CHINESE AMERICAN CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE:
SUNSET PARK, BROOKLYN

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

When the New City Rezoning Plan of Manhattan was approved in 2008, it intensified the conflict over living conditions between Chinese tenants and landowners in New York’s Chinatown. As a result of rising real estate prices and loss of small business services, great numbers of Chinese residents and businesses have moved out to new communities, such as Sunset Park, Brooklyn. This thesis applies descriptive methods to compare and contrast several historical communities that are similar to Sunset Park, and then evaluates the impact of landscape and other elements in urban design on their community identity. This thesis compares Chinese communities in: 1) central and suburban Toronto, Canada; 2) central and suburban Los Angeles; and 3) Chicago, Illinois. Each of these communities has weathered stresses from gentrification and/or urban redevelopment processes. This research examines how those Chinatowns were able to revitalize without losing their unique cultural character and identity. In particular, the role of landscape amenities and urban landscape design in this process is examined, in order to understand if and how particular site-scale strategies, techniques and impacts of landscape can support longer-term cultural sustainability of diversified communities. This study applies those lessons to the new formed Chinese community at Sunset Park to illustrate a variety of ways that landscape design might contribute to sustainable development there.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As part of the history of Chinese immigration, many Chinese immigrants in Chinatowns and in other Chinese communities in North America, have faced the similar difficulties and challenges, such as gentrification. By studying different Chinese communities, as well as the process of transition within and between Chinese communities, this thesis aims to identify the role of landscape architecture and urban design in presenting Chinese identity in Chinese communities.

1.1 Research Overview

Gentrification means a shift in an urban community toward wealthier residents and/or businesses, followed by increasing property values (Lees 2008). In recent decades, New York’s Chinatown, located in the city center of New York, because of its relatively low property price, has been targeted by large public, private, and institutional development projects. While residents have successfully opposed some of these development plans, gentrification and urban development projects threaten the neighborhood’s role as a destination for new immigrants, and begin to destroy affordable housing, commercial, and institutional spaces where Asia immigrants have traditionally lived and worked (AALDEF 2013, 7).

The history of gentrification in New York’s Chinatown probably begins with the major rezoning plan of New York City in 1961. That plan focused on creating open space, parking for the increased use of the automobile, and the separation of land uses. The 1961 Zoning Plan allowed the development of high rise residential building
development, set in wide open spaces (GVSHP 2012). In 1974, the construction of the Confucius Plaza high-rise development created more job opportunities and living space for the Chinatown community (Gee, Lee, Nam Le 2010, 9-11). In 1981, the Special Manhattan Bridge District was built, which aimed to encourage real estate speculators to build high-rise luxury condominiums (Gee, Lee, Nam Le 2010, 9-11).

In his book *Landscape in Sight, Looking at America*, (1997), J.B Jackson asked: “Is Gentrification good for local communities?” Jackson used small towns in America as examples where community bloomed because of business and tourism development. However the increasingly crowded conditions and low benefits of such development, may also motivate people to go elsewhere to find the services and benefits they enjoyed in their community before gentrification. Many small towns in America, when they found themselves next to an oil field, would immediately turn their back on the previous resource (J. B Jackson 1997, 40). They might obtain significant short-term economic benefits, but if towns or communities to break with their own past, or make decisions independent of their environment, it often results in a total social and physical dislocation and a loss of a sense of community identity (Jackson 1997, 37-42).

In Atkinson and Bridge’s opinion, there are both negative and positive effects of gentrification. Negative effects include displacement through rent, community resentment and conflict, homelessness, increased costs and changes in local services, loss of social diversity, population loss, and weakened cultural identity (Lees 2008, 196). The positive effects may include increased property values, encouragement and
increased viability of further development, increased social diversity and increases in the number of well-educated residents (Lees 2008, 196).

Therefore, understanding the specific effects of gentrification on different communities forms the larger social and historical context and challenge for this research. Those effects will be more clearly considered and reevaluated in a case by case basis below.

1.2 Sunset Park Gentrification

At the beginning of 1980s, when several Chinese investors from Hong Kong, Taiwan and southeast mainland China first arrived at Sunset Park, their "invasion" was seen as causing gentrification for Sunset Park (Hum 2014, 139-145). They bought property and apartment buildings to open their retail businesses. In addition to those investors, more undocumented immigrants from mainland China were crushed into Sunset Park, white people began to move out due to their unwillingness to live with undocumented immigrants, and crowded living environment, not to mention the increasing price of rent (Hum 2014, 139-145). At that time, not all Chinese residents in Sunset Park were wealthy; most of them were low income workers. The high prices and commercialized neighborhoods threatened the quality of life for the middle class as much as the Chinese working poor and other Mexican and Latino labors.

In the 21st century, urban planning proposals for Sunset Park continued to aggravate the pressure of gentrification. The Department of City Planning rezoning plan
(updated in 2007) first included 8th Avenue, the major business avenue for Chinese immigrants, as the boundary of rezoning plan, adding more development pressure among the Chinese area (Hum 2014, 149). On September 30, 2009, the City Council adopted the Sunset Park Rezoning Plan. The new rezoning plan is aimed at preserving neighborhood character and places height limits in rezoning area. Also, it allows for new business development along major business avenues. The most important goal, however, is to create opportunities and incentives for affordable housing (NYC Planning 2009). (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Sunset Park Rezoning Plan (http://www.nyc.gov/)

This rezoning plan was immediately opposed by residents in Sunset Park. Chinese organizations and church leaders met together, presented their worries about this plan, and insisted the rezoning plan would displace them (Hum 2014, 1). The composition of population in Sunset Park community may explain this super-sensitivity.
New migrants from Chinatown in Manhattan, and other Latino migrants from other place in America, had suffered from gentrification before, so they voiced more cares and concerns about the rezoning plan in order to avoid additional distress.

On my site visit last September (2014), it was not hard to feel the commercialization of Sunset Park community; stores and shops expanded from traditional 8th Avenue to 7th, and neighborhood in the middle of 7th and 8th; countless shops are among residents and community buildings. However, Chinatown in Sunset Park has not been obviously gentrified. Along 8th Ave, from 40th to 60th Street, there are many new storefronts, bank branches, decorated restaurants, and new condo developments. Those new developments do suggest the revitalizing of Chinese community in here, but they have also changed and transformed the original building and street character. On the other hand, it is not apparent that this is the classic form of gentrification; the goods sold in the new stores are hardly special and expensive, rather they are items with Chinese cultural character, or some unusual clothes and fabrics. Gentrification remains an important issue at Sunset Park, and the Chinese community is still concerned and vigilant.

With an increasing Chinese population in America, Chinese community history in Sunset Park is a typical example of new Chinese settlements in the 21st century. Further, its special history and mixed ethnic make-up are similar to other new Chinese communities, such as the Chinatown in Queens. Because Sunset Park is representative of a new process, This analysis and research into Sunset Park could be suitable for other new Chinese communities in North America.
As a relatively new population in Sunset Park, Chinese immigrants only have about 30 years of history here. As they are still developing and stabilizing their community, replacement and demolition are not the kind of future they want to have. Unlike New York’s Chinatown, Sunset Park’s Chinese community was built based upon a legacy of other ethnic groups. As a growing community, what lessons can Sunset Park learn from other Chinese communities in North America to help it find cultural stability and fend off gentrification? What are the most useful landscape design strategies to help maintain the stability and revitalization of neighborhoods? What practices may help preserve and present Chinese cultural identity in the urban landscape during the formation and development process of community?

1.3 Research Purpose

Sunset Park residents may not be aware of the lessons that other communities have already learned, and especially may not be aware of useful techniques in landscape architecture and urban design to preserve their community spirit. By studying other Chinese communities in North America that have weathered stresses from gentrification and/or urban redevelopment processes, we may be better able to understand how they managed to revitalize without losing their unique cultural character and identity. In particular, this project studies the role of landscape amenities and urban landscape design in this modernization process, in order to understand if and how particular site-scale strategies, techniques and impacts of landscape can support long-term cultural sustainability of communities in transition.
1.4 Significance

As a nation of immigrants, countless people have come here to pursue their American dream. Chinese people are no exception. Given the pressures of gentrification, downtown Chinatowns in major cities in North America have experienced transitions, and have become increasingly mobile, rebuilding and changing their landscapes, commercial models, and even their life style. Chinatowns are spaces where Chinese nostalgia has taken place, and also represent the identity and development of Chinese immigrants over different generations.

The comparison of different Chinatowns can help clarify our knowledge about development processes and models in ethnic Chinese communities, and provide new information to guide further landscape designs in Chinatowns and other newly formed Chinese communities.

This research will compare and analyze the physical changes and social history of three Chinese communities in North America, in order to provide lessons for the new formed Chinese community in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, and perhaps elsewhere.

Even though every community has its specific history and problems, some of the strategic site-scale interventions may be transferable for new Chinese communities in the future. As long as migration, immigration and gentrification exist, this expansion process out from the original core of Chinese settlements will continue; therefore this study of precedent communities may have value to guide the development of Chinese communities.
1.5 Research Questions

The one main research question is: What can Sunset Park learn from other communities about how to resist gentrification and preserve its special ethnic character?

This is broken down into researchable topics and followed by supporting sub-questions:

a) What is the social and physical similarities and differences between Sunset Park community and other Chinese communities?

b) Compared with Sunset Park,

- What landscape design challenges have those older communities faced in their history; what strategy was used to negotiate/stabilize threats and changes;
- What is the landscape result;
- What are the benefits (positive) and consequences (negative) from those actions/decisions?

c) Besides visual and lifestyle difference, what kind of cultural differences do new Chinese communities want to present, and what kind of cultural interactions do they want to enjoy with mainstream cultures?

d) Based on precedent studies, what design challenges will likely soon face the Sunset Park Chinese Community and how best should the community prepare to meet them?
CHAPTER 2: TOPICAL BACKGROUND FOR CONTEXT

2.1 Historical Overview of Immigrants and Migrants in Manhattan’s Chinatown

In November 2008, the New York City Council approved the East Village/Lower East Side of Manhattan rezoning plan, despite significant opposition from Chinatown and Lower East Side community members (Lim 2009). According to the NYC Planning website, the rezoning plan would allow for taller buildings and higher densities, especially in those two zones that included parts of Chinatown. Based on an urban planner’s independent analysis, “this rezoning plan would not only harm the Chinatown community, but also impact lower-income communities of color, including Chinatown and the Lower East Side” (Li 2010,1).

The effects of this rezoning plan have been very obvious to the Chinatown community. Many landlords have evicted their tenants since 2008, in order to charge new occupants higher rent, and many residents have moved out of Chinatown because of the unaffordable rent. As the Chinatown Tenant Union put it, lower income residents were almost made homeless because the city initially refused to provide them with alternative housing. They now project that the rezoning plan will push commercial and luxury development into the Chinatown neighborhood, where luxury condominiums have already changed the skyline of New York’s Chinatowns since the 1970s, when the Confucius Plaza was built. In Chinatown, more than 94 percent of the traditional commercial uses are small businesses, with about 12 percent classified as “high-end” (Li 2013, 23) (Figure 2). In 2008, the AALDEF (Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund) survey recorded 20 hotels in this neighborhood; however, since this
survey was finished, developers have built even more hotels, including the Wyndham Garden Luxury hotel (Li 2013, 23). Given the pressures from the luxury business, especially after the rezoning plan was passed, many small businesses closed down, and community markets were sold out for high end projects by private developers. The loss of these markets makes daily life in Chinatown less convenient; the grocery stores, that always attracted people from other parts of New York are disappearing also (Li 2013, 22-31).

Figure 2: Chinatown & Lower East Side Study Area Land Use Map by AALDEF (City Planning Commission 2010) (Li 2013, 23)
Figure 3: Asian Population Change In New York City’s Chinatowns 1990-2010 (Source: U.S census data for 1990, 2000, 2010)

Given this situation, many original or long term residents of Chinatown have chosen to move out into mixed communities in Sunset Park in Brooklyn, Flushing in Queens, and East Harlem in Manhattan. Based on the US Census between 2000 and 2010, the Asian population of New York’s Chinatown decreased by 12 percent, whereas Manhattan’s overall Asian population grew by 24 percent (Figure 3). In Chinatown neighborhood, the non-Hispanic white population increased by 19 percent, while other races decreased by 21 percent, and total population decreased around 8 percent (NYC Department of City Planning 2010, 14). Judging from the U.S. census data, it suggests that Manhattan’s Chinatown is losing Asian population, there are more other Chinese communities in American could as the destinations for new immigrants. The high rent, high density, and flocks of tourists in Chinatown have also prevented Asian and Chinese immigrants from continuing to live here.

At the same time, reports from the NYC Department of City Planning shows the population increased more than 5 percent in Sunset Park, Brooklyn from 2000 to 2010. The Asian population increased 41.2 percent for the whole Brooklyn area, and 24.0 percent for Queens (NYC Department of City Planning 2010, 16). Because of the close
distance and convenient transportation to the Manhattan Chinatown, we can infer that a significant number of Chinese from Manhattan Chinatown have relocated in those alternate communities, probably including new Chinese immigrants, to rebuild traditional services and Chinese groceries, and to try to form a new core of Chinese culture in a new location.

During this community formation process, landscape architecture plays a role. In such a dense urban areas where Chinatowns are typically found, parks and public green space may serve as significant social and physical settings that supply the needs of neighborhood for recreation and leisure (Li 2014, 230). Parks have always functioned as gathering places for racial minority groups who often have limited socioeconomic resources (Li 2014, 230). What’s more, the landscape features in Chinatown tell a story about the history of Chinese culture and Chinese immigrants here, presenting the particular identity of the Chinese in America and also in specific locations.

Columbus Park, designed by Calvert Vaux in the 1890s, is the only major park in Manhattan’s Chinatown. After World War II, Columbus Park became a central recreational area; after finishing a three-stage renovation plan in 1983, Columbus Park now is a public open space with successful spatial design that encourages multiple activities (Li 2014, 246). Characteristic Chinese group activities have been observed by Chuo Li (2014), such as playing chess, chatting and people–watching. Because of the good separation of private and public space, Columbus Park supports activities of all ages. Li concluded, "Columbus Park attracts people of all ages and embraces users of
various ethnicities and social status. It works as a community center for Chinatown, but at the same time also provides a stage for inter-ethnic communication" (Li 2014, 246). This suggests that there are demands within the green space and public parks of Chinese to provide for characteristic activities, while also reflecting the ethnic and cultural identities of Chinese Americans.

2.2 Sunset Park Historic Review

Turning to the new Chinese cultural core in New York, in resisting similar threats of gentrification, Sunset Park faces issues such as business displacement and the escalating costs of housing. What we can learn from the process of its historical formation? What landscape features does it already have? What all the major issues and requirements for urban landscapes in Sunset Park’s Chinese community now?

Sunset Park is located in the southwest section of Brooklyn (Figure 4), which is densely occupied by new Chinese and Latino immigrants, and many Chinese migrants from Manhattan’s Chinatown. With a diverse racial composition, Sunset Park is regarded as one of the distinctive communities in New York (Hum 2014, 1).

Back to history, the location of the waterfront and access to the village called New Amsterdam in what is now lower Manhattan, made Sunset Park a desirable place to settle for the Dutch in the 1600s (Hum 2014, 43). Because of water transportation, the land now called Sunset Park was a good place for industrial development; during the 1800s, opportunities for employment attracted Polish, Irish, Scandinavian, and Italian
immigrants, to occupy their own neighborhood streets, and build social and business institutions (Hum 2014, 44). The basic infrastructure of Sunset Park was constructed by a large number of unskilled workers who came from Ireland, escaping from the potato famine around 1840s (Hum 2014, 44). For the whole of the 19th century, immigrants residing in the Sunset Park community were mainly white. Among them were Scandinavians who worked in shipbuilding and dock work, Polish people who worked as gravediggers and maintenance workers at Greenwood Cemetery, and a Finnish population recognized as skilled craftsmen and tailors. While mostly white immigrants lived around Greenwood Cemetery, Finnish people also bought property along 43rd street, between 8th and 9th Avenues, and built the first Cooperative apartment, named Alku in 1916 (Hum 2014, 47).

During this period, white immigrants created their neighborhood, with churches, professional services, and medical institutions. In order to relieve the overcrowded port near the waterfront of Sunset Park in the late 1890s, the establishment of Bush Terminal encouraged the increase of manufacturing workers in Sunset Park. As part of the industrial push taking place in New York City, Sunset Park’s waterfront acted as the center of Brooklyn’s industry. Late in the 20th century, World War II production requirements and highway construction projects brought more jobs for Italian, Irish, and Scandinavian people living in Sunset Park (Hum 2014, 50-51). Following WWII, however, the early decline of manufacturing industry happened during the 1950s. With the relocation of major firms, the Sunset Park waterfront and Bush Terminal no longer functioned as the center of U.S. production and industries export (Hum 2014, 52). The
collapse of industry subsequently caused significant demographic shifts in this community.

The decline of industry in Sunset Park was soon accompanied by racial transformation; when white people moved to surrounding suburbs or Long Island, Latinos moved in for new employment opportunities, especially highway expansion construction after 1960s (Hum 2014, 54). Chinese immigrants came later in the decade from 1980 to 1990, but increased much quicker than Latino, increasing 259% total (Hum 2014, 55). In the 1990s, Chinese immigrants, especially the Fujianese (people from Fujian province, many of them were undocumented), provided cheap labor and trade business for Sunset Park. This situation changed again after 2000, as more and more immigrants from mainland China, bringing improved skills, knowledge, and money, arrived at Sunset Park. These late immigrants renewed the local economy here, and Chinese investors developed housing and businesses in Sunset Park, which occupied the traditional retail center of 8th Ave (Hum 2014, 68-69). "Sunset Park is now New York’s largest Chinatown, with 34,218 Chinese residents, up from 19,963 in 2000, a 71% increase" (Beekman 2013). (Figure 5-7)

The history of Sunset Park shows the formation and mobility of a diverse community in New York and in America in general. The rise and fall of industry and economy offered one explanation for the change of racial and ethnic composition of Sunset Park. However, although many of those immigrants have come and gone, the architecture, streets, and landscapes they left in Sunset Park marked and reflected the
culture and identity of each ethnic group, and presents the role of Sunset Park as a global immigrant neighborhood.

For people who still living in Sunset Park now, especially Chinese people, given the pressure of gentrification and limited land use, negotiating the needs of surrounding ethnic groups is also imperative for future community development. What’s more, Sunset Park has very little green space, well below the urban average of 2 acres per 1000 people. Sunset Park only has 0.45 acres of public space per 1000 residents (Hum 2014, 190), less than one quarter of the acceptable standard, there is no public access to the waterfront except the Brooklyn Army Terminal. The Sunset Park waterfront, which should be a good space for giving residents access to water and nature, now exists as a regulated field littered with illegal construction debris (Hum 2014, 190).

The lack of green space, affects the quality of life in the communities, and also, as a community with many historical industrial sites, new proposals for adding green space are urgent to build a better urban environment.
Figure 4: Sunset Park Community Map
Figure 5: Historical Analysis: Development of Sunset Park Community

During the 19th century, the European immigrants that settled in Sunset Park first passed the Ellis Island.

Pen Drawing of Sunset Park

Earlier Business in 8th Ave

Bush Terminal on the waterfront in Sunset Park neighborhood, which was built in 1890.

Sunset Park was built in 1861 and expanded in 1925.

In 1941 the Gowanus Expressway was built, connecting Sunset Park with surrounding parts of New York City.

8th Ave with Chinese Business

Alku Toinen
The first non-profit housing cooperatives in the U.S. Finnish Co-op, 43rd Street.

Brooklyn Army Terminal was built in 1919, which served as the warehouse during World War II.

Latino Shops during 1970s

Figure 6: Historical Immigrant Population in Sunset Park

- Before 1800
- 1800
- 1840
- 1900
- 1910
- 1930
- 1950
- 1960
- 1970
- 1980
- 2020

- Irish immigrants helped to build Green-Wood Cemetery.
- More than 25,000 worked for Brooklyn Army Terminal warehouse industry.
- The Great Depression in 1929.
- After World War II, Bush Terminal encouraged industrial development.
- With the transition of new cargo center to New Jersey, industry business declined in Sunset Park.

Source: U.S. Census data. SunsetPark.com
Figure 7: Ethnic Distribution Map
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL CONTEXT

3.1 Theory of Heterotopia

Semiotics of vernacular architecture and landscapes are reflected in design interventions of Chinatown. Because architecture and structures with Chinese features have specific meaning and interpretations, the symbols and signs in Chinatown remind people of the demographic change. “The electric pagodas and hyphenate gates in Chinatown, such as the Dragon Gate at the intersection of Grant Avenue and Bush Street, San Francisco, and the Central Plaza Arch Pagoda Gate at the east entrance of Los Angeles, downtown Chinatown, serve as a counter-monument to the folklore of Chinatown, now as a tourism destination” (Kyan 2013, 41). Looking at the traditional Chinatowns in big cities of North America, there are many semiotic signs and architectural symbols telling people that this place is occupied by people from Asian culture. Original Chinese immigrants copied the traditional garden and architectural ideas from Ancient China. Red pagodas, pavilions, shopping signs, and buildings with an eight corner roofs contribute to making Chinatown feel like a different place in contrast with surrounding communities. It is necessary to establish such an image in this western culture, because it’s a useful way to attract customers to Chinese retail businesses. At the beginning of Chinese-American immigration history, this difference helped new residents get attention, but it also aroused suspicion and prejudice from mainstream American culture.

Michel Foucault, a French philosopher, a critic, a theorist, his thoughts and ideas highly influenced academic scholars. In his theory of heterotopia, he said “We are living inside a set of relations that demonstrate sites which are not easy or simply made to
one another, and also not overlapping with one another." (Foucault, 1967) Heterotopia seems like an appropriate concept to describe both the situation and the space of Chinatown. Among so many ethnic groups in America, Chinatown exists inside a city center, visually unlike other neighborhoods in the same city, structures with Chinese features that it separated it from others. Although as a whole, it still has some economic and social connection with outside, Chinatowns provide basic living conditions for Chinese immigrants, to the extent that they do not need to have contact with outside. A well known illustration is how well Chinese living inside Chinatown can work, communicate, and live happily without speaking English. Thus suggests that traditional Chinatown is a heterotopic space, and permits residents to remain isolated from surroundings.

With the waves of new Chinese immigrants, and the pressure of gentrification, Chinese immigrants moved out of Chinatown, seeking new living spaces. At this point, the traditional downtown Chinatown begin to transfer its role from a living community to a gallery or a museum that exhibit and present cultural heritage of Chinese for tourists.

In Jia Lou’s paper, she made the same argument that the Washington D.C’s Chinatown makes efforts to preserve the cultural identity of Chinese (Lou 2007, 23). D.C Chinatown’s semiotic landscape, the street and shop signs, combined and maintained the Chinese text, color, and symmetrical style, but the businesses with those signs are no longer Chinese businesses. For instance, Starbucks may use a red color sign instead of its traditional green signs (Lou 2007, 22). Anomalous business imagery may be caused by the relocation of Chinese businesses, but on the other
hand, even though we think it could withstand the force of incorporation, however, that mainstream culture and lifestyle already deeply penetrated into D.C.’s Chinatown.

A similar experience may be had in New York’s Chinatown. Manhattan Chinatown has similar Chinese-style signs for popular fast food, franchise (such as MacDonald’s), and retail stores. It is a popular tourism destination nowadays, in which the red pagoda, pavilion, landscape features, Chinese style architecture and facades all designed to represent the traditional Chinese Culture. Although linked to the historical Chinese immigrant society, those signs and symbols do not stand for the real community identity today. Instead, because of these iconographic signs and symbols, Manhattan Chinatown now functions as an “other space” (Heterotopia) with variable forms and functions related to the other Chinatowns in New York, but its Chinese population continues to decrease.

Compared with other suburban Chinatowns, downtown Chinatown plays the “role to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned” (Foucault, 1967). It is more like a ‘theme park’, visitors know what they can buy from Chinatown, specific food and goods, they know what they can experience in this space, unified and symbolic structures, downtown Chinatown provides lively and exotic experience for visitors, but commercialization eliminated lots of community diversity.

As a community, Chinatown, in its history, is the starting point of all original immigrants, it evoked nostalgic memory of Chinese immigrants, it was their living space, also reminded and connected them with their hometown. With gentrification
pressures and urban development, Chinatown architecture has been preserved as a valuable historical relic, but with more and more residents moving out, the community spirit and cultural ecology are missing. Michael Sorkin pointed in his book *Variations on a Theme Park*, (1992), that, the preservation of physical structures in historical city failed to consider the human ecology, urban design and urban planing, the failure of such rezoning plans sacrificing the idea of the city as the site of community and human connection, the sameness of place erased the diversity and cultural features of communities (Sorkin 1992, xiv)

Therefore, when looking at different Chinese community case studies, it is crucial to emphasize the cultural identities and cultural character. The realistic and sustainable socially development style the suburban Chinese communities may have will direct the formation of other new Chinese community, however, the tourism and the commercialized downtown Chinatown situation should be criticized more deeply in discussing the formation, identity, and mobility of new Chinese Communities.

This thesis applies heterotopia as a theoretical interpretation of case studies to compare different processes of forming and developing original downtown Chinatowns and the new Chinese communities outside the city center.

This research examines how in the new century, are new Chinese communities still heterotopic in the way they present Chinese identities? If not, what’s the new way? Besides visual and lifestyle difference, what kinds of cultural differences do new Chinese communities want to present, and how do they negotiate with cultures
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Research Strategy

What are the social and physical similarities and differences between Sunset Park community and other Chinese communities? In order to answer the research question, this study uses descriptive methods (comparative case study) to compare and contrast several historical communities that are similar to Sunset Park.

The study then evaluates the impact of landscape and other elements in urban design on community identity in these precedent cases, so as to answer: What landscape design challenges have those older communities faced in their history? What strategy was used to negotiate/stabilize threats and changes? What is the landscape result, and What are the benefits (positive) and consequences (negative) from those actions/decisions?

Applying those findings with the current context in Sunset Park community, then, results in a classification of landscape design strategies that may prove useful to help residents of Sunset Park. This classification may then lead and help address the final question: What design challenges will likely soon face the Sunset Park Chinese community, and how best should the community prepare to meet them?

Selection of Comparative Case Studies: to establish comparisons for Sunset Park, Brooklyn, this thesis examined several communities: 1) Chinese communities in central and suburban Toronto, Canada; 2) Chinese communities in central and suburban Los Angeles; and 3) Chinese communities in Chicago, Illinois. I have chosen
these communities for their similarity with Sunset Park: including their age, size, population, ethnic tensions at the margins, income and class similarities, and other similarities from being small ethnic enclaves in major metropolitan areas with very strong redevelopment pressures.

Specific Criteria for Analysis & Comparison

a) History and context information
b) Accessibility to city center and transportations
c) Scale (community size)
d) Commercial Model (typical Chinese shopping mall models)
e) Park or open space stimulating surrounding business
f) Pavilion+Facades+Pagoda

These criteria are chosen based on similarities and differences that existing case studies have on different scales and terrains. In addition to considering the main landscape features and designs in existing Chinatown, the surrounding context and accessibility are also important in comparing differences and similarities.

4.2 Comparative Case Studies

4.2.1 Chinese communities in central and suburban Toronto, Canada
Toronto Chinatown is located in the downtown of City of Toronto (Figure 8). The first Chinese immigrant came in 1878 and opened a laundry business; the major objective for Chinese immigrants at that time was to earn money and support their family. In the early 1930s, because Chinese brought so many shops and restaurants in one area, Chinatown was widely recognized. After the 1930s, thousands of Chinese immigrants rushed into Toronto, but that first or original Chinatown didn’t exist for a
long time. The construction of Toronto City Hall in 1969 occupied the location of old Chinatown, and resulted in the establishment of a newer Chinatown ("Toronto Chinatown" 2015). After the 1970s, because of the encouragement of the new immigration policy of the government of Canada for attracting money and talented people, a new group of Chinese immigrants, mainly well-educated professional from Hong Kong and Taiwan, formed the Chinese middle class in Toronto (Ling 2009, 229). With this influx of Chinese immigrants, the capacity of downtown Chinatown was hardly adequate to fulfill the requirement of a growing Chinese population. Compared with the previous immigration of undocumented immigrants from mainland China, these Chinese immigrants had more money, better education, and thus better professional prospects. Because the purpose of immigration was to seek a good living environment and better quality of life, then to tolerate limited space and housing choices, expensive rents, and unhealthy living environments in Chinatown definitely was not a good choice for those talented new immigrants. Another group of people had similar requirements: the second generation of the first Chinese immigrants, who grew up in a western culture, and preferred individualistic, more physical, and free, disengaged lifestyle. Toronto’s old Chinatown was not an idealized home for them once they were independent from their parents. Those two groups of people represented the new voice of Chinese in Toronto, and composed the backbone residents of newly formed Chinese neighborhoods surrounding Toronto at the beginning of the 1980s.

What’s more, during the 1980s, gentrification occurred in Toronto’s Chinatown, with more expensive rents and new construction of buildings, and some of the original
residents in downtown Chinatown chose to move out. In such a situation, where the expansion of Chinatown is in high demand, the nearby residential neighborhoods normally occupied by white people were targeted as destinations for the three groups—new immigrants, second generation Canadian Chinese, and some original downtown residents during the 1980s (Ling, 2009, 233). (Figure 9)

After the 1980s, several suburban Chinese communities developed in the greater Toronto area. Only 10-15 miles distance to the city of Toronto, and downtown Chinatown, the new Chinese communities choose to establish next to an expressway and railway. This guaranteed better access to the city, and ensured a suitable distance to any commercial connection, work places, and possibly friends and relatives in the downtown of Toronto.

Pacific Mall located on Steels Avenue in the City of Markham, is typical of the new development model for those new Chinese communities surrounding the city of Toronto. It is important to understand the retail phenomenon, especially the landscape interventions proposed for those new retail and commercial districts identified with Chinatown. This retail model provides economic benefits to communities, while on the other hand, the concentration of ethnic retail generates a cultural enclave, that presents Chinese immigrant identities (Zhuang 2013, 92). These historical landscapes, as well as potential landscape design trends in the future, should both be significant to landscape architects and other planners for reformation and improvement of other Chinese communities.
In 1878, the first Chinese immigrant in Toronto was Sam Ching, who opened a laundry business at 9 Adelaide Street West.

1890s, First Chinatown established in Toronto.

Elizabeth and Hagerman Street.

In 1906, the center of Chinatown was the intersection of Dundas West and Elizabeth Streets, behind old City Hall.

The settlers bought a number of properties in the area and opened stores, clubs, casinos, opera, and theaters, creating a "town within the city."

Figure 9: Timeline of Toronto’s downtown Chinatown
In 1950s, New Toronto City Hall occupied the original Chinatown, relocated Chinatown in Spadina Avenue and Dundas street.

In 1960s, New Chinatown was built, became the Chinese commercial hub in downtown Toronto.

In 1970s, the city erected street signs in both English and Chinese. Chinatown street signs have similar style with Hong Kong, use red color and facades to present Chinese identities.

In 1980s, Gentrification happened in Toronto Downtown Chinatown, suburban Chinatowns formed with younger generation and profession immigrants.

Clusters of Commercial Developments (shopping malls) Business+Tourism

Figure 9 (Cont): Timeline of Toronto’s downtown Chinatown
In Markham, Pacific Mall is a small shopping center developed during the 1990s, with 270,000 square feet of retail space (Zhuang 2013, 106). Since the 1980s, Markham has seen a dramatic transformation from a rural town to a “ethnoburb” (suburban ethnic gathering place). Today the major ethnic population for City of Markham is Chinese (Zhuang 2013, 106). New neighborhoods of Chinese immigrants have now surrounded the Pacific Mall, which provides work opportunities and also attracts tourists and shoppers from near and far. Compared to the traditional retail street of Chinatown, this combined commercial building model, with clusters of small indoor retail stores, creates a cleaner community street, and also saves cost and time.

Looking at the landscape features, at the beginning, Pacific Mall was designed only for business purposes, so parking and traffic flow were the major problems the owner studied (Zhuang 2013, 106). Since the target customers at that time were Chinese, the designer and planner used a Chinese-style pagoda to present cultural character. The red color and the Chinese-style gates, which frequently appeared in traditional Chinatown in Toronto, probably led the designer to think those elements would provide a sense of belonging to the new local residents. (Figure 10) However, by contrast, the facade and shopping mall building kept a modern form; when looking from outside, only the Chinese signs tell you it is a Chinese shopping mall (Figure 11). Thus, it raises the question, whether specific Chinese elements only play a role in appealing to foreigner customers, or in this vocabulary demanded for shopping place, by Chinese communities? Does the latest generation of Chinese still care about having Chinese elements in their shopping malls?
Over the last twenty years, Chinese have been the fastest growing immigrant group in Canada. Retail malls with Chinese features no longer seem exotic or unique to other ethnic people, such like White, Latino and Mexican, and it is easy to find Chinese goods in other Asian malls or online stores. Further, single-function shopping malls, that sell grocery goods combined with restaurants only, no longer attracts second and third generation Chinese. Therefore, since 2000, the Chinese community in Markham is looking for the new style shopping mall, offering multiple services, more public space and green landscape.
In 2009, the City of Markham decided to demolish Market Village, a mall just next to Pacific Mall, and proposed a new Remington Center, to be targeted with Pacific Mall to form a large-scale, multi-functional shopping, commercial, and business center in Markham (In The Loop 2012).

Kohn Partnership’s architects and planners have proposed this project. The design vision behind the Remington Centre is to create an absolutely new kind of shopping experience (“Welcome to Remington Centre”). As their proposal described, instead of a shopping mall, the Remington Centre is intended as a destination; a mixed-use urban center built both for the local and global users, including Chinese and other ethnic groups (“Welcome to Remington Centre”).

In its landscape architecture aspect, the Remington Centre combines landscape amenities with other programs. Its proposed large outdoor square and open pavilions (Shown in the renderings) positioned to host exhibitions and other cultural activities. The pedestrian walkway with outdoor cafe-style seating invites both tourists and locals to enjoy outdoor spaces (In The Loop, 2012). (Figure 12 & 13)

Figures 12 & 13: Remington Center (“Welcome to Remington Centre”)
Figure 14: Transformation of Pacific Mall
Remington Center’s proposal is still in process, the proposed principles and goals need to be evaluated after its construction. But based on the design proposal and its propaganda, we can perceive the trends of new commercial malls in the Chinese community, following the trends pace of modern construction, the new style has more ambition to assimilate Chinese community with surrounding mainstream cultures. It considers green space and sustainable systems in design, the efforts that the Chinese community has made to embrace the urban landscape, to get rid of the traditional impression of Chinese shopping style, is very obvious.

Pacific Mall and old Remington Center (Market Village) represent the typical Chinese shopping mall in the Greater Toronto area, and its advantage is to assemble resources and generate great benefits. This model is also reproducible; as more and more Chinese investors flow into North American, such shopping malls continued the traditional retail business of Chinese. On the other hand, they respond to the surrounding landscape, connect, and communicate with neighborhoods, as part of a larger urbanization process. (Figure 14)

This updated shopping model of Remington Center has the added benefit that it prevents Chinese communities from becoming a theme park or a heterotopia. The Toronto downtown Chinatown is more and more like a heterotopic place, a place with lots of attractions with Chinese features, for tourists and visitors. Constructions and development of Chinatown are excluded and kept from urban design process With strong connections to other Chinese communities, it has refused to be assimilated with mainstream cultures. While this local character brings economic and cultural benefits, it
is not convenient any longer for the purpose of an integrated everyday life. But in Remington Center, the new Chinese community suggests how the new Chinese immigrants can find a way closer to mainstream urban development. If gentrification and new immigrants pushed the expansion of Chinatown, then the new generation and inconstant economic situation forces new Chinese communities to form. Elsewhere, no longer built as downtown Chinatowns, those new communities preserve their identity in more subtle and obscure ways. These strategies include programing Chinese activities, promoting Chinese food, with less focus more on iconic visual signs and architectural aspects as before.

4.2.2 Chinese Communities in Central and Suburban Los Angeles

Chinatown in downtown Los Angeles has a similar situation with the Toronto Chinatown. In the mid-19th century, Chinese immigrants began coming, for the main purpose of earning money and seeking a new life. As a labor force, Chinese immigrants did work such as laundry and road building, and also were the key labor force for building the American railroad ("Los Angeles Chinatown"). As they rented and occupied properties, they expanded their activity areas. However, due to the policy that the Chinese couldn’t own properties, the municipal government didn’t tend to the maintenance of the streets and the living environment of the earliest Chinatown in downtown Los Angeles suffered ("Los Angeles Chinatown"). In the 1950s, downtown Chinatown was destroyed in a major urban renewal to make room for the highways ("Los Angeles Chinatown"), and soon was relocated. Like other downtown Chinatowns
in America at that time, the new Chinatown utilized Chinese-style pagodas, gates and pavilions decorated with red color banners to show cultural features and identities. In 1979, when official relations were established in Beijing, U.S. immigration policy and international policies relaxed, and encouraged a big wave of Chinese immigration (Fong 1994, 29). As new Chinese immigrants flourished in downtown Chinatown, new investors came with money and skills, the increased housing and property demands, the strong purchasing power forced the price rise of rent in Los Angeles Chinatown, gentrification also occurred at the same time, and pressured the new generation to seek more living and business space ("Los Angeles Chinatown"). During this period, the first suburban Chinatown formed in Monterey Park (Fong 1994, 34). (Figure 15)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Entrance to the new Chinatown City, which celebrated its opening on Aug. 2, 1999.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>From 1948 of an entire block along North Los Angeles Street, the last vestige of old Chinatown. The area was razed to make way for a freeway and park area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>New Chinatown proposal created in 1950s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15: Timeline of Los Angeles’s downtown Chinatown
Figure 15 (Cont): Timeline of Los Angeles's downtown Chinatown

- Gentrification happened in Los Angeles Chinatown since 1980s.
- Chinese moved out to San Gabriel Valley from Chinatown in Los Angeles since late 1980s.
- The Dragon’s Gate above Broadway is seen with City Hall in the background in 2010.
- A statue honoring Dr. Sun Yat-sen in Central Plaza.
- New Chinatown - Central Plaza.
Monterey Park is located seven miles east of downtown Chinatown. Similar to other developed suburban Chinatowns, such as Alhambra and Temple City in the San Gabriel Valley, they formed according to similar rules as Toronto Chinatown. They had one prominent business avenue (the Valley Boulevard Corridor) that connected them together. (Figure 16)

Figure 16: Map of Los Angelos Chinatown and Suburb Chinese Communities

The first wave of migration to Monterey Park included many students and people with a high-level education background and professional skills. U.S. policy encouraged them to join in the American mainstream, bringing investment and professional skills (Fong 1994, 31). Chinese immigrants were predominantly from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.
The huge new population of Chinese not only brought their money to Monterey Park, but also engaged in many aspects of community development, including residential, commercial, and also social development. From the 1980s to 1990s, Monterey Park began to develop high density apartments, condominiums, and additions to existing houses. By investing in real estate, the money from newcomers built equity in the homes, properties, and their own businesses, which helped secure their place in U.S. (Fong 1994, 35-49). In this kind of situation, where the local economy is transformed and controlled by Chinese-Americans, Chinese have a greater voice in establishing the social and political organizations to meet their cultural, social and political needs.

The business model in Monterey Park is similar to the Toronto area, in which the shopping mall replaced the downtown business street. The old Atlantic Square Shopping Mall near Pomona Freeway represented the earlier business model with Chinese style roof and signs. This was transformed into a multi-functional commercial condo in 2010, providing more services and having only a few Chinese cultural features. Another center, Atlantic Times Square near the San Bernardino Freeway, introduced a modern contemporary commercial model in the new century. With the growth of second and third generation of Chinese-Americans, Chinese identity has been increasingly assimilated into mainstream culture (Figure 17).
Looking at landscape architecture, the Monterey Park community has a good public open space system. The most famous park and also the one with a large Chinese constituency is Barnes Park. Barnes Park was built in the 1930s; before the Chinese came, it served mainly for Christian church service and activities. The circular stage and auditorium on the slope were designed for religious activities as well as neighborhood secular gathering. After Chinese immigrants rushed in, their requirements for public parks and pressure for open space grew. The function of many parks has therefore changed to include a greater diversity of programming and other cultural aspects. As the montage shows (Figure 18-19), the basic landscape of Barnes Park kept its original shape, but subtle Chinese-style features were added, including structures, gardening, and planting. For example, the red canopy for the stage, pavilion on the lake, and also the Chinese-garden-style topiary, adds to the Chinese-specific cultural features in the park. The users of the park have also changed, as the stage now is used more for celebrating Chinese festivals and social activities, such as Chinese Spring Festival performances and community parties (Figure 19-21).
Figure 18: The Park System of Monterey Park

Figure 19: Transformation of Barnes Park

Figures 20-21: Chinese style Landscape Features in Barnes Park (http://www.montereypark.ca.gov/)
In summary, in its architecture and landscape architecture aspects, Monterey Park's Chinese development and construction have maintained subtle Chinese character in some of its details, but they not so prominent and obvious when compared with those of the downtown Chinatown. The landscape of Monterey Park presents Chinese identity more through its social activities instead of physical structures. As a town made up of many large ethnic groups, Monterey Park is not very different than surrounding towns. It should not be considered a heterotopia. The Chinese-style pavilion in the Barnes Park and the Asian-style gardening are well communicated with users, the media presenting Chinese features, functions independently itself, and is not generated for the sole purpose of showing the cultural style. Rather, Monterey Park is a town with traditional American architecture and planning that has accommodated these new cultures and identities. Rather than a community developed to be segregated, it has been assimilated and mixed. Chinese people in Monterey Park have followed the dominant lifestyle of other Americans, but still show their spirit and traditions in a subtle and affectionate way.

4.2.3. Chinese Communities in Chicago, Illinois

Similar to Sunset Park in Brooklyn, Chinatown in Chicago is also located in the heart of a large metropolitan city. However, unlike the preceding cases, Chicago's Chinatown didn't relocate, but has maintained its place from very early in the 1920s. In 1928, Chinatown's "city hall" - Leong Merchants Association Building - was designed and built by architects Christian S. Michaelsen and Sigurd A. Rognstad to follow Chinese
architectural form (Figure 22), more recently, Chicago’s most famous Chinese landscape architectural work, the Ping Tom Park, is located next to the riverfront ("Welcome to Chicago Chinatown" 2003).

The Chinese population first came as a work force for the completion of the transcontinental railroad in the 1870s. Newcomers after World War II had more diverse geographic origins, not only from south of China, Guangdong Province, but also from Taiwan, and Hong Kong (Ling 2012, 213).

The construction of the Stevenson Expressway (Route 55) in the 1950s reduced the size of Chinatown. In 1970s, Chicago’s Chinatown was bounded on the south by 25th street and on the west to Canal Street (Ling 2012, 217) (Figure 23).

The interesting thing in Chicago’s Chinatown is that even though geographical boundaries have limited its expansion, Chicago’s new Chinese community didn’t develop successful suburban satellites. In the 1970s, Hip Sing Tong, a Chinese-American Association, led efforts to establish a new north Chinatown to the Argyle & Broadway area, on the north side of Chicago, which was easily accessible and inexpensive. Private financial help was provided to residents who wanted to move there. But this northern Chinatown never attracted enough immigrants and Chinese residents in order to be qualified as a Chinatown. Nowadays, it is more famous as a Vietnamese gathering area ("Welcome to Chicago Chinatown" 2003).

At present, there are some small enclaves of Chinese in the Bridgeport and Brighton communities (Figure 23), and the Chinese population there is rapidly
increasing. Based on the 2000 census, the Chinese population in Bridgeport was 8273, while the original downtown Chinatown, only had 7148 Chinese residents (Ling 2012, 220). But given the rapid growth of the community, Chinese home and business owners promoted development vigorously in Bridgeport. With the resulting increased house prices, some tension has arisen between Chinese-Americans and other established ethnic groups. Racial harassment began happened during the beginning of the 21st century (Ling 2012, 221). The history of racial violence of white against black in Bridgeport also has had an influence on Chinese new comers. Racial tensions would thus be one important reason that the Chinese community is expanding to the south and west, or even more distant suburbs in the future (Ling, 2012, 221). (Figure 23-24)
Figure 22: Timeline of Chicago Chinatown
Figure 22 (Cont): Timeline of Chicago Chinatown
Figure 23: Map of Chicago Chinatown and Possible Suburb Chinatown
Figure 24: Accessibility and parks of Chicago Chinatown
In 1993, the land between Arch Avenue and Cermark Road was constructed as a retail market with interior plaza, composed of multiple shops and restaurants. The whole shopping center was integrated with Chinese cultural characters; for instance, in the center of the plaza, there are 12 bronze zodiac figures; in the front of the square, a mural presents the history of Chinese immigrants; four bronze gates at the four corners of the plaza present the four great Chinese interventions of ancient China: compass, gunpowder, papermaking, printing (Ling, 2012, 218). (Figure 25)

Compared with previous cases, this business center is smaller. But, considering the smaller size of Chicago's Chinatown, its shopping mall does fulfill the requirements of its Chinese community, attracting people here to shop for food and other goods. What's more, the specific Chinese features on the plaza and gates continue to propagate the history and identities of Chinese in the Midwest.

In the 1970s, with government funding and private donations, Chicago's Chinatown got a strip of land on 24th Street, next to the south boundary of the community, to be developed as a public park named Sun Yat Sen Park (Ling 2012, 217). Since its inception, it has been used mainly by elders and children in Chinatown.
Its hexagonal pavilion, seating, public plaza, and surrounding plantings create a quiet, comfortable space for residents.

Another green space, Ping Tom Park opened in 1999, as a memorial for the famous American businessman and political movement leader, Ping Tom, who encouraged communication between Asian-Americans and mainstream culture. As one of the founders of the Asian American Coalition, he worked and fought for Chinese immigrants' rights his whole life. The area of Ping Tom Park is 24 acres adjacent to the Chicago river and it forms the north boundary of Chinatown (Ling 2012, 218). Ping Tom Park provides a riverfront landscape for Chinatown and surrounding communities, and improves the quality of life for the neighborhood. The landscape features in Ping Tom Park, together with Chinese features in the commercial square, help to preserve the cultural heritage of Chinese Americans. What’s more, through those parks and landscape features, residents, Chicago citizens, and out-of-town visitors can have a wonderful experience and enjoy the cultural performance (Figure 26).

Looking to the north, parks in Chinatown is part of the larger park system of downtown Chicago. They are also part of many other cultural exhibitions around this
culturally mixed city. With its smaller scale, accessibility and care for its residents, and with less pressure from waves of new immigrants, Chicago’s Chinatown has not developed as quickly as other Chinese communities among the precedent studies. The landscape design presents a modern taste with sustainable thinking, while, on the other hand, it shows the persistence of the cultural difference and specific cultural features.

The slower pace of growth of Chicago’s Chinatown has possibly prevented less suffering from the effects of gentrification. It has a similar increasing rent issue, but a smaller population and is not a popular immigration destination, so the rate of expansion is slowing, and thus more space remains close to the downtown area to develop green space. Without the pressure of waves of immigrants, Chicago’s Chinese community has more opportunities to consider a healthy development of community, and to emphasize its connection and relationships with surrounding communities. Although it is difficult to control the waves of immigrants, we still can infer that a sustainable community needs to have a stable population composition and growth plan.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Considering the first research question: What are the social and physical similarities and differences between Sunset Park community and other Chinese communities?

Figure 27: Comparison of Chinatowns
In historical context, except Chicago, Sunset Park and the two other new suburban Chinatown case studies seem to have formed partly as a response to the pressure of gentrification in older, dense downtown Chinatowns. The origin of Chinese populations in the new Chinese communities also has more diversity of geographic origins. There is a combination of immigrant and citizen-migrants having different educational background and financial resources. The mixed population results in multiple values, openness for modern lifestyles, and a broader understanding for cultural performance. All of this tends to spread Chinese identity in more subtle ways, by exhibitions, parties, and social activities, for example, all working to present Chinese culture.

Sunset Park and the three precedent cases all exhibit good access and proximity, not only to this original Chinatown, but also to the downtown area of the city. The geographic position suggests that possible strong connections with the center of the city, and also to the core cultural and landscape zone in the city in a valuable trait. The Chicago’s Chinatown especially shows the values of sharing parks with the city in larger integrated green systems. (Figure 27)

However, Sunset Park has several key differences from other new Chinese communities. The population background in Sunset Park is different; a working class labor force coming from China is still a major group in the composition of the population, mixed with well-educated students, professional people, and rich investors. What’s more, Sunset Park is a mixed ethnic community, and its complicated surroundings and ethnic tensions on the frontier bring Sunset Park more challenges.
These ethnic tensions all presented by overlapping ethnic commercial banks, with competing agendas to promote business activities serving the interests of different ethnic groups in a limited land use (Hum 2014, 137). Thus, the future development plan for Chinese community in Sunset Park must acknowledge competition, related to surrounding ethnic groups.

Returning to the second set of research question, compared with Sunset Park, what landscape design challenges have those older communities faced in their history; what strategy was used to negotiate/stabilize threats and changes; what is the landscape result, and What are the benefits (positive) and consequences (negative) from those actions/decisions?

Common issues for downtown Chinatowns in the three cases are: limited land, unhealthy business and living environment, unaffordable housing, and limited open space. Migration is one way that Chinese seek better living environment. When they settle down, they make efforts to live and create connections to surrounding ethnic groups. By looking for a way that approaches the mainstream standard to reform their traditional retail business, a similar business model has been applied in those three Chinese communities.

Unlike how Toronto and Los Angeles show a large Chinese population distributed in a large-scale land mass, Chicago’s Chinatown suggests a comparatively small and compact commercial model with proportional open spaces (Figure 27). Sunset Park may not have similar area with Toronto and Los Angeles Chinatown, but
the high density of the community decided that it need implies a multi-functional commercial center, such as Chicago's Chinatown to replace the crowded street market. All three cases proved that a new commercial center can actually strengthen the dominant role of retail business in the communities. Further, a mixed modern commercial center that caters to the mainstream taste attracts visitors out or in the city. One negative of developing this commercial model is that new structures normally require higher rent, and some original tenants may not able to afford it. However, government funding and private support may help balance the rent and improve access. Planners and landscape architects may also help the transformation of projects from the original business streets into more consolidated centers.

On the other hand, those Chinese communities have clearly recognized the importance of open spaces, parks and other public space, and acknowledged them as crucial elements in community development process, to have activities and also keep a better quality of life.

In response to the final research question, there are several lessons Sunset Park could learn from other Chinatown communities:

1). Responding to the need for growth and population expansion may include several strategies: a. extended community boundaries, b. decrease the density of population, c. create more opportunities for cultural commerce, e.g. multi-functional commercial model such as Markham and Monterey Park could be one solution.
2). Develop business models and policies that use the land efficiently and attract more business investors from mainland China or Chinese-Americans. With the money they bring in, more facilities could be built for their residents of Sunset Park community. Such as Chinese communities in Toronto and Los Angeles, seize the opportunity of immigration policy, bring more rich investors into community, prepared the basic elements for better development.

3). Amplify the Chinese identity or cultural diversity of the community by programing and activities, in order to attract cultural tourism, both from native and foreign visitors. Even if the Chinese immigrants and residents in Monterey Park and Markham erased the obvious Chinese features when they build the new structures, they still reflected some ethnic characters in small particular details.

4). Create more public space for a better living environment, cultural events, gathering spaces, social exchange, and exercise. Use vacant lots or riverfront site, find the geographic advantages of communities. Such as Chicago Chinatown, amplify the good access to the river, create riverfront park, connect community to the nature. Rezoning plan (2009) gives Sunset Park an opportunity to connect to waterfront neighborhood and create a network of public spaces and promenade. Connect the existing green space with proposed open space, and generate a green corridor from 8th Ave to the waterfront.

5). Transform the previous park to a new, featured park with Chinese characters, such as the Barnes Park in Monterey Park, better served Chinese residents in the
communities. Sunset Park could transform existing green spaces, to an urban landscape with more functions and serve more peoples.

Suggested Design Recommendations for Sunset Park:

1) With a high density of architecture, Sunset Park might not have extra land for a multi-function shopping mall, like other Chinatown applied. Therefore, other strategies could be generated to combine the existing street market, create more specific shopping experience. Such like, revitalize the street markets with new structures, such as a canopy with Chinese features; update architectural facades and canopies for markets, inspired by the dragon dancing in spring festivals, architectural façade treatments could be temporary, added and removed easily with fabric or banner materials; proposal temporary out-door markets, which could be removable, not occupy street land, at weekends or holidays, the outer-door market will fulfill increasing shopping requests.

![Design Strategy 1](image)

Figure 28: Design Strategy 1

2) Develop pocket parks between buildings, to create sitting, resting and play spaces for the neighborhood. The pocket parks between streets will create attractive
visual experiences for pedestrian, and at the same time, provide small chatting and resting spaces for residents and visitors.

3) Seize the opportunity to create connections between Sunset Park and Bush Terminal Park by generating an expanding public space network for the community. One approach is to extend a commercial and green corridor along 8th Avenue terminating at the Bush Terminal Park.

As a new Chinese community in such crowded neighborhood, there is no chance for the Chinese to build many new structures now. Besides advertising, one hardly can find Chinese features in Sunset Park today, which makes it an ideal place to start a cultural plan learned from other communities. Considering coordination with
other ethnic groups in Sunset Park, these suggested strategies may also fulfill the requirements of residents in Sunset Park for collecting identity. The idea of presenting Chinese identity inside the Chinese - American community also aims to encourage both landscape and spatial transitions inside Sunset Park. Signifying Chinese identity might motivate other ethnic groups to present their identity in their own way, thus, form a more diverse community both physically and visually.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Sunset Park can learn valuable lessons from other communities’ landscape and urban design, to help present cultural identity and create a better living environment for its residents. Sunset Park has a similar population structure with previous downtown Chinatown, but inherits its physical foundation from preceding white people. This makes Sunset Park both a typical and a specific example. The function of vital installations is much more important than copying of Chinese-style structures. In the 21st century, people have more understanding with China, and with Chinese people even than before. Traditional Chinese temples, and pavilions can not be integrated with surroundings in a modern urban environment. A “heterotopia” decoration with red gates and Chinese signs is not useful here; rather, it is urgent to have a sustainable planning and design solution, considering Chinese cultural identities and background, solving housing resource constraints, limited green, decreasing commercial opportunities.

Even if gentrification can hardly be avoided, the well planned expansion and slowly paced growth will help to decrease the pressure of gentrification and give more time and opportunities for the community to think about sustainable environment and resilient urbanism. What’s more, site design is another beneficial way to solve and relieve the negative effects of gentrification.

This research has studied other Chinese communities, however, the proposed design illustrations remain unevaluated. Given the different situations and develop models of each Chinese community, it is hardly possible to copy one design from another place, therefore the information and idea provided by this thesis serve only as
a suggested guide for further landscape architecture design, not a solution for all new Chinese communities.

Finally, this idea explained in this thesis are not unique to North America, as China is growing into the biggest economic engine in the world, landscape architects in China are facing the same puzzles as in the American Chinese community: how to maintain and express specific cultural identity but at the same time, following the modern design trends in today. In the same way that Sunset Park can learn from other North American communities, perhaps Chinese cities can learn from other Asian precedents. When proposing and constructing Chinese structures and commercial architecture, it is important to avoid building a second downtown Chinatown in Manhattan, a Heterotopia place, where installations and structures function for tourism, rather than the community itself. Instead of focusing on symbolic signs and cliche meaning, start from the community’s requirements first.
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APPENDIX

a. Sunset Park Community Map (made by author)
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Historical Analysis: Development of Sunset Park Community

During the 19th century, the European immigrants that settled in Sunset Park first passed the Ellis Island.

Pen Drawing of Sunset Park

Earlier Business in 8th Ave

Alku Toinen
The first non-profit housing cooperatives in the U.S. Finnish co-op, 43rd Street.

Brooklyn Army Terminal
was built in 1919, which served as the warehouse during World War II

8th Ave with Chinese Business

Bush Terminal on the waterfront in Sunset Park neighborhood, which was built in 1890.

Sunset Park was built in 1891 and expanded in 1905.

In 1941 the Gowanus Expressway was built, connecting Sunset Park with surrounding parts of New York City.

Latino Shops during 1970s

Source: SunsetPark.com/NYC Parks/History of Sunset Park, Brooklyn, New York
Historical Analysis: Immigrant population

- Before 1800
- 1800: Irish immigrants helped to build Green-Wood Cemetery
- 1840
- 1880
- 1900: More than 25000 works been hired for Brooklyn Army Terminal warehouse industry.
- 1910
- 1920: The great depression in 1929.
- 1930
- 1940: After World War II, Bush Terminal encouraged the development of Cargo industry.

Sources: U.S. census data. SunsetPark.com
Historical Analysis: Ethnic Distribution Map

Source: http://www.urbanresearchmaps.org/
Map of Toronto Chinatown and Suburb Chinese Communities

- Old Chinatown
- North York
- Scarborough
- Mississauga
- Richmond Hill
- Markham
- Pacific Mall
- City of Toronto

Distances:
- 7 miles
- 10 miles
- 13 miles
f: Timeline of Toronto’s downtown Chinatown

Toronto Chinatown Timeline

In 1852, the first Chinese immigrant in Toronto was Sam Ching, who opened a laundry business on Baldwin Street West.

In 1879, First Chinatown established in Toronto. East Indian and Japanese street.

In 1908, the center of Chinatown was the intersection of Dundas West and Elizabeth Street, behind old City Hall.

In 1924, the Chinese community established in Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street.

In 1936, New Toronto was built behind the Chinese community building in downtown Toronto.

In 1940s, merchants abandoned Old Toronto.

In 1990s, gentrification happened in former downtown Chinatown, and Chinese businesses moved to King west with cheaper rent and profession employment.

Today, Chinese business form a core of local east mall, entertainment, and dining hub.

Toronto Chinatown street signs have similar style with Yonge-Eglinton and bar. Facades of buildings were painted to attract Chinese visitors.
h: Timeline of Los Angeles’s downtown Chinatown

Established in 1851

Entrance to the Chinatown, which opened on May 23, 1851.

From 1860 to 1880, a streetblock along North Los Angeles Street, known as Chinatown, was a bustling business area.

New Chinatown proposal in 1874.

New Chinatown - Central Plaza

The Dragon Gate above Broadway is one of the main entrances to the business area.

New Chinatown - Central Plaza

The statue honoring Dr. Sun Yat-sen is in Central Plaza.

The Chinese influence on San Gabriel Valley's history began in 1905.

San Gabriel considered Los Angeles's Chinatown over El Pueblo in 1910.

Chinatown moved to San Gabriel Valley from Chinatown in Los Angeles since late 1980s.
Map of Los Angeles Chinatown and Suburb Chinese Communities
Transformation of Atlantic Time Square

Atlantic Time Square, Monterey Park, CA

Shopping Mall + Residential Model:

Programing:  Grocery  Tourism

Luxury Condo  Dining  Cinema  Shopping  Theater

1980s

2000s
k: Transformation of Barnes Park

Barnes Park - Monterey Park, CA

Activities:
- Amphitheater: Religious Activities - Church Service
- Add Benches for public events
- Stage and Theater: Spring Festival
- Chinese Temple Style picnic Shelter: for family gathering and cheese, poker,
Timeline of Chicago Chinatown

1910 - Chinese population grew with the completion of the transcontinental arid which led to an influx of Chinese immigrants to the city of Chicago.

In 1870, Chinese Americans established the first Chinese settlement in the city, which eventually grew into what is now Chinese-American neighborhood.

1871 - Chinese immigration led to the establishment of the first Chinatown in Chicago, on the south side of the city.

1903 - The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) was founded by Dr. Charles K. Cheung to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

1907 - The Chinese Merchants Association was founded by Dr. Charles K. Cheung to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

1919 - The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was founded to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

1930 - The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was founded to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

1940 - The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was founded to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

1950 - The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was founded to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

1960 - The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was founded to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

1970 - The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was founded to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

1980 - The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was founded to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

1990 - The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was founded to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

2000 - The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was founded to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

2010 - The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was founded to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

2020 - The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was founded to promote the welfare of the Chinese community.

From 1980s today, the Chinatown area has become a major tourist destination, attracting visitors from around the world.

Central Nuclei includes the Chinese Culture Center, Leung Merchants Association building and the Chinese American Cultural Center.
Map of Chicago Chinatown and Possible Suburb Chinatown
Accessibility and parks of Chicago Chinatown
Shopping street model of Chicago Chinatown

Commercial model - Chinatown Square

Facilities + Forms: Symmetrical plaza gates and pavilions, small business streets

Activities: Serve Chinese and people in town also.
p: Park System of Chicago Chinatown

Parks and Open spaces - Sun Yat Sen Park and Ping Tom Park

Facilities + Forms: Pavilion + Rest space + Statue
Activities: Elders + children

Facilities + Forms: Pavilion + Pillar + Bridges + Riverfront Space
Activities: communities and surrounding residents

1970s - Sun Yat Sen Park

1999 - Ping Tom Park
q: Comparison of Chinatowns

Sunset Park, NY
- Composition:
- Accessibility: 278
- Commercial Model: Street market
- Land mass: 53,800 People per square mile
- Open Space & Parks:
- Streetscape signs: Chinese & English
- Pavilion + Facades + Pagoda: Not developed

Monterey Park, LA
- Composition:
- Accessibility: 10, 50
- Commercial Model: Shopping mall model
- Land mass: 7,793 People per square mile
- Open Space & Parks:
- Streetscape signs: Chinese & English
- Pavilion + Facades + Pagoda: Chinese modern style, Pagoda shopping mall

Markham, Toronto
- Composition:
- Accessibility: 407, 404
- Commercial Model: Shopping mall model
- Land mass: 8,513 People per square mile
- Open Space & Parks:
- Streetscape signs: Chinese & English
- Pavilion + Facades + Pagoda: Chinese Pavilions + facades

Chicago Chinatown, IL
- Composition:
- Accessibility: 35
- Commercial Model: Street market
- Land mass: 16,250 People per square mile
- Open Space & Parks:
- Streetscape signs: Chinese & English
- Pavilion + Facades + Pagoda: Chinese Pavilions + facades
Design Strategy 2: Pocket Park with greens and open spaces, playground, rest area.