

Hoa Binh Plaza: An Ethnic Island



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Introduction

On a recent sunny weekday morning, the shops at Hoa Binh Plaza in South Philadelphia were slowly preparing for the day's business. The chain securing the back entrance had been removed and the doors flung open, while delivery men hauled in boxes of noodles, fresh vegetables, brightly colored candles, packages of dried seafood and cans of tropical juice for the Washington Supermarket. The smoke-filled Viet Huong Cafe was already busy serving Vietnamese coffee and hoagies. Wing Kee Chinese Imports was arranging their display of plastic gold-colored Buddhas and jade-like trinkets.

As Chinese techno emanated from their sound system, we wandered into the empty Wah Ying Video Store and approached an older woman behind the counter. Communication with her in English was difficult, however, and she called in a shopper to act as a translator. The customer, a young man named Tranh, turned out to be a regular at the Plaza. The woman soon excused herself from the conversation, and we continued to talk with Tranh.

Tranh, a recent college graduate employed nearby as a government engineer, was waiting for his car to get fixed. He had stopped by Hoa Binh for a meal, hoping that some of his friends would be working there that day. Like most shoppers at Hoa Binh, Tranh comes here not only to shop and eat, but also to visit with other members of the Chinese-Vietnamese community. The Plaza primarily draws members of this community from North Philadelphia, like Tranh, but also serves as a valuable ethnic shopping resource for Asian-Americans in the tri-state area.

Situated on an industrial strip, Hoa Binh is wedged between two decaying neighborhoods in South Philadelphia. This location raises several issues concerning the plaza's function in the Asian community as a cultural center, as well as presenting questions about its relations with the neighborhood in which it is located. This paper will explore the physical and social structures of Hoa Binh Plaza, its place in the local community, as well as implications for the larger Asian-American population in Philadelphia.

The Building: Street Market Meets Mini-Mall

Hoa Binh Plaza is a one-story, nondescript, cinder block warehouse. The blue and white awning, accentuated with red lettering, stands in contrast to the drab industrial buildings across the street. A chain link fence, approximately eight feet high, borders the dangerously baffling parking lot, with one entrance on Chadwick street and one on Washington Avenue. Like all American supermarkets, posts have been planted around the entrance to cage runaway shopping carts. A pay phone located on the right side of the doorway shares space with informal advertisements and occasional graffiti.

The Plaza consists of a single hallway of shops each fronted by floor-to-ceiling glass windows. Stainless-steel supports serve as unofficial bulletin boards for community events. Fliers written in Vietnamese, Chinese and English, which advertise houses for rent, available retail spaces, and used cars, are mixed with posters from the Vietnamese Student Association of Drexel University and other announcements. This indicates that the Plaza has taken on multiple roles as both a shopping mecca, and as a center for community information exchange.

The glass door at the end of the hall, although giving the illusion of transparency and rear access, is used only for deliveries. The interior space is lit by fluorescent lighting and daylight from the doors at either end. It appears the management has imposed signage control, allowing each business a standard sign above its door. The signs are red and blue on white, each announcing its business in three languages. Many of the shops, however, have augmented these signs with window posters or tacky decorations hanging from the ceiling in the hallway. The unswept linoleum tile floor is lined with Washington Grocery deliveries, wooden cabinets, fake plants, porcelain vases and tables covered with assorted small carry-out orders. Many stores open for business have their doors propped, easing the flow of shoppers.

On a busy day, the hall is alive with various activities. The most striking perhaps, are the children playing in the hallway as they might in an outdoor street festival or market. They create their own games, oblivious to the shoppers around them as they laugh and run about. The children personify the casual, family-oriented environment at Hoa Binh.

The atmosphere provided by the children's play, the linear arrangement of shops, and the sense of openness created by the glass doors at either end of the hall, is akin to that of vendors' stands lining a traditional Asian street market. This design is a translation of the outdoor bazaar - a common feature in the urban fabric of East Asian cities - into the confines of the American commercial standard of the shopping mall. It takes the romanticized open-air market, folds it in half with the shops parallel to one another, and encloses it with a roof. Meanwhile, it retains the ambiance of the crowded, dusty bazaar with its neon signs and children on the sidewalks. This collectivization of community merges with the sterile standard of the glitzy American mall, in this bifurcated reality of the Asian-American mini-mall.

The Stores and Their Social Constructs

There are thirteen storefronts in Hoa Binh: Hai Tien Chinese Restaurant, GBA Jewelry, Wing Kee China Imports, International Fashions, Washington Supermarket, Vine Garden Restaurant, Eagle Travel Agency and Chinese Herbs, Paris Hair Salon, Viet Huong Cafe, Kim Son, another importer, Wah Ying Video, and one office containing East-West Realty, Five Star Business Services Company, and a notary and tax service. According to Paul Li, one of the original developers, the 10,000 square-foot Washington Grocery was included as their anchor tenant. They counted on patrons to shop "at the market, get something to eat at the Chinese restaurant or the Vietnamese noodle restaurant, get their hair done, buy a video. . ." (Dubin 1990). The diversity of services provided allows Hoa Binh to become something of a town center. People do come here to take care of several errands at once, in an environment that supports their specific needs.

The majority of shoppers at Hoa Binh are regulars, some coming here several times each week, others only on weekends. More often than not, they come in groups, some of which span several generations. As discussed above, the children play in the hallway while their parents, grandparents and other relatives go about their business. Employees and shoppers know each other, and the Plaza is filled with lively conversation as its customers exchange the latest news. In

this way, Hoa Binh is a community center -- although one physically separate from its residential base -- providing some employment, satisfying commercial wants, and creating a social structure of and for a specific, ethnically-based group of patrons.

The Eagle Travel Agency and Chinese Herbs share one space, though they are two separate businesses owned by the same person. On the day we visited, an elderly man rested on a stool behind the herb counter while the timid middle-aged travel agent sat behind his desk finishing a lunch of noodle soup. Shopping patterns for the two businesses are distinctly different from each other. Eagle Travel is prone to more sporadic use simply by the nature of the travel business. The herb shop, however, has many long-term customers. Individuals with a chronic illness will repeatedly come back for the same medicine whereas the need for travel is generally of less immediacy.

The family enterprise is a prominent social feature of Hoa Binh. Family employees work extremely hard to keep their businesses thriving, some staying as long as sixteen hours each day. This is very impressive dedication, considering the Plaza is open 365 days a year. Wing Kee China Imports, one of the more intriguing shops on the hall, is exclusively family owned and operated. On several different visits to the Plaza, we observed the family eating a meal together in their crowded store, amongst the paper umbrellas, brightly painted animal figurines, two-foot-high statues of Buddha, Snoopy air fresheners, and countless other trinkets.

At Wing Kee, the family has constructed a Buddhist shrine in the back of the store. Two stands holding apples and an array of incense sticks flank the red wooden structure. A row of empty brass candlesticks line the front and hardened wax droplets have collected on the floor below. Personal and business life are virtually inseparable. While religion is certainly not the main focus here, many businesses have small shrines (see photo, appendix 2).

The Washington Supermarket is partly a family organization - many of the workers are related, but several are from outside the family. The employees are mainly from South Philadelphia and on the whole, speak both Chinese and Vietnamese fluently, as well as a fair amount of English. The Supermarket has lived up to its anchor-tenant status, becoming the main

draw of the Plaza. The owners stock items to please a predominantly Vietnamese clientele, as well as attempting to provide for the larger Asian-American community, with foodstuffs appealing to Thai, Laotian, Filipino and other Southeast Asian cultures. It is easily one of the largest Asian specialty supermarkets in the area, and attracts shoppers from beyond the Philadelphia region, some traveling from northern Maryland and New Jersey, especially the large immigrant communities in Camden (DiStefano 1991).

Family-based, ethno-centric, multi-purpose Hoa Binh Plaza is a center of commercial community activity, as well as facilitating its own social patterns. It was originally intended to serve the Vietnamese community in the Philadelphia area, but meets the needs of many Asian groups so well that its draw extends across state lines.

Quantitative and Qualitative Neighborhood Description

The northern boundary of Hoa Binh's neighborhood is Catherine Street, above which lies the University of the Arts and its theater and restaurant district. The wide, multi-lane Broad Street delineates the eastern boundary. The western boundary is more ambiguous, obscured by blocks of crumbling row houses and warehouses. We decided to draw the edge at 24th Street, where the dense neighborhood ends and Washington Avenue intersects with Grays Ferry Avenue. The southern boundary, Federal Street, lies four blocks below Washington. These boundaries include two census tracts, the 19th, which is directly north of Hoa Binh, and the upper blocks of the 22nd tract, directly south of Washington Avenue.

Hoa Binh, therefore, occupies a position as a thriving Asian shopping center balanced between two deteriorating non-Asian neighborhoods on either side. The disparity between the streets around the Plaza and the life inside its doors is extreme, and is the reason for the invisible social wall between the neighborhood and the Plaza.

These neighborhood distinctions influence the dynamic of Hoa Binh's relationship with the customers on either side of Washington Avenue. In these neighborhoods, unexpectedly well-manicured blocks of freshly painted row houses contrast with sudden strips of vacant lots and

abandoned, boarded-up houses. Several buildings have been popular places for graffiti and tagging, and broken glass and garbage sporadically litter the streets and sidewalks. In the southern neighborhood there seems to be more street activity with children playing outside, adults conversing on their front stoops, and young men working on cars. Point Breeze Avenue, which cuts through the neighborhood serves as a seedy Main Street, littered with an assortment of corner delis, wig shops, thrift stores, and hole-in-the-wall markets.

The neighborhood directly north of Hoa Binh contains fewer businesses and seems more densely residential than its southern counterpart. The Marion Edwards Recreation Center is located here on 17th Street between Catherine and Fitzwater, and the Community Health Care Center is on the 1500 block of Catherine Street. Other nearby social services include a homeless shelter on the corner of 15th and South, and We the People, a support network for adults coping with AIDS, on Broad Street. Undeniably, the services with heaviest representation in the area are countless check-cashing agencies and (mainly Baptist) churches.

The 17th police precinct, which includes Hoa Binh, has its headquarters at 20th and Federal and shares its building with the fire department. The hospitals in the area are the Graduate Hospital at 17th and Bainbridge and St. Agnes, located ten blocks south of Washington along Broad Street. The nearest public high school is Orden Reed at 33rd and Tasker, although it lies outside our neighborhood boundaries. The Norris Barrett Junior High School is at the corner of 16th and Wharton. These standard services are all located south of Washington Avenue, connecting the two neighborhoods across the industrial strip and the main thoroughfare. This trans-neighborhood connection is in fact the reason for drawing the southern boundary beyond Washington Avenue. The street serves as a main artery for commuters entering and leaving the city, and doubles as a loading strip for the MAC trucks delivering to the warehouses surrounding the Plaza.

The 1990 Census reports no significant neighborhood distinction by age group¹. This comes as a surprise, and runs contrary to the trends discussed in Philadelphia: Neighborhoods.

¹For the most part, we have discussed Census statistics in the aggregate. For more

Division, and Conflict in a Post-Industrial City. Adams et al believe that Philadelphia's older industrial neighborhoods, of which this is one, "became the locus of an aging population in an aging housing stock" (82). While their theory may hold true in other neighborhoods, the blocks around Hoa Binh don't particularly support it. There are nearly 200 more people between the ages of 22 and 49 than there are above 60 years old, in tract 22, with a similar situation in tract 19. The majority of houses in the area were built in the 1930s, but a building surge added 230 new homes in the 1950s and '60s, and another in the late 1980s added 71 more homes. Approximately 80% of the existing housing units are occupied, while the rest are quickly deteriorating as they lie vacant.

The 1990 U.S. Census Report reveals the glaring absence of an Asian community within the immediate vicinity of the plaza. These homogeneous neighborhoods are characterized, rather, by an overwhelmingly black population. A significantly greater number of white residents in the 22nd census tract may be the result of the uppermost parts of South Philadelphia's "Little Italy" lying within these boundaries. Census bases also document significant numbers of German, Irish, and Polish citizens in the southern part of 22nd census tract. The only Asian residents in the vicinity are a scant 24 Chinese and Japanese who live south of Washington Avenue.

The neighborhoods both north and south of Hoa Binh are extremely poor. Nearly half of all residents are below the poverty level, with a median household income of approximately \$10,000. Education and labor statistics reinforce this discouraging economic malaise. In the 19th tract, roughly 35% of residents attained a high school diploma or higher, with only a slightly higher percentage in the 22nd tract. Only half of the people over sixteen years of age were in the labor force in 1990. Typical of many predominantly black communities, the high incidence of female heads of households may account for the lower rate of unemployment among women in these neighborhoods. Of those residents that are employed, the mean commuting time of roughly thirty minutes indicates that most persons work outside the neighborhood, although a significant number of people in the area south of Hoa Binh work either ten minutes or an hour away.

specific information please refer to the Appendix.

Across the street from Hoa Binh Plaza, in the 1500 block of Washington Avenue, is an empty lot surrounded by a low chain-link fence. Browne and Company, Leasing Agents, have planted a sign amongst the weeds and garbage advertising retail space in the soon-to-be-built 5100 square foot Washington West Shopping Center. Scott Browne, director of the project told us his development would include retail, restaurants and a food market for the neighborhood. A true salesman, he proudly stated that, considering the lack of retail development in the area, Washington West would be a "Renaissance type of thing. It's a plus for the community. . . a community project." After being reminded of the existence of the plaza across the way, he said that Washington West will have little impact on Hoa Binh, because it serves a different clientele, saying bluntly "that's an Asian market," assuming that this explained everything.

Mr. Browne is probably correct that the clientele of the two plazas will have little cross-over, although one might question the overall economic and social impact on the area. Washington West, if successful, will certainly draw more of the neighborhood into the immediate vicinity of Hoa Binh, and bring more people onto the currently empty sidewalks. Nonetheless, Mr. Browne's perception of Hoa Binh is another example of its isolation from the rest of the area.

Neighborhood and Community Relations

As already mentioned, a sharp distinction can be made between the community that surrounds Hoa Binh and the community that is Hoa Binh. Although it has been proven through the census data that Hoa Binh Plaza is not related demographically to the neighborhood of South Philadelphia that surrounds it, the relations of the communities should be discussed. We have spoken with Asian shoppers and store owners, as well as with neighborhood residents, security guards and police officers to gain a clearer picture of how the Plaza interacts with the surrounding residences.

Perhaps sanctified by its name -- which, when translated, means "peace" -- the Hoa Binh Plaza is purported to be virtually crime-free. Mike, the security guard, and Sgt. Andy Smith of the 17th District relate only minor incidents of theft as the only instances of crime in the Plaza. This

was surprising, considering the Point Breeze area just a few blocks south is considered to be one of the most criminally dangerous sections of town. However, this is a strong indication that the two communities are very separate and that the Plaza truly "keeps to itself" (Smith 1995).

Interestingly enough the one breach of Hoa Binh's isolation from the neighborhood is its method of crime protection. In the interest of effective security, they directly contract a few local residents to work as security guards. This is a successful method of screening the customers, and, according to Mike, it enables the owners to have a filtering system for potential trouble-makers.

Tensions, both racial and economic, do exist between the black community and the employers in the Plaza. Sgt. Smith stated that many blacks in the area have complained that the Asian-owned businesses, both inside and outside the Plaza, are taking business and jobs away from them. This in itself is not surprising, considering that tensions between poorer black communities and Asian "intruders" are notorious in many large cities. Consider the events of the L.A. riots after the Rodney King beating when angry blacks were looting Korean-run businesses while the store-owners stood poised with guns on their roofs.

Nevertheless, many of the Hoa Binh customers and employees we spoke with painted a slightly different picture. A regular shopper believed that the neighborhood and Plaza were of no relation to each other, and that there were no inter-community tensions. Other employees said that there was minimal contact between the two communities, and that no hostilities were present.

Perhaps their responses can be qualified by the fact that they may not have wanted to give a bad impression of the Plaza to curious newcomers. A racially tense situation in such a bad neighborhood may prompt more police surveillance, which the Plaza managers may find undesirable. This is a feasible possibility, considering the strong distrust of the police in the Vietnamese community. Remembering corrupt police in their native lands, many immigrants are wary of government-funded authority and tend to shy away from relying on the police at all (Weikel 1990).

This distrust of public authority and the proven tensions between the inside and outside communities are visually manifested in the Plaza's preventive security measures. In front, the

parking lot is completely surrounded by a tall chain link fence providing limited access. Following the building north along Chadwick Street, evidence of vandalism in the form of graffiti and spray-paint tags stands out. The back door to the Plaza is locked when no delivery is expected, and is secured with a heavy-duty chain. These elements demonstrate an uncomfortable relationship with the neighborhood, and help to ground the Hoa Binh Plaza in the truth of its location.

Plaza History and Its Relationship with Chinatown

The two original developers of Hoa Binh Plaza are Chinese-Americans from Houston and Atlanta who had built Asian mini-malls in several other cities before selecting Philadelphia in 1990. After some scouting, they found a defunct lumberyard in South Philly, and decided the space and location would work for their purposes. The location was chosen because it was available, was close enough to Asian-American population centers to attract new shoppers, and conveniently, already had a parking lot (Dubin, 1990). The developers, Paul Li and Wai Pang, directed the original \$1.1 million investment. As they were getting to know the Asian community here, they met their third partner, Tuan Hai Ngo, a local grocery store owner. The three were assisted by former president of the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, Stanley Yuen.

The developers planned the plaza so that shoppers would make multiple purchases at one time. This multi-purpose organization mirrors pre-existing shopping patterns in Philadelphia's crowded Chinatown, a little over a mile northeast of the Plaza. At first glance, it seems one could expect some serious competition between the two. Stanley Yuen, with years of experience working in Chinatown, insists that Hoa Binh shouldn't have any "major conflict with Chinatown. . . and can only enhance the city as a whole" (Dubin 1990).

True to this prediction, there are several factors inherent in Chinatown and the greater Asian-American population which now support Hoa Binh without taking away from Chinatown in any significant manner. First, while the overall population of the Philadelphia area is declining, the Asian population is experiencing enormous growth not only in the city, but in the suburbs as well, thus creating a growing pool of Asian shoppers. Also, whereas Chinatown has been described as

"more purely Chinese" (Tranh), Hoa Binh Plaza caters to the Southeast Asian community, namely Vietnamese and Cambodian.

The most important reason that people choose Hoa Binh and other plazas over Chinatown has nothing to do with population or specific ethnic identity; it has to do with parking. Since a very small percentage of the area's Asian-American population lives in Chinatown proper, the majority drive to do their shopping, and this means that the stores must provide sufficient parking. Unfortunately for that neighborhood, the city has approved a series of projects that create more traffic and greater need for parking. The bulk of traffic entering the Vine Street Expressway and Franklin Bridge runs right through the heart of Chinatown, so during rush hours the streets are jammed. To the east is the Courthouse and Independence Mall, and to the south, the Gallery at Market East. The biggest impact on the parking situation in Chinatown is from the newly-constructed Convention Center, which does its best to make a wall down the east side of Chinatown, on Eleventh Street, as well as drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to an already crowded district.

The lack of adequate parking in Chinatown is a boon for Hoa Binh. All of the Plaza's customers are commuters and rely on the fact that it will be easy to park their cars while they shop. It should be noted here that despite nearby bus and subway lines, no one we talked to had ever taken public transportation to get to Hoa Binh, making the parking lot that much more important.

Asian Market and Mini-Mall Competition

Hoa Binh Plaza was the first of its type in Philadelphia when it was constructed in 1990. Chinatown, as it has been established, didn't pose a great competition problem. However, upon its opening, Hoa Binh itself immediately provided strong competition for the Vietnamese market area, near the 9th Street Italian Market. This ethnic shopping district had been established over the past twenty years as Southeast Asian immigrants and refugees from the war were attracted by the outdoor market-style of the Italians. According to senior City major Truc Ha, many Vietnamese were particularly reminded of home by the open-air bazaars and they opened shops side-by-side

with the Italians. This created rivalry and tensions between the two ethnic groups. The Vietnamese community eventually bled over into the 8th and 7th Street areas and continued to prosper.

When the Hoa Binh investors realized the potential commercial benefit of the growing Asian population in the city, they decided to capitalize on it with a centralized development, detailed previously. The decentralized shops near the Italian Market could not compete well with a 32,000 square foot mini-mall that provided a variety of services in one location. In fact, this notion of a sundry of Asian stores in one shopping mall to cater to the growing Vietnamese, Filipino, Cambodian and Laotian clientele became very popular in Philadelphia. In the last five years, several more Asian mini-malls have sprung up in the city, profiting from the ever-increasing population demands.

Havens for the approximately 50,000 Southeast-Asian immigrants (Sokolove 1994), these plazas vary only slightly in commercial make-up and generally tend to attract the same kinds of customers, regardless of location. According to Mike Williams, one of the Hoa Binh Plaza security guards, there is a plaza currently under construction on 11th and Washington, expected to be finished by December. In addition, there are two other malls that have direct correlations with Hoa Binh. One year ago, construction was completed on a second plaza, named Hoa Binh II, which was opened by the same partners. This mini-mall, also known as Adam's Market, is located in Northeast Philadelphia, "in a better neighborhood," according to Mike, and has more space.

Five months before the construction of Hoa Binh II another shopping complex, named Atlantic Supermarket, was opened just two blocks away. The manager, Ky Thai, was a former manager and major stockholder in the original Hoa Binh. "Now, there are warring Asian shopping centers right on top of each other...It is business the ancient way: You step on my toes, I'll stomp on yours" (Sokolove 1994). Although the competition is more business than personal, the old partners' friendships are strained. The individual customer battles are won or lost based on the success and popularity of particular restaurants or stores (Ibid.)

These tensions provide for contrasting viewpoints: how will the balance between the Asian communities and the shopping complexes be affected by time? Will the supply eventually supersede the demand? Or will the increasing Southeast Asian population in Philadelphia create a further need for this type of ethnic mall? Perhaps for now we may assume that the equilibrium is tenuous at best. As Sokolove states, "each [is] competing for a market that might not support them [all]."

The Ethnic Breakdown: Meshing Chinese and Vietnamese

An important distinction that is not often made when discussing Hoa Binh Plaza is the ethnic make-up of the Southeast Asian community that works and shops there. The name of the plaza is Vietnamese, and the signs in the shop windows are mainly Vietnamese with Chinese and English translations. According to Truc Ha, a senior Cities major, Vietnamese is the official language of business in the shopping complex, but many side transactions are conducted in the various dialects of the consumers and the employees.

Mike Williams and Sgt. Andy Smith can rattle off a list of the various ethnic backgrounds of the clientele: Vietnamese, Chinese-Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, Filipinos, and even non-Asians like Jamaicans and West Indians whose "vegetables and spices are very similar" to those used in traditional Vietnamese cuisine (Williams 1995). A slight distinction is that the original Hoa Binh Plaza was founded by a group of Chinese-American developers, and the store owners are mainly comprised of Chinese-Vietnamese and "ethnic" Chinese.

Truc Ha clarified that although they may seem similar, the Vietnamese and Chinese cultures are very different. This is one of the main reasons these plazas are so attractive to Southeast-Asians; Chinatown mainly caters to the Chinese, who have very different cuisine and customs than the Vietnamese (Ha 1995). In addition the mini-malls provide the specialty foods and goods the Vietnamese are looking for.

There are three delineations of ethnic background in the Vietnamese community of Philadelphia: there are the "pure" Vietnamese, the "ethnic" Chinese (Vietnamese of Chinese

descent) and the Chinese-Vietnamese by marriage. In Vietnam, the racial tensions between the Chinese and the Vietnamese were very high. However, in the U.S., those differences are often put aside for the sake of "survival needs" in a foreign environment (Ha 1995).

It is perhaps this particular compulsion that draws the Vietnamese and other Southeast-Asians of Philadelphia into such a tight-knit community. Hoa Binh Plaza is a "safe ground" for the urban and suburban immigrant populations (Ha 1995). Customers flock from the three main Vietnamese districts of Northwest, South and Southwest Philadelphia, as well as from all over the tri-state area.

The Future of Hoa Binh

The Hoa Binh Plaza is a thriving shopping complex which incorporates a sense of community with ethno-centric commercial services. As mentioned above, the plaza is facing a steady increase in competition from other Asian mini-malls establishing themselves in Philadelphia. In addition, the racial and ethnic divisions, between the Asian Plaza and the black neighborhood, provide uncomfortable tensions. Thus questions about the future functions of the Plaza emerge as we contemplate its current use within the context of the greater Philadelphia area.

Any suggestion for alterations of the Plaza's current situation, be it through physical or social constructs, must take into account the Plaza's current success. It could be said, for instance, that the most obvious recommendation for change would be cleaning up Hoa Binh's interior. The floors in the hallway are dirty and a thin layer of dust covers many items in the shops, including the packaged food in Washington Grocery. In addition, the use of the hallway as a display area makes it cluttered and disorganized. Although the indifferent attitude toward cleanliness is notable, we don't feel that a sterilization of the facility is necessary. Scrubbing the interior would be imposing the antiseptic character of an American suburban mall standard. The grime is simply a part of the quirky atmosphere, and most importantly, no one seems to mind it.



Another possibility is a physical expansion of Hoa Binh into its immediate surroundings. An addition of several stores in a satellite building across the street could build on existing

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Former-Train Tracks

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|----------------------------------|
|  | The Neighborhood Boarder | 1 | Community Health Care Center |
|  | Tract 19 Boarder | 2 | Fire Department |
|  | Tract 22 Boarder | 3 | Graduate Hospital |
|  | How Binh
(Haitien, Hoa Binh Plaza
and Parking lot) | 4 | Homeless Shelter |
| | | 5 | Marion Edwards Recreation Center |
| | | 6 | Norris Barretts Junior High |
| | | 7 | Orden Reed High School |
| | | 8 | Police Station |
| | Streets Surrounding
Neighborhood | 9 | St. Agnes Hospital |
|  | | 10 | We the People |

Appendix II: U.S. Statistical Base-- Census Information

	<u>Tract 19</u>	<u>Tract 22</u>
Total population	2,362	2,275
Percent below poverty level	45.8	32.7
Median household income	\$10, 805	\$15, 131

Labor Force Status

Percent in labor force	48.5	54
Percent males ¹ in labor force	51.7	62.6
Percent females ¹ in labor force	45.7	47.4
Percent unemployed	31.3	20.4
Percent males unemployed	33.5	26.8
Percent females unemployed	29.1	14.0

Mean travel time to work(min.)	28.4	28.4
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Housing

Total housing units	1,258	1,112
Occupied units	988	947
Vacant units	270	165

Age

1-21	586	557
22-49	1032	914
49-60	177	216
60-	671	588

¹ Sixteen years and older.

Appendix II: U.S. Statistical Bases -- Census Information

	<u>Tract 19</u>	<u>Tract 22</u>
<u>Educational Attainment</u>		
Percent high school graduate or higher	36.9	40.3
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	4.1	6.8

Race(as percent of total population)

White	68	315
Black	2,236	1,900
American Indian	33	0
Asian or Pacific Islander	0	24
Chinese	0	11
Japanese	0	13
Vietnamese	0	0
Other Race	25	36



A view of Hoa Binh's parking lot, with warehouses across Washington Avenue, from the entrance of the Plaza.



Hoa Binh Plaza with Center City
in the distance

Community Bulletin
Board outside of
International Fashions



Shrine belonging to
in import store with
incense and burning
candles outside of the shop.





Graffiti on the back of Hoa Binh and
a view of the decaying neighborhood.



The empty lot - the future Washington
West Shopping Center - with Hoa
Binh in the background.