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### Constructing Chinatown: Community Resistance Against Symbolic Displacement

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# Constructing Boston's Chinatown: Community Resistance Against Symbolic Gentrification

Julia Chun '22 – (Sponsor: Professor Mark Davidson)



CLARK UNIVERSITY

## Research Question

I started this thesis by questioning what is gentrification really? Gentrification is a contested as the influx of wealthy, college-educated white students, the construction of high-rise luxury buildings, and the displacement of residents or as positive development and social mixing. What are its negative and positive ramifications on an ethnic enclave that has historically been marginalized? How is gentrification differentiated from urban reinvestment and positive development? This thesis examines the physical impacts of gentrification by comparing google maps photos, property assessment maps, and census data. But more constructively, I examine cultural gentrification at the planning stages of urban development and how residents define gentrification and resist displacement.

## Master Plan Analysis Using NVIVO

	Environmental Issues	Built Environment Concerns	Demographic Shifts	Evictions	Luxury Development	Affordable Housing	Aesthetic Displacement
Master Plan 2010	x	x				x	
Master Plan 2020	x		x	x	x	x	x
CPA Gentrification Report			x	x	x	x	
	Open Space and Arts	Preserving Heritage	Local Business Development	Affordable Housing Construction	Economic Development Projects		
Master Plan 2010	x	x	x	x	x		
Master Plan 2020	x	x	x	x			
CPA Gentrification Report		x	x	x			

Fig 3: Master Plan Matrix

## Findings and Discussion

Resident voiced development was most emphasized in the 2020 Master Plan and the CPA gentrification report. 2020=11 CPA=6. For both the 2010 and 2020 master plan there were only 3 cases of city officials for each document. In determining a central definition of gentrification, the 2010 plan identified a shortage in affordable housing but did not attribute this to an expansion of South End or the development of luxury buildings. Instead, the 2010 Master Plan identifies opportunity zones that will strengthen the community's economic value. The CPA gentrification report suggests otherwise, acknowledging an awareness of development impacts on the rising rents in Chinatown. The 2020 Master Plan had the most codes for luxury development attributing demographic shift, aesthetic displacement, and housing insecurity due to luxury development on the periphery of Chinatown.

Desired renewal expressed in the documents prioritized open spaces and arts that nourished heritage and neighborhood strength and community participation via community development corporation and resident activism. Coding for positive renewal resulted in the most emphasis on creating more green space and investing in technology to reduce air pollutants, granting licenses to have cart sellers and open space to engage visitors with local business, and emphasis on more affordable housing that fits the needs of the residents. Desired renewal projects identify areas of future development in opportunity zones but are primarily interested in the addition of green space, arts, and services in existing spaces.

## Demographic and Site Data



Fig 4: Asian and White Rents in 02111 and 02110

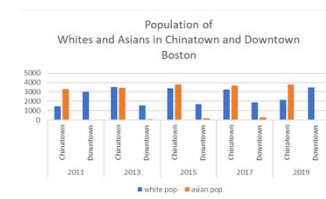


Fig 5: Population in 02111 and 02110

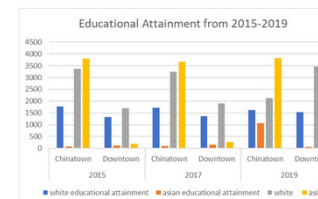


Fig 6: Educational Attainment 2015-2019

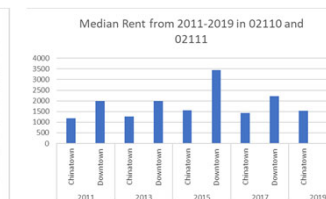


Fig 7: Rent in 02110 and 02111 from 2011-2019

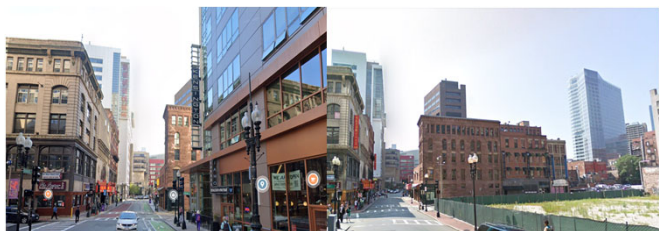


Fig 1: 670 Washington St 2020

Fig 2: 670 Washington St 2009

## Methods

- Demographic data collected from the ACS Census
- Property Assessment Data and Policy Map Data-mapped in ArcGIS online
- Participant Observation
- Google Photo Comparisons using the timeline feature
- Media review of Sampan Articles
- Content Analysis using NVivo 12
- Matrix coding
- Semi-structured interviews with community leaders and residents



Fig 8: Resident Mapping 2020

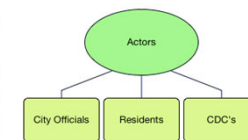


Fig 9: Actors in the Master Plans

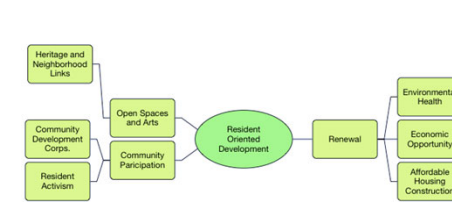


Fig 9: Resident Oriented Development Mind Map