

CULTURAL AND ARCHITECTURAL REVITALIZATION: A REINTERPRETATION OF CHINESE TRADITION

by

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ABSTRACT

Toronto's downtown Chinatown was once the central core of Asian culture and business in Canada but now has been superseded by Markham's opening of Pacific Mall and ongoing development of suburban neighbourhoods. As a result, Toronto's Chinatown Centre, a mall and landmark in the heart of Chinatown, has significantly suffered as markets, shops and restaurants have either closed or are now deprived of business with no sight of recovery. Through a reinterpretation of core principles of the traditional Chinese siheyuan, this thesis explores how architecture can become a catalyst in the revitalization of Chinatown Centre, retaining inherent qualities of Chinese culture through a narrative which could be understood transgenerationally and transculturally. As geopolitical, economical and technological implications forced the outsprawl of Chinese communities to migrate out of downtown, the same factors could play a significant role in bringing the Chinese communities back. The project becomes a symbol and a physical reminder of Toronto's resilience while bringing awareness to the serious issue of the declining Chinatown Centre.

Key Words:

chinese architecture, chinatown, chinatown centre, cultural identity, ceramic screens, siheyuan reinterpretation, modern chinese architecture, chinese reinterpretation, architectural reinterpretation

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

iii	Author's Declaration
iv	Abstract
vii	Acknowledgments
viii	Table of Contents
x	List of Figures
18	Introduction

1 THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHINESE COMMUNITIES

23	Introduction
25	Traditional Community: 1880 - 1947
27	Transitional Community: 1947 - 1967
27	Contemporary Community: 1997- Present
31	New Chinatown: 1997

2 CHINATOWNS IN NORTH AMERICA

33	Introduction
34	Manhattan, New York
36	Washington, D.C
38	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
40	Chicago, Illinois
42	San Francisco, California

3 MODERN CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

- 45 Approach and Methodology
- 49 Case Study: Astor Court
- 53 Case Study: Lan Xi Curtilage

5 THESIS DESIGN

- 76 Site
- 85 Mall
- 93 Design Approach and Methodology
- 96 Circulation and Courtyards
- 106 Intervention 1: Entrance Gate
- 110 Intervention 2: Tea Gardens
- 114 Intervention 3: Quiet Retreat Room
- 118 Intervention 4: Dining Hall
- 122 Intervention 5: Main Hall

4 REINTERPRETATION OF CHINESE TRADITIONS

- 56 Introduction to the Siheyuan
- 60 Meandering and Circulation
- 62 Spatial Arrangement
- 64 Social Hierarchy
- 66 Time and Visual Depth
- 68 Inside vs Outside
- 70 Emergence of Clay and Ceramics

6 CONCLUSION

- 128 Conclusion

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

- 18 Fig 1 Chinatown, San Francisco
 "Chinatown, San Francisco." Digital Image. The full guide to Chinatown, San Francisco. November, 2018. San Francisco, CA. Timeout. Accessed 28 Nov 2018. <https://www.timeout.com/san-francisco/neighborhoods/chinatown-san-francisco>.
- 20 Fig 2 Chinatown, Toronto
 "Dunlap at the Toronto Chinatown Festival" Digital Image. Accessed 28 Nov 2018. <https://universe.utoronto.ca/events/dunlap-at-the-toronto-chinatown-festival-%E5%A4%9A%E4%BC%A6%E5%A4%9A%E5%8D%8E%E5%9F%A0%E8%8A%82/>.
- 21 Fig 3 Performance at Chinatown Centre
 Buda, Janos. "Janos Buda sketchbooks, scrapbooks, and albums [1946]". April 2003. Toronto Archives. Accessed November 20, 2018.

CHAPTER 1

- 22 Fig 4 Downtown Chinatown (Old Chinatown) vs Markham (New Chinatown)
 Image by Author.
- 24 Fig 5 Timeline of parallel development of Old Chinatown (Downtown Toronto) and Markham (New Chinatown) during the Traditional Community
 Image by Author
- 25 Fig 6 Class Structure of Toronto's Chinatown
 Reproduced by Author from
 Thompson, Richard H. Toronto's Chinatown. "Class Model of Toronto's Chinatown. New York: AMS Press Inc, 1989. 268.
- 26 Fig 7 Timeline of parallel development of Old Chinatown (Downtown Toronto) and Markham (New Chinatown) during the Transitional Community
 Image by Author.
- 28 Fig 8 Timeline of parallel development of Old Chinatown (Downtown Toronto) and Markham (New Chinatown) during the Contemporary Community
 Image by Author.

30 Fig 9 Pacific Mall, Markham
Photograph/Image by Author.

CHAPTER 2

32 Fig 10 Chinatown, New York
Photograph by Author

35 Fig 11 Gentrification is Modern Colonialism, New York.
Rupersburg, Nicole. "Chinatown Art Brigade's Here to Stay Projection in Chinatown, NYC." Digital Image. July 2018. Accessed January 23, 2018. <https://springboardexchange.org/the-chinatown-art-brigade-fights-for-housing-rights-in-one-of-the-most-gentrified-cities-in-america/>.

36 Fig 12 Vine Street Freeway, Philadelphia
Yee, Mary. "The Save Chinatown Movement." Digital Image. *Pennsylvania Legacies* 12, no. 1 (2012): 24. doi:10.5215/pennlega.12.1.0024.

37 Fig 13 Save Chinatown Movement, Philadelphia
Liu, Roseann. "Reclaiming Urban Space: The Growth of Philadelphia's Chinatown and the Establishment of a Community School." Digital Image. *Pennsylvania Legacies* 12, no. 1 (2012): 18. doi:10.5215/pennlega.12.1.0018.

39 Fig 14 Chinatown, Washington
Washington Dc Sightseeing Tours. "Chinatown." Digital Image. Accessed December 19, 2018. <https://sites.google.com/a/colgate.edu/colgatevr/citing-images/citing-images-chicago>.

40 Fig 15 Chinatown, Chicago
Yi, Ji Suk. "The Grid: Exploring the Chinatown Neighborhood." Digital Image. Accessed December 19, 2018. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/entertainment/the-grid-chinatown-neighborhood-things-to-do-restaurants-festivals-events-shopping-chinese-food-chicago/>.

43 Fig 16 Chinatown, San Fransisco
"Chinatown, San Fransisco." Digital Image. The full guide to Chinatown, San Francisco. November, 2018. San Fransisco, CA. Timeout. Accessed 28 Nov 2018. <https://www.timeout.com/san-fransisco/neighborhoods/chinatown-san-fransisco>.

CHAPTER 3

- 44 Fig 17 Lan Xi Curtilage Facade, Archi Union Architects
 Frearson, Amy. "The Lan Xi Curtilage by Archi Union Architects". Digital Image. December 2012. .
 Accessed December 18, 2018. <https://www.dezeen.com/2012/12/04/the-lan-xi-curtilage-by-archi-union/>.
- 46 Fig 18 Ningbo History Museum, Wang Shu
 Hobson, Ben. "Wang Shu's Ningbo History Museum built from the remains of demolished villages." Digital Image. August 2016 . Accessed December 19, 2018. <https://www.dezeen.com/2016/08/18/video-interview-wang-shu-amateur-architecture-studio-ningbo-history-museum-movie/>.
- 49 Fig 19 Astor Court Peony Pavilion Exhibition, Metropolitan Museum of Art
 Li, Han. "Astor Court for the performance of The Perony Pavilion (2012)." Digital Image. "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America." *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4, (2015):. 295. doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284pass:[_]1.
- 50 Fig 20 Astor Court Courtyard Exhibition, Metropolitan Museum of Art
 Li, Han. "Astor Court Cold Spring Pavilion." Digital Image. "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America." *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4, (2015):. 292. doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284pass:[_]1.
- 53 Fig 21 Lan Xi Curtilage Courtyard, Archi Union Architects
 Frearson, Amy. "The Lan Xi Curtilage by Archi Union Architects". Digital Image. December 2012. .
 Accessed December 18, 2018. <https://www.dezeen.com/2012/12/04/the-lan-xi-curtilage-by-archi-union/>.
- 54 Fig 22 Lan Xi Curtilage Courtyard, Archi Union Architects
 Frearson, Amy. "The Lan Xi Curtilage by Archi Union Architects". Digital Image. December 2012. .
 Accessed December 18, 2018. <https://www.dezeen.com/2012/12/04/the-lan-xi-curtilage-by-archi-union/>.

CHAPTER 4

- 56 Fig 23 Siheyuan Layout Illustration
 Shen, Yiye. "Beijing Siheyuan". Digital Image. Accessed December 19, 2018. <http://projects.leadr.msu.edu/traditionaleastasia/exhibits/show/eastasiahousing/beijing-siheyuan>.
- 58 Fig 24 Sketch of a Traditional Siheyuan Layout
 Image By Author.

- 60 Fig 25 Sketch of a Siheyuan's Circulation
Image By Author.
- 62 Fig 26 Sketch of a Siheyuan's Spatial Arrangement
Image By Author.
- 64 Fig 27 Sketch of a Siheyuan's Spatial Hierarchy
Image By Author.
- 66 Fig 28 Sketch of a Siheyuan's Visual Depth
Image By Author.
- 68 Fig 29 Sketch of a Siheyuan's Concept of Inside vs Outside
Image By Author.
- 70 Fig 30 Hollow Brick, Early 1st Century CE.
Nickel, Lukas. "Hollow Brick, Early 1st Century CE." Digital Image. Arts Asiatiques 70 (2015): 2. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26358183>.
- 72 Fig 31 Traditional Screens Used in a Siheyuan
Silbergeld, Jerome. "Du Fu Thatched Hall, Water Bamboo Dwelling." Digital Image. The Art Bulletin 86, no. 2 (2004): 217. doi:10.2307/3111111 <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=88960088&site=ehost-live77415>.
- 73 Fig 32 Shadow Casts From 3D Printed Screen Prototype
Image By Author.
- 73 Fig 33 Scale 3D Printed Ceramic Screen
Image By Author.
- 75 Fig 34 3D Printing Prototype of Ceramic Screens.
Image By Author.

CHAPTER 5

- 76 Fig 35 Chinatown Site Plan
Image By Author.
- 78 Fig 36 Chinatown Centre Courtyard on Spadina Avenue
Image By Author.

79	Fig 37 Chinatown Site Analysis Image By Author.
80	Fig 38 Chinatown Pedestrian Circulation Analysis Image By Author.
81	Fig 39 Chinatown Pedestrian Interactivity Analysis Image By Author.
82	Fig 40 Chinatown Automobile Circulation Analysis Image By Author.
83	Fig 41 Chinatown Bicyclist Circulation Analysis Image By Author.
84	Fig 42 Aerial View of Chinatown Centre and Surrounding Context Image By Author.
85	Fig 43 Chinatown Centre Main Courtyard Image By Author.
87	Fig 44 Existing Courtyards at Chinatown Centre Image By Author.
88	Fig 45 Chinatown Centre Interior - Atrium Image By Author.
89	Fig 46 Chinatown Centre Interior - Atrium Image By Author.
90	Fig 47 Chinatown Centre Interior - Vacant Storefront. Image By Author.
91	Fig 48 Chinatown Centre Exterior - Main Courtyard Image By Author.
92	Fig 49 Parti Diagram Translating Traditional Narrative onto Existing Building Image By Author.
94	Fig 50 Diagram Demonstrating Size of Current Mall Image By Author.

- 95 Fig 51 Diagram Demonstrating Proposed Changes to Current Mall
Image By Author.
- 96 Fig 52 Proposed Project Plan and Site Plan
Image By Author.
- 98 Fig 53 Aerial View of The Proposed Project
Image By Author.
- 99 Fig 54 Ramp Circulation Throughout The Project
Image By Author.
- 100 Fig 55 Exterior View Inside Courtyard
Image By Author.
- 102 Fig 56 Section 1: North Section Demonstrating Relationship Between Mall and
Proposed Interventions
Image By Author.
- 104 Fig 57 Section 2: East Section Demonstrating Relationship Between Mall and
Proposed Interventions
Image By Author.
- 106 Fig 58 Location of Entrance Gate in Site Plan
Image By Author.
- 107 Fig 59 Entrance Gate in a Siheyuan
Craig, Robert M. "Passages to a Different Universe." A Different Universe Pavilion. Digital Image.
Southeastern College Art Conference Review 11, no. 3 (March 1988): 222.
- 108 Fig 60 Exterior View of Entrance Gates
Image By Author.
- 108 Fig 61 Location of the Tea Gardens in Site Plan
Image By Author.
- 111 Fig 62 Concept of the Tea Gardens
Silbergeld, Jerome. "Du Fu Thatched Hall, Water Bamboo Dwelling." Digital Image. The Art Bulletin 86,
no. 2 (2004): 217. doi:10.2307/31http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct
=true&db=asu&AN=88960088&site=ehost-live77415.

- 112 Fig 63 Interior View of Tea Gardens' Atrium
Image By Author.
- 114 Fig 64 Location of The Quiet Retreat in Site Plan
Image By Author.
- 115 Fig 65 Visual Depth in a Siheyuan
Silbergeld, Jerome. "Du Fu Thatched Hall, Water Bamboo Dwelling." Digital Image. The Art Bulletin 86, no. 2 (2004): 226. doi:10.2307/31http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=88960088&site=ehost-live77415.
- 116 Fig 66 Interior View of The Quiet Retreat Room
Image By Author.
- 118 Fig 67 Location of The Dining Hall and Pavilions in Site Plan
Image By Author.
- 119 Fig 68 Location of The Dining Hall and Pavilions in Site Plan
Silbergeld, Jerome. "Nine Elders of the Mountains of Fragrance." Digital Image. The Art Bulletin 86, no. 2 (2004): 211. doi:10.2307/31http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=88960088&site=ehost-live77415.
- 120 Fig 69 Interior View of The Dining Hall
Image by Author.
- 122 Fig 70 Location of The Main Hall in Site Plan
Image by Author.
- 123 Fig 71 Main Hall in A Siheyuan
Craig, Robert M. "Administrators Garden." A Different Universe Pavilion. Digital Image. Southeastern College Art Conference Review 11, no. 3 (March 1988): 222.
- 124 Fig 72 Exterior View of the Main Hall Performance Stage on Ground Level
Image by Author.
- 126 Fig 73 Interior View towards Toronto's City Hall in The Lookout Tower Of Main Hall
Image by Author.



Fig 1. Chinatown, San Francisco.

INTRODUCTION

When you think of Chinatown, what do you imagine? You probably imagine a picturesque neighbourhood with red lanterns, dragon gates and pagoda roofs (Fig 1). One may think this image of Chinatown speaks to Chinese culture, but actually it does not. This concept of Chinatown is a capitalist product and a western fantasy that fails to appropriately capture the sense of Chinese culture. Although the dragon gates and pagodas are identified as Chinese, immigrants questioned why ancient Chinese vernacular architecture which was not built in China, had been portrayed within a modern city of America.

When walking through the streets of downtown Toronto, there is a clear sense of diversity and multiculturalism. If you wander west on Dundas street, you will come across an enclave of ethnic communities between College to Queen Street West. To the casual Torontonians, Chinatown is a cluster of postmodern buildings from the late 80s and early 90's (Fig 2). Although it may not look like vernacular architecture from a movie set, this image speaks to Chinese culture in Toronto. From the people, the food, the environment, the market signs to the cheap prices. It's the non-material legacy which really makes Chinatown, Chinatown. Back in the early 1990s, Chinese immigrants from all over Ontario would commute hours to Toronto's Chinatown to socialize, eat and browse outdoor vendors. To them, Toronto was the only place where they could get an emotional connection with the surrounding environment. Architecturally, little has happened that suggests



Fig 2. Chinatown, Toronto.

a change in Toronto's Chinatown over the past two decades. However, the reality is that the shifting social, political and economical pressures have considerably affected the development of the community which are not evident at first glance.¹

More specifically, Toronto's Chinatown Centre designed to be the central mall and landmark of Chinatown located in the centre of Spadina Avenue and between Dundas Street West and Queens Street West, was once a vibrant and prosperous hive of cultural activity is now devoid of culture, uninviting and characterless. In the early 1990s, locally famous artist Janos Buda was fascinated in social and cultural activity and attended many events throughout Toronto, some of which were hosted in Chinatown Centre. In his drawings, he was able to capture the vibrant energy and atmosphere of Chinatown Centre (Fig 3). Now, markets, shops and restaurants are deprived of business and many have even disappeared. Chinatown Centre now evokes collective memories and shadows a place which has long been transformed.

¹ Andrew Chung, "Death of a Neighbourhood," Urban Toronto, last modified March 12, 2006, <https://urbantoronto.ca/forum/threads/chinatown-death-of-a-neighbourhood.3738/>.



Fig 3. Performance at Chinatown Centre.

The objective of this thesis is to bring people back into the mall and reconnect the community with Old Chinatown. In order to help Toronto's Chinatown resist against political and economic pressures, research is required to understand how other Chinatowns in North America had continually resisted social, political and economic pressures during their development. Through an investigation of Chinatowns from San Francisco to Toronto, this research suggests that geo-political and economical events had ultimately shaped Chinatowns across North America. Furthermore, the findings suggest that a replication of culture does not always result to an appropriate resolution of cultural identity. Chinatowns are places of lived, local cultural expression, not kitsch displays of culture; Chinatowns are communities, not a tourist commodity.²

² Roseann Liu, "Reclaiming Urban Space: The Growth of Philadelphia's Chinatown and the Establishment of a Community School" (Pennsylvania Legacies 12: no. 1, 2012) 21, doi:10.5215/pennlega.12.1.0018.

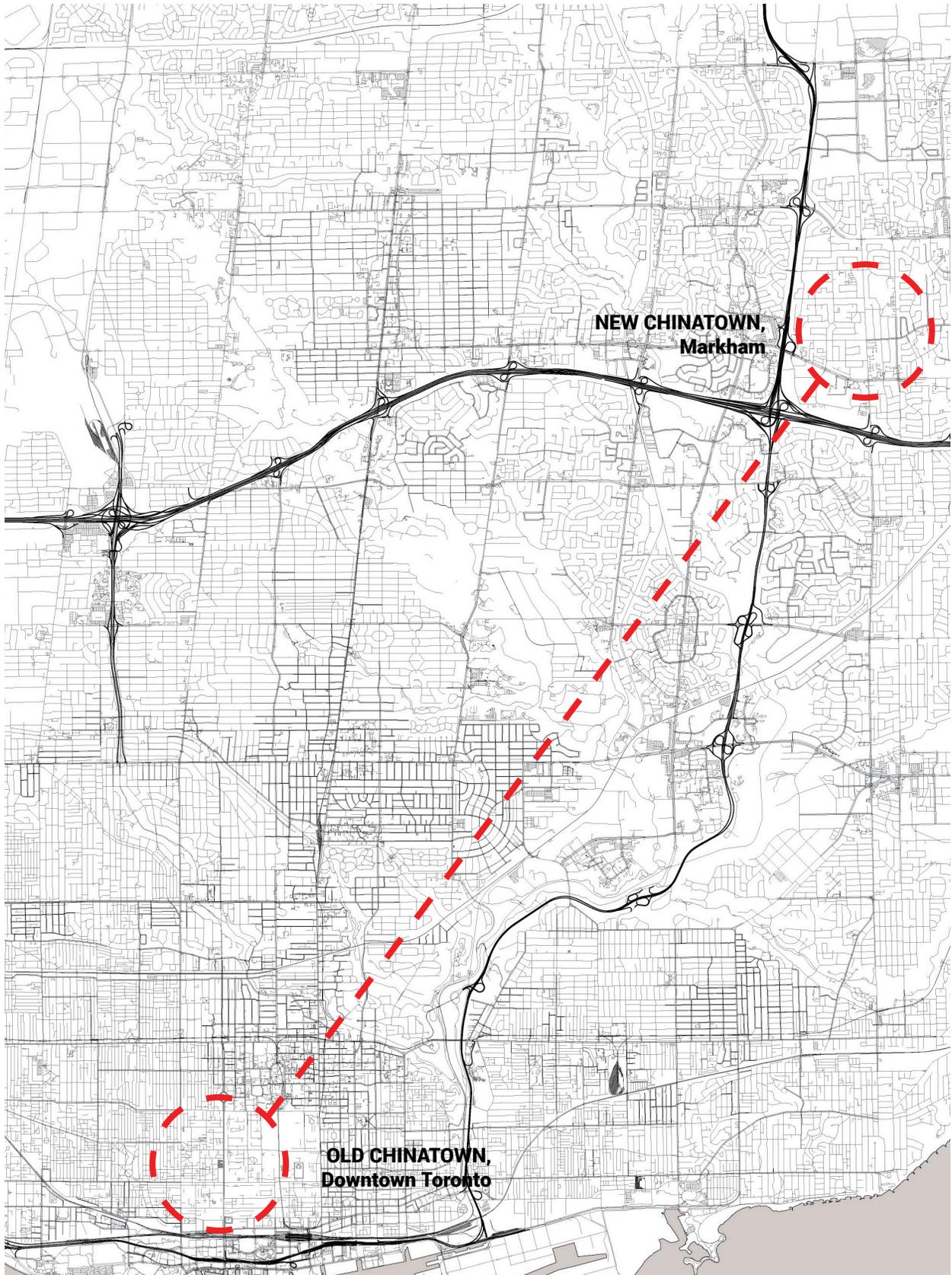


Fig 4. Downtown Chinatown (Old Chinatown) vs Markham (New Chinatown).

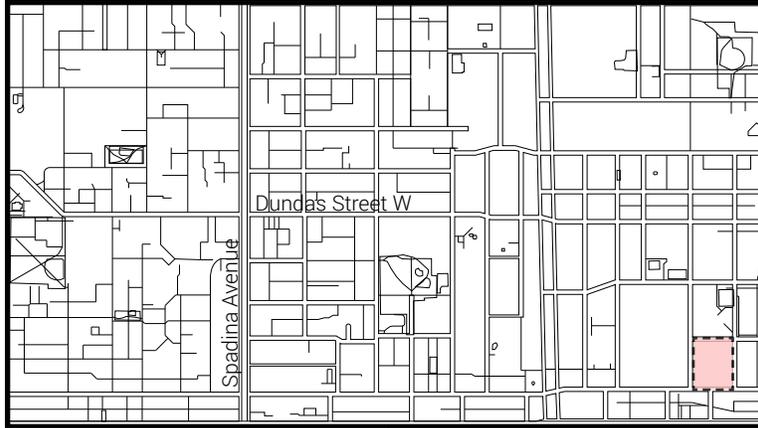
THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHINESE COMMUNITIES

Taking a closer look into Toronto's Chinatown within the past few years, the physical changes are a clear indication of underlying social revolutions that have shaped Chinatown. To fully understand the transformation of Chinatown it is important to understand the transformation of the Chinese community themselves. In *"Toronto's Chinatown"*, Richard Thompson presents a class model that demonstrates the relationship between politics, economics and three Chinese communities (Fig 6).³ According to the class model, there is a clear pattern between the time of immigration and the immigrant's economic status. Through a timeline, the research demonstrates how technological, economic and geopolitical pressures had ultimately influenced immigration patterns and reshaped Toronto's Chinatown. It demonstrates how in a very short time between the 1950s to early 2000s, the paralleling relationship between Markham and Downtown Chinatown had undergone significant change. Although this research had been conducted in Toronto, the evidence suggests what is true to Toronto is also comparable to other North American cities.

³ Richard H Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization Of An Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1989), 268.

1955

Downtown Toronto (Old Chinatown)



1955
Development of
New City Hall

1950

1960



1960

Markham (New Chinatown)

Fig 5. Timeline of parallel development of Old Chinatown (Downtown Toronto) and Markham (New Chinatown) during the Traditional Community.

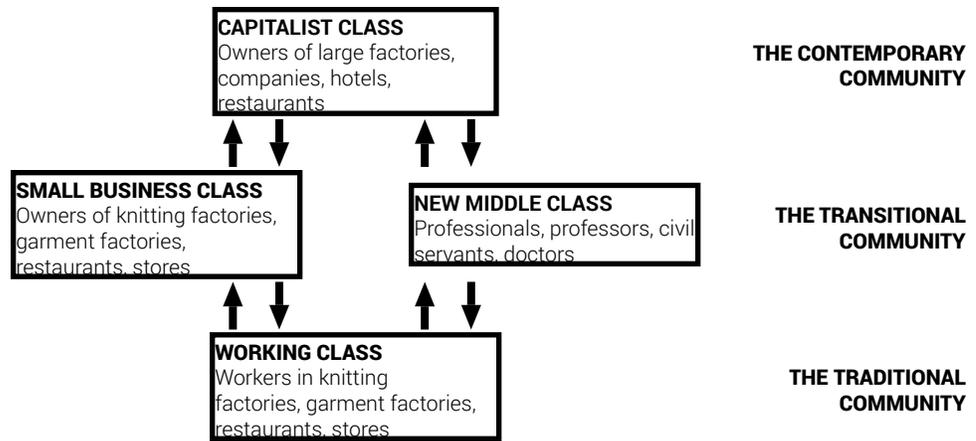


Fig 6. Class Structure of Toronto's Chinatown.

THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY: 1880-1947

The Traditional community was the first established Chinese community from the 1880s to late 1940s. During the 1880s, this community was characterized as a male dominant group with occupations of laundry services, restaurant owners or workers on the trans-Canada railway.⁴ It was not until the 1940s when new waves of immigrants came to North America for better lifestyles and survival against wars. During this time, immigrants began to experience racial discrimination which led to social isolation. This was most evident in 1947, when Toronto council approved the development of the new civic square and City Hall. The proposed New City Hall would be located at Elizabeth St and Dundas Street West, where Chinatown was located at the time. In 1955, the development of New City Hall had begun, forcing southern Chinatown businesses to move west on Dundas towards Spadina Avenue (Fig 5).⁵ Because the Liberalized Immigration and Nationality Act had not been enforced at the time, this event was seen as racial discrimination as it segregated and expropriated many Chinese shops and restaurants leaving 500 Chinese unemployed.⁶

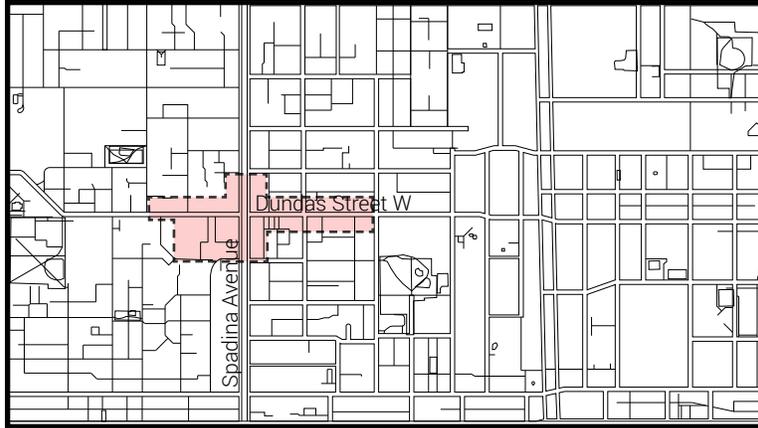
4 Richard H Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization Of An Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1989), 4.

5 "Chinese History In Toronto - Chronology," accessed November 22, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/access-city-information-or-records/city-of-toronto-archives/using-the-archives/research-by-topic/chinese-history-in-toronto/>.

6 Ibid.

1955

Downtown Toronto (Old Chinatown)



1965

Immigration and Nationality Act

1955-1980s

Downtown Chinatown began to move west

1970

1980



1970

Development of Suburbs in Markham



1970

Markham (New Chinatown)

Fig 7. Timeline of parallel development of Old Chinatown (Downtown Toronto) and Markham (New Chinatown) during the Transitional Community.

THE TRANSITIONAL COMMUNITY: 1947 - 1967

The Transitional community were immigrants who moved out as a result of the Chinese Revolution in 1949. The relationship with Anglo-Canadians and immigrants had drastically changed as many immigrants during this period were educated which allowed them to enter professions rather than continuing the family business.⁷ The transitional community was significant because they developed ethnic social organizations in North America that asserted dominance to immigrants, influencing authority and power which stabilized the community.⁸ In 1965, the Liberalized Immigration and Nationality Act had reconfigured racial policies that made immigration process easier, which began a new era for Chinese immigration. This act created a social and cultural revolution that manifested a new wave of Chinese immigrants.⁹ Within the transitional community emerged a new generation of social organizations that consisted of young educated immigrants who began to compete with the traditional Chinatown associations as they sought to build political structure and fought for inclusion and equality in national policy.¹⁰ During this time, the Chinese community who were forced out of old Chinatown began to move west on Dundas to create a new cultural identity for the Chinatown, while new Chinese immigrants followed the suburban developments and began to migrate north towards Markham for new job opportunities (Fig 7). The sense of cultural identity became an important tool that helped advance political and economic rights of all immigrants and native-born Chinese in Toronto.¹¹

7 Richard H Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization Of An Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1989), 89.

8 Richard H Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization Of An Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1989), 90.

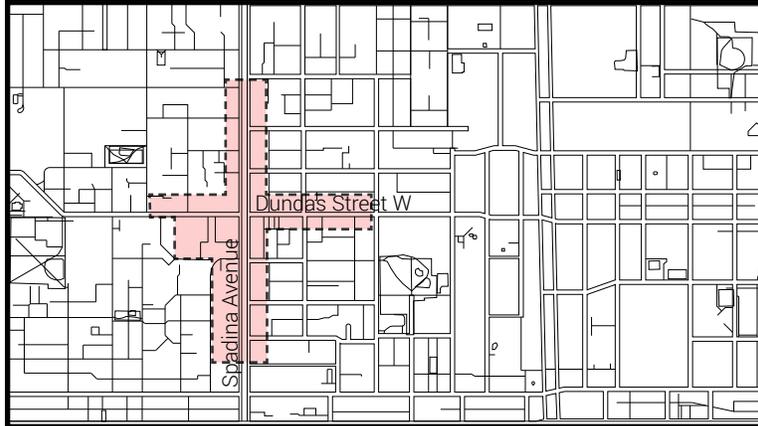
9 Richard H Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization Of An Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1989), 3.

10 Chuo Li, "Interrogating Ethnic Identity: Space and Community Building in Chicago's Chinatown." (*Traditional Dwellings and Settlements: Review* 27, No. 1, 2015), 58, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24720000>.

11 Chuo Li, "Interrogating Ethnic Identity: Space and Community Building in Chicago's Chinatown." (*Traditional Dwellings and Settlements: Review* 27, No. 1, 2015), 56, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24720000>.

1989

Downtown Toronto (Old Chinatown)



1989

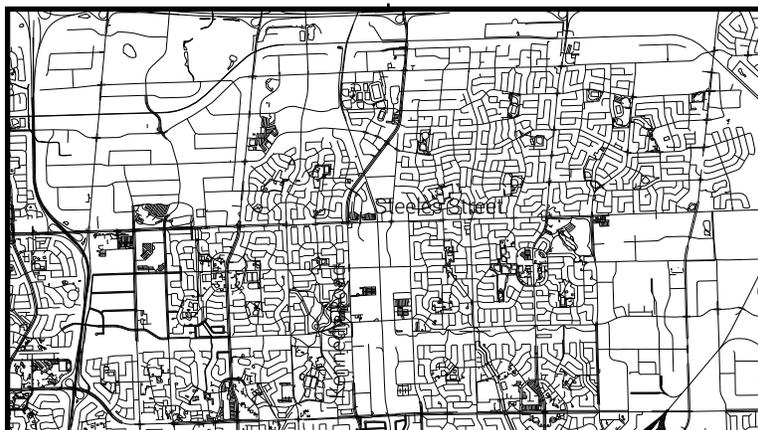
Opening of Chinatown Centre

1990

2000

1997

- 1) Handover of Hong Kong
- 2) Opening of Pacific Mall



1997

Markham (New Chinatown)

Fig 8. Timeline of parallel development of Old Chinatown (Downtown Toronto) and Markham (New Chinatown) during the Contemporary Community.

THE CONTEMPORARY COMMUNITY - 1967 TO PRESENT

During the Vietnam War from the mid 1950s to mid 1970s, North America granted asylum to refugees that resulted in another large influx of refugees which had significant impacts on social and cultural landscapes across North America.¹² In 1972, a re-establishment of diplomatic relationships between America and Communist China further developed new visions of urban politics and changed the composition of the Chinese population in modern cities.¹³ These changes resulted in the new generation of the contemporary community, who altered significantly due to growth and diversity.¹⁴ The contemporary community differed in every aspect: education level, occupation, age, language and motivation.¹⁵ They primarily came to North America for education, business and new experiences, only possible through association with family members who had already migrated, social networking and digital marketing via technology. Moreover, throughout the mid-late 1980s, the contemporary community in Toronto began to rebuild shops and the construction of Chinatown Centre Mall were approaches to rebuild downtown Chinatown. In 1997, many Chinese people feared the handover of Hong Kong from the British control that resulted in a wave of Chinese immigration to North America as means of escaping social and political instability.¹⁶ Many immigrants came to North American cities such as Toronto because they were seen as the promise land where families could prosper from many working opportunities.¹⁷ Although Toronto received a large wave of Chinese immigrants, downtown Chinatown did not experience this (Fig 8). So, why did this happen?

12 Roseann Liu, "Reclaiming Urban Space: The Growth of Philadelphia's Chinatown and the Establishment of a Community School" (Pennsylvania Legacies 12: no. 1, 2012) 20, doi:10.5215/pennle-ga.12.1.0018.

13 John Zucchi, *A History Of Ethnic Enclaves In Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian History Association, 2007), 16.

14 Richard H Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization Of An Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1989), 141.

15 Richard H Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization Of An Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1989), 152.

16 Roseann Liu, "Reclaiming Urban Space: The Growth of Philadelphia's Chinatown and the Establishment of a Community School" (Pennsylvania Legacies 12: no. 1, 2012) 20, doi:10.5215/pennle-ga.12.1.0018.

17 Roseann Liu, "Reclaiming Urban Space: The Growth of Philadelphia's Chinatown and the Establishment of a Community School" (Pennsylvania Legacies 12: no. 1, 2012) 21, doi:10.5215/pennle-ga.12.1.0018.



Fig 9. Pacific Mall, Markham.

NEW CHINATOWN - 1997

In 1997, the same year of the Handover of Hong Kong, the Pacific mall in Markham located at the intersection of Steeles Ave and Kennedy Road had opened and immediately became recognized as the coliseum of shops and North America's Largest Chinese Mall (Fig 9).¹⁸ Furthermore, in 2008, the Splendid China Tower opened that mimicked Beijing's Forbidden City. During this period, Chinese immigrants saw opportunities to begin new businesses largely achievable through digital marketing and social media via technology. After the development of both malls, the neighbourhood continued to grow and Markham became recognized as the *New Chinatown*. The neighbourhood sprawled of Chinese culture and activity that resembled markets found back in Hong Kong and China. As a result of technological, political and economical pressures, the development of suburbs had appealed to the Chinese community. As more Chinese immigrants moved from downtown to Markham, the character of downtown Chinatown began to experience a decline. Restaurants and shops had closed or were deprived of business with no sight of recovery. Elders who had lived in old Chinatown had retired and moved up to Markham. The traditional community became professionals and also moved to the suburbs for affordability and cultural assimilation. Markham's real estate market provided larger properties for families and investments. Consequently, no one had taken responsibility to carry on the torch that left Chinatown unattended. Before, Chinatown brought in revenue from locals and tourists but everything had changed after the development of New Chinatown. Tourists and local visitors have declined drastically and old Chinatown has never recovered since.

¹⁸ Andrew Chung, "Death of a Neighbourhood," Urban Toronto, last modified March 12, 2006, <https://urbantoronto.ca/forum/threads/chinatown-death-of-a-neighbourhood.3738/>



Fig 10. Chinatown, New York.

CHINATOWNS ACROSS NORTH AMERICAN

If the outsprawl of Chinese communities consequently migrated out to the suburbs, what is happening in Toronto's downtown Chinatown now? For us to understand how to revitalize Toronto's Chinatown, a critical part of this research is to investigate how other communities in North America have been resilient against political pressures to save their Chinatown. From San Francisco to Toronto, the research demonstrates that both Canadian and American politics had a history of discrimination towards Chinese immigrants which dictated the early character of Chinatowns, however it was only after enacted social legislations that affected state relations with the Chinese and other ethnic groups.¹⁹ Although it is easy to understand Chinatown based on the space and place, this research suggests that it is also important to understand the technological, economical, geopolitical pressures which have shaped the making and identity of Chinatowns.

¹⁹ Richard H Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization Of An Ethnic Community* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1989), 4.

MANHATTAN, NEW YORK

Manhattan's Chinatown is one of the oldest in New York City with a population over 90,000 Chinese people, however in the 1990s globalization led to many loss jobs. After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, real estate developers funneled billions of dollars of government subsidies to gentrify Chinatown and the Lower East Side as means of economic recovery.²⁰ During this time, the Chinese working class immigrants were harassed by landlords that resulted in unsafe living conditions and forced evictions.²¹ Small Chinese run stores, businesses and restaurants were displaced or closed because landlords wanted to establish luxury housing businesses or art galleries.²² In 2013, the Chinese population had declined by 30% since 2003 and lost more than 30,000 affordable housing units.²³ In pursuit of preserving the vibrant immigrant community, activist groups such as the Chinatown Art Brigade and the Committee Against Anti Asian Violence (CAA AV) worked together to pressure the city council in approving the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) community rezoning plan, which was a community that managed the growth of the neighbourhood while discouraging luxury developments.²⁴

20 Betty Yu, "Chinatown Art Brigade: Resisting Gentrification through the Power of Art, Culture and Stories." *Visual Inquiry: Learning & Teaching Art* 6 (2017): 174, doi:10.1386/vi.6.2.173pass:[.]1.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.



Fig 11. Gentrification is Modern Colonialism, New York.

Their goal was to amplify community led events in efforts against gentrification and the displacement of Chinatown.²⁵ In 2015, the "Here to Stay" launch was the main cultural project that addressed these issues. Oral storytelling, songs, photography, banners and other content were projected onto the public architecture.²⁶ These events enabled the sharing of stories and experiences that encouraged the anti-displacement narrative. As a result, the public projections onto the building of Chinatown created a two-way critical dialogue within the community that made the resistance of gentrification possible.²⁷ This project is critical in this research as it demonstrates the importance of mobilizing artists, activists and community lead events that work towards a common goal of social and cultural change. The community driven project celebrated resilience and resistance against economical and political pressures which demonstrate that art and culture can in fact have long lasting and significant impacts in the communities in which we live.²⁸

25 Betty Yu, "Chinatown Art Brigade: Resisting Gentrification through the Power of Art, Culture and Stories." *Visual Inquiry: Learning & Teaching Art 6* (2017): 174, doi:10.1386/vi.6.2.173pass:[1].

26 Ibid.

27 Betty Yu, "Chinatown Art Brigade: Resisting Gentrification through the Power of Art, Culture and Stories." *Visual Inquiry: Learning & Teaching Art 6* (2017): 176, doi:10.1386/vi.6.2.173pass:[1].

28 Betty Yu, "Chinatown Art Brigade: Resisting Gentrification through the Power of Art, Culture and Stories." *Visual Inquiry: Learning & Teaching Art 6* (2017): 177, doi:10.1386/vi.6.2.173pass:[1].



Fig 12. Vine Street Freeway, Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

In 1966, the pivotal government project of the Vine Street Freeway planned to demolish most of Philadelphia's Chinatown and the iconic Holy Redeemer (HR) church which served as a community centre for the Chinese community. This sparked rage within the local Chinese community.²⁹ During the 1970s, the survival of Philadelphia's Chinatown was in serious jeopardy due to the project's "cultural genocide" that would prevent growth of the community on all four sides (Fig 12).³⁰ As a result, the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) and the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) represented the community and spoke on behalf of the first and second generation communities. Adversity, tensions and threats of the survival of Chinatown had brought the community together and deepened the significance of the community across the country.³¹ By establishing cultural identity as a public presence, the community became an unstoppable force that resolved and changed the outcome of the enormous scale of the government project. The fight to save Chinatown movement represented the sense of courage, identity and legacy of the community that broke the stereotype of the ethnic population and demonstrated the importance of community working together towards a common cause which

²⁹ Mary Lee, "The Save Chinatown Movement: Surviving Against All Odds" (Historical Society of Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 24-25.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Mary Lee, "The Save Chinatown Movement: Surviving Against All Odds" (Historical Society of Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 27.



Fig 13. Save Chinatown Movement, Philadelphia.

strengthened the cultural identity. The community efforts had demonstrated to the city that survival had been at the core of the immigrant experience.³² After Philadelphia's Chinatown experienced growth from 1980s to 1990s, the second generation children were growing and the community desperately needed a school, however urban planners were more focused on the development of several revitalization projects such as a Convention Centre and a City Centre as means of generating revenue.³³ If this had happen, it would have displaced and destroyed many homes in Chinatown . As a result, the Chinese community protested and a declaration of right of existence was put in place to claim the community rightful to the neighbourhood (Fig 13). The community developed the sense of contemporary moral urgency and building things for the community became the instrument to act against the demolition of Chinatown. In 2005, the Philadelphia School board established the Chinatown community school and the school itself stood as a symbolic and physical reminder of Chinatown's victory in claiming the right to reimagine and remake its community.³⁴

32 Mary Lee, "The Save Chinatown Movement: Surviving Against All Odds" (Historical Society of Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 30, doi:10.5215/pennlega.12.1.0024.

33 Roseann Liu, "Reclaiming Urban Space: The Growth of Philadelphia's Chinatown and the Establishment of a Community School" (Pennsylvania Legacies 12: no. 1, 2012) 21, doi:10.5215/pennlega.12.1.0018.

34 Roseann Liu, "Reclaiming Urban Space: The Growth of Philadelphia's Chinatown and the Establishment of a Community School" (Pennsylvania Legacies 12: no. 1, 2012) 22, doi:10.5215/pennle-

WASHINGTON, D.C

After World War II, Washington had brought significant changes and new opportunities for ethnic communities as the government mobilized and generated military and white-collar opportunities.³⁵ During this period, Chinatown's community and economy experienced growth and the Immigration Act of 1965 only continued to strengthen the community. Due to these events, Chinatown became the central hub of activity for the Chinese community to celebrate festivals such as Chinese New Years, Lion Dances and other festivals. In 1970 however, the development of Washington's first Convention Centre was conceived as a way to provide an economic boost to the community which resulted in the displacement of many permanent Chinese businesses and residences, an event that Chinatown was never able to recover from.³⁶ After this event, the development of the "Friendship Archway" in 1986 was an attempt to revitalize the community and was a significant activist approach as it not only marked the neighbourhood for the community, but was a symbol of prosperity, diviness and good fortune.³⁷

ga.12.1.0018.

35 David Hathaway and Stephanie Ho, "Small but Resilient: Washington's Chinatown over the Years," (Washington History 15: no. 1, 2003), 48, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40073561>.

36 David Hathaway and Stephanie Ho, "Small but Resilient: Washington's Chinatown over the Years," (Washington History 15: no. 1, 2003), 56, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40073561>.

37 David Hathaway and Stephanie Ho, "Small but Resilient: Washington's Chinatown over the Years," (Washington History 15: no. 1, 2003), 52, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40073561>.



Fig 14. Chinatown, Washington.

The arch itself, was an architectural masterpiece as it was carved from wood, contained 284 carved dragons and fit together like a jizz-saw puzzle.³⁸ The Chinatown Service Centre also played a significant role in retaining the Chinese community of Washington, however after the mid 1980s, the neighbourhood experienced a decline of the Chinese community due to new developments that increased rent to unaffordable prices. This event had ultimately pushed Chinese businesses and residences out of the downtown core and into the suburbs. As immigrants raised enough money, they moved out to affordable housing in the suburbs, and therefore Chinatown no longer had a strong sense of cultural identity. Although it is evident that gentrification had diluted the Chinese character of downtown Washington and raised questions for need of a Chinatown, the fact is the construction of the Friendship Archway will remain to be the symbol of Washington's Chinatown as it is a physical reminder of the community's resilience.

38 David Hathaway and Stephanie Ho, "Small but Resilient: Washington's Chinatown over the Years," (Washington History 15: no. 1, 2003), 52, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40073561>.



Fig 15. Chinatown, Chicago.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Before the 1960s, Chicago's Chinatown was subtle in association with ethnic diversity, however in the 1970s, new structures began to develop that "represented" Chinese culture. Chinese Style gateways and pagoda-tiered restaurants were constructed in attempts to evoke culture and tradition, however the projects became tourist attractions and a commodity for capitalism.³⁹ Although the remaking of Chinatown's built environment did actively engage in ethnic groups and create self identity, the multifaceted meaning of "culture and tradition" also developed discussion of representation. The authenticity of the buildings in Chinatown however, were not considered vernacular because the styles implemented had been derived from a high-Chinese architectural style which had little connection to the lives of the immigrants living in Chicago. The invented traditionalism was just a mythicized and commodified version of western's fantasies about Chinese culture.⁴⁰ These efforts had only exoticized and confirmed the "oriental otherness" which became a social and racial construct.⁴¹ In 1965, new developments in downtown increased rent which forced many Chinese families and young Chinese professions to move out to the suburbs.

39 Chuo Li, "Interrogating Ethnic Identity: Space and Community Building in Chicago's Chinatown," (Traditional Dwellings and Settlements: Review 27, No. 1, 2015), 55, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24720000>.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

As a result of the decline of the Chinese community, Chicago's Chinatown became a vulnerable and unstable neighbourhood.⁴² In 1980, the Chinatown organization Neighbourhood Redevelopment Assistance approached this issue by constructing a pagoda, friendship gardens and ethnic decorations as means of enhancing the ethnic character of Chinatown (Fig 15).⁴³ This approach to revitalization, supported by Chinese developers who also sought to improve Chinatown, evidently fostered a sense of public engagement as it created spaces for social and cultural interaction. In 1990, the development of Chinatown Square became another project in revitalizing the neighbourhood. The project adopted a Chinese theme that encompassed archways, pavilions and murals which reflected the Chinese immigration experience. The structures themselves conveyed a strong sense of cultural identity, while embracing the notion of "Chinese-ness".⁴⁴ Chicago's Chinatown becomes important in this research as it demonstrates how the strength of a community can blur political and cultural boundaries as means of achieving a new cultural identity while revitalizing the neighbourhood.

42 Chuo Li, "Interrogating Ethnic Identity: Space and Community Building in Chicago's Chinatown," (Traditional Dwellings and Settlements: Review 27, No. 1, 2015), 60, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24720000>.

43 Chuo Li, "Interrogating Ethnic Identity: Space and Community Building in Chicago's Chinatown," (Traditional Dwellings and Settlements: Review 27, No. 1, 2015), 61, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24720000>.

44 Chuo Li, "Interrogating Ethnic Identity: Space and Community Building in Chicago's Chinatown," (Traditional Dwellings and Settlements: Review 27, No. 1, 2015), 63, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24720000>.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

San Francisco's Chinatown, is the oldest and largest Chinatown outside Asia. Since its development in 1848, the shaping of San Francisco's Chinatown was always a result of social and cultural politics. Ever since the 1900s, San Francisco's Chinatown had experienced a shift in cultural production, social relation and commercial capitalism⁴⁵ During the early 1910s, San Francisco's Chinatown had attracted many American tourists because they were fascinated by the idea of being a foreigner in their own land.⁴⁶ Buildings were decorated and Chinese immigrants were paid to stage fake scenes of Chinese violence and crime, which affirmed the sense of cultural differences to the American audience. Although the Chinese community fought back for their own right, overtime, San Francisco's Chinatown still remains an example of a capitalist approach and a western fantasy. Although the architecture and symbolism of dragon gates and pagodas are identified as Chinese, new Chinese immigrants who moved to America in the 1960s, questioned why ancient Chinese vernacular architecture which had not been seen in even in modern China, had been portrayed within a modern city of America (Fig 16).⁴⁷

45 RAYMOND W. RAST, "The Cultural Politics of Tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown, 1882-1917," *Pacific Historical Review* 76, no. 1 (2007): 46, doi:10.1525/phr.2007.76.1.29.

46 Ibid.

47 Sean Real, "It's Chinatown. Conducted by Sean Real" (Recorded on Aug. 11, 2018) Streaming audio, <https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/its-chinatown/>.



Fig 16. Chinatown, San Francisco.

San Francisco's Chinatown becomes an important project in this research as it demonstrates that a mere replication of inherently cultural qualities does not always result to an appropriate resolution of cultural identity.

The projects presented in this research demonstrate the importance of mobilizing artists, activists and community members working towards a common goal for social change. The community driven projects and responses celebrated resilience and resistance against economical and political pressures. They demonstrate that the sheer strength of people, art and culture can in fact have long lasting and significant impacts in the communities in which they live. In order to save Chinatown in Toronto, this research reflects upon these communities to understand how social, cultural and political awareness can be translated through architecture to have long lasting impacts.



Fig 17. Lan Xi Curtilage Façade, Archi Union Architects.

MODERN CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY OF MODERN CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

The approach of modern Chinese architecture began in the early 20th century when traditional Chinese architecture collapsed under the influence of western architectural theory and technology.⁴⁸ During this time, modern Chinese architecture became so heavily influenced by western ideologies that it created conflict between Chinese and western culture. As a result, many Chinese architects eagerly began to search for their own cultural identity.⁴⁹ Chinese and Pritzker award winning architect Wang Shu, created a model for capturing culture within a modern context. Shu's approach in sustaining culture was to stimulate contemplation about cultural origins and evoke nostalgia.⁵⁰ Through Chinese philosophy, Shu understood how to build connections between the human and the natural world, creating a beautiful artificial world with a mixture of nature and human activity.⁵¹ Shu believed that architects must design and transform a world that transforms people's feelings because it is important for architecture to think about the inner self.⁵²

48 Hsing-Chen Cheng and Chih-Ming Shih, "REINTERPRETING TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE IN THE OFFICE BUILDING AND SKYSCRAPER: THE ARCHITECTURE OF C. Y. LEE," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 182, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030835>.

49 Hsing-Chen Cheng and Chih-Ming Shih, "REINTERPRETING TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE IN THE OFFICE BUILDING AND SKYSCRAPER: THE ARCHITECTURE OF C. Y. LEE," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 182, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030835>.

50 Alex Ulam, "Wang Shu: Chinese Garden," *ArtAsiaPacific*, no. 52 (March 2007): 64, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505231572&site=ehost-live>.

51 Alex Ulam, "Wang Shu: Chinese Garden," *ArtAsiaPacific*, no. 52 (March 2007): 64, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505231572&site=ehost-live>.

52 Alex Ulam, "Wang Shu: Chinese Garden," *ArtAsiaPacific*, no. 52 (March 2007): 65, <http://search.ebsco>



Fig 18. Ningbo History Museum, Wang Shu.

C.Y.Lee, another important figure in developing modern Chinese architecture, states modern Chinese architecture should be adjustable enough to conform to the contemporary situation while relating to traditional cultural characteristics via modern techniques.⁵³ Rather than replicating tradition, modern Chinese architecture should reinterpret traditional practices through transforming and applying abstract principles, organization, concepts and styles. By simplifying traditional vocabularies to achieve semiotic images, cultural identity is experienced through a hint of traditional spatial organizations.⁵⁴

The debate of modern Chinese architecture since the 1940s however had always been complicated and the issues of incorporating Chinese and Western ideas evolved into the dispute between three groups: The Chinese nationalist, the vernacular-oriented group and the Chinese conceptualists.⁵⁵ The nationalist group reinterpreted the nature of traditional Chinese

host.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505231572&site=ehost-live.

53 Hsing-Chen Cheng and Chih-Ming Shih, "REINTERPRETING TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE IN THE OFFICE BUILDING AND SKYSCRAPER: THE ARCHITECTURE OF C. Y. LEE," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 182, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030835>.

54 Hsing-Chen Cheng and Chih-Ming Shih, "REINTERPRETING TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE IN THE OFFICE BUILDING AND SKYSCRAPER: THE ARCHITECTURE OF C. Y. LEE," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 183, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030835>.

55 Hsing-Chen Cheng and Chih-Ming Shih, "REINTERPRETING TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE IN THE OFFICE BUILDING AND SKYSCRAPER: THE ARCHITECTURE OF C. Y. LEE," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 194, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030835>.

architectural principles by incorporating Chinese national vocabulary of unifying man with nature into Western theory.⁵⁶ The vernacular-oriented group emphasized vernacular characteristics by incorporating material, tectonic, order, and spatial considerations into modern architectural design.⁵⁷ The conceptualists argued that modern Chinese architecture should interpret the Chinese spirit with modern theory to fulfil the spirit of time.⁵⁸ Both Chinese nationalist and vernacular groups focused on reinterpreting modern Chinese architecture with references of tradition whereas the conceptualist had represented the Chinese spirit through a modern architectural form.⁵⁹ Although the three groups had different approaches, they all shared similar exploration of traditional Chinese philosophy.

56 Hsing-Chen Cheng and Chih-Ming Shih, "REINTERPRETING TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE IN THE OFFICE BUILDING AND SKYSCRAPER: THE ARCHITECTURE OF C. Y. LEE," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 194, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030835>

57 Ibid.

58 Hsing-Chen Cheng and Chih-Ming Shih, "REINTERPRETING TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE IN THE OFFICE BUILDING AND SKYSCRAPER: THE ARCHITECTURE OF C. Y. LEE," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 195, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030835>

59 Ibid.

It is undeniable that modern Chinese architecture strives to reflect both Chinese and Western ideals, however there will always be criticism towards "the correct" approach of cultural appropriation in modern architecture. From the transformation of traditional spatial principles, reinterpretation of traditional architectural languages and transformed vocabularies, this research demonstrates that modern Chinese architecture struggles to clarify issues of cultural identity, however we must commend modern Chinese architecture for breaking the structural bond of tradition language making distinct progress in the approach.⁶⁰ Although this research suggests there will never be one solution in approaching cultural identity, it further explores interdisciplinary approaches in search of alternative solutions in an attempt to retain cultural identity as a result of development of the suburbs and gentrification in the cosmopolitan.

60 Hsing-Chen Cheng and Chih-Ming Shih, "REINTERPRETING TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE IN THE OFFICE BUILDING AND SKYSCRAPER: THE ARCHITECTURE OF C. Y. LEE," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 198, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030835>.



Fig 19. Astor Court Peony Pavilion Exhibition, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

CASE STUDY OF MODERN CHINESE ARCHITECTURE: ASTOR COURT

As a part of the investigation of modern Chinese architecture, this research examines the Astor Court exhibition at Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York because it is a crucial project that demonstrates how institutional and social politics can be involved in architecture to exploring the idea of “Chinese-ness” in America. The term “*Chinese-ness*” refers to the invention between traditional Chinese culture and western ideals as a result of diasporic Chinese aesthetic and cultural sensibilities.⁶¹ Constructed during a critical time of relations being normalized between the United States and the People’s Republic of China, the Astor Court integrated institutional function, personal nostalgia, social programming and (un)intended cross-cultural interpretations.⁶² Astor Court captured the spirit of the traditional Chinese garden through the physical layout, social function and cultural meaning in pursuit of authenticity and reality.⁶³ At the same time, it considered dynamic interplay between personal and institutional dimensions that created a multiplicity of meaning and values.⁶⁴ Overall, the project received recognition for its sociocultural and cross-cultural significance because it provided a

61 Han Li, “From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting ‘Chinese-Ness’ in America,” *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 286, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

62 Han Li, “From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting ‘Chinese-Ness’ in America,” *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 286, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

63 Han Li, “From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting ‘Chinese-Ness’ in America,” *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 286, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

64 Han Li, “From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting ‘Chinese-Ness’ in America,” *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 286, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.



Fig 20. Astor Court Courtyard Exhibition, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

large perspective of cultural politics behind exhibiting "Chinese-ness" in America.⁶⁵ To ensure authenticity and quality, the exhibition achieved a poetic correlation through spatial configurations arranged in a rectangular space, zigzag corridors, a pavilion, ponds and a performance theatre modeled after the famous garden from late Spring Studio (Fig 20).⁶⁶ In Chinese philosophy, the gardens were situated and enclosed within a busy urban fabric and considered to be the treatise in the world, "if one could find seclusion in a noisy place, there is no need to yearn for places far from where you live."⁶⁷ Situated in the busy environment of the museum rather a busy city, the poetic gesture demonstrated a cultural constructed agreement which spoke much to the relationship between Chinese and western culture.

The project also emphasized authenticity through materiality and techniques, two aspects crucial to the Chinese garden. The exhibit featured precious materials of fine textures of wood and ceramics which were unique to the construction of a siheyuan, however the project embodied authenticity beyond the material artefact. The use of techniques applied by

65 Han Li, "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 286, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

66 Han Li, "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 287, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

67 Han Li, "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 291, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

traditional tools and methods provided extravagant detail that demonstrated patience, profession practice and masterly skill by the craftsmen.⁶⁸ This skills employed added another level of significance to the project and furthered the legacy of the project because it demonstrated not only the craftsmanship but the history and methods that were passed on through oral traditions.⁶⁹ While the physical construction of the Astor Court was completed in 1980, the interpretation of spaces were designed to remain as an ongoing programme.⁷⁰ As visitors pass through the garden, the meandering paths were essential in developing one's emotion and character. Traditionally, theatrical performances were exhibited at the end of the garden that narrated themes of transcendence through life and death, time and space.⁷¹ Reflecting upon this, the Astor Court exhibited a performance hall at the end of garden for social venues for artistic performances, vernacular operas, traditional instruments and dances that summarized the visitor's entire experience.⁷²

68 Han Li, "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 291, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

69 Han Li, "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 294, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

To conclude, the Astor Court demonstrates an intellectual anecdote of serendipity to the overall narrative that blended practical use with its poetic sensibility.⁷³ The interpretative activity of the project echoes a siheyuan through composed and curated sequences that provides opportunities for transcultural audiences to experience Chinese culture. The project deliberately blurs the boundaries between a real garden experience and a museum exhibit, and demonstrate a narrative of a traditional pursuit converging with a broader institutional purpose, something Chinese intellectual tradition favour.⁷⁴ The Astor Court not only displays the physical legacy of the garden, but exemplifies the non-material legacy valuable for sustaining cultural and artistic tradition.⁷⁵

73 Han Li, "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 287, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

74 Han Li, "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 287, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

75 Han Li, "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 294, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.



Fig 21. Lan Xi Courtyard, Archi Union Architects.

CASE STUDY OF MODERN CHINESE ARCHITECTURE: THE LAN XI CURTILAGE

When investigating how modern architecture can authentically express Chinese culture, it is important to understand Cucuzella's theory of sustaining architectural visual expression. In *"Is Sustainability Reorienting the Visual Expression of Architecture?"*, Cucuzella suggests rather than addressing sustainable design with an array of expensive technologies and efficient strategies, an alternative is to integrate traditional practice to enhance visual culture of architecture.⁷⁶ Cucuzella presents two concepts in sustaining culture in an architectural framework: the textual and visual⁷⁷. The textual articulates narratives and underlying intentions which visually communicate lyrical expression rooted in cultural significance.⁷⁸ The visual can be expressed through instrumental devices or through interpretation employed through materials, techniques and compositions which communicate intrinsic atmosphere and quality of space.⁷⁹ The Lan Xi Courtyard, located in Chengdu China designed by Archi Union Architects best reflects these concepts in modern Chinese architecture.

76 Carmela Cucuzella, *"Is Sustainability Reorienting the Visual Expression of Architecture?"* (Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review (RACAR), 2015), 40: 88.

77 Carmela Cucuzella, *"Is Sustainability Reorienting the Visual Expression of Architecture?"* (Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review (RACAR), 2015), 40: 97

78 Carmela Cucuzella, *"Is Sustainability Reorienting the Visual Expression of Architecture?"* (Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review (RACAR), 2015), 40: 93.

79 Ibid.



Fig 22. The Lan Xi Curtilage Courtyard, Archi Union Architects.

The Lan Xi Curtilage is culturally and aesthetically driven as it demonstrates experiential, visual and cultural significance through its narrative and use of technology. The built form and reinterpretation of built form demonstrate a social construction of space and meaning of cultural place without it being "kitsch". This project communicates cultural iconography through its elaborative and interpretative facade which is derived from the Chinese mountains, which ultimately specializes culture through its interpretation via digital manufacturing (Fig 22). The material, ornament, composition and atmosphere manifests Chinese cultural identity through visual expression that became the narrative which transforms space through metaphor. This project an example of social and cultural construction as provides meaning based on the materiality. Overall, the construction of the Lan Xi Curtilage assembles and elaborates interpretations of space and place, creating a sense of cultural identity in though a modern lens.

第七节 明、清一般城镇、住宅、园林及家具陈设

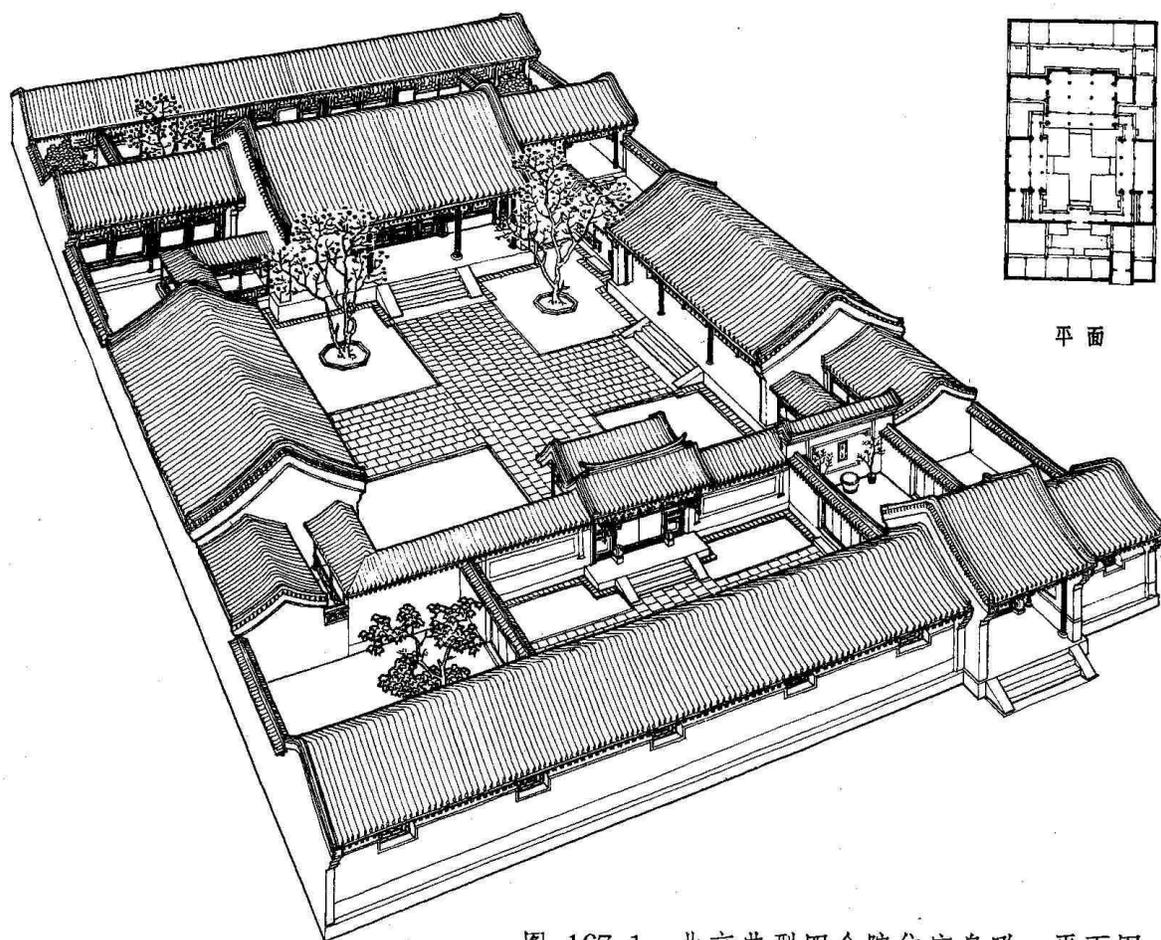


图 167-1 北京典型四合院住宅鸟瞰、平面图

Fig 23. Siheyuan Layout Illustration.

REINTERPRETATION OF CHINESE TRADITIONS

INTRODUCTION TO THE SIHEYUAN

This research investigates both the architectural and ethnographic significance of the traditional Chinese courtyard to understand how architectural, environmental and spatial configurations were considered to foster better social and cultural relationships. For over five thousand years, the traditional Chinese courtyard known as a *siheyuan*, was considered as the microcosms of philosophical, social, ethical and aesthetic ideas.⁸⁰ A siheyuan served as a dynamic space for political, cultural and artistic expressions.⁸¹ It was also a symbol of togetherness as it provided a place of interactivity where people socialized, traded products and exchanged ideas. Philosophically, a siheyuan linked heaven and earth that brought harmony and good fortune.⁸² Phenomenologically, a siheyuan focused on the division of spaces, connection between inside and outside, sequential relationships between major and minor spaces and social relationships.⁸³

80 Donia Zhang, "Courtyard Houses of Beijing: Lessons from the Renewal," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 27, no. 1 (2015): 69, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24720001>.

81 Han Li, "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 285, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1

82 Donia Zhang, "Courtyard Houses of Beijing: Lessons from the Renewal," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 27, no. 1 (2015): 69, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24720001>.

83 Wei Zhao, "Beyond the Invariable Style: The Development of Residential Architecture in Yanxia Village, China," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 26, no. 2 (2015): 42, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24347525>.

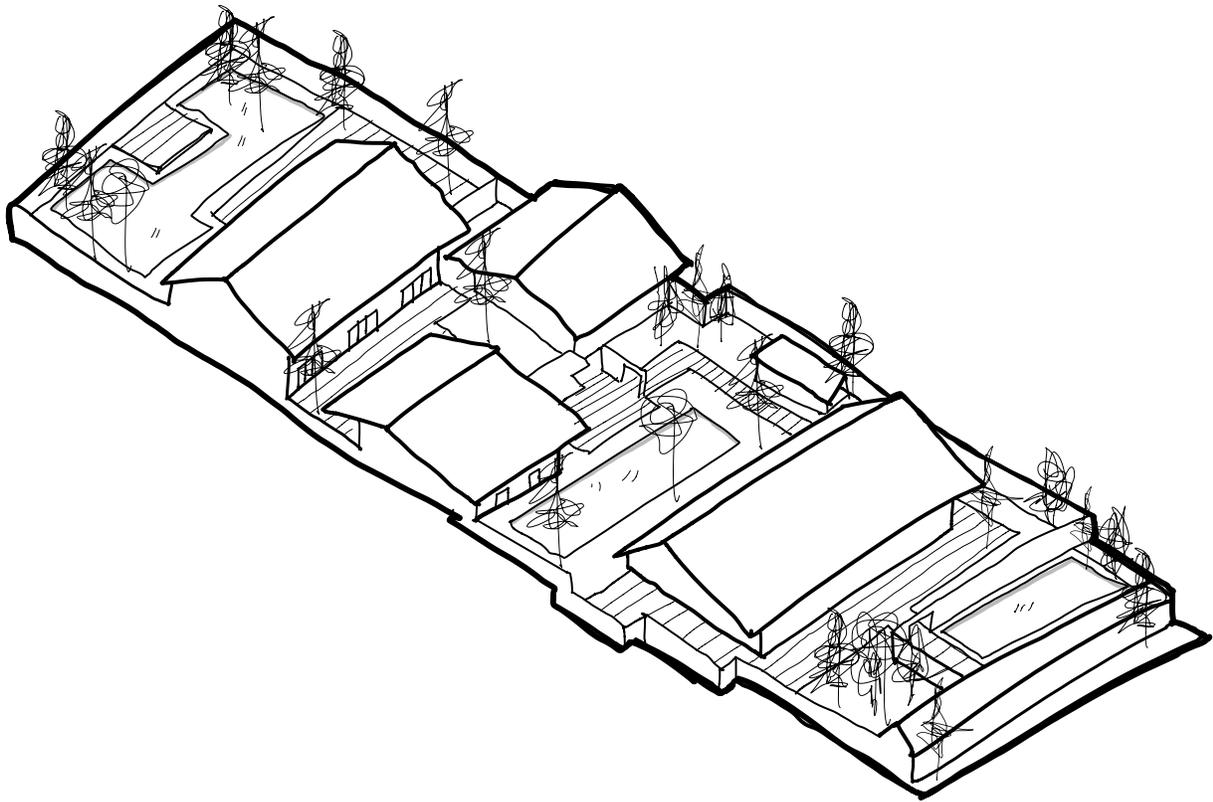


Fig 24. Sketch of a Traditional Siheyuan Layout.

Similar to ancient Chinese poetry and paintings, a siheyuan represented Chinese oversight of the world as it compassed elements of surrounding mountains, meandering paths, rivers and pavilions in front of ponds.⁸⁴ Both literally and figuratively, the design of a siheyuan represented the entire terrestrial realm for its ability to translate Chinese traditions in architectural form.⁸⁵ In the following, this research presents five core concepts in a siheyuan.

84 Zohreh Shirazi, "The Symphony of Iran and China in Garden (2012)," *Manzar: The Iranian Scientific Journal of Landscape* 4 (20): 70, <http://search.ebscohost.com.librweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=88960088&site=ehost-live>.

85 Jerome Silbergeld, "Beyond Suzhou: Region and Memory in the Gardens of Sichuan," *The Art Bulletin* 86, no. 2 (2004): 208, doi:10.2307/3111111 <http://search.ebscohost.com.librweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=88960088&site=ehost-live77415>.

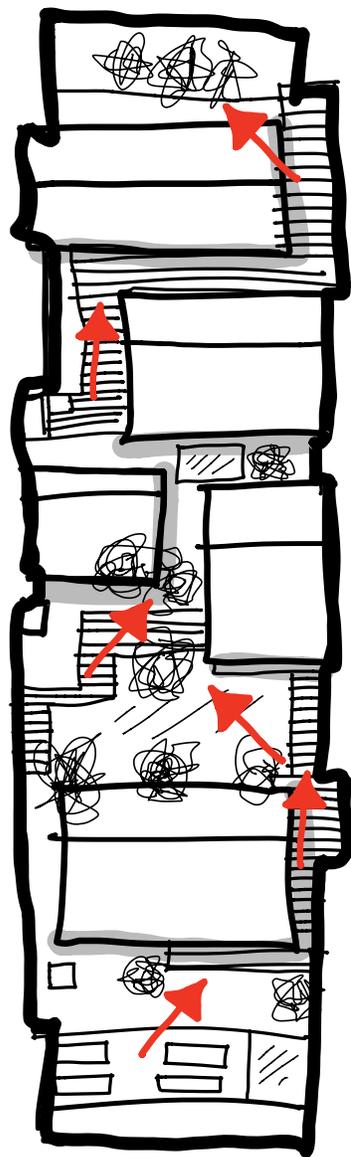


Fig 25. Sketch of a Siheyuan's Circulation.

1. MEANDERING AND CIRCULATION

Circulation throughout a siheyuan was designed to choreograph and orchestrate a visitor's visualization and experience through meandering paths between architectural structures and courtyards. The zigzag movement orchestrated through series of meandering paths and levels implied traditional poetics as it created a universe where the mind, the eye and nature interact.⁸⁶ These labyrinth paths were essential to creating curiosity and enhancing the visitor's visualization and experience.⁸⁷ The mysterious and complex paths became a place where the relationship between man and nature were fostered.⁸⁸ By the end of the path, the significance of the journeys were not only to allow visitors to experience the relationship between man and nature but to narrate the experience of transcendence through life and death, time and space.⁸⁹ The circulation of the meandering paths was a critical design principle for its ability to translate a narrative through built form.

86 Robert M Craig, "Passages to a Different Universe: The Three Gardens of Zhuo Zheng Yuan, Suzhou," *Southeastern College Art Conference Review* 11, no. 3 (March 1988): 223, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505528812&site=ehost-live>.

87 Ibid.

88 Zohreh Shirazi, "The Symphony of Iran and China in Garden (2012)," *Manzar: The Iranian Scientific Journal of Landscape* 4 (20): 70, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=88960088&site=ehost-live>.

89 Han Li, "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 294, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

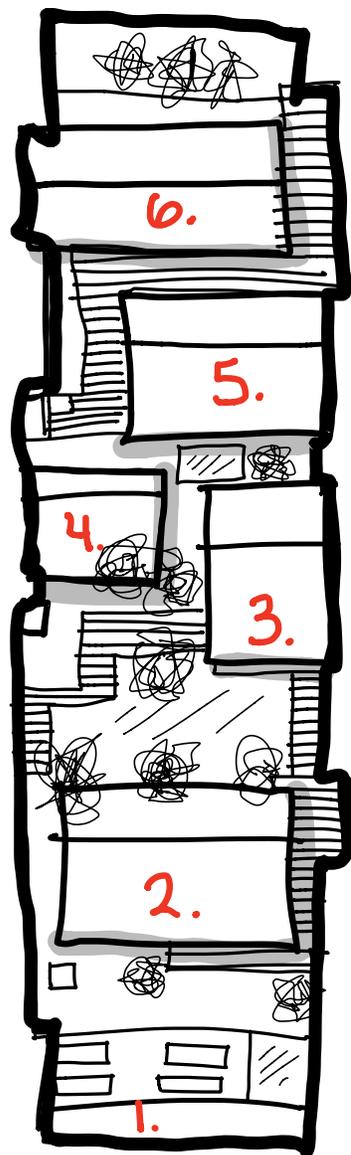


Fig 26. Sketch of a Siheyuan's Spatial Arrangement.

2. SPATIAL ARRANGEMENT

A problem Chinese architecture experienced was a lack of central spaces. In western architecture, the center was fundamental of existential space where important primary activities took place. In contrast, Chinese architecture employed spatial arrangements to express the primary importance of psychological function.⁹⁰ The spatial arrangements in a siheyuan were comprised of architectural interventions and courtyards that were systems for people to orient and identify themselves. The series of configurations created visual puns and endless variations that engaged with the imagination.⁹¹ Ultimately, symbolism and semiotics employed throughout the siheyuan created dialogue between man and buildings so that the built environment could easily be understood.⁹² As a result, the series of spatial arrangements were not only the medium and interposition of exterior and interior spaces, but provided a spatial adventure with alternate big-small, inner-outer, longitudinal-latitude, and open-closed spatial changes.⁹³

90 Xiao Hu, "Boundaries and Openings: Spatial Strategies in the Chinese Dwelling," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 23, no. 4 (2008): 362, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41107440>.

91 Jerome Silbergeld, "Beyond Suzhou: Region and Memory in the Gardens of Sichuan," *The Art Bulletin* 86, no. 2 (2004): 214, doi:10.2307/3111111 <http://search.ebscohost.com/librweb/laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=88960088&site=ehost-live77415>.

92 Xiao Hu, "Boundaries and Openings: Spatial Strategies in the Chinese Dwelling," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 23, no. 4 (2008): 354, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41107440>.

93 Xiao Hu, "Boundaries and Openings: Spatial Strategies in the Chinese Dwelling," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 23, no. 4 (2008): 360, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41107440>.

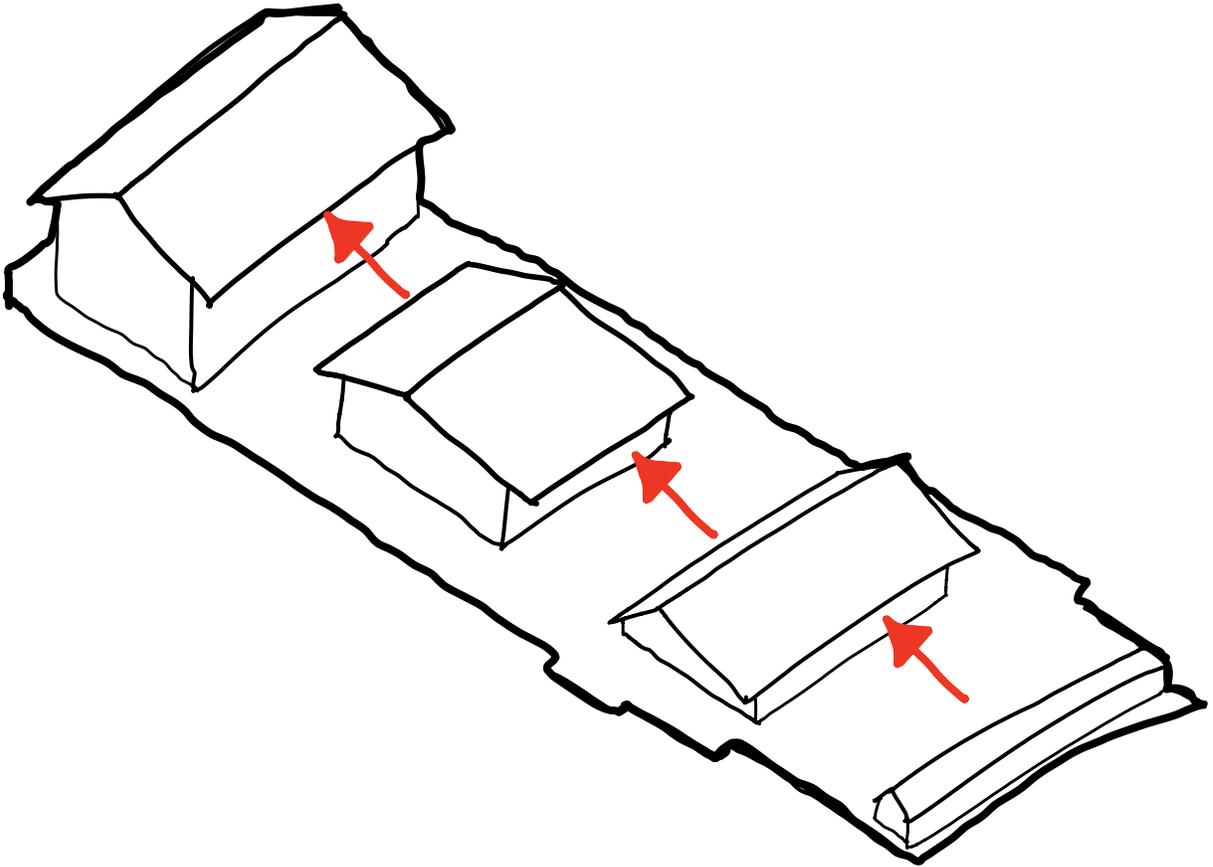


Fig 27. Sketch of a Siheyuan's Hierarchy.

3. HIERARCHY

In China, the feudal society formed a strict pyramidal system where the highest authority and commander would be at the top and common people were at the bottom. As Chinese architectural practice had paralleled with China's social class system, the spatial sequencing became a mechanism to control society and ensured a strong tradition under a central power.⁹⁴ The major north-south axis of a siheyuan was the most important element in the design because the length was a symbol of wealth and social position.⁹⁵ Gradations and progression throughout the courtyard began from semi-private to public spaces that demonstrated a transitioning sequence of ascending order of social and spatial hierarchy. As the entrance gates claimed a lower political status and the main hall located in the inner courtyard claimed a higher social and political status, the progression of built forms demonstrated social and spatial hierarchy.⁹⁶ The progression of new stimuli throughout the courtyard not only suggested altering built environments but provided new meanings of architectural spaces through social and cultural activities.⁹⁷

94 Ping Xu, "FENG-SHUI" MODELS STRUCTURED TRADITIONAL BEIJING COURTYARD HOUSES," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 15, no. 4 (1998): 278, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030469>.

95 Ping Xu, "FENG-SHUI" MODELS STRUCTURED TRADITIONAL BEIJING COURTYARD HOUSES," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 15, no. 4 (1998): 279, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030469>.

96 Xiao Hu, "Boundaries and Openings: Spatial Strategies in the Chinese Dwelling," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 23, no. 4 (2008): 364, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41107440>.

97 Wei Zhao, "Beyond the Invariable Style: The Development of Residential Architecture in Yanxia Village, China," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 26, no. 2 (2015): 42, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24347525>.

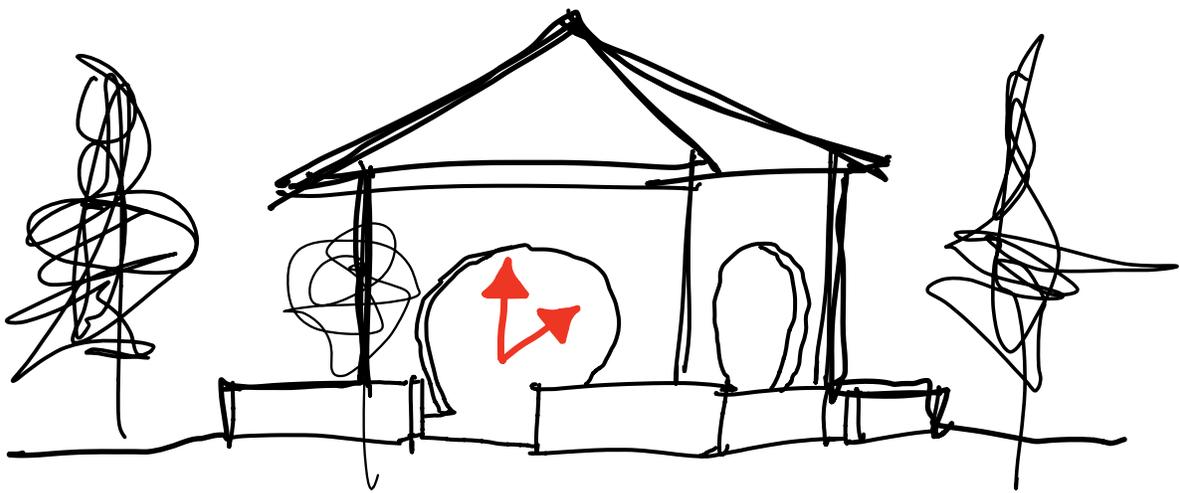


Fig 28. Sketch of a Siheyuan's Visual Depth.

4. TIME AND VISUAL DEPTH

Time and visual depth were parallel concepts that played important roles in traditional Chinese architecture. In ancient Chinese society, people considered time as circular and the never-changing cycles of time were important in organizing social life with the seasons of the year. In a siheyuan, rooms provided places for people to slow down and look through the courtyard as if they were looking through time. The abstract concept of looking and slowing down created a sense of visual depth that provided opportunities to self reflect into the past, present and future. Now, modern Chinese architecture has further developed this concept to become more dynamic.⁹⁸ In modern society, daily life has become busier and quicker, and time becomes an abstract concept that relates to the fast rhythm of daily routine reflecting today's social and of economic values.⁹⁹

98 Bernard Leupen, Lin Hai, and Sun Meng, 2009, "Time - Based Architecture in China Meeting Present, Bridging Past and Future," *Time-Based Architecture International* 5 (March): 4, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=43581951&site=ehost-live>.

99 Ibid.

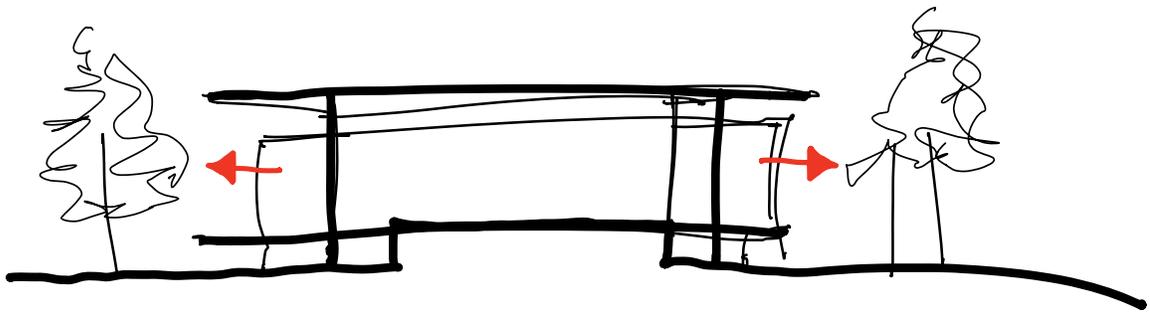


Fig 29. Sketch of a Siheyuan's Concept of Inside vs Outside.

5. INSIDE VS OUTSIDE

The architectural infrastructure in a siheyuan reflected China's practice of inside vs outside. All interior spaces were never separated into intricate spaces as the most important focus was the courtyard.¹⁰⁰ Walls were not used to support the roof but were flexible facades to be rearrange that brought the courtyard space inside.¹⁰¹ This was a key element in the configuration of spaces that blurred the boundaries between built forms and courtyards. The philosophical concept of Yin and Yang demonstrated the basic components of the universe that created ultimate harmony when in perfect balance. The contrast between solid and void inspired natural movement and represented the interaction between Yin and Yang.¹⁰² Only through the relationship between human and nature will one find the order of nature and be in harmony with the world. The courtyard became the mediating place between human and nature, public and private, open and closed, solid and void, and interior and exterior.¹⁰³ The sequences of contrasting interior and exterior spaces complemented each other.

100 Xiao Hu, "Boundaries and Openings: Spatial Strategies in the Chinese Dwelling," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 23, no. 4 (2008): 360, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41107440>.

101 Ibid.

102 Xiao Hu, "Boundaries and Openings: Spatial Strategies in the Chinese Dwelling," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 23, no. 4 (2008): 359, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41107440>.

103 Ibid.



Fig 30. Hollow Brick, Early 1st Century CE.

THE EMERGENCE OF CLAY AND CERAMICS

Until the introduction of steel, concrete and glass in architecture in the 20th century, fired clay may have constituted the most widely used building material throughout the world.¹⁰⁴ In exploring material culture of Chinese tradition, ceramics were discovered to be an important building material which were used for architectural and structural elements. During the late Bronze age (1200-1046 BCE), ceramics were used as building elements for floor tiles, roof tiles and hollow bricks which became widespread in China.¹⁰⁵ It was only until the late 3rd century BCE onwards that builders began to realize the potential of ceramics and ventured into buildings walls and ceilings.¹⁰⁶ During the 1st century, builders better understood brick building and new technologies revolutionized clay that lead to the innovation of mortise and tenon bricks used for barrel and groin vaults in tomb architecture.¹⁰⁷ Although some Chinese builders pushed the boundaries of ceramics, the prototype culture had lacked and consequently not all builders made use of ceramics at the time.¹⁰⁸ It was not until the 9th century CE that architecture saw buildings

104 Lukas Nickel, "Bricks in Ancient China and the Question of Early Cross-Asian Interaction," *Arts Asiatiques* 70 (2015): 50, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26358183>.

105 Ibid.

106 Lukas Nickel, "Bricks in Ancient China and the Question of Early Cross-Asian Interaction," *Arts Asiatiques* 70 (2015): 51, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26358183>.

107 Lukas Nickel, "Bricks in Ancient China and the Question of Early Cross-Asian Interaction," *Arts Asiatiques* 70 (2015): 56, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26358183>.

108 Lukas Nickel, "Bricks in Ancient China and the Question of Early Cross-Asian Interaction," *Arts Asiatiques* 70 (2015): 60, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26358183>.



Fig 31. Traditional Screens used in the Siheyuan.

constructed entirely of ceramics.¹⁰⁹ As an ongoing pursuit of this material investigation, this thesis further develops the prototype culture of ceramics in architecture via digital technology.

Inspired by traditional Chinese lattice screens in a siheyuan, this research investigates the application of digital fabrication to articulate intricate ceramic screens via digital technology. The exploration of ceramic screens throughout this research reinterprets Chinese architecture through a manifesting 3D printed ceramics screens that could be understood transculturally and transgenerationally. The fabrication of the ceramic screens argue that decoration in architecture is becoming increasingly relevant in the production of form. Throughout this research, digital technology became an iconic tool that demonstrates the potential of 3D printing ceramic screens and pushes material exploration. This investigation exemplifies that digital computation has the ability to drastically change social and cultural interactions at large scale. New developments in technology allows this thesis to compute complex notions of reality at a variety of scales without altering or simplifying mathematical formulations or physical laws.¹¹⁰ Throughout the process of manufacturing the ceramic screens, digital technologies

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Mario Carpo, "Excessive: From Digital Streamlining to Computational Complexity," In *Architectural Design* (Volume 86, Issue 6, 2016), 80.

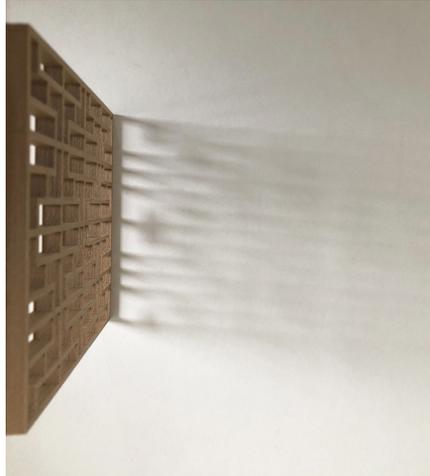


Fig 32 Shadow Casts From 3D Printed Screen Prototype.



Fig 33.1:1 Scale 3D Printed Ceramic Screen.

helps this research with reinterpreting the spirit of a ceramics and develops a continuity between form and gestures of skilled craftsmen.¹¹¹ These ceramic screens oppose western architectural train of thought that ornament is a supplementary form and argues that ornamentation is not wasteful, rather is the premise of reality. Technology and ornament together convey meaning which open new theoretical issues of architectural principles and aesthetics. Throughout this process, this research explores how fine textures of ceramics embodied authenticity beyond the material artefact.

As light and shadow pass through the ceramic screens, one's immediate position in space transcend beyond the physical, redefining rhythm and changing moods as it would engage the observer.¹¹² According to Malgrave's theory in "From Object to Experience", his theory suggest that the human body understands culture through materials, pictures and symbols because their inherent qualities induce an aesthetic emotion that result in an aesthetic experience deeply rooted in human perception.¹¹³ This direct engagement with atmospheric qualities and technology suggests

¹¹¹ Mario Carpo, "Excessive: From Digital Streamlining to Computational Complexity," In *Architectural Design* (Volume 86, Issue 6, 2016), 81.

¹¹² Robert M Craig, "Passages to a Different Universe: The Three Gardens of Zhuo Zheng Yuan, Suzhou," *Southeastern College Art Conference Review* 11, no. 3 (March 1988): 223, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505528812&site=ehost-live>.

¹¹³ Harry Francis Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience: The New Culture of Architectural Design* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 119.

the ceramic screens can communicate Chinese culture through material, detail and symbols.¹¹⁴ As natural light would fill a space through the ceramic screens, it would orchestrate materiality and texture which create different senses of culture through emotional tones, colours, scales, textures and patterns.¹¹⁵

The lines casted from the shadow of the ceramic would interact with nature in such ways that transform transparent pattern of the real with the artificial.¹¹⁶ The altering visions and perspectives constantly create light and shadow, playing with coarse and fine texture that reflect traditional Chinese practice.¹¹⁷ Traditionally, these lattice screens were created and engraved in wood that demonstrated extravagant detail, patience and profession practice of the traditional craftsmen. This research however, adds another level of significance to the project because it not only interprets the lattice screen through a new material, but challenges the question of "what is craft?" The ceramic screens, although fabricated by a robot, demonstrate the legacy of traditional lattice screens. The "techniques" demonstrates the same level of traditional craftsmanship, however requires a reinterpretation of methods which were passed on through oral traditions via tools of the 21st century.

114 Harry Francis Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience: The New Culture of Architectural Design* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 126.

115 Harry Francis Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience: The New Culture of Architectural Design* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 134.

116 Robert M Craig, "Passages to a Different Universe: The Three Gardens of Zhuo Zheng Yuan, Suzhou," *Southeastern College Art Conference Review* 11, no. 3 (March 1988): 229, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505528812&site=ehost-live>.

117 Zohreh Shirazi, 2012. "The Symphony of Iran and China in Garden. (English)," *Manzar: The Iranian Scientific Journal of Landscape* 4 (20): 70, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=88960088&site=ehost-live>.

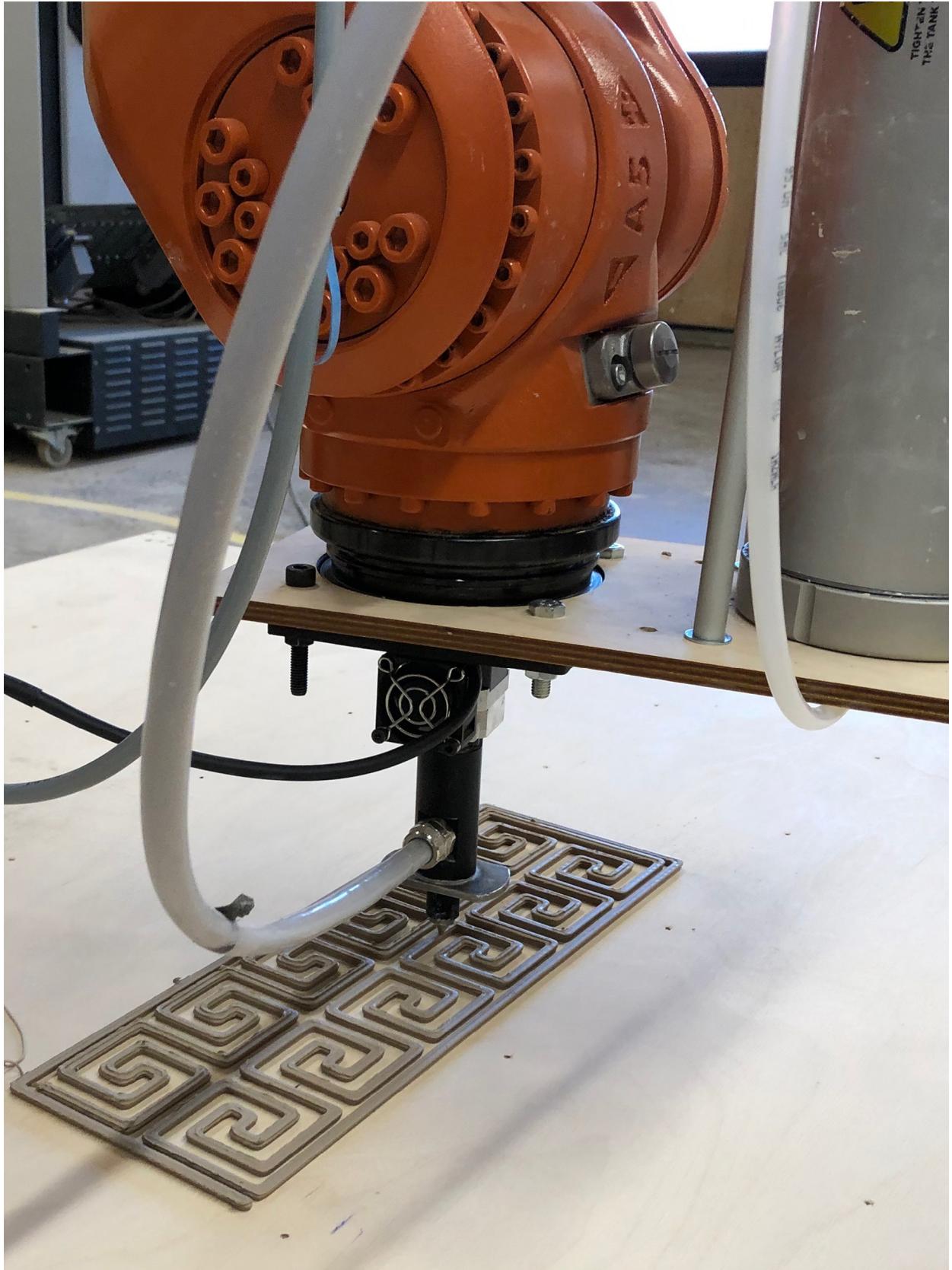


Fig 34. 3D Printing Prototype of Ceramic Screens.

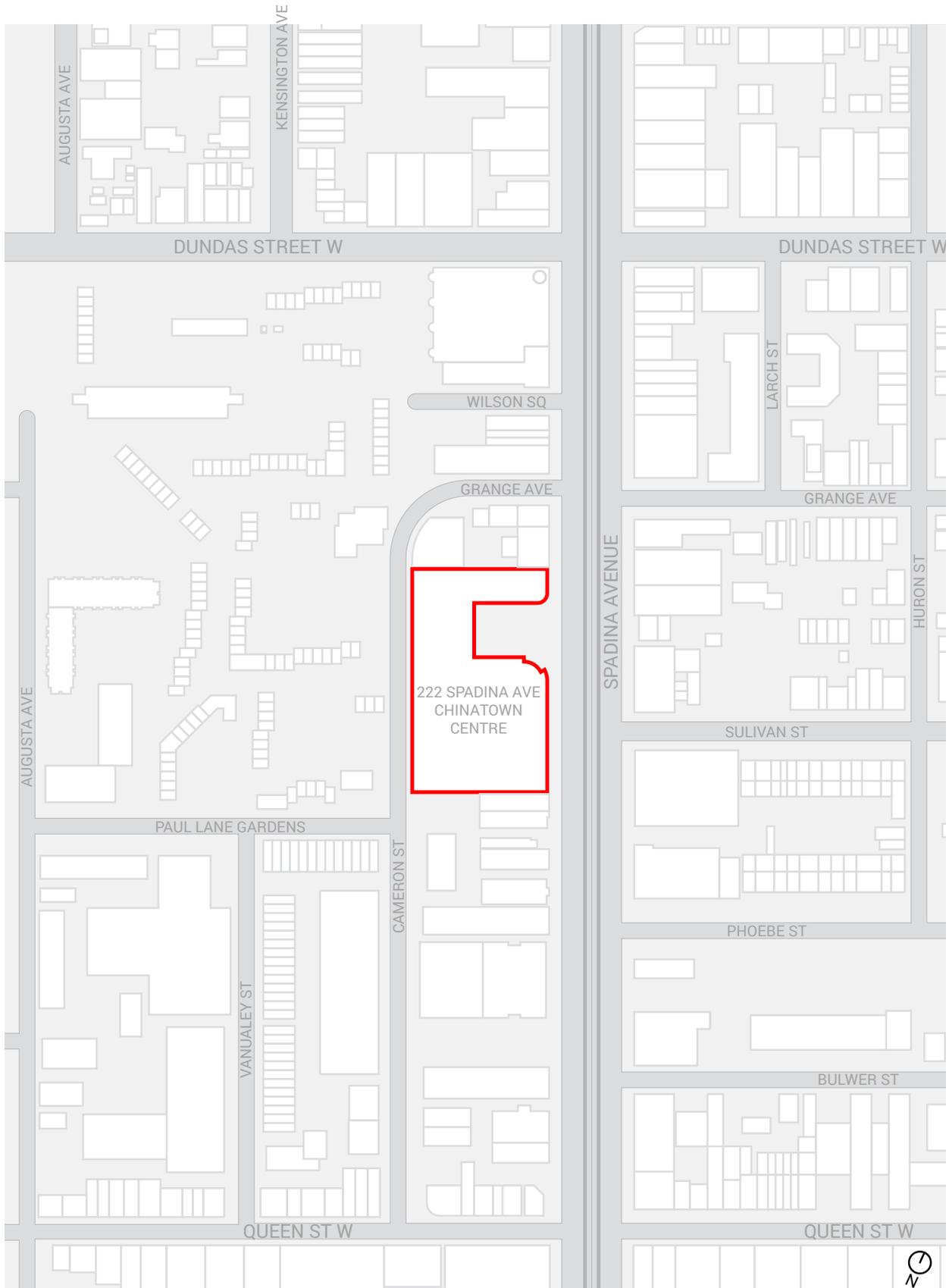


Fig 35.Chinatown Site Plan.

THESIS DESIGN

SITE: CHINATOWN

From the research presented in the previous chapter, it is evident that Toronto's Chinatown is currently undergoing a process of gentrification and its existence is at serious jeopardy. For years, committees have searched for solutions to pave way for "real" progress, however these plans did not always include the people of Chinatown. As evidence suggests, it is critical for the community to be involved in activist approaches to stand at the center of political, social and economic pressures as the sheer strength of a community has proven to save Chinatowns around the world.¹¹⁸ Although people and buildings come and go, there will always be something meaningful about Chinatown which captures the hearts of people that forever be imprinted in their experience and memories. In beginning this design process, the research starts with a site analysis to understand the programmatic context around the site.

¹¹⁸ John William Chin, "A Walk through Chinatown." (Pennsylvania Legacies 12: no. 1, 2012), 40, doi:10.5215/pennlega.12.1.0040.



Fig 36. Chinatown Centre Courtyard on Spadina Avenue.

Through investigating the site, it is clear that Chinatown's neighbourhood is constantly full of pedestrians as it is surrounded by institutional, financial, commercial and residential program (Fig 37). The next step in this thesis was to investigate amenities the neighbourhood is lacking. Because the site is located in a densely populated area full of tourists, residents and white collared workers, this suggests that during lunch or after work hours, the neighbourhood requires a place for people to reconcile with nature, to relax or to socialize. However, through investigating the site it is clear that there is no access to any urban infrastructure, green space or parks for any social activity. Therefore, the objective of this thesis is not only to design an urban infrastructure for the community but to create more social and cultural spaces that engage the community in a more diverse dialogue for both transcultural and transgenerational audiences.

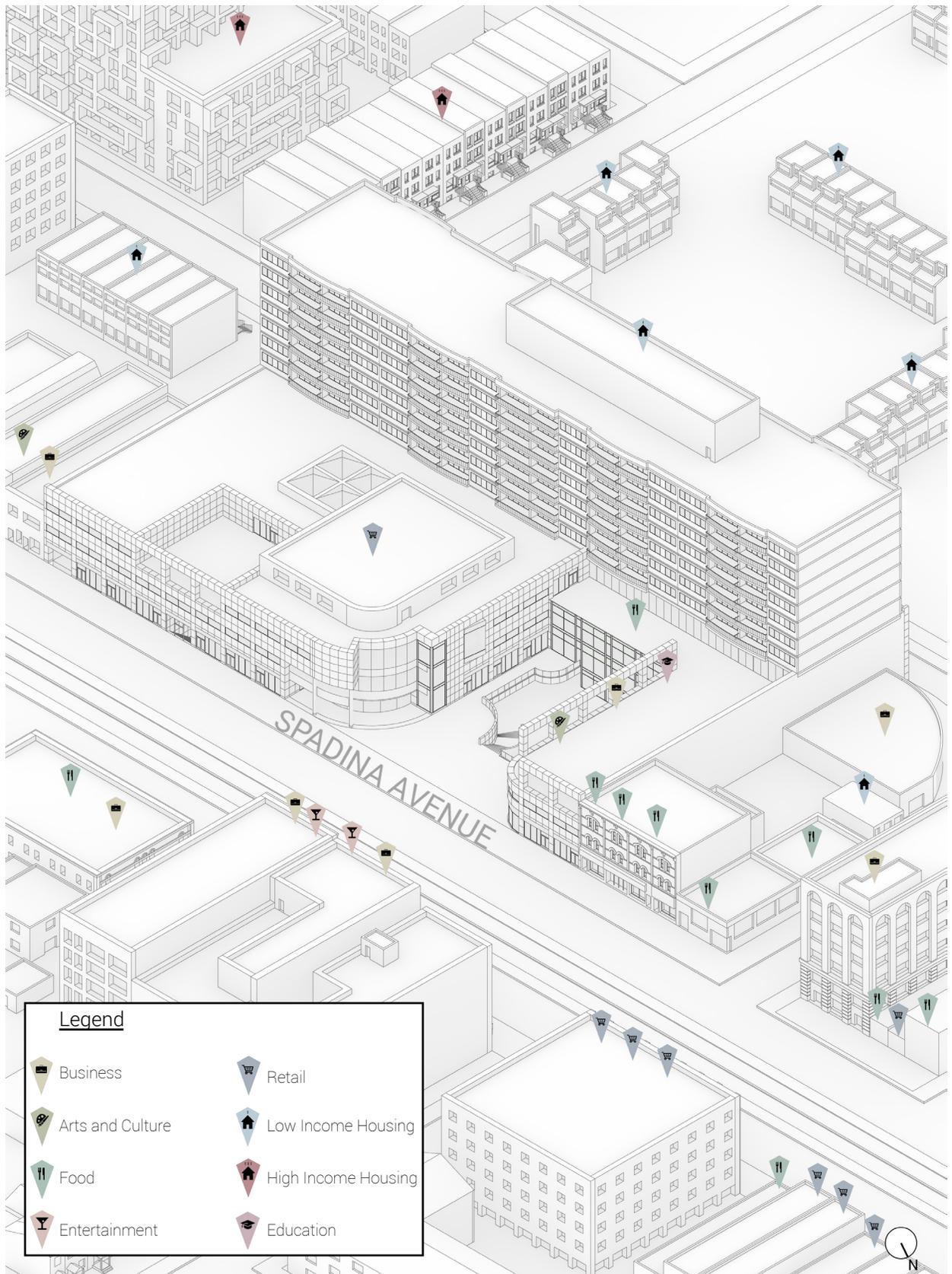


Fig 37.Chinatown Site Analysis.

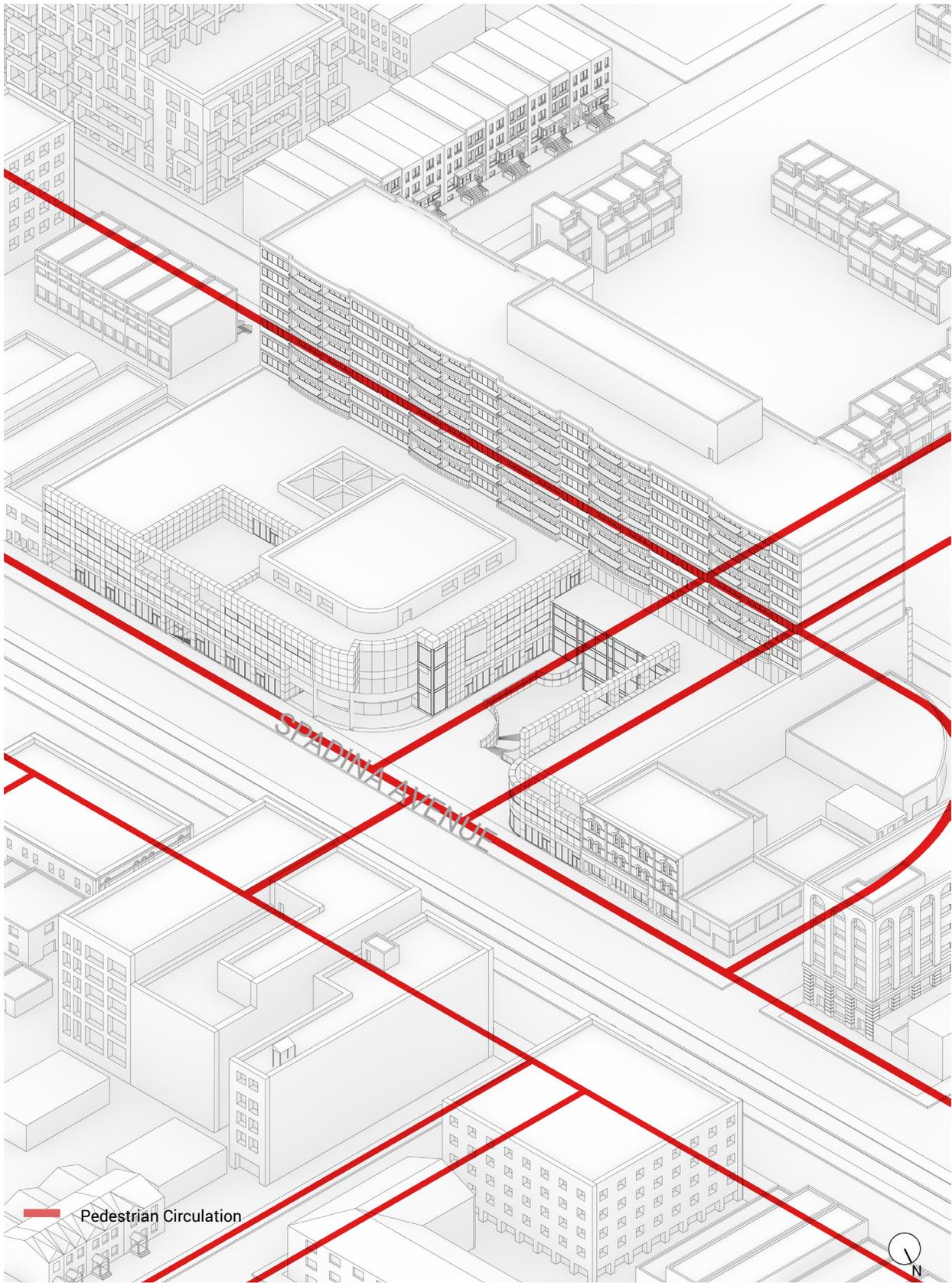


Fig 38. Chinatown Pedestrian Circulation Analysis.

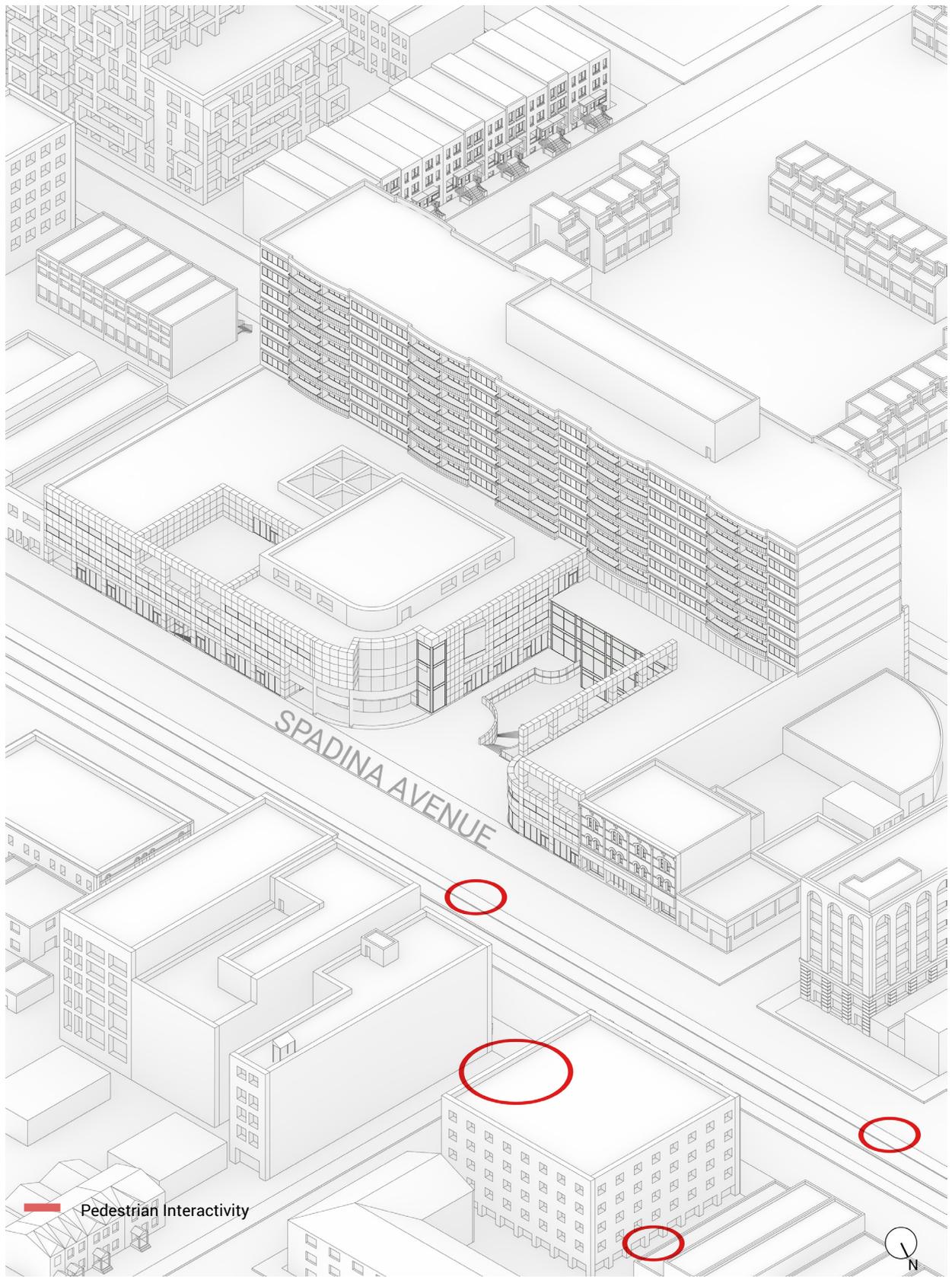


Fig 39. Chinatown Pedestrian Interactivity Analysis.

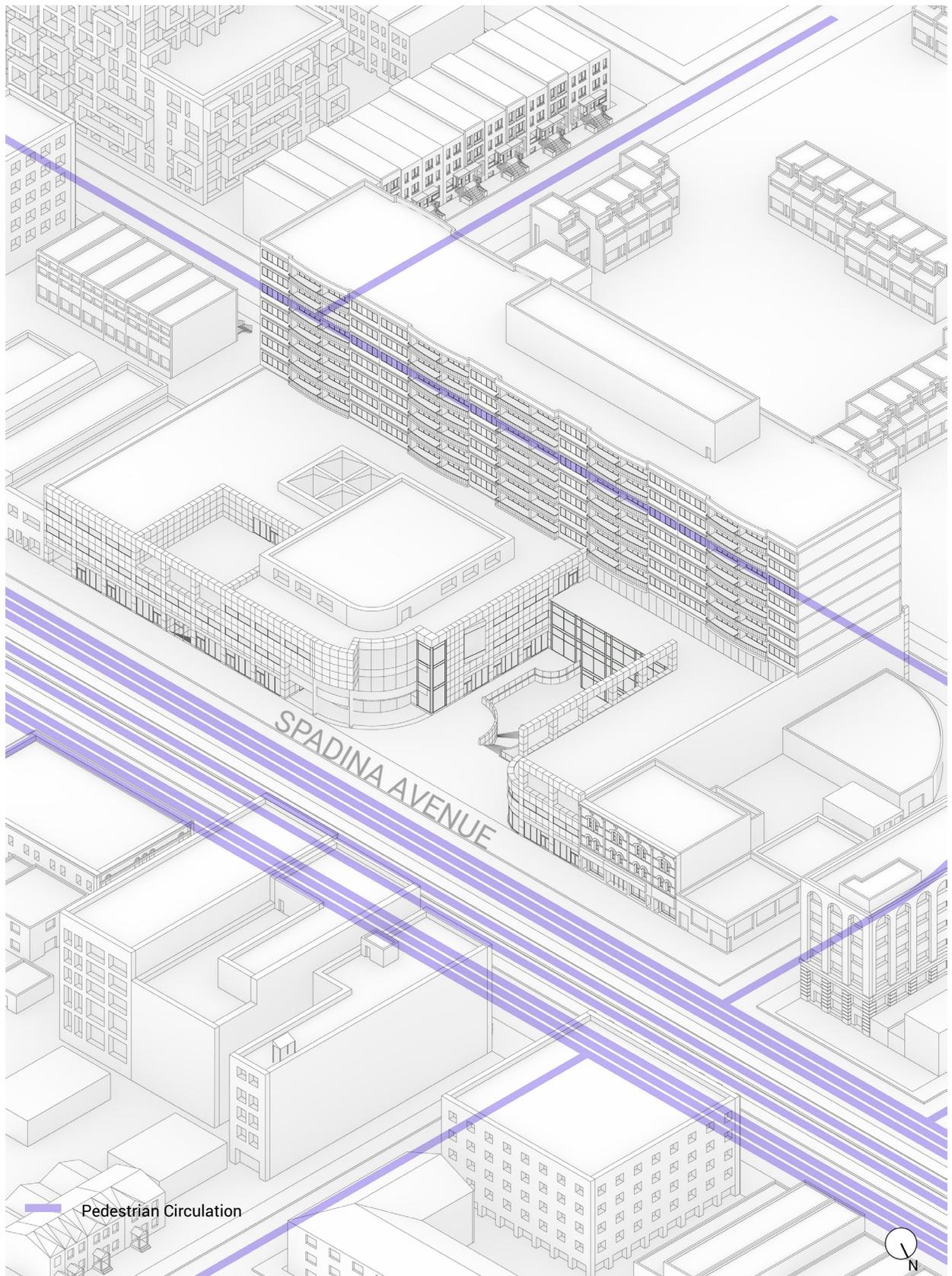


Fig 40. Chinatown Automobile Circulation Analysis.

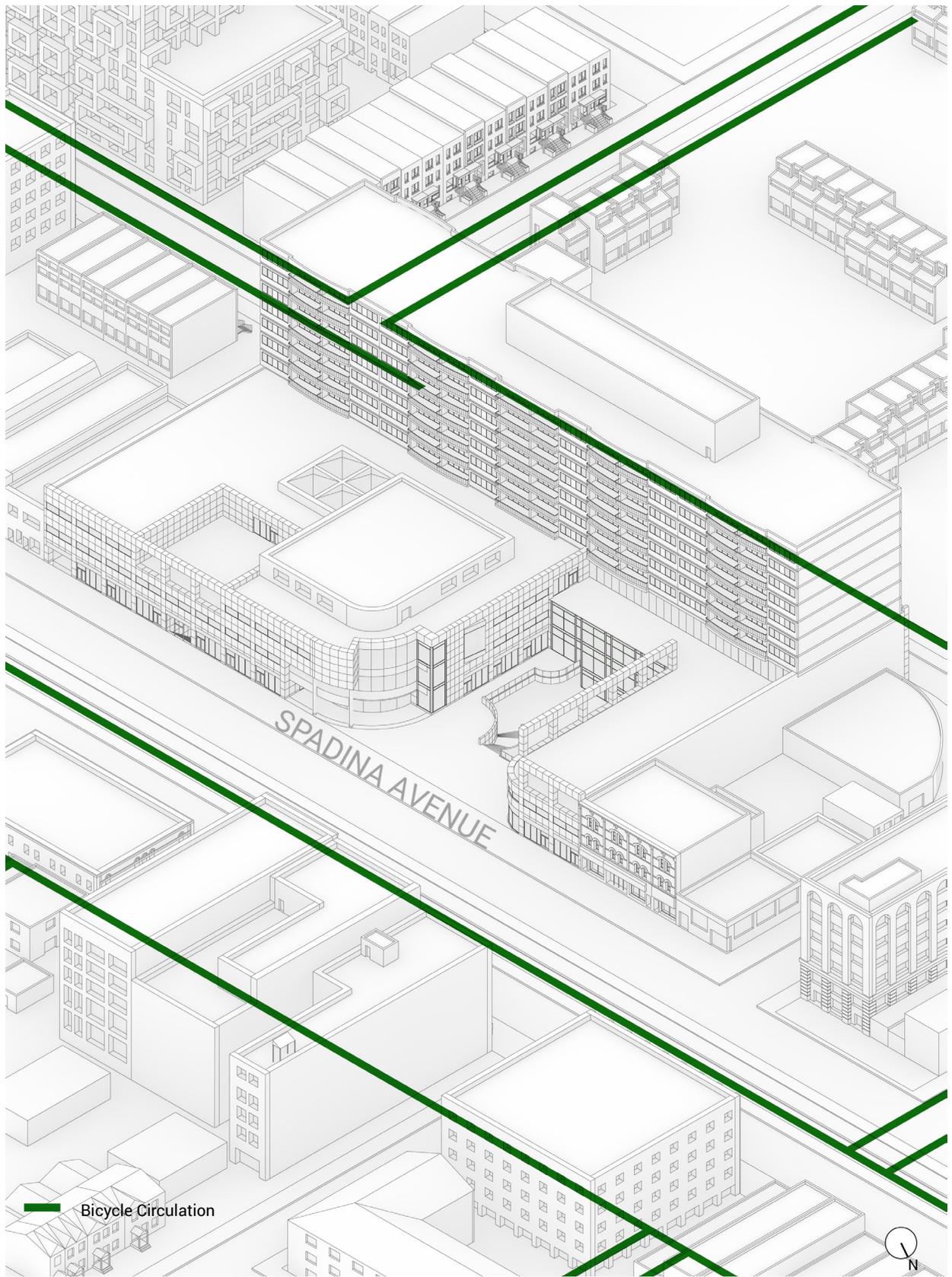


Fig 41. Chinatown Bicyclist Circulation Analysis.

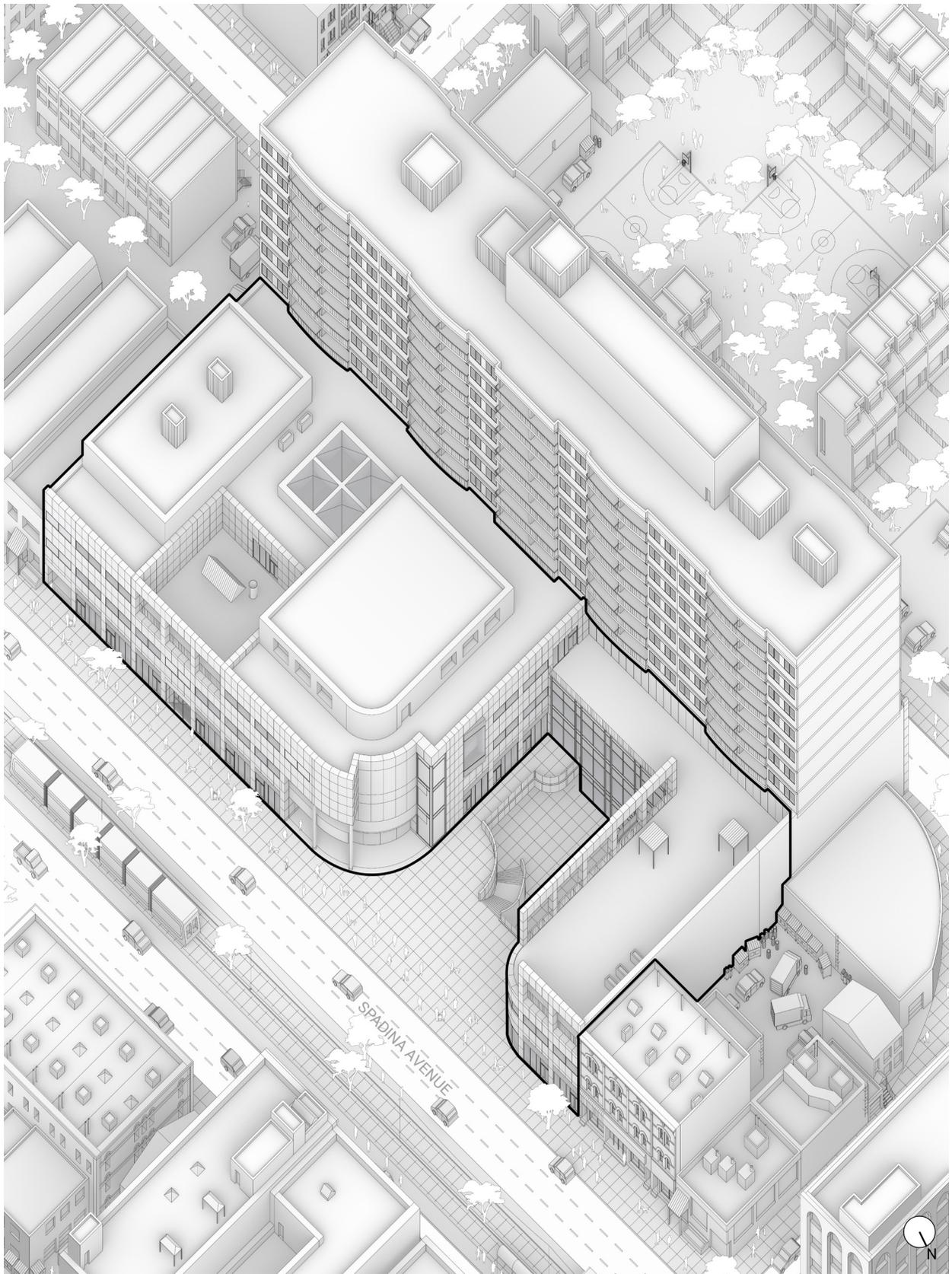


Fig 42. Aerial View of Chinatown Centre and Surrounding Context.



Fig 43. Chinatown Centre Main Courtyard.

THE MALL: CHINATOWN CENTRE

Toronto's Chinatown Centre located in the centre of Spadina Avenue and between Dundas Street West and Queens Street West, once a vibrant and prosperous hive of cultural activity is now devoid of culture, uninviting and characterless. Critically analyzing the mall's architecture, the existing structure encompasses three courtyards that suggests the architects had considered social and environmental activity intended to be used by shoppers and pedestrians, however they are currently obstructed and unused by anyone (Fig 44). Moreover, Chinatown Centre's streetfront is constantly overwhelmed with traffic everyday. Thousands of pedestrians travel through this property to shop, eat, entertain and work. The mall's main courtyard receives constant foot traffic as pedestrians use it as a threshold to get from one destination to another, however the same could not be said about the mall itself.

As Chinatown Centre fails to draw visitors inside, the mall is underutilized and fails to engage in any social and cultural activity. The mall comprises of many vacant stores, an empty food court and an unused performance stage. Nothing about the project pays tribute to Chinese culture and speaks nothing to Chinese identity. Landlords who have attempted to sell their unit were unsuccessful and robberies have occurred more frequently. It is evident that overtime, Chinatown Centre has experienced a drastic decline because of the development of New Chinatown. As a result, committees

with local owners and businesses have fought back in attempts to revitalize Chinatown Centre. In 2006, business owners created a partnership with the city of Toronto and executed a plan for rescue Chinatown Centre.¹¹⁹ One solution was incorporating the Super 8 hotel as means of promoting tourism, however that approach had failed as the hotel struggled to find renters and the mall had yet to see recovery.

Throughout this research, interviews of community members and pedestrians were conducted to understand the relationships between the community and the mall. When questioned about the mall, some members of the community claimed the mall was once a vibrant place full of activity, however has declined significantly within the past decade. Others said the facade was set back too far, desaturated and uninviting. Some members of community did not know that Chinatown Centre was even a mall. Although Chinatown Centre has experienced a drastic decline, there is no doubt that something must be done as the mall is located near the intersection of Dundas Street and Spadina Avenue which will always remain as one of the most lively intersections in Toronto.

¹¹⁹ Andrew Chung, "Death of a Neighbourhood," Urban Toronto, last modified March 12, 2006, <https://urbantoronto.ca/forum/threads/chinatown-death-of-a-neighbourhood.3738/>.

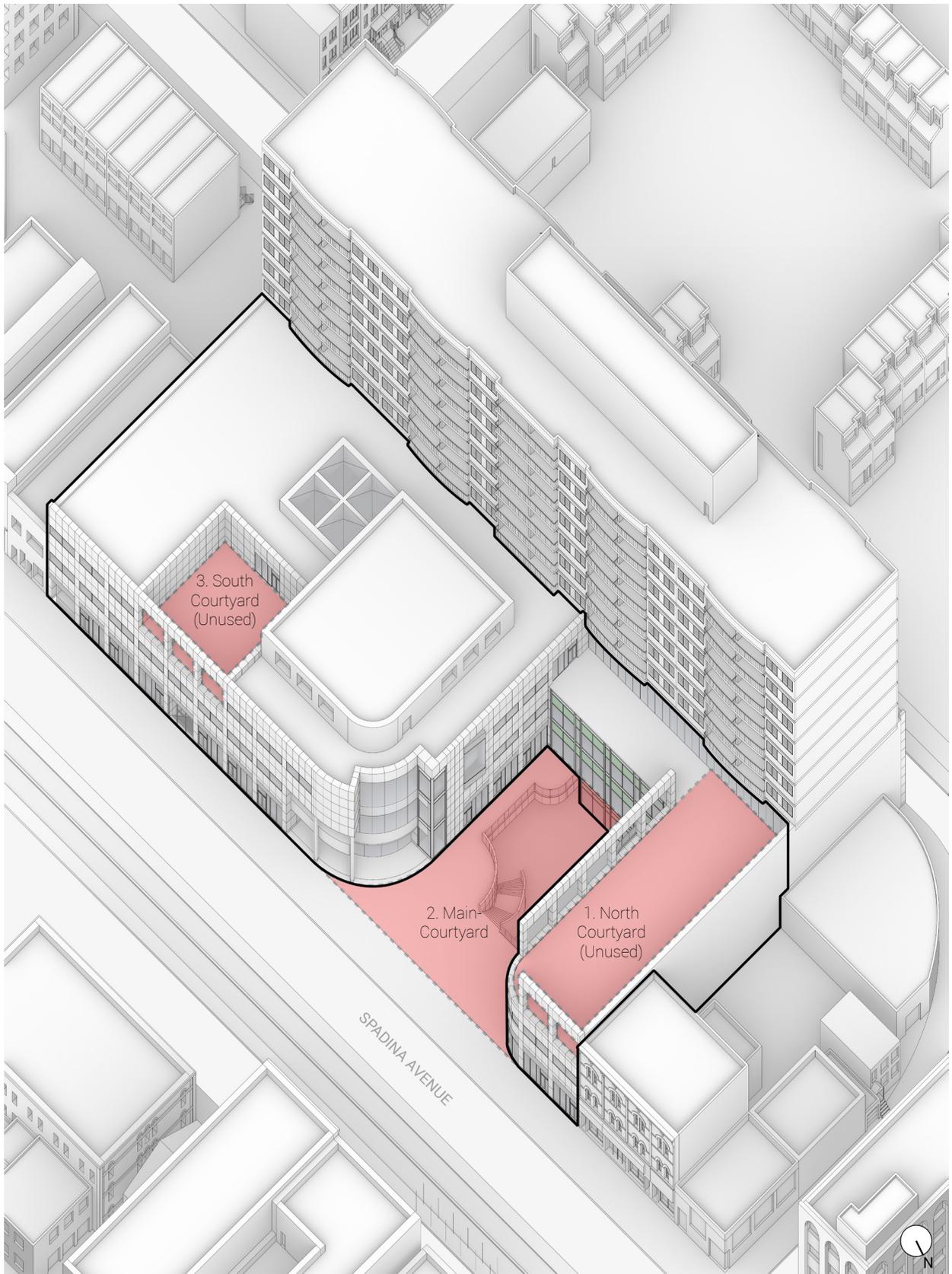


Fig 44. Existing Courtyards at Chinatown Centre.



Fig 45. Chinatown Centre Interior - Atrium.



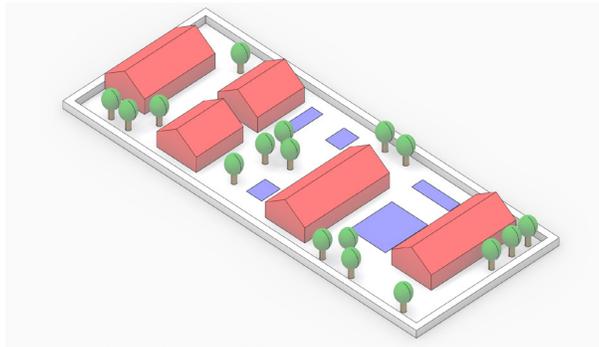
Fig 46. Chinatown Centre Interior - Atrium.



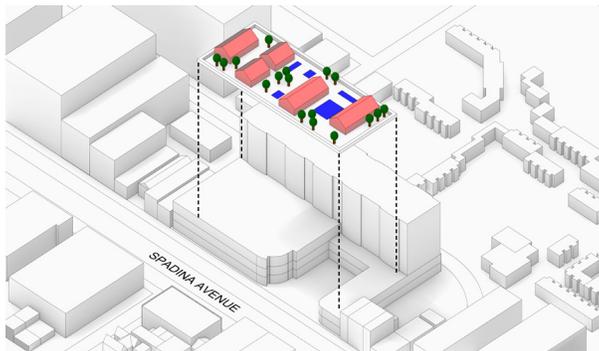
Fig 47. Chinatown Centre Interior - Vacant Storefront.



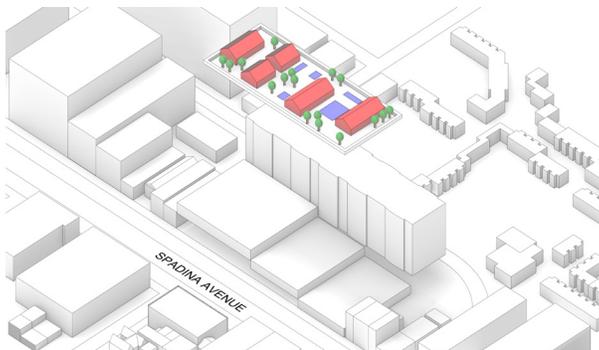
Fig 48. Chinatown Centre Exterior - Main Courtyard.



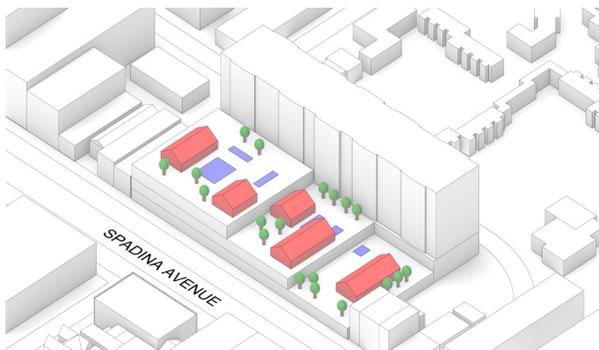
1. Siheyuan Parti



2. Spatial Arrangement Inspired From Siheyuan



3. Project Configuration Onto Existing Floors



4. Graduation in Levels and Social Hierarchy

Fig 49. Parti Diagram Translating Traditional Narrative onto Existing Building

DESIGN METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The design approach of this thesis, entitled *Unforbidden Courtyard* inspired by the Forbidden city in Beijing, reinterprets the architectural, social, cultural and political significance of a siheyuan to not only create dynamic spaces that fosters better social and cultural relationships but to act as an institution that teaches people transculturally and transgenerationally about the underlying political pressures of the Chinese community. The design of the *Unforbidden Courtyard* has a political approach which becomes the most critical component of this project as it demonstrate the history of cultural and political struggles Chinatown had endured at an underlying level. Only the journey through the series of choreographed design interventions can the political narrative be understood, as each intervention gradually pays tribute to both traditional Chinese architecture and modern politics. The journey is designed to raise awareness of the ongoing issue of a displaced community, while celebrating Chinatown's resilience and resistance against pressures from the City of Toronto. As we begin the journey through this design thesis, the following framework will be a guide to how one meanders through this politically and culturally driven project.

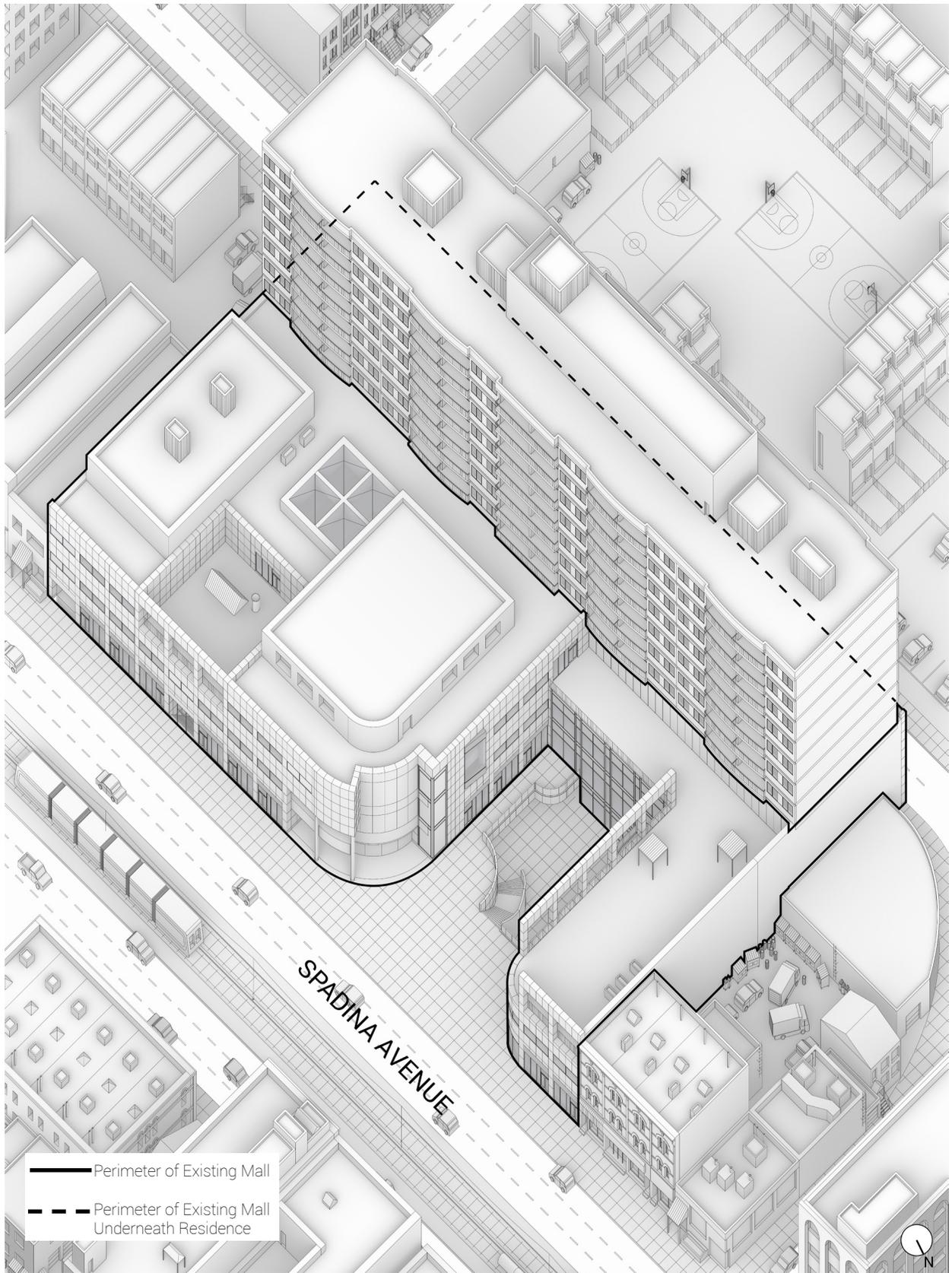


Fig 50. Diagram Demonstrating Size of Current Mall.

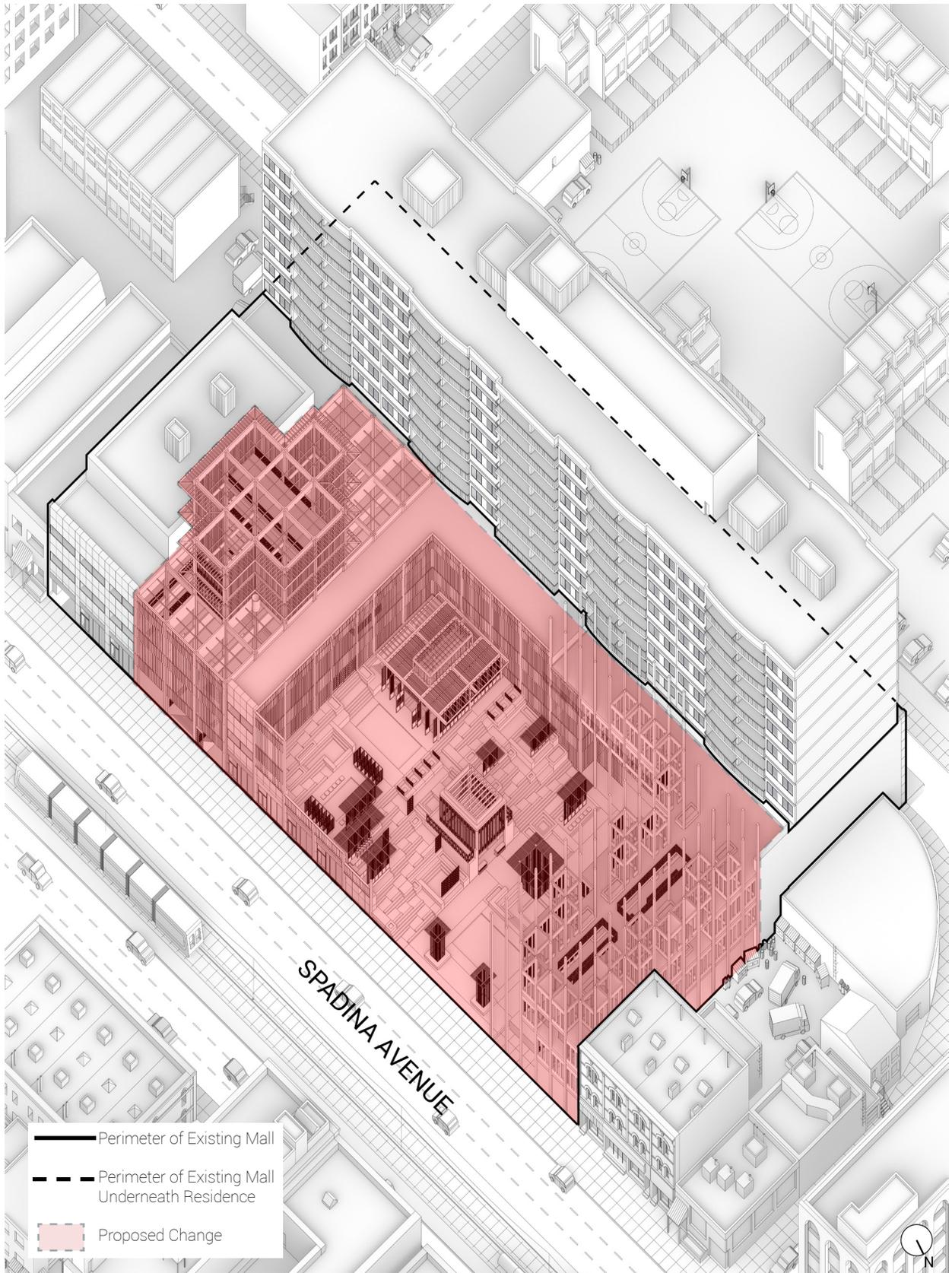


Fig 51. Diagram Demonstrating Proposed Changes to Current Mall.

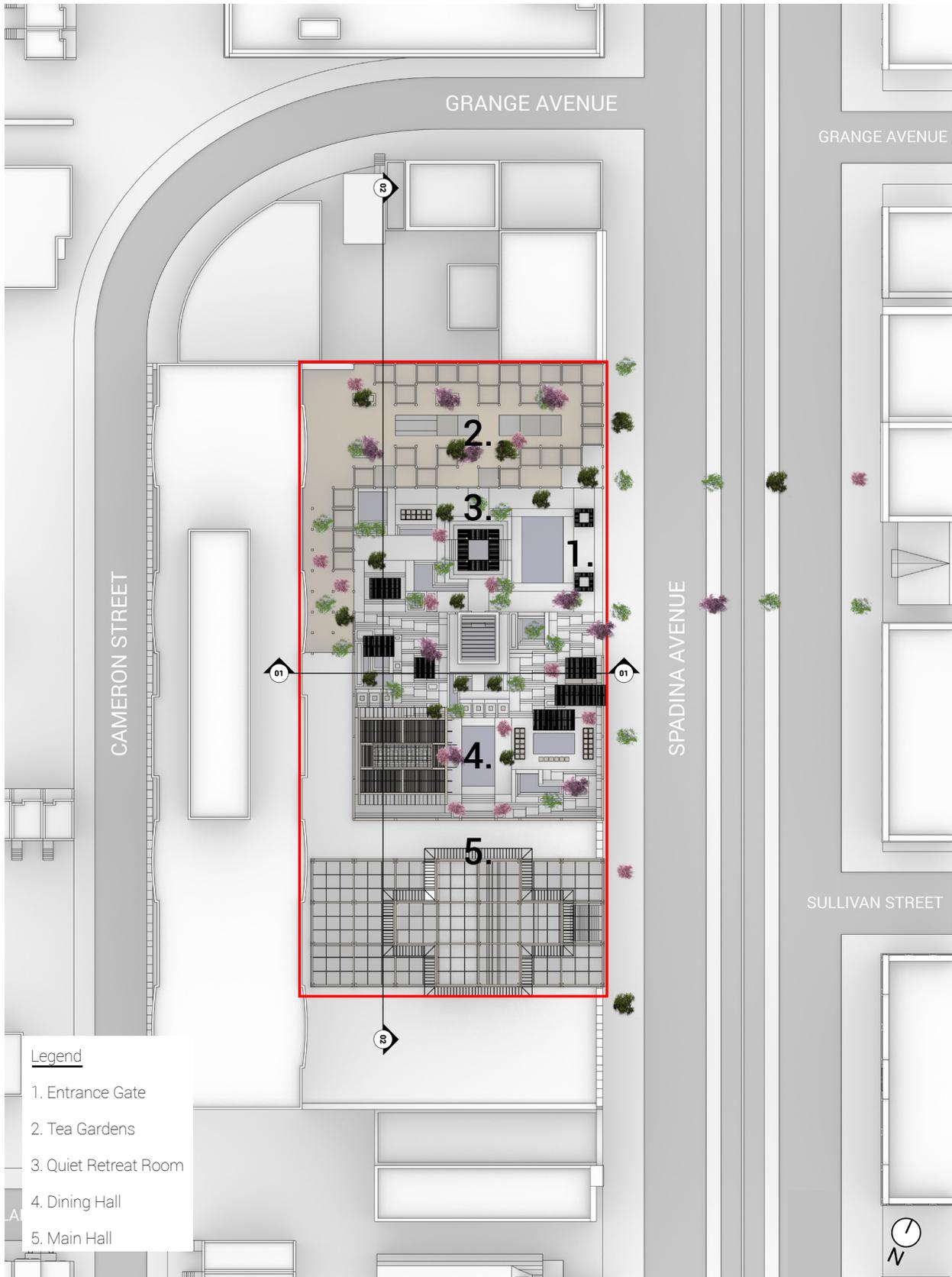


Fig 52. The Proposed Project Plan and Site Plan.

CIRCULATION

Throughout the design of the *Unforbidden Courtyard*, each design intervention pays tribute to a different core principle of traditional Chinese architecture while subtly addressing political issues at an underlying level. The ceramic screens in each intervention not only push the boundaries of material culture, but are also used to frame views of intentional political vistas or used as canvases to project political content in an attempt to educate visitors. Thus, each intervention distinctively has its own meaning and purpose throughout the project. The alternating levels of labyrinth paths throughout the design not only provide circulation from one intervention to the next, but form interaction between open and closed spaces.



Fig 53. Aerial View of The Proposed Project.

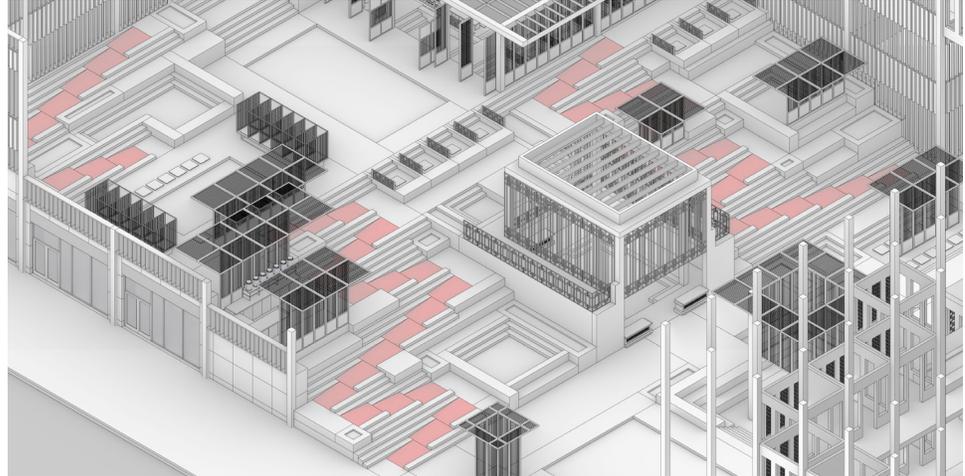


Fig 54. Ramp Circulation Throughout The Project.

The design of the labyrinth path not only choreographs a visitor's visualization and experience, but gradually brings visitors from the street level into the mall through the integration of a ramp. The labyrinth ramps are designed at a 1:12 slope making the entire project dynamic and accessible for people of all cultures and generations. (Fig 54). The circulation pays tribute to traditional Chinese principles of time as the meandering paths represent the past, present and future making the project more dynamic and flexible in adapting to different social and cultural activities. As people meander through the complex environment, they explore and discover truthfulness of the underlying politics. Although environmental, spatial and construction qualities are important in the *Unforbidden Courtyard*, social and cultural cohesion are also significant considerations to the built form. Traditionally, social and cultural activities occurred more often in a siheyuan than outdoor spaces of mid- or high rise apartment buildings as they emphasized a hierarchy of spatial transitions from private to public that modern mid- or high rise housing lacked.¹²⁰

120 Donia Zhang, "Courtyard Houses of Beijing: Lessons from the Renewal," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 27, no. 1 (2015): 80, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24720001>.



Fig 55. Perspective View Inside Courtyard.

COURTYARDS

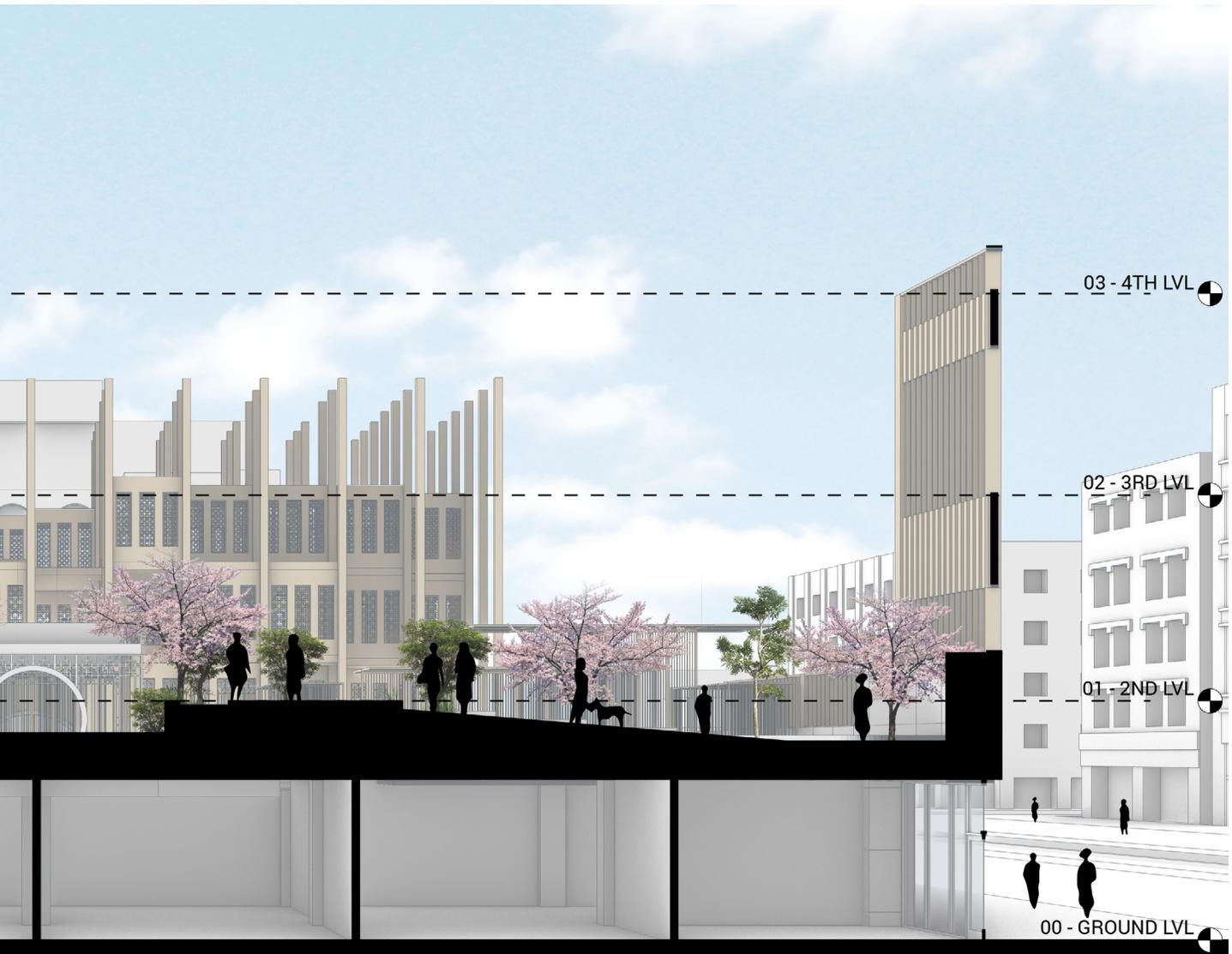
In the *Unforbidden Courtyard*, the courtyards produces orders that helps people discover social positions of the world, therefore when someone understands the meaning of an intervention through symbolic expressions, the project is understood and becomes more meaningful.¹²¹ Furthermore, the project provides an active place that brings people and families together as the courtyards are flexible for both social and cultural activities such as the Chinese New year and Mid Autumn festivals.¹²² During Toronto's winter season, the flexible space becomes a winter playground as it provides activities of ice skating and warming huts that shelters visitors from winds and snow. Although the courtyards become a place for many social and cultural activities, it is also a device that draws people into the mall as it dynamically engages with the existing Chinatown Centre, paying tribute to the Chinese tradition practice of contrast and inside vs outside (Fig 56). The mixture of human movement, architectural interventions and courtyard imposes social life and flexible spatial operations.

121 Xiao Hu, "Boundaries and Openings: Spatial Strategies in the Chinese Dwelling," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 23, no. 4 (2008): 354, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41107440>.

122 Ping Xu, "FENG-SHUI" MODELS STRUCTURED TRADITIONAL BEIJING COURTYARD HOUSES," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 15, no. 4 (1998): 280, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030469>.



Fig 56. Section 1: North Section Demonstrating Relationship Between Mall and Proposed Interventions



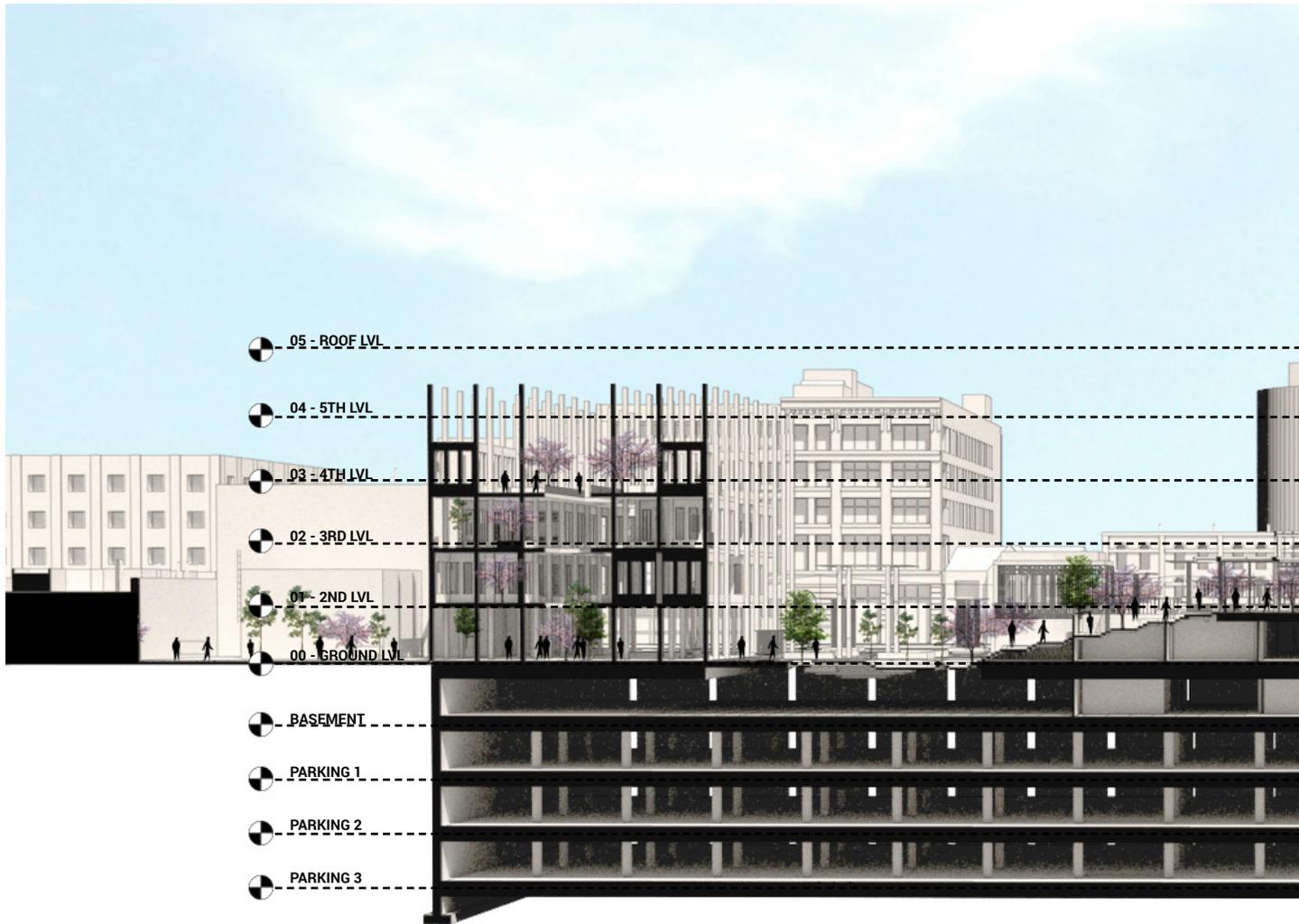
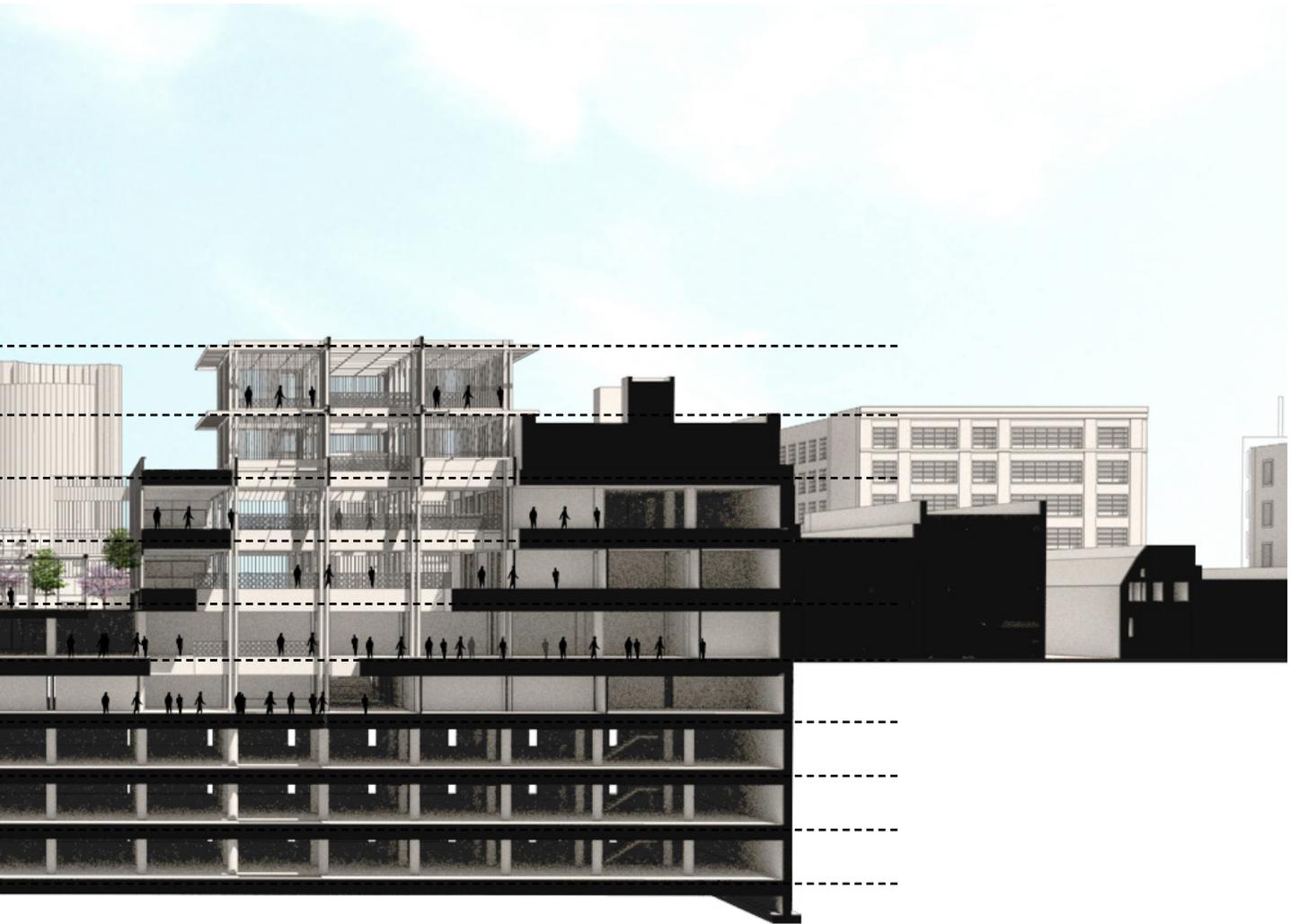


Fig 57. Section 2: East Section Demonstrating Relationship Between Mall and Proposed Project



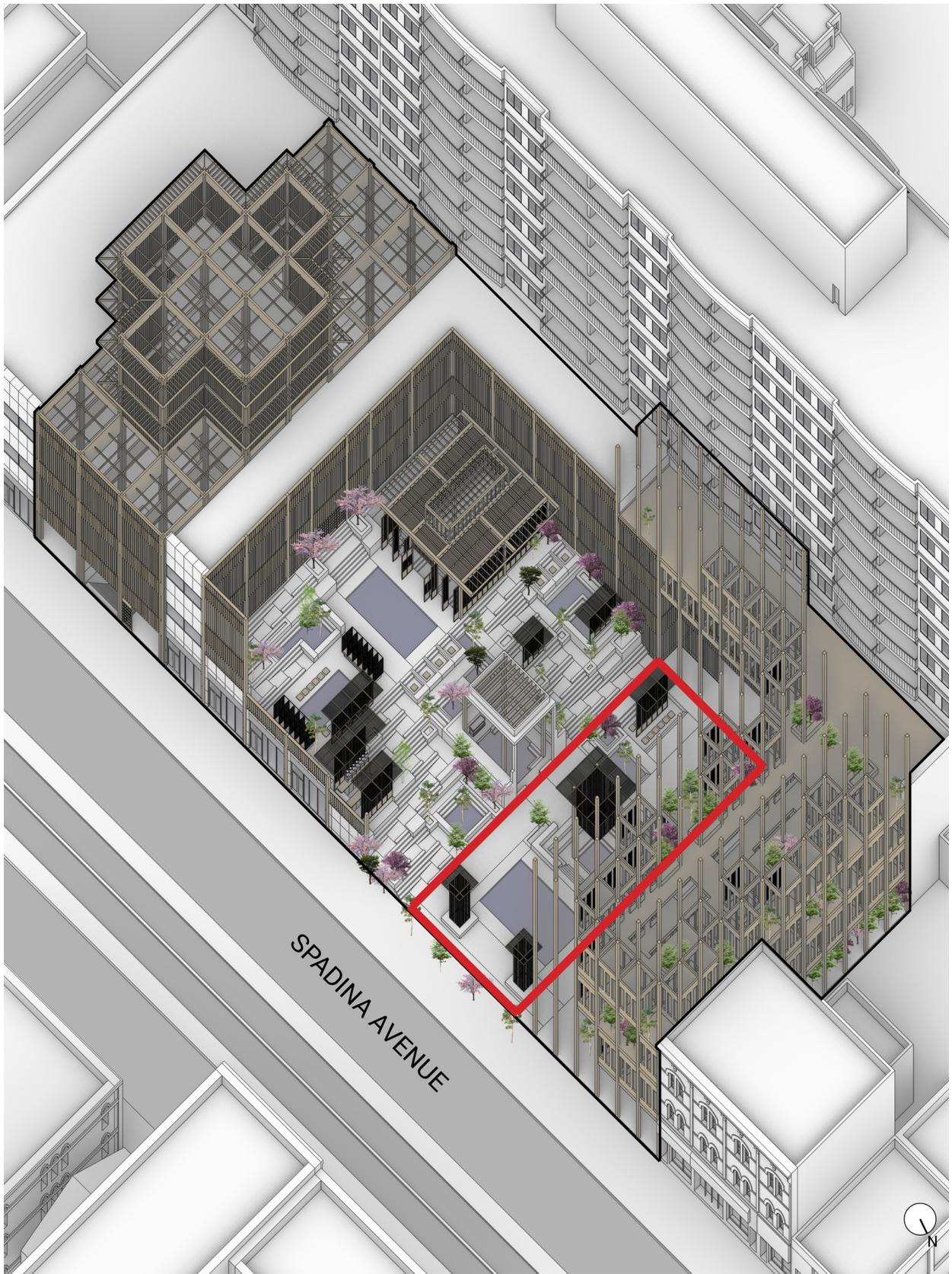


Fig 58. Location of Entrance Gate In Site Plan.



Fig 59. Entrance Gate in a Siheyuan.

INTERVENTION 1: ENTRANCE GATES

Addressing the community's concern of Chinatown Centre's distant, dark and uninviting facade, the project's entrance gate, situated closer to Spadina Ave, becomes the first approach to drawing visitors inside the mall. As visitors approach the entrance gate, they are immediately immersed with integrated urban seating, vegetation, screens and gates. The reinterpretation of a siheyuan entrance gate provides opportunities for visitors to sit down, socialize and congregate thus suggesting a slowing down of time, paying tribute to Chinese tradition through the consideration of time as an architectural device.



Fig 60. Exterior View of Entrance Gates.

The social interactivities that occur at the entrance gate gradually invite people into the mall and become a device with which to draw people in. The entrance gate comprises of ceramic and wood screens, however prevents direct views into the courtyard. This intentional obstruction becomes a method that sparks curiosity and invites visitors into the courtyard. To experience the main courtyard, visitors must move around through indirect spatial sequences which symbolizes a meandering river.¹²³ As one enters the courtyard, circulation begins from the north and continues south.

¹²³ Ping Xu, "FENG-SHUI" MODELS STRUCTURED TRADITIONAL BEIJING COURTYARD HOUSES," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 15, no. 4 (1998): 274, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030469>.

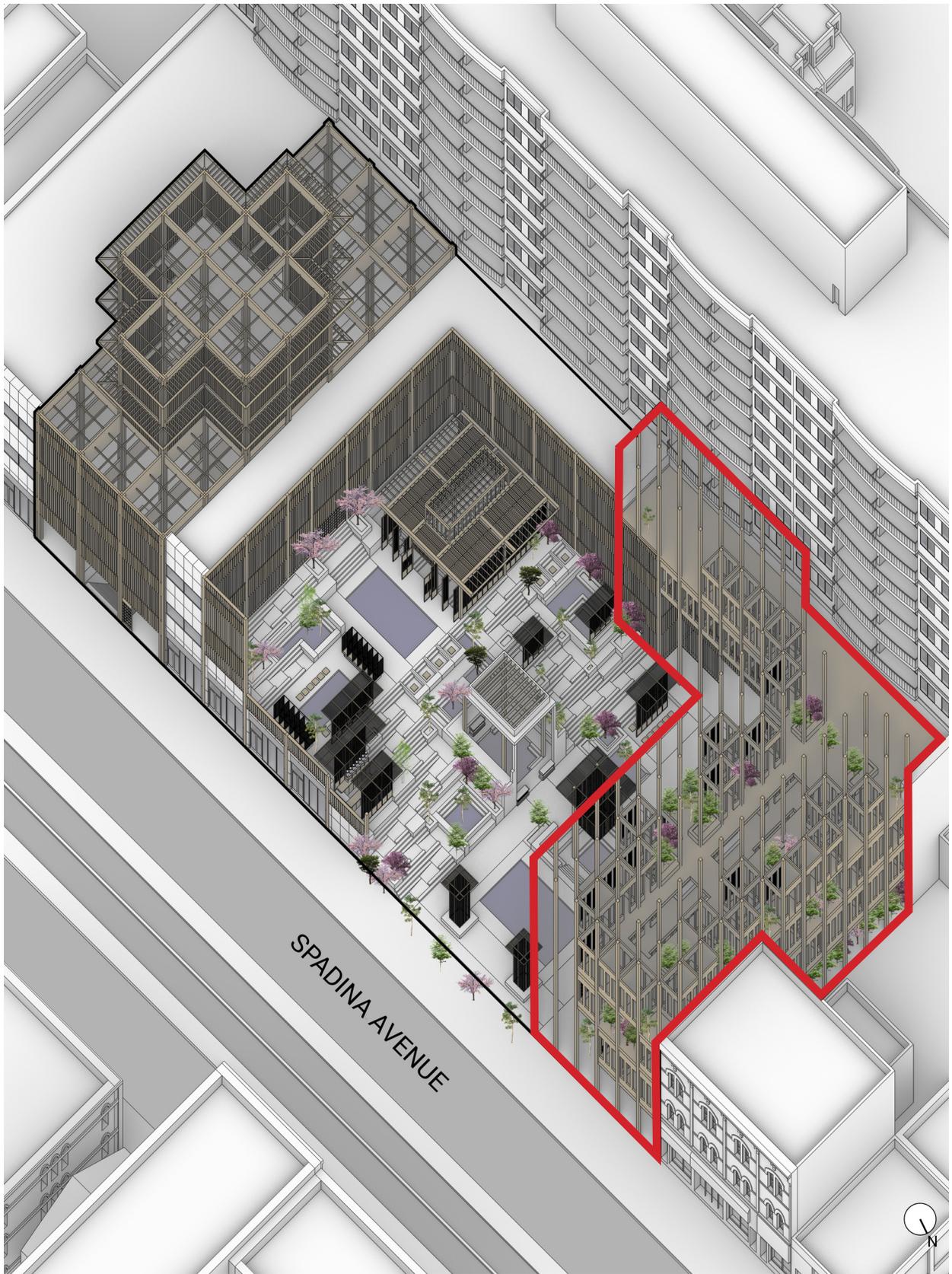


Fig 61. Location of The Tea Gardens In Site Plan



Fig 62. Concept of the Tea Gardens.

INTERVENTION 2: TEA GARDENS

Tea gardens were rooms in a siheyuan that expressed tranquility and sentimentality through the act of drinking tea during tea ceremonies. They were simple and modest in design that encompassed only empty spaces. The experience in the room was powerful, developed through simple arrangements and connections with nature. Corridors were comprised of screens, walls and vegetation that not only created flexible spaces but also brought in natural elements. Tea gardens were surrounded by canopies of tall bamboo and vegetation that added a visual density and casting dark shadows over the garden.¹²⁴ The relationship between the corridor, the tea garden and the courtyard provided the sense of immersion in a forest. Traditionally, visitors were presented ceramic teapots that represented an appreciation at the end of a tea ceremony. Both ceramics and views to an artificial landscape were important in Chinese tradition.

¹²⁴ Jerome Silbergeld, "Beyond Suzhou: Region and Memory in the Gardens of Sichuan," *The Art Bulletin* 86, no. 2 (2004): 217, doi:10.2307/311http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=88960088&site=ehost-live77415.



Fig 63. Interior View of Tea Gardens' Atrium

In the *Unforbidden Courtyard*, the tea gardens do not follow the hierarchical system of the project. However, the intervention is situated adjacent to the courtyard and represents traditional Chinese philosophy through reinterpreting typology, orientation and location. Metaphorically and physically, the tea gardens are designed to be an artificial landscape which are ornamented with natural and architectural inspirations that link nature and the visitors to a different universe. As the mountains symbolize mother earth's protection and meandering rivers symbolize ancestry, the tea gardens reflect perfect balance of the mountains (Yin) and water (Yang). Structurally, the tea gardens are suspended on stilts and elevated above the ground level that not only reinterpreted tall canopies and vegetation, but becomes a place where visitors can remove themselves from a busy and fast lifestyle to appreciate the ceramic screens that frame views visually and physically from one universe to another.¹²⁵ The ceramic screens present a political moment in the project and as they provide views of the project's spatial hierarchy while beginning to frame partial views to Toronto's city hall.

¹²⁵ Robert M Craig, "Passages to a Different Universe: The Three Gardens of Zhuo Zheng Yuan, Suzhou," Southeastern College Art Conference Review 11, no. 3 (March 1988): 224, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505528812&site=ehost-live>.

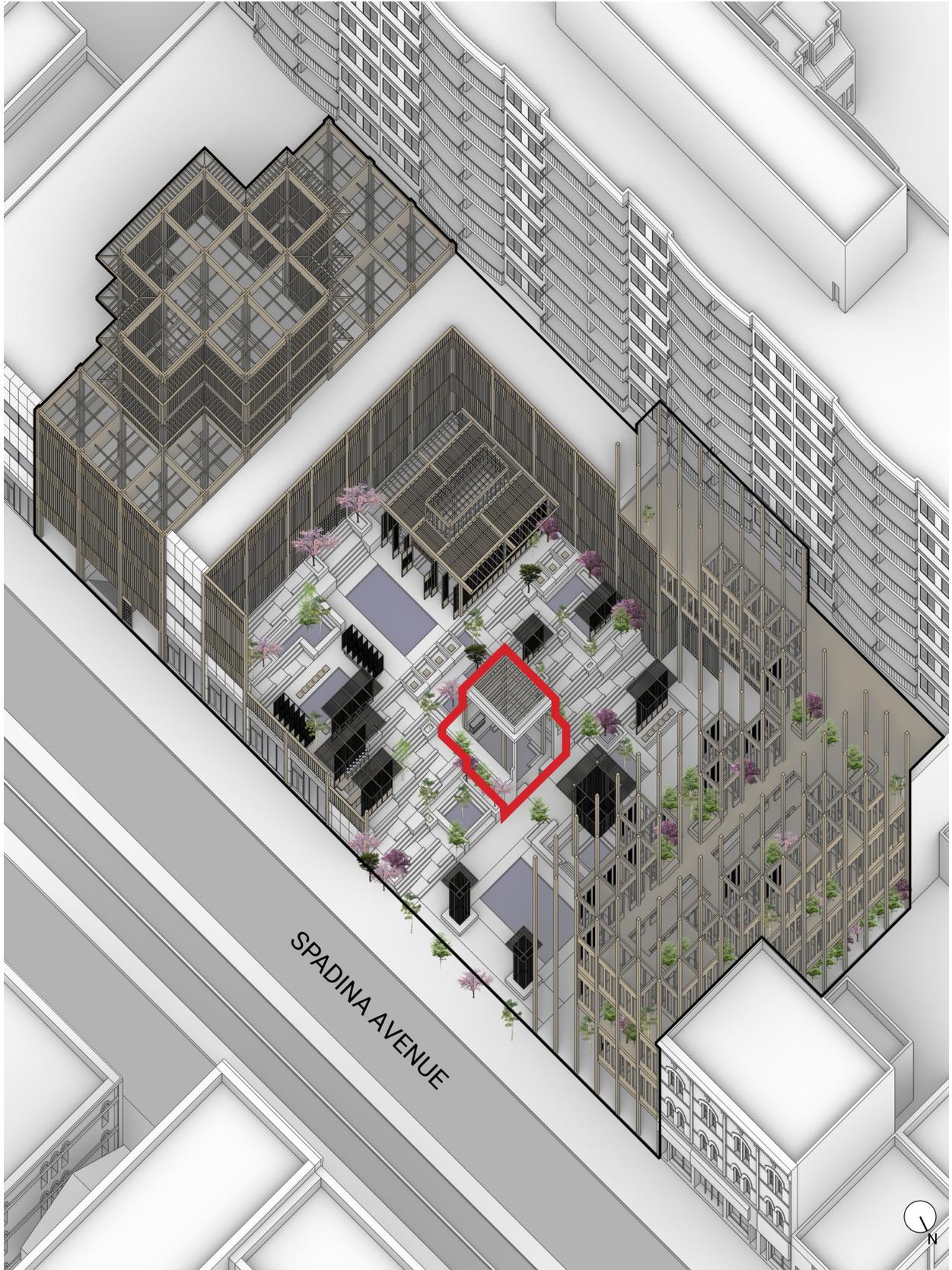


Fig 64. Location of The Quiet Retreat Room in Site Plan.

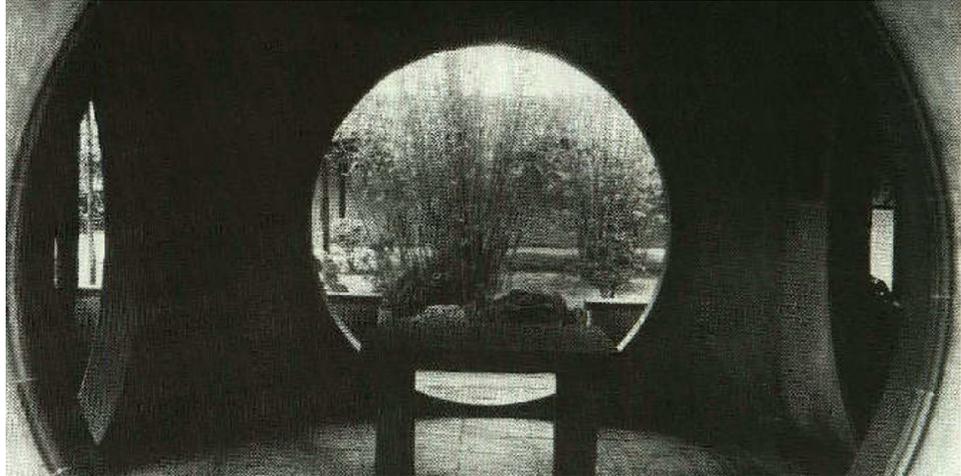


Fig 65. Visual Depth in a Siheyuan.

INTERVENTION 3: QUIET RETREAT ROOM

Traditionally, as people enter and transition through the entrance gate from the east, the most inviting pavilion is the Quiet retreat. The room's design encompasses a flaring roof and four simple walls. It employs the principle of visual depth and temporality as it suggests a slowing down of time while concealing natural and architectural scenes through a series of opened gates.¹²⁶ The opened gates frame different scenes of the garden that separate two different universes.¹²⁷ Traditionally, the room contrasts the opened wooden pavilions in a siheyuan with decorated stone or ceramics, while providing a transitional space to the main courtyard.¹²⁸

126 Robert M Craig, "Passages to a Different Universe: The Three Gardens of Zhuo Zheng Yuan, Suzhou," Southeastern College Art Conference Review 11, no. 3 (March 1988): 226, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505528812&site=ehost-live>.

127 Robert M Craig, "Passages to a Different Universe: The Three Gardens of Zhuo Zheng Yuan, Suzhou," Southeastern College Art Conference Review 11, no. 3 (March 1988): 225, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505528812&site=ehost-live>.

128 Robert M Craig, "Passages to a Different Universe: The Three Gardens of Zhuo Zheng Yuan, Suzhou," Southeastern College Art Conference Review 11, no. 3 (March 1988): 226, <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505528812&site=ehost-live>.



Fig 66. Interior View of The Quiet Retreat Room.

As visitors journey further into the courtyard, the Quiet Retreat room is the next architectural intervention that contrasts the surrounding pavilions and pays tribute to Chinese tradition through materiality comprised of stone and ceramics. The Quiet Retreat room also speaks to Chinese traditions through developing a sense of vision depth through a framed view of ceramic screens, that presents movement and direction into the main hall. The ceramic screens also add to the political narrative as they suggest views and direct visitors towards the main wall which has the highest political status. The solid stone walls create the sense of isolation and become a destination place where visitors can find comfort within the busy environment. As loud sounds beyond the perimeter are muted by the enclosed walls, the Quiet Retreat room manifests tranquility and serenity within, providing an intimate environment for visitors to self reflect. This interpretation pays tribute to traditional Chinese practice as it reinterprets the notion of isolation within a busy urban fabric. These types of spaces were considered to be the treatise in the world, "if one could find seclusion in a noisy place, there is no need to yearn for places far from where you live."¹²⁹

129 Han Li, "From the Astor Court to Liu Fang Yuan: Exhibiting 'Chinese-Ness' in America," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4 (2015): 291, doi:10.1386/jcs.4.2.284_1.

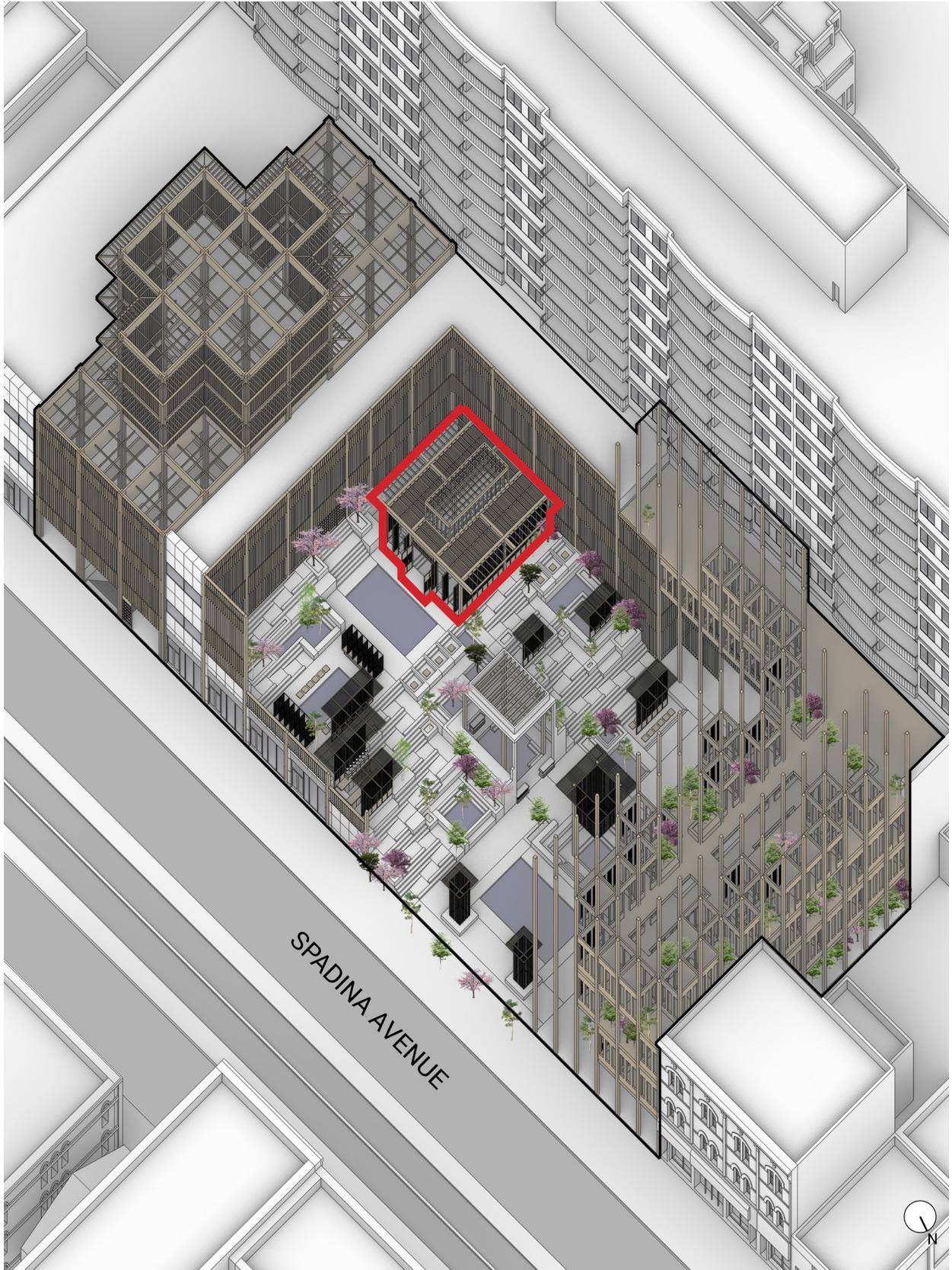


Fig 67. Location of Dining Room and Pavilions in Site Plan.

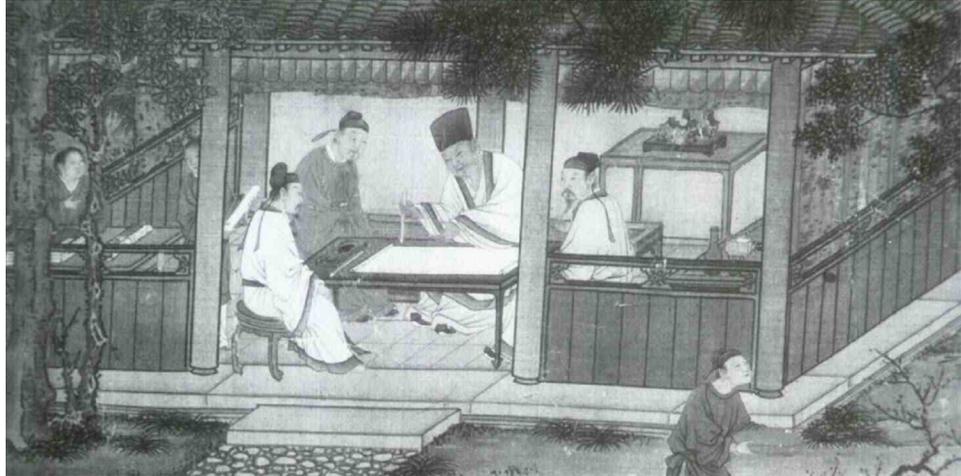


Fig 68. Illustration of Traditional Dining Hall.

INTERVENTION 4: DINING HALL

Traditionally, the dining hall was a room where friends and families ate and socialized while establishing relationships with the natural environment. It was a social construct where stories are told and shared while enjoying views onto the artificial landscape. Social gatherings and togetherness implied that life occurred where appropriate spatial organization was arranged. Throughout a siheyuan, wooden structures encompassed elevated tie beams and struts traditionally used to suspend roof beams. Timber from the ground to the roof were fabricated together with horizontal beams that penetrated the sky.¹³⁰ The relationship between the tall timber framed structures and the environment denoted the relationship between the built form and the natural environment.

130 Jerome Silbergeld, "Beyond Suzhou: Region and Memory in the Gardens of Sichuan," *The Art Bulletin* 86, no. 2 (2004): 220, doi:10.2307/3111111 <http://search.ebscohost.com.libweb.laurentian.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=88960088&site=ehost-live77415>.



Fig 69. Interior View of Dining Hall.

After visitors finish the process of self reflection, the next sequence in the *Unforbidden Courtyard* is the dining hall and pavilions. Both interventions express equilibrium with nature and architecture through the consideration and integration of light, vegetation and built form which pay tribute to traditional Chinese practice known for integrating flexible arrangements and "inside vs outside". Situated adjacent to ponds and artificial landscapes, the position and orientation of both dining hall and pavilions provide space for family and friends to eat and share stories while being immersed into the environment. This experience demonstrates the relationship between man, nature and built form. As visitors meander through the courtyard, both interventions provide opportunities for visitors to relax, sit and interact while viewing an array of ceramic screens. The repetition and exhibition of ceramic screens throughout the project becomes a discussion piece as visitors socialize at these interventions. Through framed views and projections of public art on the ceramic screens, the meaning and symbolic expressions gradually become more understood, adding meaning to the political narrative of the project.

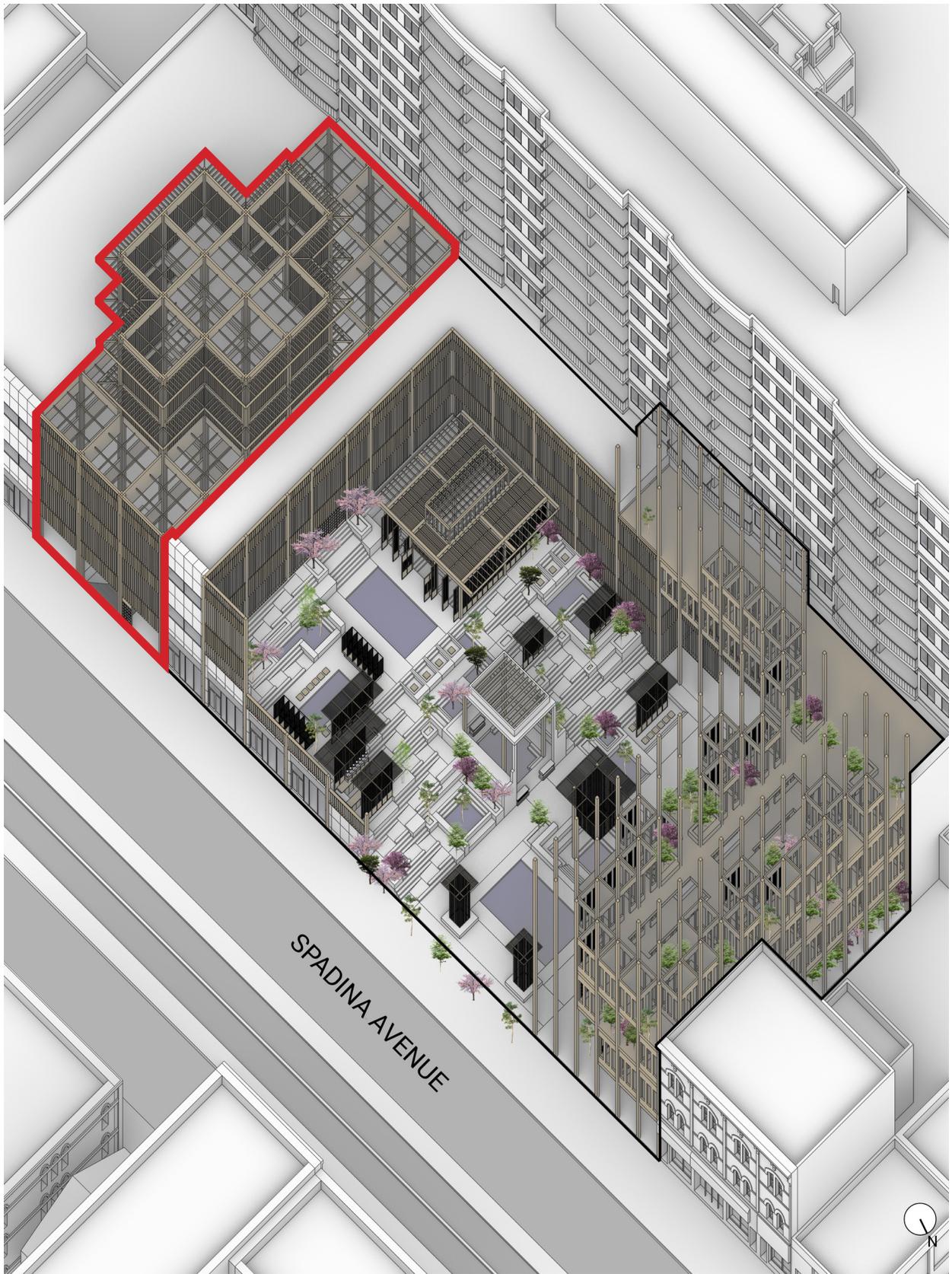


Fig 70. Location of The Main Hall in Site Plan.



Fig 71. Main Hall in a Siheyuan.

INTERVENTION 5: MAIN HALL

As visitors finish eating, sharing their experiences through the journey and discussing the political narrative, the final intervention of the *Unforbidden Courtyard* becomes the most critical part in this thesis. Reflecting on a siheyuan, the location of the main hall suggests both spatial and vertical hierarchy through the placement at the highest and innermost location.¹³¹ The built form of the main hall claims larger spaces, clear geometric forms and more vertical levels to achieve a higher significance. The design of the main hall is critical to this project's narrative as it encompasses dynamic functions. The main hall consists of two spaces: a performance stage and a lookout tower.

¹³¹ Xiao Hu, "Boundaries and Openings: Spatial Strategies in the Chinese Dwelling," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 23, no. 4 (2008): 364, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41107440>.



Fig 72. Exterior View of the Main Hall Performance Stage on Ground Level.

On ground level, the performance stage is not only a space for social and cultural activity, but becomes a stage where community members can express themselves to city hall. After an interview with a member of the Chinese community and resident of Chinatown Centre Residence, the member shared their experience and struggle of their relationship with the City of Toronto. The interview became crucial in this research as it provided insight of the underlying political pressures the mall and the residents encounter. An example of a recent conflict between the tax paying residents and the city council regarded structural issues in the building's existing basement. Representatives from the council went from door to door to negotiate cost of fixing these issues. This incident, one of many, has inconvenienced the residents however, they have no place to communicate these issues to City Hall as a whole. Rather than neglecting the lives of the residence and the surrounding community, the main hall provides space for political discussions such as this. Situated on ground level, the main hall achieves political significance as it provides opportunities for public engagement to raise awareness of political issues.

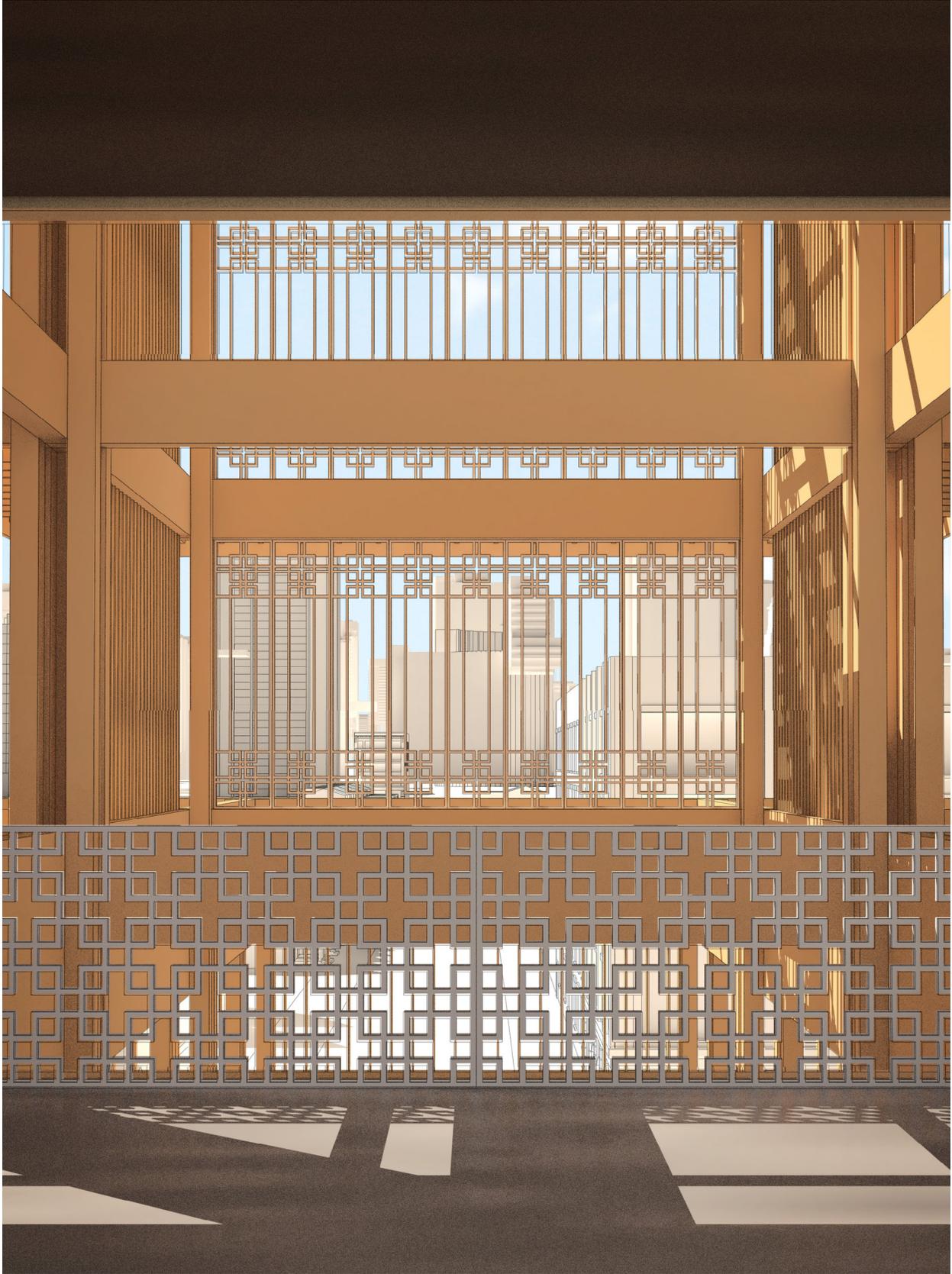


Fig 73. Interior View towards Toronto's City Hall in The Lookout Tower of Main Hall.

Furthermore, the second space of the main hall is located above ground. The sheer scale of the lookout tower not only pays tribute to traditional Chinese practice to social and spatial hierarchy, but it demonstrates political significance through its orientation towards city hall. The vertical elevation is an essential element to the design as it not only provides visitors views of Chinatown, but provides political views of City Hall both literally and figuratively. The orientation and elevation adds to the political narrative as it demonstrates to the visitors that the very existence of this space is a result of the actions of Toronto City Hall. The main hall speaks to the political narrative through providing spaces and opportunities for the Chinese community to unite together while demonstrating the narrative of Chinatown's resilience. Throughout the spatial progression, the journey ends and the climax is reached when visitors arrive at the main hall.¹³² By reaching the main hall, it not only brings visitors into the mall, but it tells the story of how technological, economical and political powers ultimately transformed not only this project, but the shaping of Chinatown.

¹³² Xiao Hu, "Boundaries and Openings: Spatial Strategies in the Chinese Dwelling," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 23, no. 4 (2008): 365, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41107440>.



Fig 74. Process of Gentrification - Redevelopment of Hsin Kuang Centre, Chinatown.

CONCLUSION

The fact is, everyone is moving out to the suburbs for many reasons and we have to accept that society cannot resist suburban developments, but there are things we can do to mitigate and prevent gentrification from happening. In efforts to revitalize Chinatown Centre, the *Unforbidden Courtyard* reinterprets core principles of a siheyuan to create new places for social and cultural activity while uniting people to resist against political pressures. Although the community and their relationship to nature are at the forefront of the design, the project's narrative provides insight to the technological, economical and political pressures endured at an underlying level through architectural form. Traditional Chinese culture believed that if the social relationship between people could be handled well, then society would ensure prosperity and vice versa.¹³³ This project's reinterpretation of a siheyuan creates an environment imbued with cultural meaning through symbolic images, spatial configuration and architectural spaces, in turn influencing the people experiencing the courtyard.¹³⁴

133 Xiao Hu, "Boundaries and Openings: Spatial Strategies in the Chinese Dwelling," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 23, no. 4 (2008): 365 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41107440>.

134 Ping Xu, "FENG-SHUI" MODELS STRUCTURED TRADITIONAL BEIJING COURTYARD HOUSES," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 15, no. 4 (1998): 281, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030469>.



Fig 75. Interior View of Chinatown's Centre Atrium and Performance Stage.

Through this cross-cultural design process, interdisciplinary approaches of sustaining cultural identity reflected both Chinese and western culture, broadening a social and political understanding. The design does not discourage, discriminate or replicate culture, but reinterprets a sense of cultural identity beyond the built form. Through the narrative, the *Unforbidden Courtyard* reminds us how the sheer power of a community can resist political, social and economic pressures in order to save Toronto's Chinatown. Considering that geopolitical, economical and technological pressures had created the sprawl of Chinese communities, the same factors could play a significant role in bringing the Chinese communities back. Through the reinterpretation of a siheyuan, the *Unforbidden Courtyard* will be a new symbol and a physical reminder of Toronto's resilience against economical, political and technological pressures.

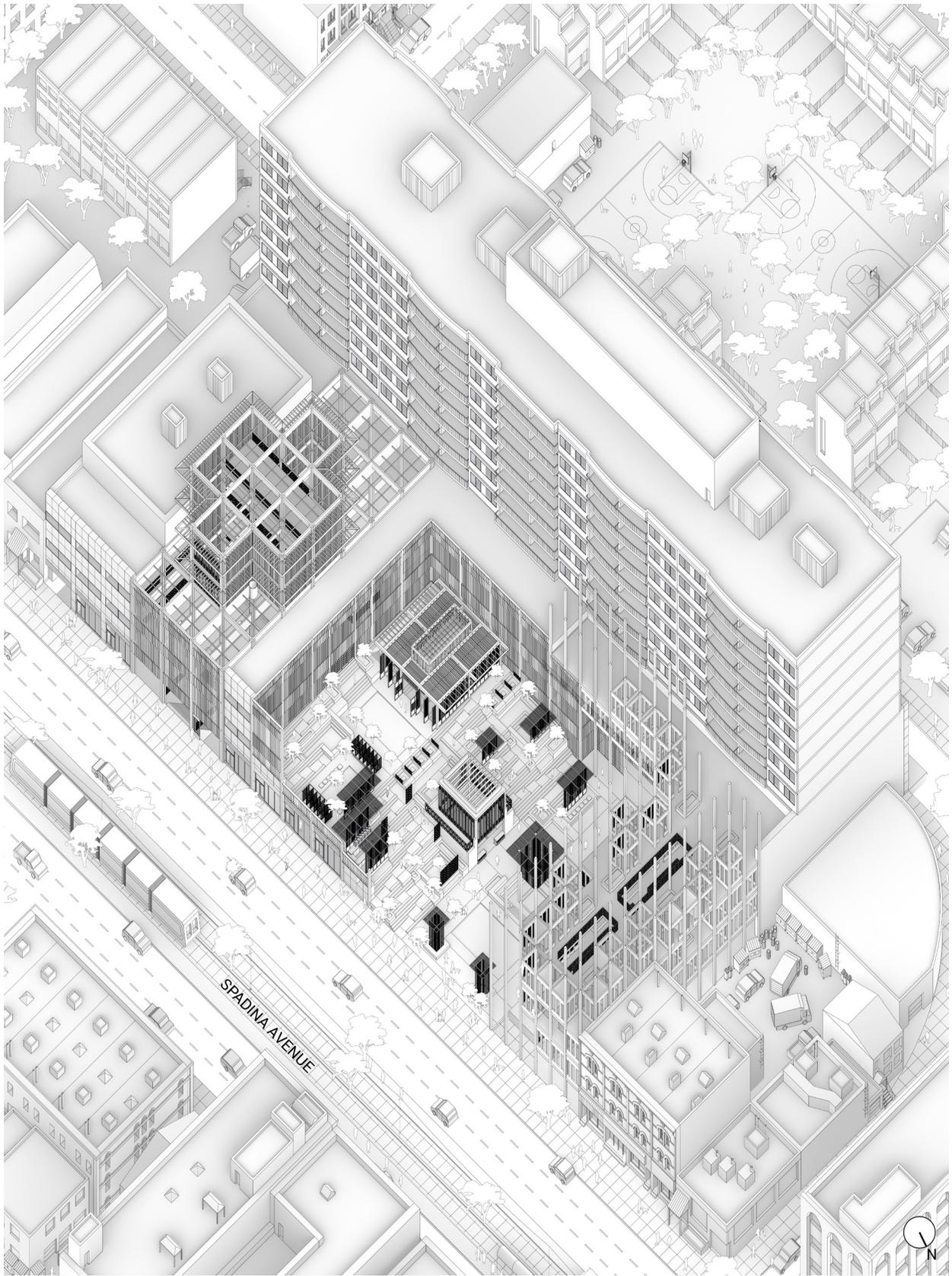


Fig 76. Aerial View of The Proposed Project.

The *Unforbidden Courtyard* is not a solution to the displaced community, but an attempt to mitigate economical and political pressures, while revitalizing Chinatown Centre into a central hub transgenerationally and transculturally. The project's objective is not to force the Chinese community back into downtown, but to become a destination place that will have lasting impacts on the communities of past and future. Although the suburbs, from a convenient perspective neglect the need for a Chinatown, this thesis argues from a cultural and social perspective that Chinatown is an essential part of Toronto for its ability to resist the pushing and pulling of economic and political pressures. This project not only retains a strong cultural identity but it demonstrates empathy of the social, economic and political struggle that Toronto's Chinatown endured, one that should never be forgotten.

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