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**THREE THINGS THAT CAN BE DONE TODAY TO MAKE
CHINATOWN'S PUBLIC SPACES MORE ACCESSIBLE
FOR 1000'S OF SENIORS AND CHILDREN**



連接華埠 Chinatown Connections

A PROJECT OF



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



SUPPORTED BY



<http://chinatown-pcdc.org/>

This report is a part of Chinatown Connections: Bridging Our Community, an initiative for safe routes to schools and parks to Chinatown supported by the Knight Foundation and led by the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) in partnership with Public Workshop and Spiral Q Puppet Theater. Over the course of 9 months, community stakeholders engaged in a series of workshops and public meetings around street safety and access to parks. The initiative culminated in a giant puppet parade and open sidewalk festival which saw 150 members of the Chinatown community walk through the neighborhood in a symbolic reclamation of a physical landscape which had long been encroached upon by local highways and urban renewal plans in the 1960s.

2,520 KIDS

3 K-8 SCHOOLS

4 DAYCARES

USE FRANKLIN SQ FROM CHINATOWN EVERYDAY

Crosswalk timer too short for seniors and kids



Non-existent crosswalk



Corner design encourages speeding



This is supposed to be a public plaza but is now used for police parking



Cars speed to and from highway



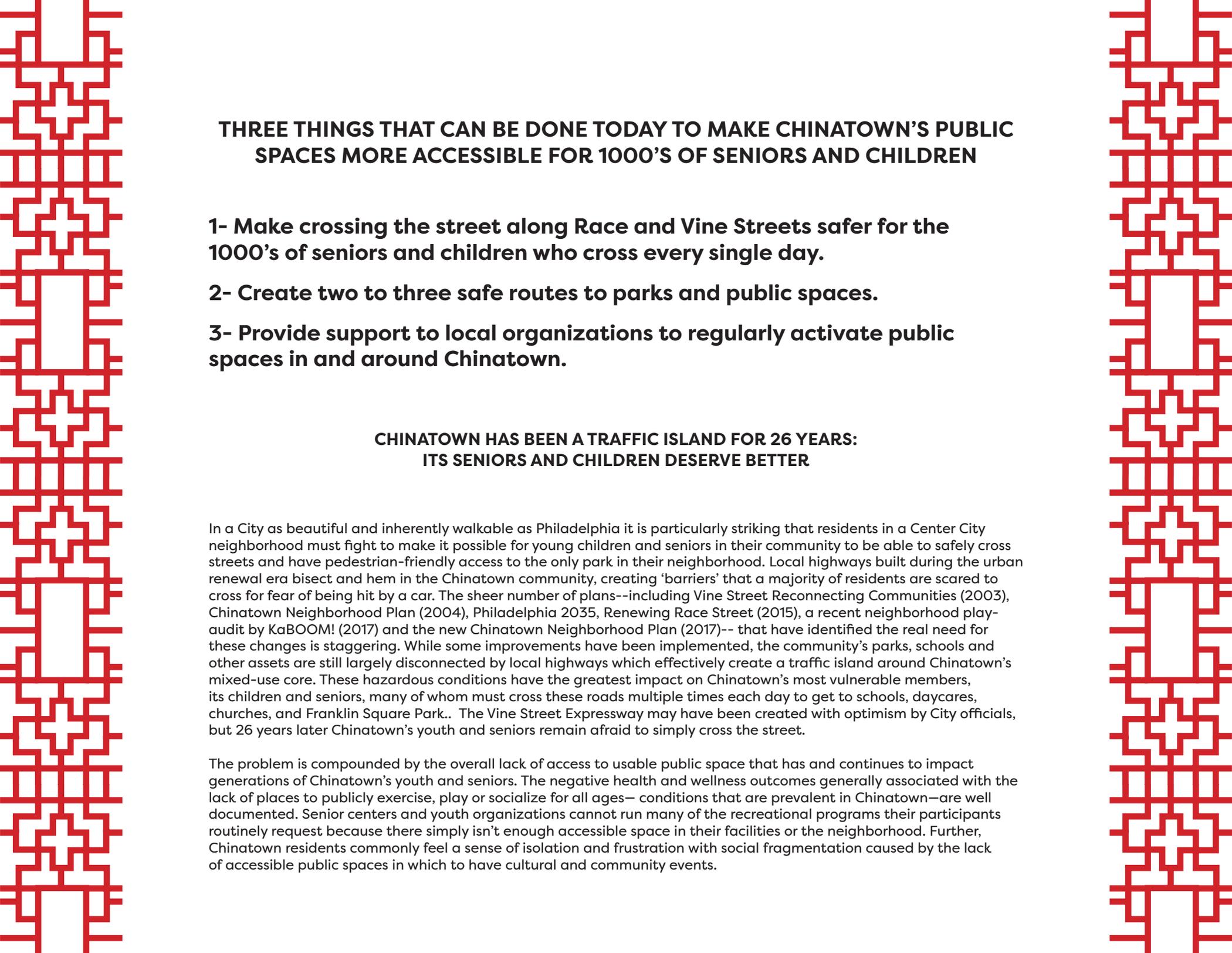
Now hidden subway station. People hidden, feels unsafe



1000's Of Children And Seniors In Chinatown Have To Cross Numerous Intersections Like This One Every Single Day Simply To Have Access To A Place To Play, Exercise Or Relax

Rare green space in neighborhood but permission to use is unclear





THREE THINGS THAT CAN BE DONE TODAY TO MAKE CHINATOWN'S PUBLIC SPACES MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR 1000'S OF SENIORS AND CHILDREN

- 1- Make crossing the street along Race and Vine Streets safer for the 1000's of seniors and children who cross every single day.**
- 2- Create two to three safe routes to parks and public spaces.**
- 3- Provide support to local organizations to regularly activate public spaces in and around Chinatown.**

CHINATOWN HAS BEEN A TRAFFIC ISLAND FOR 26 YEARS: ITS SENIORS AND CHILDREN DESERVE BETTER

In a City as beautiful and inherently walkable as Philadelphia it is particularly striking that residents in a Center City neighborhood must fight to make it possible for young children and seniors in their community to be able to safely cross streets and have pedestrian-friendly access to the only park in their neighborhood. Local highways built during the urban renewal era bisect and hem in the Chinatown community, creating 'barriers' that a majority of residents are scared to cross for fear of being hit by a car. The sheer number of plans--including Vine Street Reconnecting Communities (2003), Chinatown Neighborhood Plan (2004), Philadelphia 2035, Renewing Race Street (2015), a recent neighborhood play-audit by KaBOOM! (2017) and the new Chinatown Neighborhood Plan (2017)-- that have identified the real need for these changes is staggering. While some improvements have been implemented, the community's parks, schools and other assets are still largely disconnected by local highways which effectively create a traffic island around Chinatown's mixed-use core. These hazardous conditions have the greatest impact on Chinatown's most vulnerable members, its children and seniors, many of whom must cross these roads multiple times each day to get to schools, daycares, churches, and Franklin Square Park.. The Vine Street Expressway may have been created with optimism by City officials, but 26 years later Chinatown's youth and seniors remain afraid to simply cross the street.

The problem is compounded by the overall lack of access to usable public space that has and continues to impact generations of Chinatown's youth and seniors. The negative health and wellness outcomes generally associated with the lack of places to publicly exercise, play or socialize for all ages-- conditions that are prevalent in Chinatown--are well documented. Senior centers and youth organizations cannot run many of the recreational programs their participants routinely request because there simply isn't enough accessible space in their facilities or the neighborhood. Further, Chinatown residents commonly feel a sense of isolation and frustration with social fragmentation caused by the lack of accessible public spaces in which to have cultural and community events.

The page features a decorative border on both the left and right sides, consisting of a repeating red geometric pattern. The pattern is a stylized, interlocking grid of squares and rectangles, with some squares containing a cross-like shape. The overall effect is a traditional Chinese architectural motif, possibly representing a window lattice or a decorative screen.

The above three recommendations build on various proposals made repeatedly in plans over the past fourteen years. The key difference is that a majority of the suggestions can be implemented within the next couple of months for a relatively small investment and with few complicated policy negotiations. Given that the success of many enhancements rely on activation and ownership by Chinatown residents, quick, engaging improvements are essential to countering the lack of community trust, will and participation in civic processes created by fourteen years of planning followed by little action. These quick and relatively affordable improvements are also essential for helping residents, stakeholders and City officials ‘test’ and understand what really works before investing significant sums of money and effort in extensive permanent improvements.

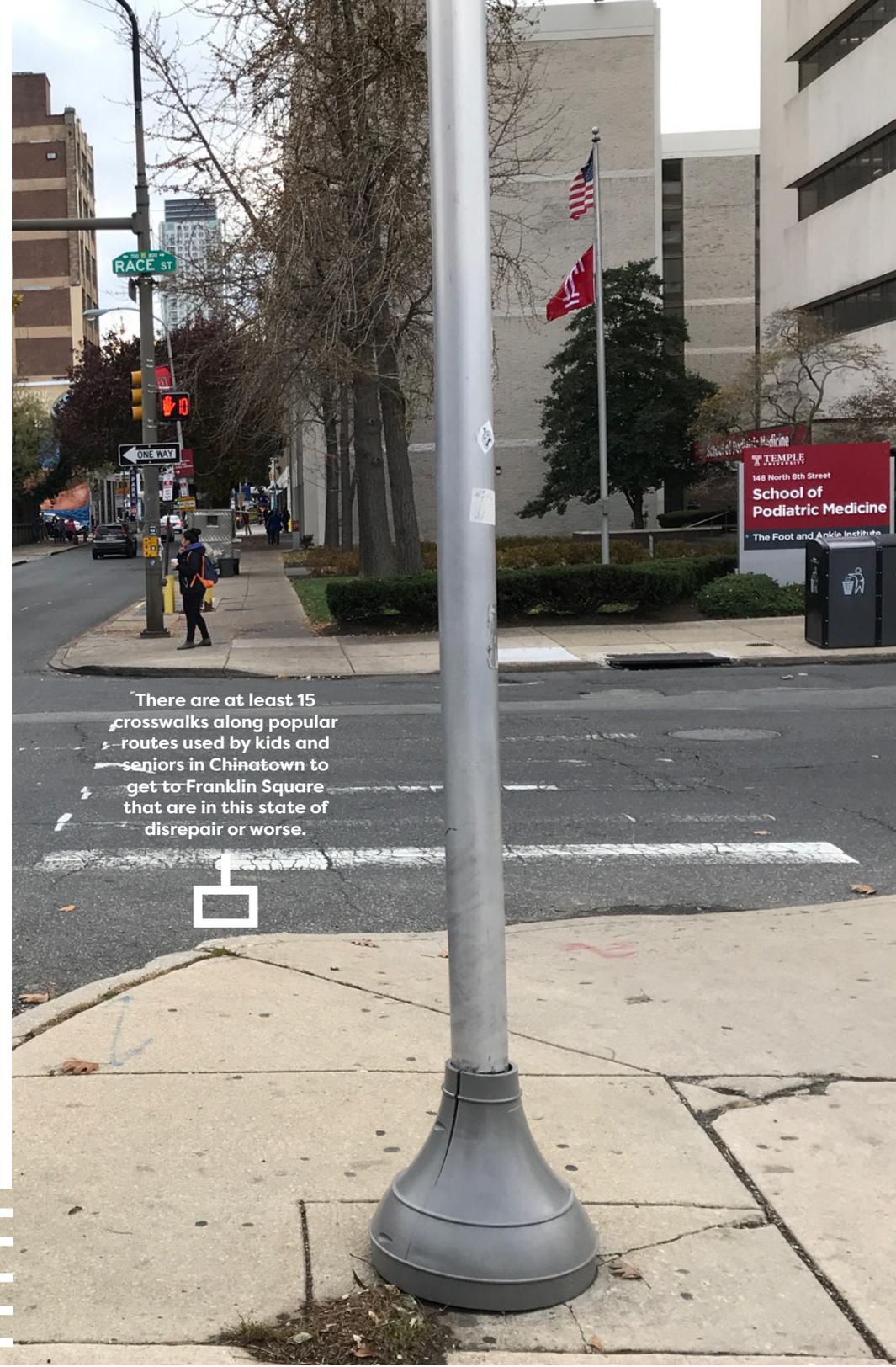
Gathered through surveying and interviewing various residents and stakeholders in Chinatown as well as other Franklin Square users, the suggested changes do not replace the much needed, more substantial improvements to Race, Vine and other streets outlined in the various aforementioned plans. However, with relatively little effort, city officials and foundations could make an immediate difference in the lives of the 2500 children and seniors who walk to Franklin Square every day as well as the many more who would love to if they felt safe.

Chinatown Is Our City’s Neighborhood Of The Future

It is important to note that these quick improvements as well as more substantial future street and public space improvements have much broader implications for Philadelphia and the region than may initially be apparent. To his credit, Mayor Kenney has done much to promote Philadelphia as an immigrant friendly city and Chinatown, at the very center of our City, remains a significant destination and place to begin for new immigrants. It is less commonly known that it is also a place to which Chinese American seniors are returning to retire. Instead of being isolated in a retirement home in the suburbs as is most common in the United States, seniors are returning to Chinatown to be connected with their peers, for easy access to resources and the general walkability of Chinatown. This unique mix of young and old is the future of how communities more effectively address aging and lower health costs. Other countries such as Germany have developed housing policies and neighborhood design principles to support such approaches. With the Pennsylvania Corporation For Aging already deeply involved in the neighborhood, investments in walkability and public space improvements in Chinatown for seniors and youth represents an important opportunity to model, test and assess the impact of such work on well-being for Philadelphia and beyond. Chinatown is our City’s community of the future.



MAKE CROSSING THE STREET ALONG RACE AND VINE STREETS SAFER FOR THE 1000's OF SENIORS AND CHILDREN WHO CROSS EVERY DAY.



There are at least 15 crosswalks along popular routes used by kids and seniors in Chinatown to get to Franklin Square that are in this state of disrepair or worse.



MAKE CROSSING THE STREET ALONG RACE AND VINE STREETS SAFER FOR THE 1000'S OF SENIORS AND CHILDREN WHO CROSS EVERY SINGLE DAY

1- Repaint Faded Crosswalks

Many of the crosswalks at some of the most critical and dangerous intersections along Race Street between 10th and 6th have almost entirely disappeared from wear and neglect. This is particularly problematic at 9th, 8th, 7th and Franklin Streets, with there being almost no crosswalks left at 8th and Franklin, the two most dangerous intersections. Philadelphia Streets Department has a process for identifying faded crosswalks and requesting repainting through an online form but requests can also be made through 311 or the Streets Department's Customer Affairs Unit at 215-686-5560.

References And Resources-

Philadelphia Streets Dept. Online Request Form <http://potholes.phila.gov/>

2- Lengthen Crosswalk Lights So Daycares And Senior Citizens Can Safely Cross

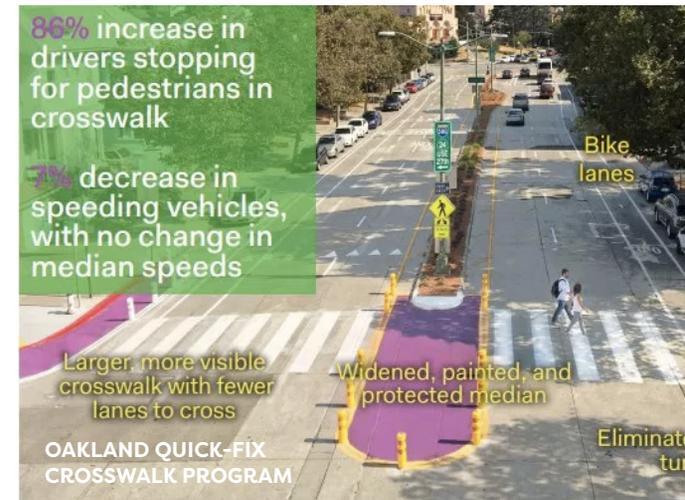
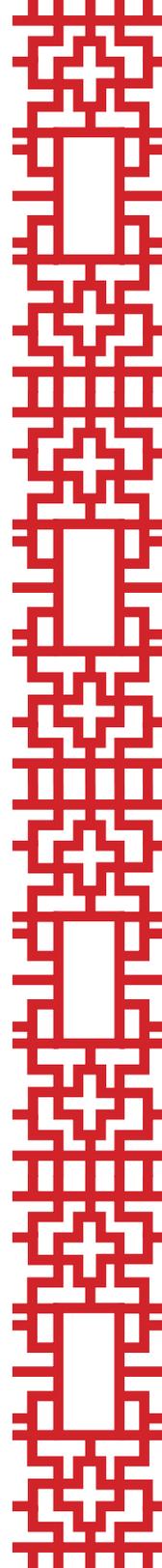
Strikingly, of the seniors, Chinatown daycares, and local youth groups surveyed, a majority were not able to safely cross intersections at Vine Street or along Race Street in the current time allotted by the traffic lights. While the Philadelphia 2035 plan, the DVRPC plan and others for Race and Vine Streets have recommended narrowing both streets with design changes to effectively shorten the crossing distance this will take time and significant capital to implement. Lengthening the amount of time for youth groups and individual senior citizens to safely cross the street will immediately improve a sense of safety and increase usage of Franklin Square by people of all ages in Chinatown.

3- Slow Down Traffic Entering And Leaving Race Street

Aside from the crossings along Vine Street, the intersections at 8th and Race and Franklin and Race are the two most dangerous points along the most commonly used route to Franklin Square. Both intersections are transition zones where cars tend to take risks and be in a hurry in a manner that is dangerous to other users. Both corners are poorly designed and encourage speeding. Replacing the corner parking spaces on the northeast corner of 8th and Race as well as the northwest corner of Franklin and Race with temporary bump outs of planters and bollards will slow drivers who turn aggressively through the crosswalks. Increasing public activity in adjacent spaces, inserting rumble strips, repainting the nearly invisible sidewalks, painting substantial public art in the street, and implementing a bike lane now along Race Street will also help with traffic calming until more substantial improvements can be implemented.

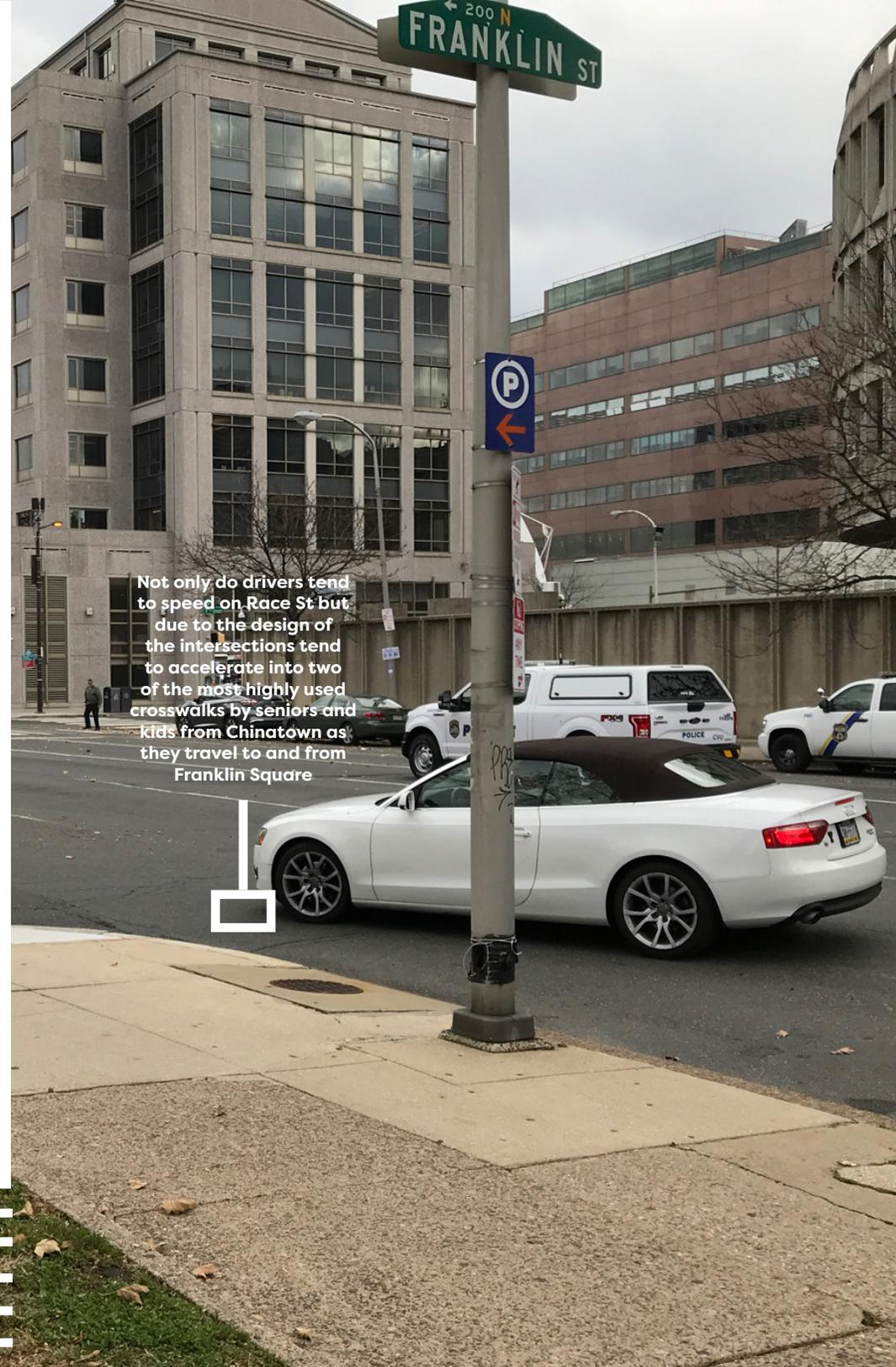
References And Resources-

Oakland's Quick-Fix Crosswalk Program <https://sf.streetsblog.org/2017/10/10/oakland-promises-fast-guerilla-style-safety-measures/>
Gray's Ferry Triangles Project <https://www.pps.org/places/grays-ferry-triangles/>
Revive Chinatown Community Transportation Plan http://www.ftscities.com/files/Oakland_Revive%20Chinatown_v3.pdf





**SLOW DOWN TRAFFIC
TRAVELING ON AS WELL AS
ENTERING AND LEAVING
RACE STREET.**





CREATE TWO OR THREE SAFE ROUTES TO FRANKLIN SQUARE THAT ALSO CONNECT OTHER PUBLIC SPACES.



INITIAL MAPPING ACTIVITIES WITH RESIDENTS SHOWED THAT A 1ST 'SAFE ROUTES TO PARKS' PATH COULD FOLLOW 10TH AND RACE, CONNECTING THE RAIL PARK, 10TH STREET PLAZA, BSL PLAZA, THE METRO LAWN AND FRANKLIN SQUARE AS WELL AS MANY STAKEHOLDER ORGANIZATIONS.



CREATE TWO OR THREE SAFE ROUTES TO FRANKLIN SQUARE THAT ALSO CONNECT OTHER PUBLIC SPACES.

1- Involve Residents And Businesses In The Design Of The Routes

Leverage a participatory design process to raise awareness about the routes and the amenities as well as the programs that the routes are connecting. How can local businesses and organizations participate and support a route? While more traditional participatory design activities such as mapping, interviews and walking tours can be used to create the 'Safe Routes', working with students and senior groups to create quick, Walk-Your-City-esque signage to test potential routes and Better Blocks-esque temporary improvement prototyping will increase engagement, awareness and ownership.

References And Resources-

<https://walkyourcity.org/>
<http://betterblock.org/>

2- Make The Routes Highly Visible And Appealing To Users

People will use the new routes if they are sensible, visible, safe and there are streetscape amenities that make the route generally alluring. Branding the routes with cultural signage and sidewalk as well as street painting is important for increasing visibility and pride. This could also include creating artist and community generated 'town squares' (intersections) at key places along routes such as 10th and Race. This will generally strengthen a sense of place, promote traffic calming and aid in wayfinding. Once or twice a year, local youth and senior organizations can highlight the primary route by designing and creating temporary lanterns. Creating cultural 'rest stops' along routes that combine seating, wayfinding and cultural installations that could be rotating will help make routes appear more welcoming, encouraging seniors in particular to travel further. These rest stops could take the form of benches with signage and other amenities or parklets that can be clad or decorated with rotating graphics that raise awareness about local events, history or community assets. Providing more lighting along routes to public spaces is a major issue and benches and parklets could incorporate solar lighting elements. Lastly, providing more amenities in Franklin Square for local users will encourage great ownership and use.

Involving not just residents and neighborhood stakeholders in the process but also tapping into the significant local signage and fabrication expertise for implementation will help maximize equity, awareness and ownership for all efforts.

References And Resources-

Intersection Repair <http://www.cityrepair.org/street-painting-examples/>
Tiny WPA's Mantua Senior Benches
Lunar Festival Lanterns <http://hesterstreet.org/projects/ground-m-s-131/>
Avenue Of The Immigrants Signage <http://hesterstreet.org/projects/allen-pike-street-malls/>
South Street Greenway Public Art Project <http://hesterstreet.org/projects/south-street-greenway-public-art-project/>





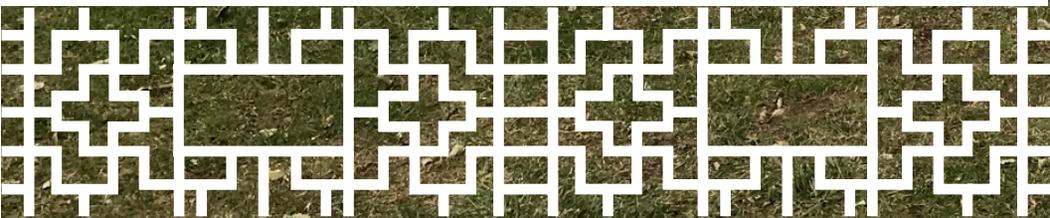
While implementation and maintenance costs are higher, the rainbow intersection at 13th and Locust shows how an intersection can be both a neighborhood 'gateway' and wayfinding device.



MAKE UNDERUTILIZED SPACES ALONG RACE STREET WELCOMING TO PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY KIDS AND SENIORS.



Neighborhood daycares and others would use this rare neighborhood green space next to Metro for activities but don't feel like they have permission.





Senior playgrounds are great but opportunities for exercise can initially be tested and provided in Chinatown a much lower cost manner with such things as Tiny WPA's sit-able bike racks.

3- Eliminate Parking In And Activate The Broad Street Line Plaza

The most commonly crossed as well as one of the most dangerous intersections along Race Street is at the stoplight on the north side of Race Street at 8th Street. Returning the Broad Street Line Plaza to being one of the most substantial public spaces in the neighborhood is important from a traffic safety and general safety standpoint. The wall of cars is threatening to public transit users as well as passersby. The current situation implicitly communicates that cars are more important than humans.

A number of residents expressed interest in using the Plaza to rest as a waypoint between Franklin Square and the center of Chinatown but also as a place to exercise. With its hardscape surface it is an excellent spot for basic exercises, dance lessons and tai-chi, which in turn will help with traffic calming at that intersection. A number of residents were interested in placing outdoor exercise equipment here but simpler benches and bike racks that encourage play or exercise as well as providing some shade in the form of movable tree planters will make the space inviting.

References And Resources-

Tiny WPA's Playable Bench
Tiny WPA's Sitable Bike Rack
Outdoor Exercise Equipment

4- Activate The Routes

Build community knowledge about these routes by supporting special events and activities with key youth and senior organizations along the routes or in Franklin Square. While this could simply involve supporting regular programming and activities in public spaces for various user groups, it might also involve monthly events at spaces along the route or even active, public art projects and performances that inhabit the streets, side walks and open spaces.

References And Resources-

Philadelphia Suns Lions Dancing
Aeolian Ride <http://www.aeolian-ride.info/>
Cai Quo-Qiang's Fireflies
Play Streets

4- Focus On Safety, Security And Traffic Enforcement Along These Routes

Work with police officers and re-develop a Town Watch for the neighborhood to ensure these routes are routinely policed, including more focused traffic violation enforcement at key intersections along the chosen routes so that residents feel safe.



SENIOR PLAYGROUNDS



AVE OF IMMIGRANTS SIGNAGE



PHILADELPHIA SUNS LIONS DANCING



A choreographed bike advocacy ride with unique inflatable windbreakers, the Aeolian Ride shows how art and joyful protest can merge to shift attitudes about street use and design.



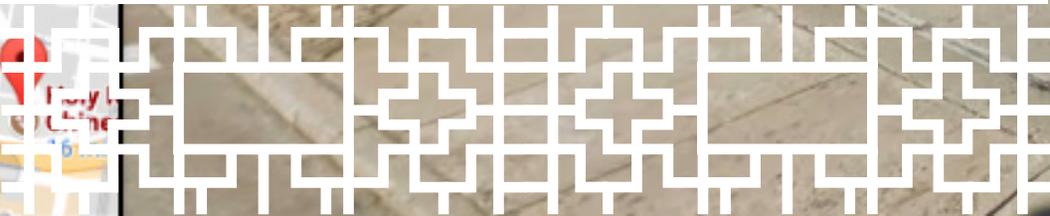
Even benches can be co-created with stakeholders to meet various local needs along a safe route such as encouraging exercise or creating 'cultural rest stops' for celebrating local assets.



PROVIDE SUPPORT TO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO REGULARLY ACTIVATE PUBLIC SPACES IN AND AROUND CHINATOWN.



Seniors and senior orgs want and need to use this space for physical activities but feel unsafe due to heavy use by homeless people



PROVIDE SUPPORT TO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO REGULARLY ACTIVATE PUBLIC SPACES IN AND AROUND CHINATOWN

Our research indicates that in particular, seniors will be significantly more likely to use a public space in Chinatown if there are organized activities for them in that space. Even local daycares feel like they lack 'permission' to use a number of the open spaces in Chinatown. Further, few seniors use the 10th Street Plaza or Franklin Square because of lack of awareness about the spaces, little sense of ownership, a dearth of amenities or programs for them, concerns about traffic safety and general worries about security. Simultaneously, On Lok (Senior) House and others lack the space necessary for seniors to be able to exercise. In fact, adequate communal space for any sort of larger group activities is lacking in Chinatown and organizations such as On Lok House are unable to fully meet the growing demand amongst seniors. While better public space amenities will be great, with minimal effort and investment, an investment in programming will transform Chinatown's few public spaces into assets for seniors, kids and the larger community which in turn will make the neighborhood safer for everyone.

1- Provide Support For Regular Free Tai-Chi, Dance And Exercise Classes In Franklin Square And 10th Street Plaza.

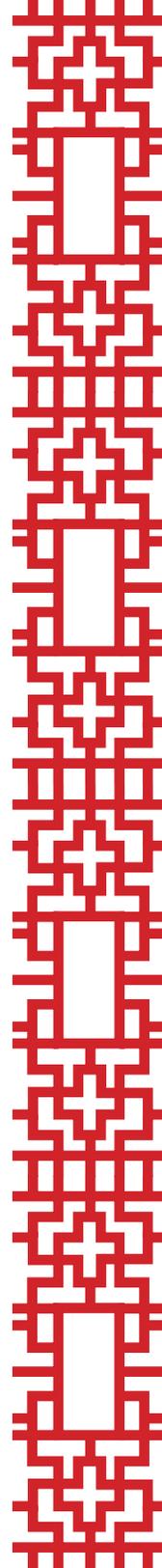
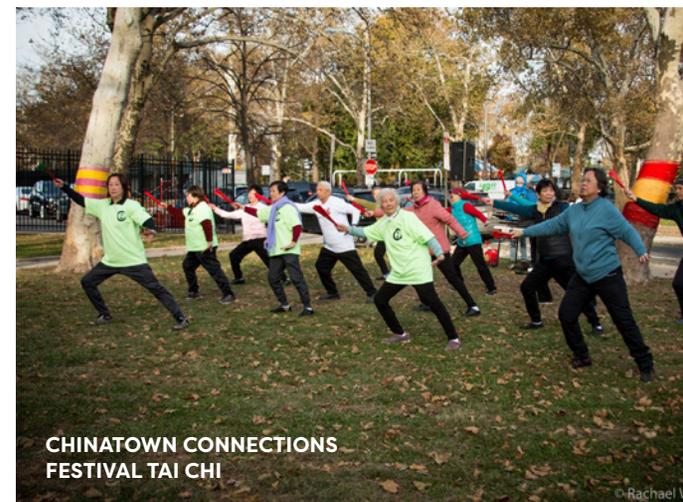
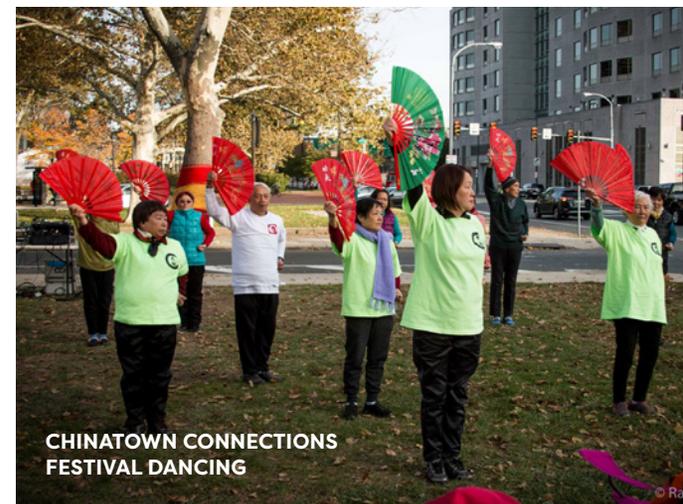
'As long as it's not icy, we are happy to exercise outside.'-Gary Ng

\$40-\$50 a day covers the cost of an tai-chi instructor, a free snack and marketing to support an hour long class for 30-40 seniors. Providing support to deliver at least one class in Franklin Square, 10th Street Plaza, BSL Plaza or the Metro 'lawn', five days a week for seniors will have a considerable impact in helping seniors feel comfortable in and have ownership of the public spaces in the neighborhood. Piloting such a program for three months at a time with small breaks in between will allow organizations to assess the impact of the investment. There are many precedents that demonstrate that while it will be great to have some degree of supported ongoing public space programming for seniors, that once a sense of ownership and culture of use has been established that seniors will largely self organize exercises and activities on their own.

After the pilot phase, ongoing programming could be supported by the Pennsylvania Corporation For Aging's open proposal period in November of every year.

2- Work With 6th District Officers To Keep Public Spaces Clear And Non-Threatening

With a firm surface and close proximity to On Lok senior housing and others, 10th Street Plaza has great potential as an easily accessible space for seniors in the neighborhood to do tai chi, dance and exercise classes every day. However, due to significant use by homeless people, particularly early in the morning when classes and informal practice might take place, the space feels unsafe. Residents and organizations will use the 10th Street Plaza for activities if they have the support of local social service groups and the 6th District Police Station to ensure that the space is clear every morning and checked throughout the day. Seniors will use public spaces such as the 10th Street Plaza as early as 6 am in the morning.



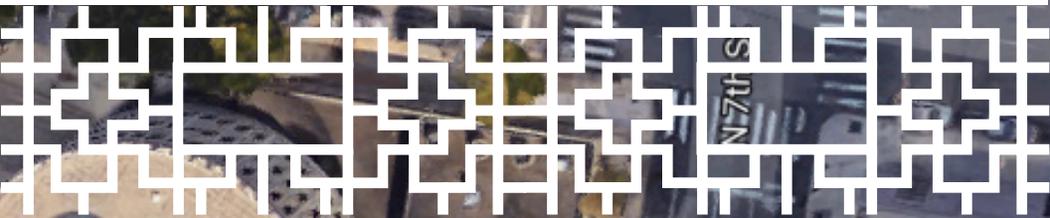


PROVIDE MICRO-GRANTS FOR LIGHTWEIGHT, MOVABLE AMENITIES TO EMPOWER CITIZENS TO BETTER UTILIZE THEIR PUBLIC SPACES



Various youth organizations use this area behind the Square Burger food stand on a regular basis for activities.

Daycares and other youth organizations often use this space and the area behind the food stand for games and play. Movable seating and other amenities that allow teachers to easily adapt to or support the day's activities were requested



3- Provide Micro-Grants For Lightweight, Movable Amenities To Empower Citizens To Better Utilize Their Public Spaces

While many organizations and individuals asked for more places to play, exercise and socialize in Franklin Square, implementing these changes in a more permanent manner can be costly and time consuming. A good first step is to provide micro-grants to neighborhood organizations, including Franklin Square (Historic Philadelphia) to acquire or create such things as movable seating; loose parts play kits; public space games such as large scale checkers; and a rolling exercise cart with things like jump ropes, hula hoops, etc.. These implements could also be used by daycares and senior groups to better utilize spaces like the 10th Street Plaza or the Metro 'lawn'. Using lightweight, movable amenities will also help stakeholders such as Historic Philadelphia better understand how people will use their space before investing in more permanent improvements.

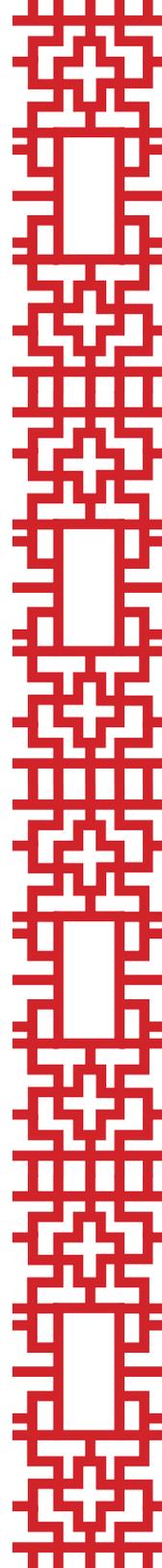
To build ownership and strengthen youth engagement, some of these things such as lightweight benches or the rolling play/exercise storage carts could be designed and built with local after-school youth groups.

References And Resources-

Public Workshop's Build-It! Disks
Imagination Playground-In-A-Box <http://www.imaginationplayground.com/>
The Uni-Project <https://www.theuniproject.org/>
Public Workshop's DIY Seesaw
Smith Memorial Playground's Mobile 'Play' Bike

4- Do Much More In Chinatown's Public Spaces

The Chinatown Connection's festival clearly demonstrated that a broad group of individuals will even brave frigid weather to participate in a wide variety of activities in Chinatown's underutilized public spaces. While having more events, parades and festivals can be quite resource-intensive, they are fantastic ways to continue to build momentum, ownership, agency, connectedness and a sense of opportunity. That being said, even small efforts, such as moving a meeting or class outside whenever possible will go a long way towards making Chinatown's public spaces more accessible for 1000's of children and seniors.



PUBLIC WORKSHOP
DIY SEESAW



PUBLIC WORKSHOP
BUILD-IT! DISKS



DIY BENCH BUILDING
WORKSHOPS

One of the best ways to make the streets safer and public spaces in Chinatown more accessible is simply to do many more things in these spaces, like the Chinatown Connections festival.





**USE THE CREATION OF
THESE IMPROVEMENTS
TO GIVE THE COMMUNITY
A VOICE**

Placing Chinatown residents and stakeholders at the center of the design, decision making and implementation process of the various recommended improvements can significantly improve the impact of these efforts.



USE THE CREATION OF THESE IMPROVEMENTS TO GIVE THE COMMUNITY A VOICE

There are significant infrastructure and design barriers that are inhibiting safer and greater use of Chinatown's limited public spaces by its children and seniors. However, as in most places, active and empowered residents are an important part of creating safer streets and more vibrant, heavily used public spaces: Chinatown is no exception. Given the lengthy history of the City ignoring the needs of Chinatown residents as well as the neighborhood's unique mix of key stakeholder groups that rarely have a voice or feel empowered in decision making--brand new immigrants, seniors and youth--there is even greater imperative that the aforementioned recommendations are implemented in a participatory manner. In some cases this will demand a simple shift in mindset, strategy and implementation but in other cases will demand additional investment by governmental agencies, foundations and organizations to maximize effectiveness.

In short, we can expect and have greater impact by reconsidering 'how' these improvements are created.

1- There is a need to help the community articulate the connection between their lived experience and political reality. Many immigrants, particularly seniors, come from a cultural and political background where hardship is commonly accepted, for various reasons. Community members should be given the opportunity to connect their lived experience with the physical reality around them, and be encouraged to advocate for changes they want to see.

2- There is a need to continue to raise awareness of this issue outside of the community and plug local efforts into local and national networks for safe routes to schools/parks as well as multi-modal streets and playable streets. The initiative started develop these relationships but there should be further development. The goal should be to secure concrete support and participation from external partners, and broader awareness from these industries of the inequities of safe streets.

3- There is a need for leadership development - to develop those local voices and enable them to be the ones making the case for safe routes, sense of safety and ownership in public spaces, places for recreation, healthy living, cultural preservation and gentrification - all issues which came out of this project.





Over 150 Chinatown residents, including numerous community groups and programs participated in the Chinatown Connections Festival despite the frigid temperatures.



This report was designed and prepared by Public Workshop.

