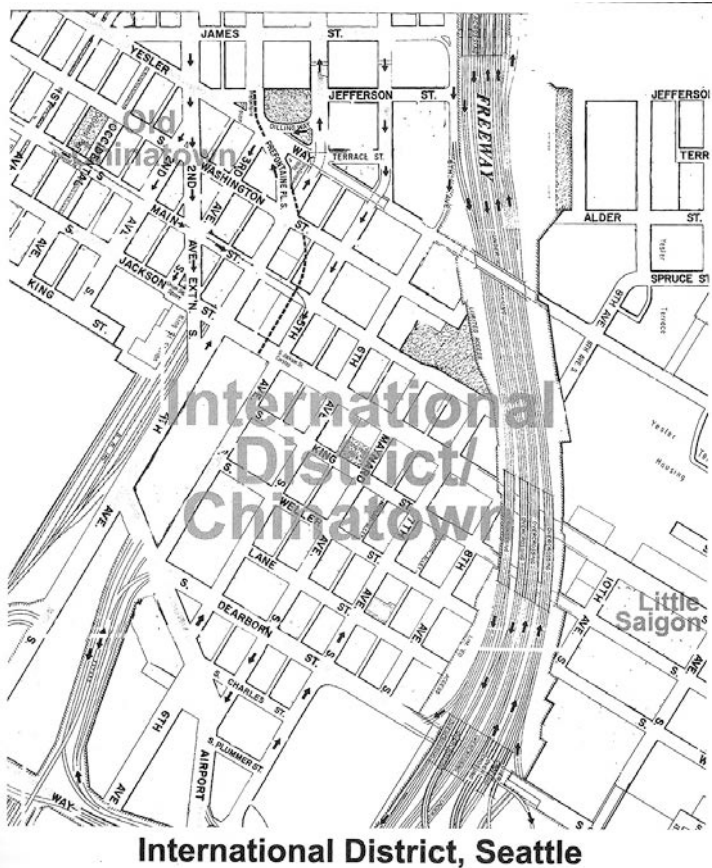


Figure 2: Map of International District showing Old Chinatown and New Chinatown-International District
Doug Chin, 2001

The development of this neighborhood began as early as 1860s, nearly the same time when Seattle started to develop. The old Chinatown was originally located very close to pioneer square, which the Second Ave. and Washington St. used to be the headquarter. (Chin, 2001)

Chin Chun Hock, who was one of the most significant merchants and labor

contractors at that time, founded his Wa Chong Company right next to the tide flats south of Henry Yesler's lumber mill. In the old time when most Chinese are illiterate and poor, people like Chin and places like Wa Chong company were their critical resources to communicate with their family back home and to connect with labor employer in mining, canneries and railroad construction. Other businesses, like fisheries, laundries, hotels, and restaurants, were all later developed surrounding these resources center. The anti-Chinese riot in 1886 and the Great Seattle Fire in 1889 had dramatically drawn down the population of Chinese people in Seattle.

1880s was an economic boom decade to Seattle. The cannery work established in Alaska in 1878 greatly triggered the growth of Chinese community in Seattle due to high demand of labor force. In 1889, there were 39 canneries on the Columbia River which made over 2000 Chinese come to this pacific northwest region by boat from San Francisco and Portland every year. The census figures of 1900 showed 438 Chinese in Seattle. Though one third of them were married, most of their wives and families were in China. Most people were living in a single room apartment or sharing a hotel room. When they came to U.S., the plan for most of them was to gain enough money and go back home instead of long-term residency, plus the policy and financial ability did not allow them to buy permanent land or property. (Chin, 2001) An accident enabled Chinese population and economics to have another quickly growth and recovered almost as same as it was before the riot.

The San Francisco earthquake in 1906 destroyed almost everything in the city including the governmental building that kept the birth records. In a sudden all the Chinese came to the office and acclaim the natural born citizenship, which allowed them to live in United States legally and travel back and forth between U.S. and China as they want. After a while, the “paper son” also appeared, which referred to people who do not have real parental/relative relationship but were acclaimed as sons of others in order to enter and live in U.S. (Wing Luke Asian Museum Videocassette, 1998) Due to this unexpected event, the Chinese population on west coast has significantly increased, and business center of Chinatown has again becoming busy and prosperous. The International Chinese Business Directory of the World for 1913 listed 41 businesses in Seattle’s Chinatown which included 28 general merchandising stores, 2 laundries, 3 associations, 2 restaurants, 2 bazaars,

2 underwear shops, 1 drugstore and a bird and goldfish store. (Chin, 2001) With all these diverse businesses, the old Chinatown was even seemed crowded, and right at this moment another opportunity came.



Figure 3: Street view of prosperous old Chinatown. *Doug Chin, 2001*



Figure 4: Jackson Regrading Project *Brian Kalthoff, 2012*

The Jackson St. Regrading Project might be the largest alternation of urban terrain in that time, shaping the terrain of Seattle that we see today. Nearly 6 miles of streets and about 56 city blocks were involved. At the end about 85 feet was cut from the ridge at 12th avenue and the grade of Jackson street was reduced from 15 percent to 5 percent. (Dorpat, 2002) This created a big amount of lands on the south side of downtown area which almost right after the Jackson St. Regrade project was finished in 1909, Chinese started to move toward south to where the current CID is to exploit the unexplored land.

Goon Dip, who formerly arrived Seattle from Portland in 1908 to organize to create the Chinese pavilion for the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition (AYPE), was the heading person of this southward movement. He founded the Kong Yick Investment Company in 1909 solely for the construction of two buildings on King



Figure 5: Kong Yick Buildings with Canton Alley in between around 1912. *Wing Luke Asian Museum Collections, 2013*

street. The shares were sold to Chinese throughout the Northwest to finance the project as publicized as a building that was completely constructed and owned by Chinese people. (Chin, 2001) Soon after the buildings were finished, Wa Chong and Quong Tuck Companies, which were two big grocery stores in that time, moved in. Followed that, a series of importer/exporter companies, restaurants, and family association moved in. They became the first Chinese businesses on the King street and also the center of the new Chinatown area. (Chin, 2001)

During World War II when Japan attacked the Pearl Harbor, around 120,000 Japanese Americans on west coast were forced to move to the camp in middle part of United States, mostly Idaho. (Chin, 2001) The population of Japanese in Seattle has suddenly dropped around 40% and never recovered ever since. Their business and stores were gradually taken by Chinese and other people came later such as Vietnamese and Philippines. Japantown greatly declined. (Chin, 2001) The World War II was also a new favorable turn for Chinese people. Chinese for the first time were allowed to enter the mainstream work force and college for higher education.

More family association emerges, offering communities that Chinese people had sense of belonging to as well as shelters that Chinese people could be protected by. When Wing Luke became the first Chinese American working in the Seattle City Council in 1962, it has also shown the raising power of Asian American in the white society in Seattle.

The neighborhood was listed as International Special Review District in 1973 by City of Seattle to preserve its unique Asian American character and to encourage rehabilitation of areas for housing and pedestrian-orientated business. However, also around 1970s, the neighborhood has encounter the difficulties ever had. The increasing seniors, retired and poverty had limited growth of neighborhood. Moreover, people starting to move out from the neighborhood to Beacon Hill and surrounding areas to seek a better quality of life. The hotels in the neighborhood also gradually closed down due to decreasing demand and updated fire code after the Ozark hotel fire in 1970, which required big investment on renovating the buildings for fire-resistive stairways and doors. Many apartments and hotels, including the Kong Yick Buildings stayed vacant since then. (Chin, 2001)

Since 1990s, the neighborhood embraced another booms brought by the \$21 million Village Square project and the \$30 million Union Station renovation project. (Chin, 2001) Entering 21st century, more low-income projects have taken place in the neighborhood. Being one of most diverse ethnic neighborhoods in the country, the CID starting to pay more attention to preserve its buildings and distinctive culture. In the brochure of *Livable South Downtown: a project of the Mayor's Center City Seattle strategy* issued in 2009, providing a diversity households and preserve affordable housing, increasing jobs supply, protect and enhance neighborhood

characters, develop sustainable community and environment, as well as create safer, accessible streetscapes and public spaces are part of important goals that the City of Seattle striving to achieve. More funding is given to the neighborhood to help push development in the area, such as the Neighborhood Matching Fund received by South Downtown in 2004. (City of Seattle, 2009) The rezoning of South Downtown area has also provide more potential of developing business and housing by increasing the height limit as well as adding more commercial types of land to the neighborhood. (City of Seattle, 2009) The future of renovating the historic buildings and revitalizing the alley is very positive.

History of Kong Yick Buildings & Canton Alley

Kong Yick Buildings, East and West, were the first several buildings constructed in the neighborhood know known as Chinatown-International District and used to be considered as the center of the neighborhood by many community leaders and local residents. It is a brick wall and wood framing building built in 1909-1910 as a mixed-use commercial building. (Gee, 2004) They have been owned by the Kong Yick Investment Company since were built until the Wing Luke Asian Museum bought the East Kong Yick Building in 2005 and moved in in 2008. It was described as a lively place by the former residents with housing, restaurants, businesses and social clubs. (Chin, 2001) In the past, housing services are offered by Freeman Hotel on the east and Kong Yick Apartment on the west and these are both most welcomed places to local residents. For instance according to the renting record, there are 103 rooms in the Freeman Hotel and only fifteen vacancies in January 1917. (Gee, 2004) Most rooms are single rooms for single workers that

planned to stay in U.S. for money and return to China as soon as they collect enough money. There are some bigger apartments on street and Canton Alley side for family use as well. The major businesses in the buildings including Yee Ching Tung Company, Sing Lee's carpentry, Tung Woh Company, Shing Chong Company, Wa Chong Company and Quong Tuck Company. (Gee, 2004) The businesses had made the buildings become the most popular and prosperous spaces during the time. The family associations include Gee How Oak Tin Association, Yee Association, Lee



Figure 6: East Kong Yick Building with grocery stores facing King street around 1920s, *Wing Luke Asian Museum Collections, 2013*



Figure 7: East Kong Yick Building with Wing Luke Museum in present, *Taking by author, 2013*

Association and Ho Nam Association. They are important part of the first immigrant community for providing the social security and community activities.

Canton Alley, given its name in the 1950's after the Chinese city, is the lone road in CID with an Asian name. (Wing Luke Collection CID 0_D57) It is also one of the only two alleys in the area that have names. In the past, Canton Alley used to be popular place for community gathering and playground of the kids in the neighborhood. According to the oral history record of interview with Jeni Dong Mar who used to live in one of the apartment at Canton Alley, she used to play games like "kick the can" and "rover rover come over" after her Chinese class at Chong Wa Benevolent. She recalled that in the old time all the kids in similar ages in the

neighborhood all knew each other and always played together at Canton Alley and the big open space behind the East Kong Yick Building. (Oral History Record, 1996)

The number 2 at the alley used to be the Sing Lee Carpenter store that was very popular in old time doing the carpentry for the family associations and businesses.

(Gee, 2004) The owner, Ah Sing, had good relationship with local residents. As recalled by Wallace Eng in interview with Wing Luke Museum, who used to regularly visit Sing's store and has close relationship with him, Sing was the only one with a car at the time and usually took kids around the city, as well as showed them the carpenter tools. (Oral History Record, 1996) In the past, residents who accessed the building through Canton Alley were mostly family units. They usually were familiar with each other and had good relationship with each other. Canton Alley was the public space used by them for chatting and meeting in spare time. (Chin, 2001)



↑ Figure 8: Canton Alley in Present, Looking from South to North with Sun May Co. storefront on the left hand painted in red. *Seattle Daily Photo*, 2012

← Figure 9: People used to sit in Canton Alley and Chatting. Photo date unknown. *Wing Luke Asian Museum Collection*, 2013

Organizations & Policies Related to Canton Alley Revitalization

The preservation movement in Chinatown-International District started around the same time with City of Seattle's preservation movement around 70s. It was listed as the one of the Historic District in 1973 by the City of Seattle to preserve the unique Asian American character and encouraging rehabilitation of the neighborhood for housing and pedestrian-oriented business. (Seattle Dept. of Neighborhood, 2013)

There are two big leading groups in the neighborhood that play important role in pushing forward the preservation movement in I.D. The first one is called the International Special Review District Board, ISRDB, created in 1974 aiming to overview the development of the entire district and supported by the entire community. However, due to its ambiguous definition on the groups it is serving, many Chinese residents and business owners accused it for threatening the identity of Chinatown, at the same time while other non-Chinese groups argued the organization is too Chinese-dominated. (Hsu, 1987) The problem of unclearly defined identity has continuously troubled ISRDB, which greatly decreased the power it could present and use. The other organization is the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authorities, SCIDpda, created in 1975 aiming to improve the quality of life in the CID. Both as public institutions that serve the community as the extension of city's authority, the ISRDB was design to overview the land use, and the SCIDpda was on the other hand design to execute the implementation of the physical improvement in I.D. Because of the clearer identity and role, the SCIDpda did not encounter too much rival forces from the community in the past and offered great senior services, affordable housing and community engagement to the local residents and business owner. (Hsu, 1987) The

CHAP, which is the major leading force of alley revitalization movement in the neighborhood, is the project running by the IDEA Space that belongs to SCIDpda. The other two important organizations to the neighborhood development are the Chong Wa Benevolent Association, CWBA, and the InterIm, which the first one serves for the benefits of Chinese community and the second one serves for the benefits of multiple Asian groups including Japanese, Vietnamese and Filipinos in the neighborhood. (Hsu, 1987) Other organizations that could influence the Canton Alley revitalization process include by not limited to: Wing Luke Asian Museum, Kong Yick Investment Company, Sun May Company, and all the stores and restaurants in West Kong Yick building, especially the Fortune Café which needs to use of the dumpsters that have been moved to the parking lot the Chong Was Benevolent.

The main policy that have direct influence on the Canton Alley revitalization is the Clear Alley Program, the CAP mentioned in introduction chapter. Based on the rules and regulation issued in 2009, I.D. was added to CAP started from 2013. Canton Alley has been included in phase I, which means beginning in April 1st, the dumpsters in the Canton Alley are forced to be removed from the alley regulating by the City of Seattle. The South Downtown Rezoning in 2009 also affects the Canton Alley revitalization. According to the *Rezoning Map of South Downtown Neighborhood* issued by City of Seattle, the height limitation in I.D. neighborhood has increased, which brought great potential of developing the local real estate and private businesses in larger scale that could attract more people to the neighborhood as well as to the alley. Besides, under regulations of both Seattle Chinatown National Register District and the International District Special Review District that were founded in 70s, any physical alternations and activities taking spaces in the

neighborhood should be managed to maintain the unique characteristics of Asian American community and improving the pedestrian oriented businesses, especially the projects receive federal funding. Therefore, it is important to remind that all the revitalization related physical improvement and community activities in the Canton Alley should be able to related to the Chinese culture and history of the alley and spread them to the modern life.

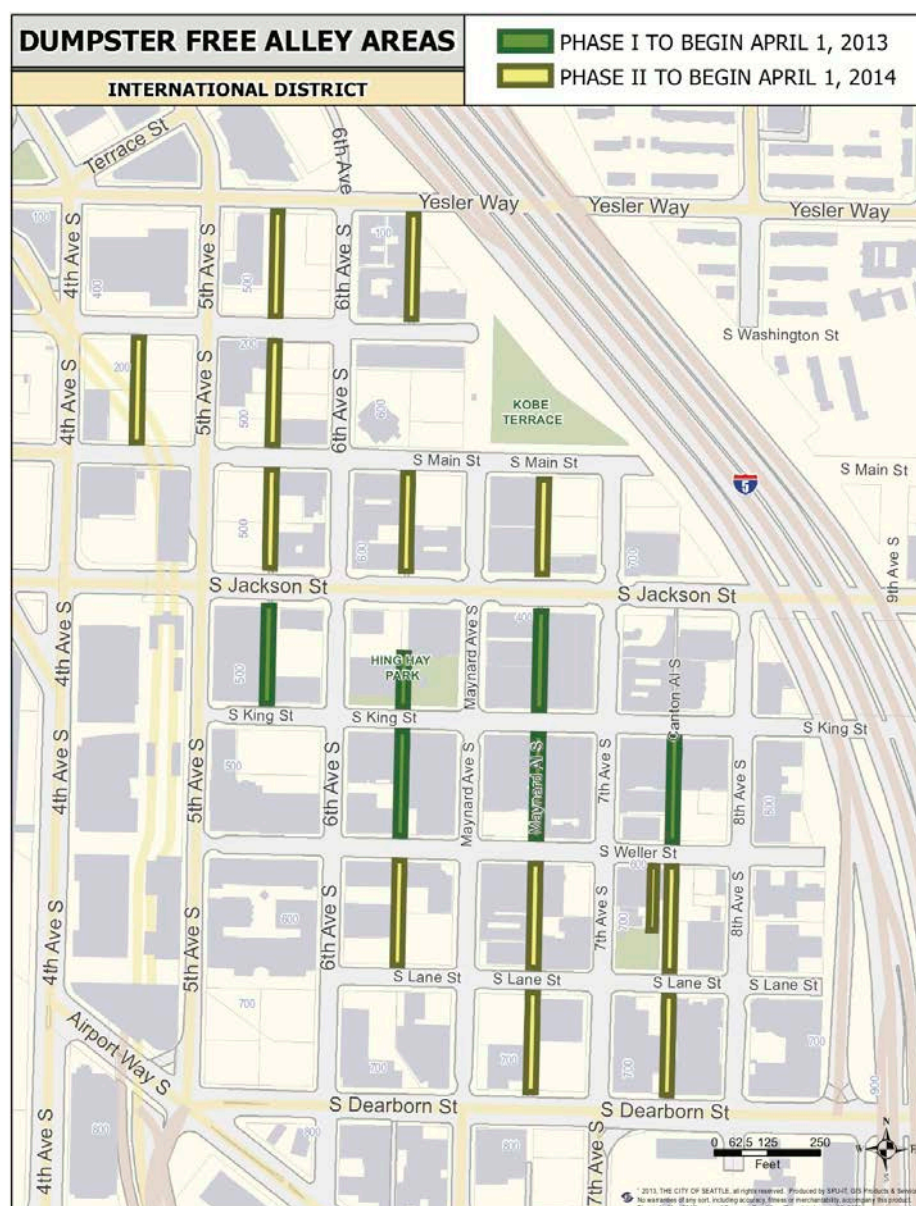


Figure 10: Map showing International District CAP area that validated since April 2013, Canton Alley marked in red circle.
Seattle Public Utilities, 2013

Chapter 4: Cases Studies of Alley Revitalization

In this chapter, I am going to study alley revitalization movement in different cities with different characteristics and strategies. By studying different strategies of alley revitalization, I learned main factors that could have impacts on the movement and could help me study the Canton Alley case later by teasing out its strategy of revitalization and build up a model according to it.

Nord Alley, Seattle

Nord Alley is an alley locates in Pioneer Square that is one of the earliest alleys started the alley revitalization movement. It is categorized as public space alley by the Seattle Integrated Alleyway Handbook. It regularly offers its space for public events such as Seattle Art Walks and World Cup Parties. The Alley Network Project is a community organization found based on alleys in Pioneer Square neighborhood that aims to transform the alleys into better public spaces,



Figure 11: Nord Alley First Thursday Art Walk, Alley Network Project, 2011

boost healthy activities, bring vibrant arts culture and attract more people to local business in the neighborhood. (Alley Network Project, 2013)

The precedent of alley revitalization movement in Nord Alley could be traced to as early as 1990s when Chris Martin started the free alleys program in Pioneer Square Neighborhood. The idea was to remove the big dumpsters from the alleys and collect the individual garbage from each household instead, which was also the origin of the CAP. (Pickford, 2010) In 2008, the International Sustainability Institute, a non-profit organization based in Pioneer Square, founded the Alley Network Project that has been playing a leading role in gathering residents, businesses owners and community groups into the revitalization movement in Nord Alley. In the past five years since the first Nord Alley party in 2008, there were nearly 100 events with more than 5,000 people in attendance in Nord Alley. (Alley Network Project, 2013) By forming partnership with many organizations and community groups, the Alley Network Project has built up a connection web for alley revitalization in Seattle and anchored Nord Alley, together with other alleys in Pioneer Square neighborhood as the real “pioneers” in Seattle Alley revitalization movement.

The main strategy used in Nord Alley revitalization is to emphasize the power of the space by continuously bringing diverse events into the alley. One significant achievements it has done is to have both year-round event as well as temporary event, which allows it to have a clear identity as art alley while always bringing in new surprises to attract wider public attendance. The annually alley art walk could maintain a fixed population such as artists and students to visit the alley. At the same time the temporary events such as World Cup party and Tour d’Alley could draw attention from different population that have different interests to also join the events

in the alley. In other words, Nord Alley has very successful marketing that clearly identifies it as a public space alley and welcome to different categories of events. This enables Nord Alley to have steady number of community activities and visitors year by year, keeping the alley as an active space. Moreover, the fund raised through events will be eventually used for permanent physical improvements in the alley that could allow bigger potential of holding different meetings and events.

Beldon Place Alley, San Francisco

The Beldon Place Alley locates in San Francisco's Financial District between Pine and Bush streets. It is a famous dining place in the city with the entire alley filled with dining tables from the restaurants



closed by. Fifteen years ago, the alley was still an unwelcoming place with big trashcans and dirty environment. A series of policy changes led to many restaurants settled in this alley in 1990s and together created a great atmosphere of dining in the alley until now.

Figure 12: Beldon Place Alley at night with outdoor dining tables and lightings. *Debra Lynn Michel, 2009*

The area around Beldon Alley is known for the hub of French-American culture with big amount of settlers from French, as well as other countries including China, Italy and Ireland. The first restaurant opened in the alley was Café Bastille in 1990. After moving in, the two owners of the restaurant replaced dumpsters in the

alleys, cleaned the pavement with water, and arranged around 100 meters long tables along the alley for dining. (Michel, 2009) One year later the Café Tiramisu opened followed by Plouf five years after that and a Catalan restaurant in 1999. The Beldon Place Alley has quickly created atmosphere of dining outdoor in the alley and became famous in the city. (History of Beldon, 2013) By realizing the potential development of alleys, the Planning Department of the City and County of San Francisco released a series of plan and policies to promote walking as primary transportation mode in downtown area. It also classified five different categories of street network, which the Beldon Place Alley was designated as a “destination alley” that required better design and maintenance of alley condition including the entry gate, pavement, façade, planting and light conditions in the alleys by the local property owners. The government also offers a variety of fund to support the merchants and business owners to renovate their alley spaces. (Michel, 2009) More restaurants moved in in 21 centuries and have made the Beldon Place Alley as one of the most famous dining alley in the city.

The development and revitalization of Beldon Place Alley is a great example of good interaction relationship between the private local business owners and the policy makers. The local government quickly recognized the potential of alleys and responded to promote improvement in the alley by issuing and regularly updating its related policy. The private local owners, who could have direct impact on and influenced by the alley, are also responsible for the alley development, which allows the most needed renovations to happen in the alley.

Blagden Alley, Washington D.C.

Blagden Alley is one of the few alleys remaining intact as the example of Washington DC style alley dwelling phenomenon, which refers to the small houses situated on alleys behind large homes facing the main



Figure 13: Central cross section of Blagden Alley, Brett VA, 2011

streets. (Borchert, 1980). It locates in the Blagden Alley-Naylor Court, which is a designated historic district in the Shaw Neighborhood. Under well protection, the alley almost remains in its original 1865 alignment after over 150 years. (Nairn, 2010) Currently the Glagden Alley is one stop in the African American Heritage Trail, which is one of the official walking trials of Washington DC belonging to the Neighborhood Heritage Trials Program and attract numerous visitors each year. (Cultural Tourism DC, 2013)

Many homes were built on alley in the city in late 19th century particularly for the African American residents as one of few options during Civil War due to the severe shortage of housing. (Borchert, 1980) These houses usually have poor condition of living and were offered to the working-class residents, majorly the African Americans. (Borchert, 1980) In 1880, there were 64 families lived in Blagden

Alley and they were all African Americans. The residents living in the alleys, who usually needed to share accessory buildings, workshops and even backyard, formed a supportive community themselves. (Borchert, 1980) However, outside community, these alley dwelling communities were regarded as insanity and dangerous, which most of them had been torn down after the Alley Dwelling Elimination Act by Congress in 1932. (Nairn, 2010) The Blagden Alley, as only few of the remnants, has survived due to a community activism in 1980s, and has been preserved and reused till now. In present, it is the home to the City's Office of Public Records as well as several small businesses and shops. (Culture Tourism DC, 2013) The African American Heritage Trail program, launched since 2000, identifies sites that are important in local and national history and culture. It includes 15 distinct neighborhoods and offers free booklet to visitors that covers the map and photos for walking or driving tours among the neighborhoods. (Culture Tourism DC, 2013) Each year, numerous visitors explore the Blagden Alley through the walking tour and learn about history and living culture of African Americans.

Blagden Alley revitalization is a distinctive case of revitalizing the alley through tourism. The city scale heritage walking tour, that has great reputation in tourism field, brings thousands of people to sites like Blagden Alley, which are places that people would never notice or feel special about unless they learn about the history. The well developed tourism project allows both local residents and visitors to know more about the alley and neighborhood, as well as continuously bringing people for the surrounding businesses and restaurants.

Nanluoguxiang, Beijing

Nanluoguxiang is a 798 meters long north-south Hutong in Beijing, China, just few kilometers from the Forbidden City. Hutong is a type of narrow alley formed by lines of traditional courtyard as a typical architectural style in Beijing.



Figure 14: Nanluoguxiang during Chongyang Festival, Ma, 2012

(Li, 2009) The

Nanluoguxiang was first established in Yuan Dynasty around 13th to 14th century. It is currently the best-preserved and well-known Hutong in the city for its architectural renovation and commercial transformation. (Li, 2009)

Beijing has been a residential area since Zhou Dynasty around 300s BC and the architecture style of Hutong first appeared in Yuan Dynasty. However, fast expansion of real estate sector in 1990s has led to large-scale destruction of Hutong residential area in Beijing. (Shin, 2010) The number of Hutongs has dropped from 6104 in 1986 to around 1300 in 2009. (Li, 2009) Nanluoguxiang has long history and was once home to many celebrities and officials of Chinese Republic. In early 21st century, the City of Beijing has recognized problems of Hutongs preservation and has issued its first urban conservation policy, which designated 25 historic areas in the Old City of Beijing for conservation and renovation. (Shin, 2010) Under

reformation and renovation, Nanluoguxiang has become a modern commercial street with mixture of Eastern and Western style stores. There are about 115 shops and restaurants locate in this Hutong, attracting six to eight hundreds of local people and visitor everyday. (Li, 2009)

Nanluoguxiang is a good representative of commercial alley that renews and transforms according to local needs. It incorporates the western elements such as bars and food trucks, while maintaining the traditional Chinese architectures along the alley. The businesses on the alley and the traditional form of Hutong fosters each other by attracting big group of population for different interests, which allows the alley to fill with people all the time. It is important to recognize the advantages of the alley, as well as the identity of the alley before revitalization in order to revitalize the space in right way.

Short Summary

By studying the cases above, some shared factors of alley revitalization could be concluded:

- A clear identity: No matter what type the alley is, at the beginning phase of marking, it is critical to analyze the advantages of the alley and its surrounding environment in order to create a strategy that works the best for the alley.
- Physical improvement and community building: Both factors are necessary to alley revitalization, which they foster each other continuously. A better physical condition would arouse more people's attention from the community by providing better events; and successful community building, which more

people from the community are actively involved in the alley's events, could raise more money for further environment improvement.

- An active policy support: The role of government support is significant. The related beneficial policies could greatly push the revitalization project forward. It should also be able to adjust itself according to changes in alleys.
- Multiple targeted populations: In order to keep a steady number of activities and visiting population in the alley, it is important to have different types of events and elements that attract different groups of people both in long-term or permanently.
- A network with local organizations/projects: A long-term relationship with local organizations and projects would allow a better promotion through the developed projects, strengthen the information flow and draw more people's attention to the alley.

Chapter 5: Canton Alley Case Study

Based on the knowledge of history context of Canton Alley, as well as the revitalization experiences of other alleys, in this chapter, I am going to study Canton Alley and its revitalization strategy in detail.

Site Analysis

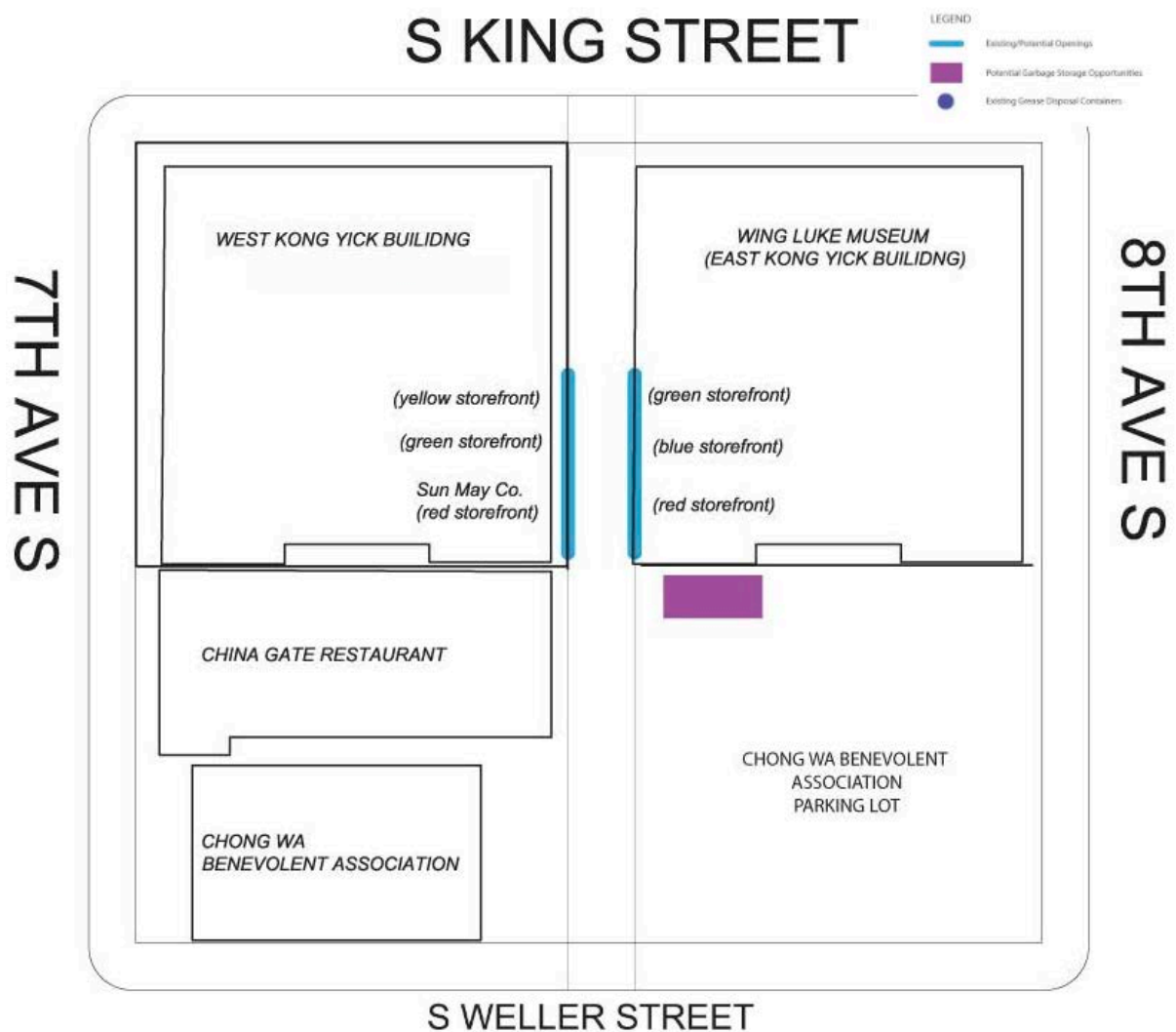


Figure 15: Site Plan of Canton Alley between 7th to 8th Avenue and S King Street to S Weller Street.
IDEA Space, 2012

The Canton Alley South is defined by the two historic brick buildings, East and West Kong Yick Buildings for its most length. (Nakano Associates, 2012) The East Kong Yick Building is owned and managed by the Wing Luke Asian Museum and the West Kong Yick Building is owned by Kong Yick Investment Company, which is the original real estate company that invested building these two buildings. The street front of East Kong Yick Building on King Street has the main entrance, number 719, of the museum. The number 705, which used to run by Yick Fung Company as grocery store, on east side of the main entrance has now been using as the showcase of a typical Chinese grocery store. The storefront of West Kong Yick Building on King Street has been occupied by commercial stores and restaurant including Fortune Café, Gom Hong Market, Harbor City Restaurant, Herb Store, Barclay Seafood and World Wireless station. The main entrance to West Kong Yick Apartment is in the center of the building façade, still using by few residents living in the building.

In Canton Alley, there are in total six historic storefronts on the south end of both building, which were painted in colors as shown in the site plan. The apartment number 6 on the west side of the East building is used as an exhibition site showing the authentic layout of a Chinese family's apartment to public who take tour with the museum. The apartment near by the number 6 has been renovated as an auditorium room and used by the museum for events. The number 5 on West Kong Yick Building is the Sun May Company that has been here for over one hundred years selling a variety of Asian items such as kimonos, Bruce Lee paraphernalia and collection of antiques. It is the only commercial store that still opens today in the alley.

The number 3 on West Kong Yick Building still serves as low-rate apartment that its entrance is right next to the Sun May Company.

The parking lot of Chong Wa Benevolent Association is located on the south east half of the alleys, which allows more sun into the alley. (Nakano Associates, 2012) After the activation of CAP in Chinatown-International District, the dumpsters that used to locate in the alley were moved to north west corner of the parking lot where the purple square is shown. The China Gate Restaurant is on the south side of West Kong Yick Building and the Chong Wa Benevolent Association occupies the south west corner of the entire block. In 2014, new lines for streetcars is planning to open where a new street car station will be built at the north end on extension of Canton Alley. This would be great opportunity to Canton Alley for providing key pedestrian connections between the streetcar and the neighborhood. (Nakano Associates, 2012)

Revitalization Time Line



Figure 16: CHAP Timeline, *IDEA Space*, 2012

The earliest revitalization effort in Canton Alley could be traced to 1998 when alley revitalization was listed on the Chinatown International District Strategic Plan for exploiting more public spaces. The IDEA Space under SCIDpda is responsible for this alley revitalization project and later, Chinatown Historic Alley Partnership, the CHAP, was born as the full name of this project. During Spring Clean in 2009, the storefronts on the alley were repainted in color for preparing the first Neighborhood Art Walk in the alley. In 2011, a \$93,800 match grant from Neighborhood of Seattle was given to the alley revitalization project for event planning, design schematics and physical installation. In summer of 2012, Canton Alley held three alley parties with the Jamfest by the Wing Luke Asian Museum, which attracted hundreds of people every month. Art exhibition, pop-up shops, live music, Chinese lantern decoration and outdoor sitting were offered during the event that showed people a completely different Canton Alley from its typical image with great potential of revitalizing and reusing the space. In 2013, the physical improvement starts in the alley by renovating the conditions of lighting, pavement and public art. The issue of International District CAP in April helped to remove the dumpsters from the alley and keep the alley clean. More events during summer will be held which enable Canton Alley to further market and promote itself in the neighborhood and attract more people to this space.

Revitalization Strategy

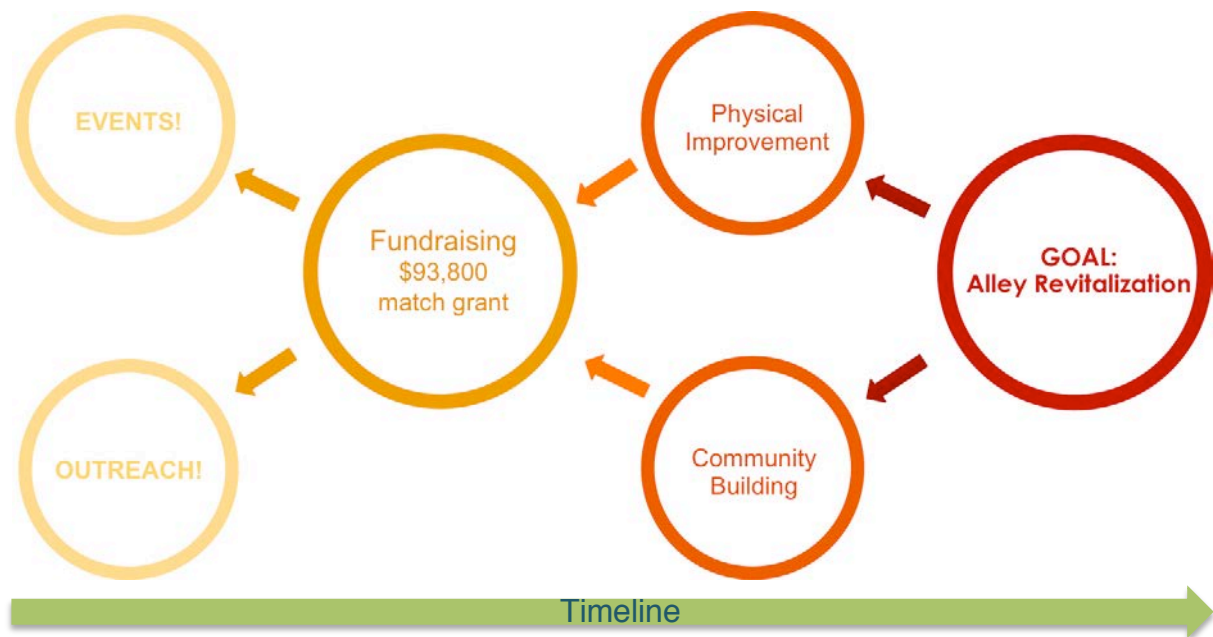


Figure 17: Flowchart of Canton Alley Revitalization Strategy

The graphic above shows the general strategy of Canton Alley revitalization. Each circle represents a task needed to complete and they happen starts from left to right. I used the inverse thinking method, explaining backward from the final goal and deducing to the foremost task that need to be done for Canton Alley revitalization.

In order to revitalize the alley, which is the eventual goal, both physical improvement and community building are required according to case studies above. The physical improvements refers to the permanent installations and renovations made in the alley, such as adding in better lighting infrastructure, repaving the road, and painting the public art. The community building refers to a process of getting people's involvement in alley revitalization from passive to active. It means to build awareness and a sense of responsible of alley revitalization in the community. Only when people in the neighborhood realize the importance of alley revitalization and participate in this process, the alley could be lively for long-term. Fund is necessary

to achieving both of these goals. In order to get the full matching fund received from Neighborhood of Seattle, the same amount of money needed to be raised by 2014. Public events and community outreach are two main methods used for fundraising. Holding event in the alley is the best way to show potential of using the alley spaces in the future. The public outreach would allow CHAP to build connections with other organizations and communities. At the beginning phase of the project when few people know about CHAP, it is important to form partnership with other well-developed project such as the Pioneer Square's Alley Network Project in order to let more people know about the project. As soon as a certain fame and reputation have been formed, Canton Alley could hold some independent event that emphasizes its particular characteristics, and build up an identity in the neighborhood.

As study in chapter three, Canton Alley has long history and has special meaning to the entire neighborhood. Categorizing as festival alley, the main strategy used by Canton Alley is to strengthen the historic and culture values of preserving and revitalizing the alley through holding events. The identity that Canton alley wants to build is that this is a historic alley that, as the carrier of numerous stories on this historic center of Chinatown area, needed to be preserved and revived by having modern public events in the alley. It welcomes the western elements and culture while at the same time strives to preserve its original Asian American culture.

According to the main factors of alley revitalization that summarized from the case studies in chapter 4, a graphics has been created based on the site plan of the alley in order to visualized these important factors that could influence the Canton Alley Revitalization.



Figure 18: Model of Canton Alley revitalization

As shown in the figure 18 above, there are four major elements in Canton Alley revitalization process. First, the physical improvement in the alleyway, which includes both temporary and permanent installations in the alley, is shown in yellow. This yellow also refers to the Second, the building occupation transformation of buildings along the alley, which in this specific refers to the six storefronts on East and West Kong Yick Buildings, is shown in red. Third, the neighborhood outreach, which refers to any marketing and outreaching activities within the local neighborhood, is marked in blue. And Forth, the other connections, that include the outreach with organizations in other neighborhood, outreach with the former

residents who lived in the alley, the cooperation with local related governmental department for a better policy revision etc, is shown in green. All four factors are important to Canton Alley revitalization. They are different with each other in scope, which from yellow to green is an increasing scale that related to more external organizations and groups.

These four factors could be further differentiated according to time scale, which I named phase one for short term and phase two for long term.

Phase I (temporary/occasional)

In phase i, the physical improvements are simple and temporary. They are usually installation that do not cost too much labor or money to be achievement and will only exist in the alley for a certain period of time. For instance, the mock-up Chinese lanterns hanging in the alley during Jamfest and Family reunion picnic are very easy to install and at the same time could directly show the identity of Canton Alley as an Asian traditional alley by having obvious Chinese elements.



↑ Figure 19: Pop-up shops for candy during Jamfest 2012
←Figure 20: Mock-up lanterns hanging in Canton Alley covered by tent during Family Reunion Picnic 2013

The building occupation in phase one is also a short-term occupation that is easy to set-up and cleanup. Due to the poor infrastructure condition, currently the storefront couldn't be used for long-term real commercial store before renovation. The pop-up shops that opened during the Jamfest is an example of short-term occupation that the shops only opened during the event for showing how the space in alley could be altered.

The neighborhood connection in phase one are mostly marketing materials for advertise the event including the printed alley project brochure, the posters and flyers. They are distributed to many local business owners as well as published online in digital version.

Designing in right way of

communication and distributed to right place with right amount is important for delivering information to population that could guarantee the expected amount of visitors during event. It is significant to allow all the local residents know about this alley revitalization effort that is going on not far from the place they live and could be very beneficial to their daily life. The aim of neighborhood outreach in phase one is to draw attention from more people within the neighborhood and let them attend the event.

The outreach to the other organizations and project in phase one is important for creating potential opportunities of forming partnership with other well-developed



Figure 21: the flyer for Canton Alley Family Reunion Picnic Event 2013, *designed by author*

alley projects and, by having event together with them, the fame of CHAP could be gradually accumulated and known by more people from different field.

Phase II (permanent/on-going)

In phase two, the fund raised through events in phase one could be used for permanent physical changes in the alley as well as the buildings along the alley. In alley, road will be repaved and public painting as well as better lighting will be added this year.

The renovation of Kong Yick Buildings also happens in phase two, which the utilities in the building such as water system, sewerage and electric power system will all be renewed, as well as the wall will be repainted. This permanent upgrade of the building will allow the storefronts on Canton Alley side being able to rent to some real businesses instead of just pop-up shops.

The neighborhood outreach in phase two will be long-term marketing methods such as the project's blog and the mailing list that regularly publish information about CHAP. At the same time, the connections to outside of neighborhood in phase two should be the formation of long-term relationship with other organization that certain will be held regularly by cooperating with each other.

Chapter 6: Alley Revitalization Model

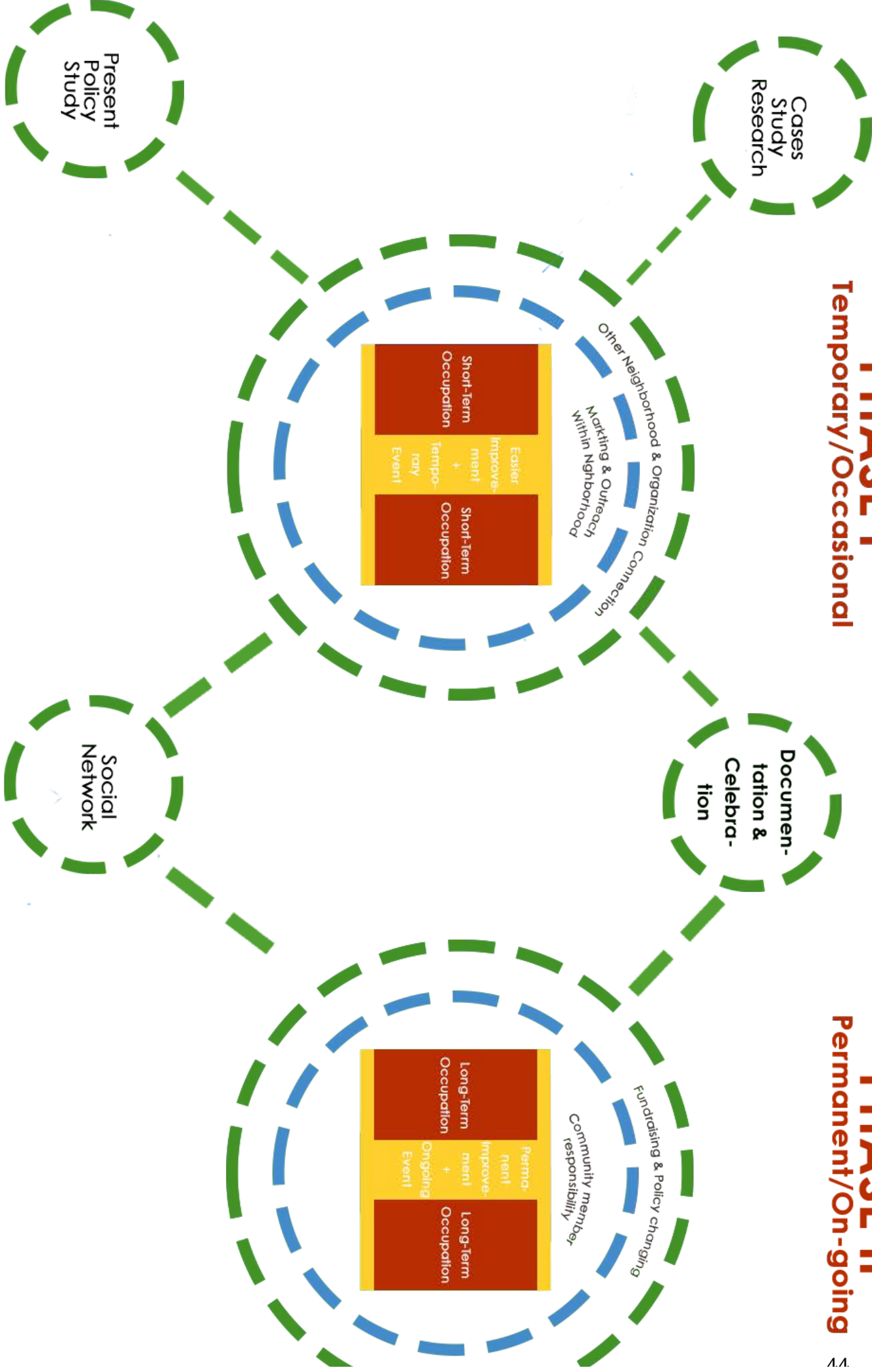
Model Interpretation

The goal of creating this model is to allow public to gain knowledge about the process of alley revitalization in the shortest time. Therefore, it was created to be very self-explanatory with the minimum amount of text in the graphic. The model emphasizes on the flow of the alley revitalization process, showing the process is not one single step of physical improvement on the alley but is a long-term procedure that involved with many cooperation and connections with the community and organization.

The study of existing alley revitalization as well as the local policy is important before the revitalization process. This helps understand the characteristics of the alley that wanted to be revitalized, as well as deciding the identity of alley and the goal of revitalization that wanted to be achieved. The two big circles represent alley revitalization progress in phase one and phase two respectively. They are connected by the continuous documentation and social network. It is worth notice here that moving from phase one to phase two is a slow transitional process instead of one step change. During transition, characteristics from both phase one and phase two could happen at the same time.

PHASE I

Temporary/Occasional



Chapter 7: Conclusion

Canton Alley revitalization effort, the CHAP, is becoming to known by more and more people through its events and outreach. Its long history and special meaning to the entire neighborhood's revival, as once being the center of old Chinatown area, has made the alley revitalization more significant and valuable. This is not an effort that could be achieved solely by an organization, but an effort that needed public involvement and participation. More people should be able to realize the important role they could play in this alley revitalization process and the great potential that they could benefit from the result. People should actively get involved into the process and using the alley as a common public space, just like the normal street. The model of alley revitalization is aiming to allow more people to understand the alley revitalization process by using the minimal amount of time and to learn that little effort made by everyone could lead to big achievement of the alley revitalization. Alley revitalization should be a collective effort by people and for the people.

Appendix : Abbreviations

CAP – Clear Alley Program

SCIDpda – Seattle Chinatown-International District Preservation and Development

Authorities

CHAP – Chinatown Historic Alley Partnership

CID – Chinatown-International District

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