Place Making of Asian-American Groups in Washington, DC
Outline

- Research Topic
- Background
- Research Questions
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- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Findings
- The Product
Asian-Americans bring a distinct culture and background to the United States that is exhibited in different ways physically in their communities.
People are immigrating from Asia to the United States in very large numbers.

Most of these immigrants locate in urban areas.

They bring a distinct culture with them which often becomes more noticeable as they establish a more permanent presence in American cities.
### Washington D.C. Racial Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>67.80%</td>
<td>51.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>8.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>11.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed / Other</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Country of Origin for D.C.’s Immigrants**

(ACS, 2008)
Research Questions

- How do these Asian-American groups influence the physical form and character of their surroundings?
- Do these groups make use of design patterns from their homelands as they shape the physical form and appearance of their communities?
- How do these groups create a sense of place for themselves?
The primary goal is to document how different Asian-American groups adapt their surroundings to conform to their different cultures.

The secondary goal is to ascertain the differences and similarities between the groups. Examples of Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese communities in Washington, D.C. are examined.

Recommendations for design guidelines for Asian-American communities are provided.
What are ethnic enclaves?

- Beachhead for immigrants in to the country.
- Protected from discrimination.
- A connection to their homelands.
- Location to network.
- A place where cultures meet and spread.
Immigration Law

- Historically immigration legislation discriminated against people from Asia.
- Many early Asian immigrants were unable to bring their families to the US.
- Asians had been considered a threat to American jobs.
- Laws began to ease up after World War II.
Origins

- Many Chinese came to the US in the mid-1800s as laborers.
- Families were not allowed to immigrate.
- Clustered together as a result of discrimination.
- Found in many cities in the US but concentrated on the West Coast.
- Their enclaves were frequent targets of urban planning interventions (e.g., slum clearance, urban renewal, etc.)
The Enclaves and Their People

- Diverse groups of people coming from different regions and speaking different dialects.
- Outgrew their historic enclaves after 1965.
- Started moving into the suburbs.
- Largely tried to assimilate into the surrounding culture.
- The “Ethnoburbs” also attract wealthy Chinese.
Origins

- Relatively small population that came during the early 1900s.
- Were restricted to work in only a small number of professions due to discrimination.
- Started a number of businesses catering to their communities.
- Large influx in population after 1965 due to affinities with American ideals (entrepreneurial opportunities, religion, etc.)
The Enclaves and Their People.

- Korean immigrants are largely Christian (unlike South Korea itself)
- Churches are very important in the Korean community.
- Very entrepreneurial and create businesses to serve their community.
- Some try to recreate the feel of Korea in their community.
- Most Koreans work for other Koreans.
Vietnamese

Origins

- Vietnamese came to the US after the Vietnam War ended in 1975.
- They fled from South Vietnam.
- Ethnic Chinese from Vietnam also followed.
- Vietnamese Americans lost their connection to their home country.
- Their population was spread evenly throughout the country initially but they began to concentrate in certain areas.
Vietnamese

The Enclave and its People.

- Many hope to recreate aspects of pre-1975 Vietnam which is forever lost to them.
- Vietnam War is very polarizing so they try to find a balance of how to observe their past without offending anyone.
- Have difficulties finding their own identity.
- Hubs of their communities are often shopping centers designed to resemble markets found in Vietnam.
Key Books

ALIEN NEIGHBORS, FOREIGN FRIENDS
Charlotte Brooks

LEGACIES OF STRUGGLE
Angie Y. Chung

LITTLE SAIGONS
Karin Aguilar-San Juan

Ethnoburb
Wei Li

Contemporary Ethnic Geographies in America

Comparative Planning Cultures

TRANSCONTINENTAL URBANISM
From Urban Enclave to Ethnic Suburb

Transnational Urbanism

New Asian Communities in Pacific Rim Countries
Place Making

- The process of making a place unique and interesting.
- Groups can define their territory.
- This idea is lost in most suburbs today.
- Kevin Lynch connected it with how people moved through and visualized the built environment.
- Circulation, land uses, focal points, architecture, and landscape elements work together to accomplish this.
Place Making Images
Methodology

- Format: Exploratory Multiple Case Study
- Location of Study: Washington, DC
- Communities specifically looked at:
  - Annandale, VA – Focal point of Korean Community in the region.
  - Falls Church, VA – Focal point of largest Vietnamese population on the east coast.
  - Washington, DC.‘s downtown Chinatown, the oldest Chinese community in the region.
Methodology

- Document Analysis
- Direct Observation (Site Visits)
- Geographic Information Systems Maps
- Documentation of Physical Artifacts
Identify Key Urban Elements
Lynch, *The Image of the City* (1960)

- Analysis of aerial photographs, direct observation, GIS for:
  - Paths
  - Edges
  - Districts
  - Nodes
  - Landmarks
Path
Edge
District
Node
Landmark
Comparative Analysis

- Analyze the data to see if there are any similarities or differences between the three communities with respect to their shaping of the built environment.
Findings
Site Locations
Population Density of Metro Area
Asian Population Concentrations in Metro Area

The map illustrates the percentage of Asian populations in different areas of the metro region. The legend on the right side of the map explains the color coding for different percentage ranges:

- 0 - 20%
- 20 - 40%
- 40 - 60%
- 60 - 80%
- 80 - 100%

The map highlights regions with high concentrations of Asian populations, indicated by red circles. The percentages are color-coded according to the legend, with darker colors representing higher percentages.
Annandale
Population

Population Per Square Mile
- 0.0 - 6852.6
- 6852.7 - 14756.3
- 14756.4 - 26775.0
- 26775.1 - 46066.7
- 46066.8 - 88300.0

Percent Asian
- 0 - 20%
- 20 - 40%
- 40 - 60%
- 60 - 80%
- 80 - 100%
Annandale

- At first glance, appears to be a conventional suburban area.
- The signage is the most evident ethnic characteristic.
- Korean businesses have congregated here.
Annandale

- It is the hub for the Korean community in the Washington, DC area.
- Full of professional services and stores that cater to the Korean community.
The presence of obvious Asian inspired architecture was not present.

There was little in the way of cultural artifacts to be found.
Observed no visible spillover in to the surrounding residential areas.
Paths did not express any distinct ethnic identity.
Edges did not express any distinct ethnic identity.
Districts

Signage helped to define an identifiable Korean district.
Korean businesses were clustered in some shopping centers.
Landmarks did not express any distinct ethnic identity.
Falls Church
Falls Church

- Community concentrated in one shopping center.
- It functioned as a tourist attraction as well as a hub for the Vietnamese community.
Falls Church

- Large shopping center with over 40 stores catering directly to the Vietnamese community.
- Has everything from spice shops, restaurants, music and video store, to travel agents.
No visible spread of obvious ethnic elements beyond this shopping center.

Functions only as a node.

Other factors such as real estate prices may inhibit spread.

Has South Vietnamese roots.
Population

Population Per Square Mile
0.0 - 6852.6
6852.7 - 14756.3
14756.4 - 26775.0
26775.1 - 46066.7
46066.8 - 88300.0

Percent Asian
0 - 20%
20 - 40%
40 - 60%
60 - 80%
80 - 100%
Chinatown

- Area defined by strict design guidelines.
- Used primarily by tourists.
- Few Chinese live or even utilize this area anymore.
Chinatown

- Area is defined by distinctive streetlights, signage, and architecture.
- Businesses such as McDonalds, Hooters, and Bed Bath & Beyond conform to ethnic signage requirements.
Chinatown

- Older buildings slowly being replaced with larger modern ones.
- New buildings still required to have Asian styling.
Paths did not express any distinct ethnic identity.
There is a relatively distinct edge for the Chinatown district, defined by design elements.
Chinatown is a clearly defined district, with specific boundaries where the design guidelines apply.
Within the district, there are identifiable nodes of activity related to the Chinatown theme.
There are several key landmarks within Chinatown.
Summary of Findings

- Koreans concentrated in one area.
- Vietnamese concentrated in a single shopping center which also serves as tourist attraction.
- Chinese have mostly left Chinatown.
- Chinatown today is essentially a tourist attraction.
- Asian influence on surrounding areas not readily apparent.
The Product

- Design Guidelines
  - Split into four categories
    - Area Wide
    - Streetscape
    - Buildings
    - Plazas / Open Space
Area Wide

- Density
- Mixed Use
- Circulation
- Neighborhood Buffers
- Civic Art
- Authenticity
Example: Civic Art

- A way to insert local character and history into an area.
- It creates something unique that sets it apart from surrounding areas.
Streetscape

- Protect Pedestrians
- Encourage Pedestrian Activity
- Enhance Transit Stops
- Pedestrian / Utility Conflicts
- Street Trees
- Pedestrian Scaled Lighting
- Street Windows
Example: Street Windows

- Creates an interesting and open environment.
- Allows businesses to display what’s inside.
Buildings

- Build to the Street
- Have Multiple Tenants / Be Pedestrian Oriented
- Emphasize Main Entrances
- Local Character
- Parking
- Quality Construction
- Human Scale
Try to use vernacular architecture.
Incorporate subtle traits into construction.
Plazas / Open Space

- Connect Green Space
- Have Open Space with Residential Developments
- Place Plazas in High Use Areas
- Function of the Plaza
- Views, Circulation, and Boundaries
- Plants and Microclimates
- Seating
- Safety
There are numerous different functions that a space can have.

The size can affect the usage and function.
Avoid forcing the creation of “theme” areas like Chinatown in D.C.
Recommendations for Asian Communities

- Allow flexibility while maintaining local character and standards.
Recommendations for Asian Communities

- Do not ignore existing populations.
- Things like civic art are easy to incorporate.