

CHINATOWN USER SURVEY

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CHINATOWN SURVEY AREA

- 1 Housing Condition
- 2 Neighborhood-User Characteristics
- 3 Neighborhood Business/ Employer Characteristics
- 4 Land Uses

● NEIGHBORHOOD USER SURVEY
Locations Of On-Street Interviews
With Pedestrians

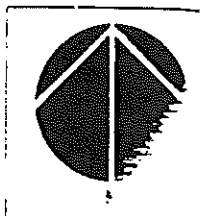
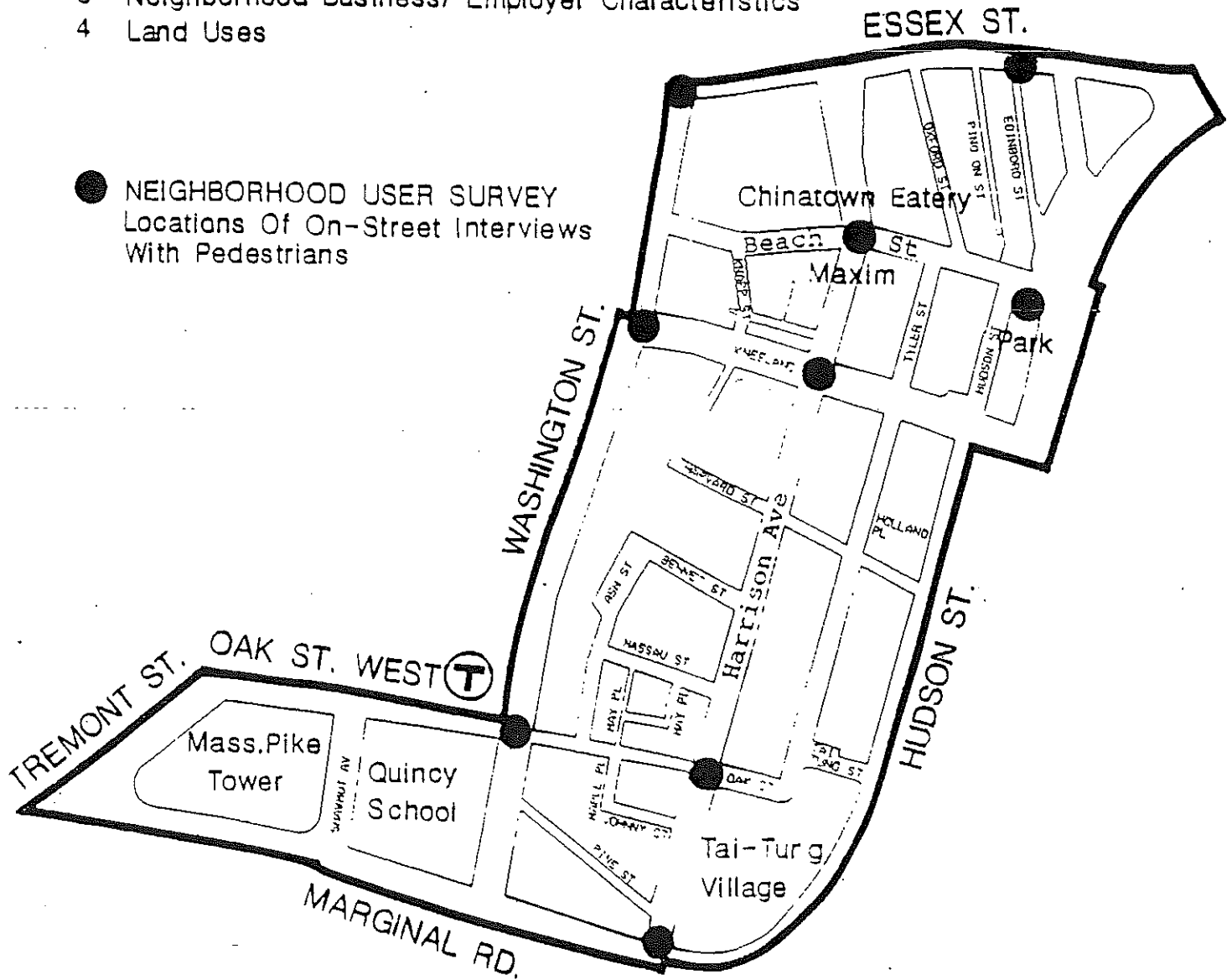


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INTRODUCTION

The User Survey was conducted to obtain information about the users of Chinatown, who they are and why they use this neighborhood. The Chinatown Community Plan effort, currently undertaken by the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Council, seeks to assess the level of use of the Chinatown neighborhood: who uses Chinatown, when and for what purposes. In addition, the effort attempts to identify general attitudes about the neighborhood, held by both residents and non-residents. A survey of Chinatown users was carried out in the section of Chinatown bordered by Essex Street to the North, the Expressway to the east, the Mass Pike to the South, and Washington and Tremont Streets to the west.¹

¹The survey area has been identified for the purpose of carrying out intensive field work in the Chinatown business and residential centers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Boston's Chinatown neighborhood has a variety of resident and non-resident users. A person may work in Chinatown, visit a restaurant or a grocery store, visit friends or relatives, pass through on their way from one section of downtown to another, or visit Chinatown for leisure and entertainment purposes.

One-fifth of Chinatown users are residents of the neighborhood, with the rest coming in from other Boston neighborhoods and areas outside the City. Nearly two-thirds of the users are Asian. Users travel to Chinatown primarily by public transportation, private car, or on foot. Users tend to be younger than the general population of Chinatown. Many non-resident users visit primarily on weekdays, in the morning and afternoon. The principle reasons for using Chinatown include to eat, work, shop, visit friends and pass through the area.

Many Chinatown users, especially resident and Asian users, use the services available in Chinatown, with 77 percent of residents and 61 percent of all Asians doing so. Medical services are the most frequently used service, but immigration services and day care services are also used often. Most users think the services in Chinatown could be improved by expanding the level of services that are offered. Users learn about these services from friends and relatives, as well as from newspapers.

Users tend to be aware of development projects in Chinatown, with most being familiar with the Orange Line Replacement and the Kingston/Bedford Parcel to Parcel Project. Overall, users tend to like Chinatown, particularly the food, Chinese community and people, and the shopping. Yet, many think there are serious problems in Chinatown, particularly garbage, the housing shortage, and crime and safety.

Those who live in Chinatown enjoy the amenities, and most live there because they like the community. It is the convenience of living in Chinatown, the stores, living near relatives and the ease of being in the Chinese community, that keeps many residents in Chinatown. However, nearly one quarter think they have no other choice. Most residents have lived in Chinatown for several years, and the majority came to Chinatown from Hong Kong and China. Former residents, who stayed in Chinatown an average of four years, left because of overcrowding, their perception that Chinatown is not a good neighborhood, and because of the expense of living there. However, just as many users live in Chinatown to be near relatives, many former residents also left Chinatown, moving to other areas, for the very same reason.

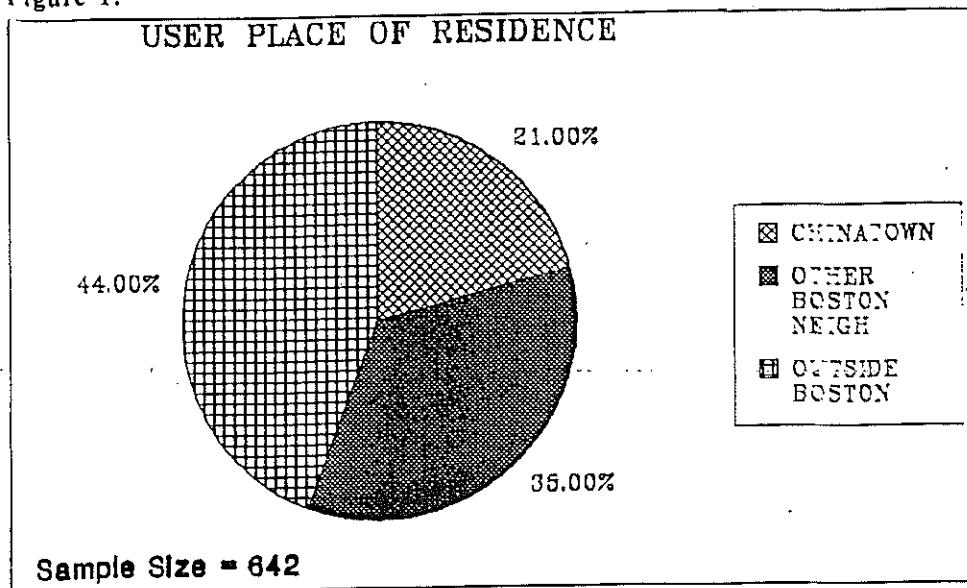
There is a strong demand for housing and desire to live in Chinatown, particularly from Asians. Housing is a problem, as the existing supply is limited and units are often too small for those who need them. Yet, many users who live in other areas would be interested in moving to Chinatown, given the right conditions. Although nearly one-half of users living outside Chinatown would not move to Chinatown if housing, comparable in cost to their current housing, were provided, the other half would be at least somewhat likely to move. Of those very likely to take this opportunity, the majority of which are Asian, their ability to pay, reflected in family income, is low for many although high for some. Additionally, many would be interested in 3 or more bedroom rental units, indicating the need for large, affordable family rental units in Chinatown. Families currently living in Chinatown have an even greater need for large rental units.

Chinatown is a unique, urban ethnic neighborhood offering many amenities and services to residents of the City and the surrounding areas, and serving as the center of the Asian population in Boston and New England. The many restaurants, shops and services available are accessible to a large resident community and to users traveling into Chinatown to work, make business and social contacts, pass through and patronize its facilities.

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Of the people in Chinatown who are working, visiting, shopping, passing through, etc., one-in-five is a resident of Chinatown. Nearly half, 44 percent, are visitors from outside the City of Boston. See Figure 1. While 21

Figure 1.



percent of the users are Chinatown residents. 35 percent come from other Boston neighborhoods, including the South End, 12 percent. Allston-Brighton, 9 percent, and Fenway-Kenmore, 3 percent.

CHARACTERISTICS OF USERS

Demographic Characteristics

Asian users still predominate as many come in from outside of Chinatown to shop, to eat, and to use services. Users of Chinatown are better educated and wealthier than Chinatown residents. Male users out-number female users 57 percent to 43 percent, perhaps due to the larger numbers of men in the local labor force.

Ethnic/racial origins of the user population of Chinatown show the
 composition of the Asian population. Asian persons account for 63 percent of
 Chinatown. Residents of Chinatown make up one-third of Asian
 non-residents make up two-thirds. Fifty-five percent of all users
 are, while 90 percent of Chinatown neighborhood residents are Chinese.
 and Cambodians totaled 8 percent of all users, with many of them
 outside of Chinatown. The other shares of all users included 24
 percent, 8 percent black, 2 percent Hispanic and 3 percent other. See
 non-resident users are predominately Asian, 55 percent, and white, 30

Ethnicity/Ethnicity of Chinatown Users (in percent)

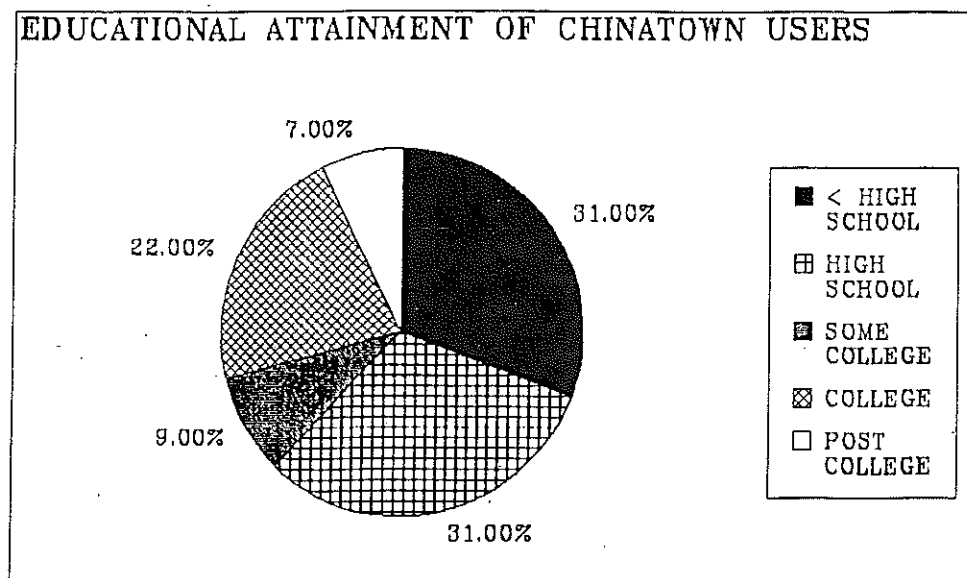
<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>All Users</u>	<u>Resident Users</u>	<u>Non-resident Users</u>
Chinese	55	90	46
Cambodian	4	4	5
Black	3	2	3
Hispanic	1	*	1
Other	24	1	30
	8	2	9
	2	*	3
	3	1	3
	100%	100%	100%
	642	134	506

* Less than 0.5 percent.

Chinatown User Survey, 1985.

The educational attainment profile of users was much different than for all residents of Chinatown. Generally users tend to be much better educated. A full 29 percent of users have a college degree or more, 9 percent have some college education, 31 percent have a high school diploma, and 31 percent have less than a high school education. See Figure 2.

Figure 2.

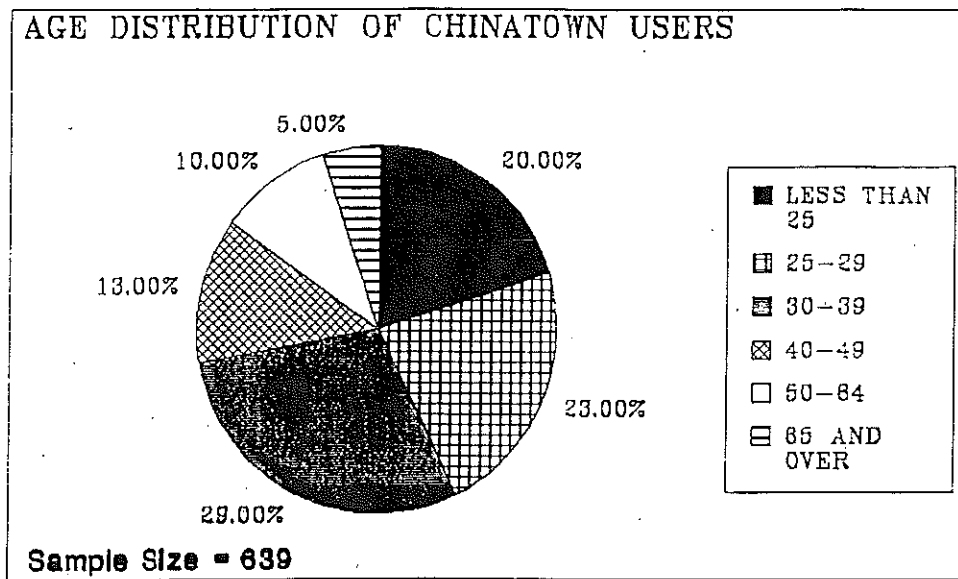


Accordingly, Asian resident users of Chinatown are less well-educated than non-resident Asian users. Only 6 percent of resident Asian users have a college degree, compared to 22 percent of non-resident Asian users. Sixty-five percent of resident Asians do not have a high school diploma, compared to 34 percent of non-resident Asians. This may be because of the many elderly residents living in Chinatown who did not receive an education, as well as the young adults who immigrated from Hong Kong and China and also never went to school in this country.

Similar to the overall population of Chinatown users, more Asian men use Chinatown than Asian women. Of resident Asian users, 55 percent are men and 45 percent are women. Of non-resident Asian users, 58 percent are men and 42 percent are women.

The age profile of users is much younger than the general population of Chinatown as a whole. The median age of users is about 32 years, with 20 percent aged less than 25 and only 15 percent aged over 50. See Figure 3. It may have been that the elderly tended not have responded to the survey effort.

Figure 3.



Income

Total family incomes of Chinatown users as a whole are much greater than for residents. The median family income for all users in 1987 was \$22,500, although family income for all residents is closer to \$15,000.² A significant thirteen percent of all users had incomes over \$40,000, while another 14 percent had incomes below \$10,000. See Table 2. Lower income users tended to be Chinatown resident users and Asian users.

²Source: BRA, Chinatown Housing Survey, 1987.

Table 2. Family Income of Chinatown Users (in percent)

	All Users	Resident Users	Non- Resident Users	Asian Users	Non- Asian Users
Family Income					
Less than \$10,000	15	24	13	19	9
\$10,000 - \$19,999	29	41	26	37	17
\$20,000 - \$29,999	27	26	27	25	29
\$30,000 - \$39,999	15	7	17	11	21
\$40,000 and over	14	2	17	7	24
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Sample Size	575	118	455	350	224

Source: Chinatown User Survey, 1987.

Housing

The average household size for all users is high, 3.7 persons, compared to the average 1985 household size of 2.5 persons citywide. For residents, the average persons per unit is 4.0. See Table 3. A significant 38 percent of

Table 3. Household Size of Chinatown User Households (in percent)

Number of Persons	All Users	Resident Users	Non- Resident Users	Asian Resident Users	Asian Non- Resident Users
1	10	3	10	6	6
2	21	13	22	18	16
3	14	3	16	9	15
4	23	27	22	28	24
5+	32	33	30	39	39
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Average Household Size	3.7	4.0	3.6	4.1	4.1
Sample Size	638	133	503	127	273

Source: Chinatown User Survey, 1987.

of households have 5 or more persons per household. Asians tend to live in households larger than most in the city. The average household size of Asian users, both resident and non-resident, is 4.1 persons.

Monthly rental or mortgage payments reflect that most families housing costs are within their means. The median housing payment for all users was \$400 per unit. A full 37 percent pay \$450 or more per month. Monthly expenditures for housing do not differ significantly by household size: the \$400 median holds for all households sizes except for two person households, who pay a median of \$350. Table 4 shows the distribution and mean and median values of mortgage and rent payments. While 20 percent of single person user households spend less than \$250 for their housing, 36 percent spend \$450 or more. Of four and five person user households, 38 and 46 percent, respectively, pay \$450 or more per month on housing. All users families spend an average of 24 percent of their monthly income on housing costs.

Table 4. Chinatown Users Monthly Rental or Mortgage Expense by Household Size (in percent)

Monthly Expense	Household Size					
	1	2	3	4	5+	All
less than \$250	20	18	13	8	6	12
\$250 - 350	18	23	19	22	18	20
\$350 - 450	26	33	34	32	30	31
\$450+	36	26	34	38	46	37
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Median Monthly Expense	\$400	\$350	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400
Sample Size	39	94	62	97	114	406

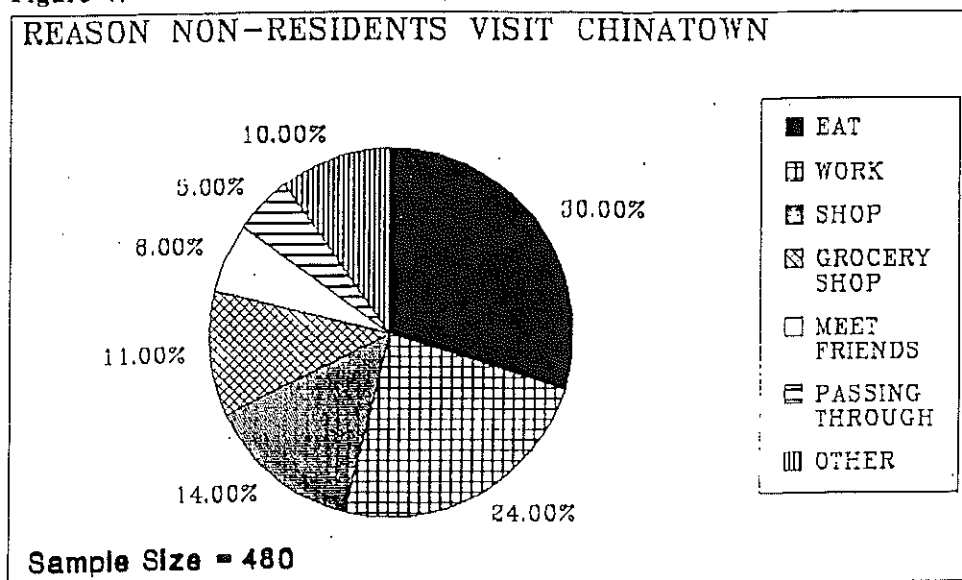
Source: Chinatown User Survey, 1987.

The average rent or mortgage payment is comparable for both resident and non-resident Asian users of Chinatown, with the groups spending \$365 and \$376 per month, respectively. In a city with rising rent costs, these amounts seem reasonable. With comparable household sizes, it is reasonable to think housing conditions may be similar for Asians both in Chinatown and outside Chinatown.

NONRESIDENTS REASONS FOR VISITING CHINATOWN

Non-resident users of Chinatown come into this area to eat, work and shop, as well as visit friends, pass through, etc. Overall, 30 percent of non-residents users are there to eat, 24 percent to work and 24 percent are there to shop, doing both general and grocery shopping. See Figure 4.

Figure 4.



Asians users visit Chinatown to work, shop, visit friends and patronize services. Twenty-two percent of Asian non-residents users visit restaurants when coming to Chinatown, compared to 30 percent of all non-resident users. Apparently, non-Asian non-residents are more likely to use a restaurant when visiting Chinatown. Asians non-residents users visit grocery shops more often

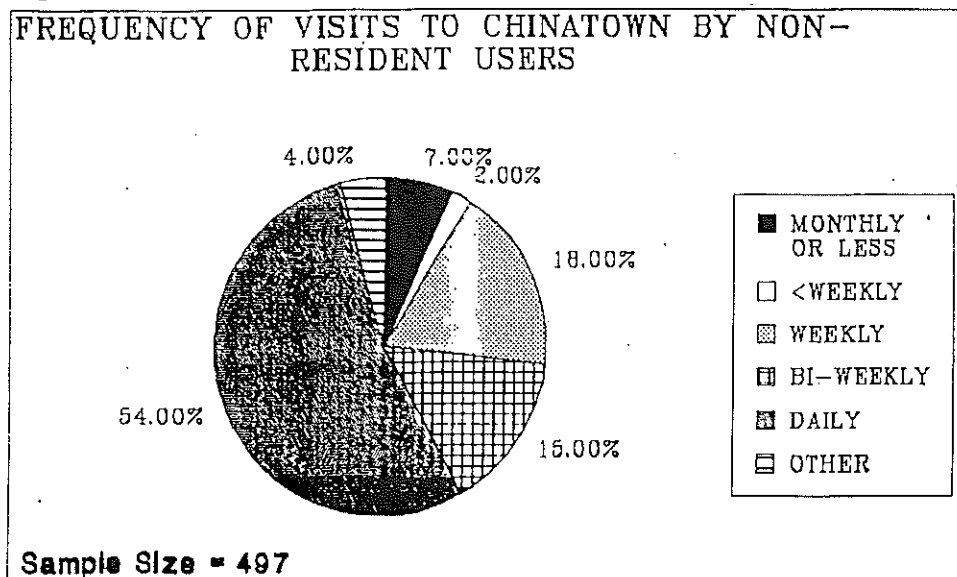
than non-asian non-residents users, with 16 percent of asian non-residents visiting for the purpose of grocery shopping, with only 11 percent of all non-resident users. Thus, the proportion of non-asian, non-resident users patronizing grocery stores must be smaller.

Restaurants and stores, grocery and general, are the most frequently used retail service used in Chinatown. Thirty-four percent of the non-resident users who visit Chinatown for the purpose of using a retail or business establishment use restaurants, while fifteen percent use grocery stores and 14 percent use general retail shops.

FREQUENCY OF VISITS TO CHINATOWN-NONRESIDENTS

The majority of non-resident users of Chinatown visit daily, and many others visit at least weekly. See Figure 5. Fifty-four percent visit daily, with

Figure 5.



many coming into Chinatown for work. Many of the trips to Chinatown by non-resident users are made on weekdays, with 76 of the users surveyed saying they visit during the week and 10 percent saying they visit on weekends. Eight

percent visit at different times. See Table 5. Nearly one-half, 48 percent, come into Chinatown in the morning, 24 percent in the afternoon, and 18 percent come in at various times.

Non-resident Asians users also visit Chinatown at various times of the day and week, the most popular times being weekdays and daytime hours. The majority, 54 percent, visit daily, while 25 percent visit at least weekly, and

Table 5. Part of Day When Visit By Days of Visits (in percent)

<u>Days of Visits</u>	<u>Part of Day When Visit</u>				<u>All</u>
	<u>AM</u>	<u>PM</u>	<u>Evening</u>	<u>Different Times</u>	
Weekdays	84	78	61	65	76
Weekends	13	19	28	14	16
Other	3	3	11	21	8
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Total	100	100	100	100	100
Part of Day When Visit - All	48	24	10	18	100
Sample Size	241	118	46	88	499

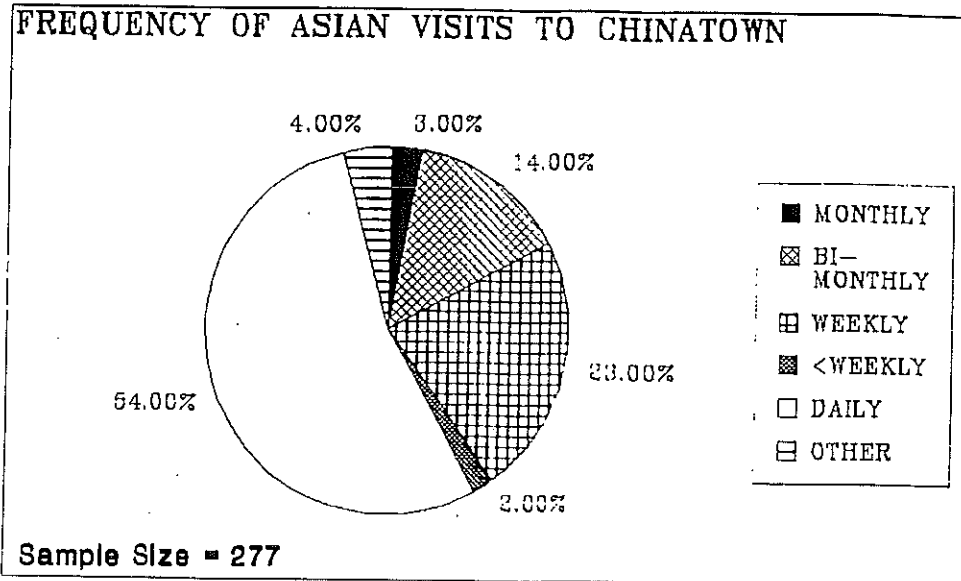
Note: Other includes Holidays, as well as responses for users who come on different days.

Source: Chinatown User Survey, 1985.

14 percent visit ever other week. See Figure 6. Three quarters of Asian non-residents visit on weekdays, while nearly one-fifth, 18 percent, visit Chinatown on weekends and the rest visiting at various times. Most visit during the day: 53 percent in the morning and 26 percent in the afternoon.

Twenty-five percent of non-resident users walk when visiting Chinatown. 38 percent take public transit and 35 percent drive by private car, with the remaining 2 percent using other means of transportation.

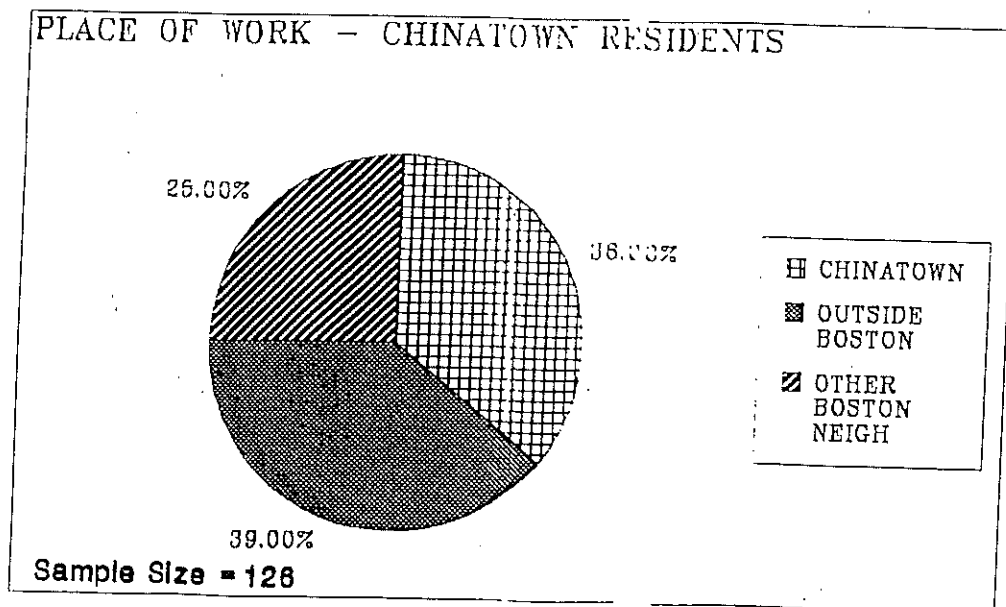
Figure 6.



LOCATION OF WORKPLACE

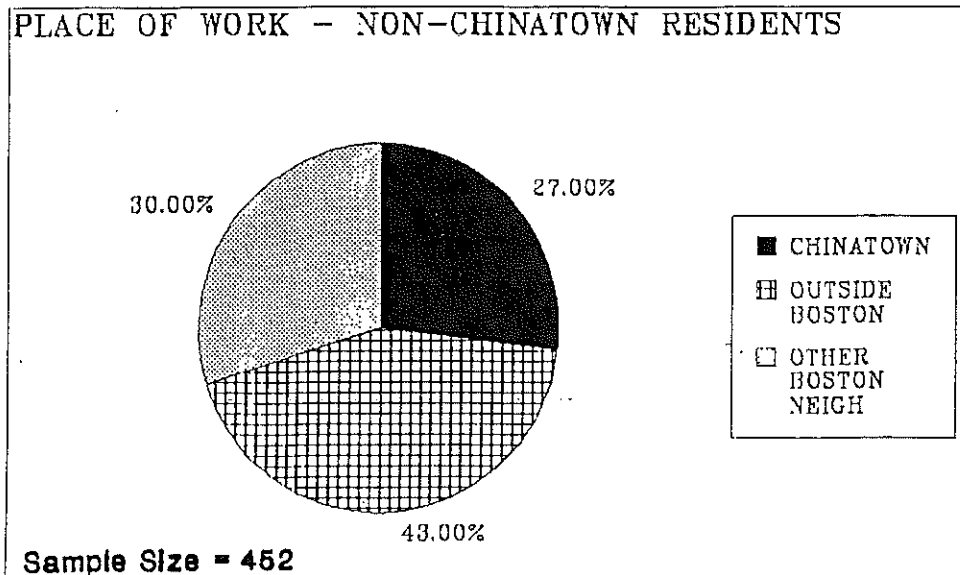
Many of the people living in or visiting Chinatown work outside Chinatown, although the majority work within the city. Twenty-nine percent work in Chinatown and 24 percent work in other parts of the City of Boston. Thirty-nine percent work in another city or town. See Table 7. A greater proportion of resident users of Chinatown work in Chinatown than non-resident users,

Figure 7.



36 percent versus 27 percent. Slightly more resident users work outside the City of Boston than non-resident users, 43 percent versus 39 percent. As mentioned, 24 percent of non-resident users work in Chinatown. See Figure 8.

Figure 8.



USE OF CHINATOWN SERVICES

Over one-half, 54 percent, of Chinatown users have used the services available in Chinatown, and resident users are more likely to use services than non-resident users, with 77 percent of resident users of Chinatown using services available to them, compared to 38 percent of non-resident users. See Table 6. Sixty-one percent of all Asian users use the services offered in Chinatown.

Medical services are the most widely used service in Chinatown, particularly by residents. Fifty-six percent of resident users use medical services available in Chinatown, compared to 28 percent of non-resident users.

Sixty-two percent of non-resident users do not use existing services. Visitors to Chinatown are interested in consuming foods and goods, and aside from using medical services, probably have other resources available in their own neighborhood or town.

Table 6. Services Used in Chinatown (in percent)				
	All	Residents	Non-Residents	Asian
<u>Services Used</u>	<u>Users</u>	<u>Users</u>	<u>Users</u>	<u>Users</u>
None	54	23	62	39
Medical	34	56	28	44
Immigration	2	5	1	3
Translation	1	1	2	2
Job	2	2	1	2
Day Care	1	5	*	2
Housing	1	3	1	2
Other	5	5	4	6
Total*	100	100	100	100
Sample Size	615	130	483	386

Note: '*' indicates less than .0.5 percent.

Source: Chinatown User Survey, 1987.

Asian users are also more likely to use medical services more than any other service available in Chinatown, with 44 percent using the medical services offered. Other services such as day care and immigration services are available and utilized by Chinatown users.

HOW SERVICES COULD BE IMPROVED

Most users of Chinatown think services can be improved simply by expanding the amount and level of services offered to users, and by providing good services. See Table 6. Thirty-six percent of all users and 40 percent of Asian users think services could be improved by expanding the current level of services offered: services should be expanded simultaneously with population growth, the hours in which services are offered should be expanded, and more services should be offered. Twelve percent of all users and of Asian users

Table 7. How Services Can Be Improved (in percent)

	All <u>Users</u>	Asian <u>Users</u>
Expand services	36	40
Provide good services	12	12
More medical services	8	9
More affordable services	4	4
Translation/bi-lingual services	4	4
General improvement	4	4
Better housing	4	4
Don't know	16	12
Other	12	11
Total	100	100
Sample Size	354	278

Source: Chinatown User Survey, 1987.

think that services could be improved simply by providing "good" services, although the definition of good is unclear. Less expensive services, particularly medical services, are also needed. Also, 16 percent of users were uncertain as to how services could be improved.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Newspapers and friends are the largest sources of information for users regarding services and activities available in Chinatown. See Table 8. Twenty-six percent get their information from the regular newspaper, such as the Boston Globe or Boston Herald. Fifteen percent get their information from the Chinese Newspaper, and twenty-three percent learn about the services and activities from friends. The majority of both resident users and non-resident users rely upon these sources for information about services and activities in Chinatown, although 11 percent of non-residents have no source of information, probably because they are not looking for information on services in Chinatown or already are aware of them.

Table 8. Sources of Information about Services (in percent)

<u>Sources</u>	<u>All Users</u>	<u>Residents Users</u>	<u>Non- Residents Users</u>	<u>Asian Users</u>
Newspaper	26	24	26	20
Chinese Newspaper	15	20	13	22
Friends	23	26	23	23
Family	4	8	3	5
People	5	4	5	6
Fellow Workers	2	1	2	2
Storefronts/Shops	3	2	3	3
Bulletins/Notice Boards	3	5	2	3
Community Groups	2	2	2	2
Radio and Television	1	1	1	1
None	11	4	13	8
Don't Know	1	2	2	2
Other	-	2	5	3
Total	100	100	100	100
Sample Size	583	129	754	381

Source: Chinatown User Survey, 1987.

The primary sources of information for Asians regarding services in Chinatown are also friends, Chinese newspapers and major newspapers. Twenty-three percent of users receive information from friends, 21 percent from Chinese newspapers and 20 percent from other newspapers. Many have no source of information, 8 percent, probably being familiar enough or involved enough to know of the services.

AWARENESS OF DEVELOPMENT

Both the replacement of the Orange Line and the Kingston/Bedford parcel to parcel project are visible to the public. Fifty-nine percent of Chinatown users are aware of the Orange Line Replacement and twenty-two percent are aware of the Kingston/Bedford Parcel to Parcel Project. Only six percent are aware

of the Combat Zone renovation and 2 percent are aware of other projects in the area. See Table 9. Eleven percent are unaware of any development. Residents and non-residents are equally aware of each development project.

Table 9. Awareness of Development Projects (in percent)

<u>Projects</u>	<u>Residents Users</u>	<u>Non- Residents Users</u>	<u>All Users</u>
Kingston/Bedford	23	22	22
Orange Line	57	59	59
Combat Zone	5	6	6
Don't Know	11	11	11
Other	4	2	2
Total	100	100	100
Sample Size	131	499	632

Source: Chinatown User Survey, 1987.

WHAT PEOPLE LIKE BEST ABOUT CHINATOWN

Food, the Chinese community and people, and shopping are what most people who use Chinatown like best about the neighborhood. The convenience of living in Chinatown and the availability of foods in shops and restaurants are the attractions liked best by Chinatown resident users. The majority of non-resident users also like the availability of food -- in restaurants, shops and bakeries -- as well as the Chinese community and people. See Table 10.

Table 10. What Users Like Best About Chinatown (in percent)

	All Users	Chinatown Residents	Non- Chinatown Residents
<u>What People Like Best</u>			
People	7	8	7
Chinese Community People	8	8	8
Chinese Culture	2	*	3
Food	37	21	41
Restaurants/Cafes			
Bakeries	7	3	8
Convenience	7	20	4
Shopping/shops	8	11	7
Own community/people	5	3	5
Friends	3	7	2
Language	2	5	2
Activity/Center of Activity	2	1	2
Groceries	3	3	3
Other	7	8	7
Don't Know	2	2	1
Total	100	100	100
Sample Size	637	131	504

Source: Chinatown User Survey, 1987.

GENERAL ATTITUDE ABOUT CHINATOWN

The majority of the users of Chinatown think that there are serious problems in Chinatown. Sixty-four percent feel this way. Only 16 percent felt that things are going well and 20 percent responded that they did not know. See Table 11. Resident users have a more pessimistic outlook than non-resident users, with 77 percent thinking that there are serious problems and 12 percent thinking things are going well, compared to 60 percent of non-resident users feeling there are serious problems and 18 percent feeling things are going well. Non-residents users are more likely to be uncertain on this issue. Asian users, both resident and non-resident, also think that serious problems exist in Chinatown.