Culture and History

The Chinatown district of Vancouver is rich with Chinese culture, history and landscape imagery. Throughout the Chinatown urban landscape there is a unique and interesting western interpretation of Chinese symbolism, shapes, forms, landscape materials and plants. The urban landscape proposed for the Keefer and Columbia building embraces this merging of cultures by recognizing its location in Chinatown with relation to surrounding landscapes, landmarks and urban rooms.

Streetscape and Entry

The streetscape including the laneway to the north recognizes the vitality and character that the ground plane can bring to a city block. Chinatown is well known for its narrow building frontages, mosaic tiled front entries and sidewalk canopies. The Keefer and Columbia building retail entry ground plane picks up on the idea of the mosaic entry through the use of a tumbled concrete unit paver set in herringbone pattern with a concrete surround at each retail bay on Keefer, Columbia and the lane. This treatment and pattern is also used at the commercial entry off Columbia to complete the block and further enhance the identity of this entrance.

The residential entry off Keefer at the southeast corner of the building takes on a different character through the use of glass prisms set in a tinted concrete surround that will be illuminated at night. The glass prisms recall the many portions of Chinatown sidewalk that were paved with concrete and glass block to allow light into the basement levels below the ground plane. It was customary in Chinatown and throughout the downtown area of Vancouver to set the name of the building or the address of the building in the pavement at the front entry. The commercial and residential entries recognize this and include either the street address or the building name in the concrete banding surrounding the entry pavement treatment.

Outdoor Rooms

The landscape spaces that form the private and semi public outdoor rooms at various levels of the Keefer and Columbia building tell a story about the strong relationship of shapes and forms, numbers and plants that are important in Chinese culture. The position of the landscape trees and bamboo relative to the building edge was carefully considered to ensure that it is visible from the street and adds character and a degree of serendipity to the building façade.

Shapes and Numbers

The circle and the square are important shapes in Chinese Culture. The circle represents the sky as well as fulfilled, oneness, perfection or unity. The circle expresses the process of something coming full circle or coming together. The square represents order, regulation as well as the earth. Each of these has been used throughout the landscape as organizing elements that define spaces within each landscape room.

The number 2 (balance, choice, cooperation), 3 (creativity, family and self expression), 5 (change, resourcefulness and adventure) and 7 (contemplation, solitude) are all positive numbers in Chinese culture. These numbers have been used in the ordering of the tree or planter quantities at each patio level.
Ginko

The choice of trees within the Keefer and Columbia landscape responds to the urban context of the site. Patio spaces fronting the Chinese Memorial Plaza incorporate the ‘Gingko’. The Gingko is the oldest tree found within the current fossil records. It is referenced in Chinese literature back as far as the 11th century. Its age and beautiful leaf holds a place of reverence in both Chinese and western culture and as such responds in a respectful way to the adjacent memorial.

Bamboo

Bamboo is a dominant plant found in the Dr. Sun Yet San garden, which is on the west side of Columbia Street across from this project. The bamboo grove creates a unique and interesting sound as it moves gracefully in the wind. The shadow of the bamboo either in the sunlight or a moon lit night creates and unique and interesting pattern on the ground plane. Bamboo has been used as the predominant plant on the Columbia fronting patio spaces. The bamboo shadow expressed as an abstraction on the paving through the use of narrow charcoal pavers inlaid in the overall paver field.

Paper Bark Maple

The Paper Bark Maple, which is also found in the Dr. Sun Yet San garden, is a medium sized tree of Chinese origin with interesting reddish brown exfoliating bark. It is tolerant of shade and as such has been selected for use on the north side of the building facing the lane. The Paper Bark Maple along with the plants within the patio planters will be visible from the lane creating an interesting green edge.

Patio Design

The roof top patio design was developed both in elevation and in plan. As noted the patio trees can be seen from the street/ lane and as such respond to the urban context of that street edge. In plan the patio design was considered as an overall assemblage. A simple ground plane is overlaid over all levels. The square or circle is overlaid on this ground plane within each patio space. It is expressed with a tumbled concrete paver creating a space of a room within the patio itself. Raised planters create seasonal interest and soften the hard lines of the built form.

The semi public amenity deck at the southeast corner of the building on Level 9 includes a BBQ area, informal seating on wood blocks and stylized urban Chinese lanterns strung above the space. Metal screens are used to provide vertical definition and define smaller gathering spaces for all residents of the building to enjoy. The Gingko leaf is expressed with small red tiles inlaid in the paver ground plane to create interest and add definition to the ground plane.

At various levels there are a number of units that front onto large private open spaces. These large private open spaces have been defined through the use of vertical metal screens and planters. There are no gates or fences employed. This is a unique response to identifying individual space while allowing the concept of ‘community and neighborliness’ to be explored.
Landscape Design Inspiration

**BAMBOO**

**GINKGO**

**LANTERN**
Landscape Design Inspiration

GLASS PAVER

WINDOW AND SCREEN

NAVIGATION
Landscape Design Inspiration

PAVER TEXTURE

PLANTER

BIKE RACK
Landscape Design Inspiration

EXISTING SITE TEXTURE
Public Realm Opportunities

LEGEND
- Site Boundary
- Street
- Laneway
- Pedestrian Intensity
- Bikeway

GREEN SPACE
1. Andy Livingstone Park
2. Andy Livingstone Field
3. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden - Private
4. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden - Public

PLAZA
5. Chinese Cultural Centre - Entry Plaza
6. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden - Entry Plaza
7. Chinatown Memorial Plaza

CULTURAL
8. Success Senior Centre
9. Chinese Freemasons Building
10. Chinese Cultural Centre
11. Chinese Cultural Centre - Gateway
12. Chinese Canadian Military Museum
13. Proposed Future Pagoda
14. Vancouver Film School
15. Wing Sang Building / Rennie Gallery

FOOD RETAIL
16. Chinese Benevolent Association
17. UBC Learning Exchange
18. Musette Cafe
19. Foo’s Ho Ho Restaurant
20. New Town Bakery
21. Bao Bei
22. Keefer Hotel / Keefer Bar

COMMERCIAL RETAIL
23. Peking Lounge
25. Chinese Tea Shop
26. Space Lab
27. BMO
28. Vancity
29. CIBC
30. Jack Chow Building
31. Ten Fu’s Tea House
32. Ten Ren
33. Tea and Ginseng Co.
34. HSBC
35. Al Beauty Salon

MIXED RETAIL
36. Chinatown Plaza Building

EXISTING SITE VIEWS
1. Andy Livingstone Park
2. Andy Livingstone Field
3. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden
4. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden
5. Chinese Cultural Centre
6. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden
7. Chinatown Memorial Plaza
8. Chinatown Plaza Building
9. Chinese Freemasons Building
10. Chinese Cultural Centre
11. Chinese Cultural Centre
12. Chinese Canadian Military Museum
13. Proposed Future Pagoda
14. Vancouver Film School
15. Wing Sang Building / Rennie Gallery
16. Chinese Benevolent Association
17. UBC Learning Exchange
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23. Peking Lounge
25. Chinese Tea Shop
26. Space Lab
27. BMO
28. Vancity
29. CIBC
30. Jack Chow Building
31. Ten Fu’s Tea House
32. Ten Ren
33. Tea and Ginseng Co.
34. HSBC
35. Al Beauty Salon
36. Chinatown Plaza Building

Laneway
Chinese Memorial Plaza + Chinatown Plaza Building
Sidewalk
Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden
Existing Site Boundary
Public Realm Program Gradient