

3.2 DOWNTOWN SUBAREAS (Continued)

5. CHINATOWN

Over the years Chinatown harbored many of Fresno’s cultural and ethnic communities, including Japanese, Italian, German, Chinese, African-American, Armenian, Basque, and Mexican immigrants. Chinese immigrants, drawn to the area to work on the construction of the Central Pacific railroad, made up one-third of Fresno’s earliest population.

It accommodated all the needs of neighboring residents, including a hospital, churches, schools, and more diverse retail. One of the oldest areas of Fresno, Chinatown truly represents the great ethnic, cultural and architectural diversity of Fresno. Although it is one of the most historically significant areas of Fresno, Chinatown has also experienced the greatest abandonment and dilapidation. Less than 20 percent of Chinatown’s original buildings remain, many in a very poor state of repair – although several are listed on the Local Register of Historic Resources. In addition, it is isolated from the Fulton District by the Union Pacific railroad tracks and from the Edison Neighborhoods by State Route 99.

Chinatown is built upon a well-connected network of pedestrian-scaled blocks with alleys servicing most blocks. However, due to the freeway and railroad tracks, Chinatown is isolated from both Downtown and Edison’s residential neighborhoods.

The original, historic portion of Chinatown between Fresno Street and Ventura Avenue consists of a patchwork of vacant lots, parking lots, and isolated buildings, although F Street, Chinatown’s main street, is relatively intact, particularly between Tulare Street and Inyo Street. From 1960 onwards, many of Chinatown’s older buildings were demolished, although nine structures are now listed on the Local Register of Historic Resources. In addition, many buildings are in disrepair and the upper floors of many buildings have been removed to conform to building safety requirements. Chinatown is also home to an extensive network of underground, interconnected basements.

North of Fresno Street, Chinatown consists of relatively large-scale commercial and industrial buildings surrounded by parking lots. South of Ventura Avenue, it consists of a mix of single-family homes and industrial buildings.

Chinatown does not have any public parks, although the abundance of vacant land and parking lots provides good opportunities to be transformed into parks as the need arises. In recent years, Chinatown has hosted a number of annual events, including the Chinese New Year Parade and the Chinatown Music and Arts Festival.

Recent revitalization efforts have resulted in improved street lighting, new street banners, facade and street improvements, new landscaping, and the preservation of several buildings.



View of the intersection of Mariposa Street and F Street in its present condition.



View of intersection of Mariposa Street and F Street. A park is proposed for Chinatown along Mariposa Street between E Street and G Street. Chinatown is revitalized through adaptively reusing notable older buildings and introducing new ones on an infill pattern. The Basque Hotel is seen at right in the foreground.