History and Present Development of Philadelphia Chinatown

Field Site Introduction

PCDC is a grassroots, non-profit, community-based organization, which plays a crucial role in preserving, protecting, and promoting Chinatown as a viable ethnic, residential, and business community.

Mission:
- Protecting Chinatown neighborhood;
- Preserving neighborhood heritage;
- Promoting the businesses and residents of Chinatown community

Services:
- Affordable housing development
- Family Support Services
- Community Organizing & Advocacy
- Youth Service

History of PCDC

The history of the PCDC began in 1966, when major urban renewal plan threatened the future of Chinatown community. Notably, the proposed plan of the construction of the Vine Street Expressway would demolish the Holy Redeemer Church and School, an important cultural landmark for the residents. In response, a group of residents and activists gathered and held a committee meeting to come up with solution to stop the demolition. The committee was later incorporated in 1969 as PCDC.

Since then, PCDC has helped protect and preserve historical legacies of Chinatown community, as well as worked with City agencies and community members to ensure that Chinatown has a voice in land use and development matters. PCDC also took constructive steps in neighborhood planning — initiated and implemented many residential and commercial development projects, such as the affordable housing projects: Wing Wah Yuen, Mei Wah Yuen and On Lok House, and the recent mixed-use project —The Eastern Tower Community Center at the corner of 10th and Vine Streets. The community center is a 23-story, 227,000 square foot landmark building, and will include a 15,000 square foot community center upon completion.

Reference
http://chinatown-pcdc.org/
http://pudc.com/chinatown-philadelphia/
http://www2.hsp.org/exhibits/Balch%20exhibits/chinatown/chinatown.html

Praxis Learning Goal

As a Cities major, I designed my own praxis learning plan to accommodate my academic interests in urban planning and community building, as well as to explore my potential career path.

My learning goals for this course included understanding the past and current development processes of Philadelphia Chinatown. Specifically, I expected to explore the identity and demographic characteristics of this historically immigrant neighborhood, and its evolving role as an important residential community in Center City Philadelphia. Furthermore, the internship was a great opportunity for me to experience the working pace and environment in a non-profit organization.

Learning Process and Result

At the field site, I assisted my supervisor with multiple planning projects: I helped collect, organize and analyze neighborhood census data for the preparation of the new neighborhood plan; I used my mapping skills to create thematic maps for property acquisition; I also conducted research on community service performances and neighborhood land use patterns. I met with my faculty advisor regularly to discuss my learning experience and exchange feedback on assigned readings.

By combining the internship and academic learning, I was able to apply the knowledge and theories I learned in class to practice. I have also gained deeper understanding of the crucial role PCDC plays in building and preserving the Chinatown community, as well as the positive impacts Community Development Corporations (CDCs) can have in the neighborhood redevelopment processes on a larger scale.

Acknowledgement

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