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# Towards Urban Frameworks: Accommodating Change in Urban Cultural Landscapes

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***Towards Urban Frameworks***  
***Accommodating Change in Urban Cultural Landscapes***

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School of Architecture and  
Urban Planning



# ***Towards Urban Frameworks***

## ***Accommodating Change in Urban Cultural Landscapes***

*Sean O'Donnell*

### **ABSTRACT**

This project is based upon a case study of an existing urban environment in New York City. The history of this environment has been characterized by a succession of ethnic communities and the consequent creation of their distinct cultural landscapes. The construction of these cultural landscapes has generally outpaced the construction and reconstruction of the large scale features of the environment however, and this process of sequent occupancy and the creation of cultural landscapes is still vigorously occurring. Accordingly, this suggests that important insights can be gleaned from this environment that are generalizable to the practice of urban design. These insights involve the creation of urban environments that are designed to accommodate change in cultural landscapes. In designing for such change, it is argued, new environments would be more likely to resist obsolescence.

In approaching this task, the case study has endeavored to identify the elements of the physical environment and the legal system that have facilitated or impeded the creation and modification of two distinct cultural landscapes, those of Little Italy and Chinatown. This was accomplished through the use of cross-cultural and historical analyses and a model of "urban frameworks" comprised of five scales: Streets, Blocks, Lots, Buildings and Smaller Than Buildings. Also important to the study is a definition of

cultural landscapes that encompasses fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed features of the environment. In analyzing these features, the study focused on the public domain and on the transitions to the private domain. The private domain is considered generally beyond the scope of the current study, but is addressed when pertinent to the discussion.

The research was performed over a two year period and it entailed literature reviews, archival investigations, field observation, site inventories/behavioral mapping, interviews and comparative site visits in San Francisco and Oakland, California.

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However, even with the kind assistance of all of these named and unnamed individuals, this work is exclusively my interpretation of the material discussed and I am solely responsible for its content.

Sean O'Donnell  
June 1995

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***For My Family***

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

In Manhattan, not far from the Brooklyn Bridge, there is an area that used to be farmland. In the decades just prior to the American Revolution this land, like a great deal of agricultural land surrounding developing cities, was subdivided and over the course of two centuries, two generations of buildings have been built upon it. The current generation of buildings, like those that they replaced, has been occupied by several different groups of people over time who collectively created neighborhoods or communities in the area. As time passed, the earliest neighborhoods or communities faded and were subsequently replaced by others, which began a process of social/cultural change that continues to this day.

During this process, each of these new, or growing, communities effectively inherited a considerable legacy of streets, property boundaries, blocks and buildings from its predecessor. As these people established themselves in their new environs, they often made modifications to the environment that suited their particular lifestyle, and since many of these groups were comprised of people with a common ethnicity, they often tailored their neighborhoods to reflect their shared "culture." These tailored environments often became identified (frequently by outsiders) with certain characteristics of the group's culture and the neighborhoods became known as Dutch-town, Little Italy or Chinatown.

This paper is going to suggest that this process of community/neighborhood change and the process of "tailoring" an inherited, and largely predetermined, physical environment should be fundamental tenets of the practice of urban design, and that there are lessons to be learned from existing environments that have continually weathered these transformations. This is because these environments have seemingly kept obsolescence at bay for long periods of time and they have apparently done this, in part, by successfully accommodating the distinct cultures of these different groups.

This paper then can be considered a record of one investigation into how a small portion of New York City has supported these different groups. This investigation has been performed largely by observing change over time and by comparing the environments created by the different groups to one another. In approaching this task, three concepts have been used to provide the study's foundation. These are: sequent occupancy, cultural landscapes and frameworks. These concepts will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, but generally they help to answer the questions: who is modifying the environment, what is being modified/created and how can this information be applied to urban design?

These three questions also provide the basic outline of this document, with the addition of Chapter Four, a discussion of the impact of regulations, and the chapter to which we now move, a discussion of the project's theoretical foundation.

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## **WHY DESIGN FOR CHANGE?**

As the title implies, this chapter will provide a rationale for urban design, and architecture, to consider designing for change. In doing so, it will also provide the theoretical foundation for the case study presented in the following three chapters.

In initially considering the question of why designing for change is important to urban design, the most evident answer might be that cities have historically been subject to a great variety of forces that have often resulted in physical transformations. The transformations that can occur are remarkably complex and involve an innumerable number of variables. The degree of complexity to be confronted is actually so great that in the past one hundred years, the new profession of planning has joined the ranks of other specialists with interests in the urban environment, including architects, engineers, landscape architects, urban designers, economists, sociologists, psychologists, geographers and lawyers, to more closely attempt to manage, or react to, the transformations.

The forces driving and/or enabling these transformations involve the interaction of an incredible array of socio-cultural, economic/market, political and technological factors that are often beyond the control of these specialists. These factors are also often beyond our ability to predict over any large period of time. However, these factors will generally manifest themselves in the environment through the actions of a great number of people and these actions may result in the modification of the built environment. Since these modifications are being made largely by individuals, these changes will be particularly evident at a small scale.

This scale might be considered the “neighborhood” and in the process of change, some neighborhoods will languish, others will remain vital, while others may experience periods of downturn and revitalization. In the course of this process, the built environment will be required to accommodate these variations and, as Anne Vernez Moudon (27. 1986a (*see page 133 for an explanation of this referencing system*)) has pointed out, we add only 2-3% to our housing stock annually and that new residential construction will likely have a life-span in excess of one hundred years. This constancy of the housing stock through potentially dramatic periods of change demands that our “neighborhood” or “urban architecture” be designed to accommodate unforeseen change as best as possible.

Several architecture/planning/research projects have already begun to address this challenge and they have provided a basis for approaching the topic again on an urban scale. The Social Sciences have also been studying urban transformations for much of this century and they have developed theoretical models and concepts, as well as

research methods, that appear to be quite useful to the urban designer. Accordingly, this project has involved the use of an interdisciplinary process that drew heavily on concepts collected under the rubric of Environment-Behavior Research. Among the most important of these concepts are: Sequent Occupancy, Cultural Landscapes and Frameworks. As the Introduction discussed, these concepts help to answer the questions of: who might change the environment, how might the environment be changed, and how can we design an environment that accommodates change? So, we now turn to these concepts.

### **Sequent Occupancy: The Role of Immigration**

Sequent occupancy is simply the process of one group of people being replaced by another in an environment over a period of time. On a grand scale, this process can be discerned through the observation that between 1985 and 1990, the 860,000 people who left New York City were replaced by 816,000 newcomers. Of these 816,000 new arrivals, 115,000 came from within the region, 270,000 came from elsewhere in the United States and 428,000 came from other countries. (30. Roberts 1994) Without downplaying the importance of those migrants to New York from elsewhere in the United States, the most striking number among the newcomers is the largest, the immigrants from other countries. The remarkable influx of immigrants to the city actually, at one point in the early 1980's, resulted in a net gain in the city's population, which runs contrary to the conven-

tional wisdom regarding American cities and population growth. (21. Winnick 1990) This is evidenced by the 2,082,000 foreign-born residents of the city identified in the 1990 Census. This number represents 28.2% of the population and it is the highest number of foreign-born residents living in the city since 1940. (30. NYC Planning Commission 1992)

These newcomers have significantly changed the "ambience" of many areas within New York and the impact of immigrant populations on old neighborhoods has been noted by scholars and journalists alike. One, for example, has noted that in "... Crown Heights and East Flatbush, American candy stores have given way to Jamaican restaurants, Puerto Rican bodegas and Trinidadian roti shops. In Cambria Heights and Laurelton, the manicured lawns and newly painted homes proclaim the presence of the Caribbean bourgeoisie. On Boston and Gun Hill Roads, the record stores belt out the pulsating rhythms of the soca... and the lilting rhythms of reggae." (21. Basch 1987) These multi-sensory descriptions of street scenes are not exclusive to New York either. From Lowell, Massachusetts we hear that "(a)cross from a small, grassy park dedicated to Greek and Irish immigrants, Joe Cogliano, whose grandparents were Italian, sells mangos to Hispanic customers from the back of his truck. Children play tag while chattering in Spanish on O'Brien Terrace, part of a housing project built in 1939 for Irish laborers. The pungent odor of Vietnamese fish sauce fills a Southeast Asian restaurant where Giavis' Greek grocery once thrived for more than 70 years." (22. Blackman 1993)

Why is this process important? The first reason is that these immigration figures, while dependent on specific political, economic and socio-cultural events around the world, represent a trend that will potentially continue into the next century. It has been noted that if current patterns continue, by the year 2025, fifty million people will have been added to the nation's population by immigration alone, after 1985. (28. Lamm & Imhoff 1985) Such an influx will lead to an increasingly diverse population that will accordingly have different requirements and standards for the environment.

The continuation of this influx may not seem evident since the most recent numbers represent peaks not seen since early in the century, however, a quick review of the history of the country's immigration policies effectively explains the early to mid-century reduction of the number of immigrants to the United States and the recent reversal of this trend. From the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 until the massive revisions of enacted by the Hart-Celler Act in 1965, the United States' policies towards immigrants were, in general, made progressively more restrictive. This is particularly true with regard to Asian immigrants, who were essentially banned from the nation for those 83 years. (21. Winnick 1990; 30. NYC Planning Commission 1992)

Since the Hart-Celler Act of 1965 immigration to this country has steadily grown and has in fact, vastly exceeded the projections that accompanied the Act. From the initial forecasts of 290,000 annual immigrants to the United States that the Act is based upon, the number of

legal immigrants rose to 400,000 by 1974 through provisions made in the Act for refugees. Then, with the addition of 300,000 illegal immigrants, the annual totals rose to 940,000 by 1978, a number that has been at least, sustained ever since. (21. Winnick 1990) Aside from the volume of immigrants indicated here, another profound change occurred as a result of Hart-Celler. This was in the place of origin of the migrants. Prior to 1965, over one half of the immigrants to the U.S. were born in Europe and another 31% were born in Canada or Mexico. By 1980 though, Asians made up 46% of the total annual immigrants to the country, a rise from 6% in the 1950's. (30. NYC Planning Commission 1992) In 1992, people from Latin America and the Caribbean made up 44% of the annual immigrants. (28. Time 1993) This change is vividly displayed in New York through the top ten countries of origin for immigrants to the city between 1982-1989. They are: the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, China, Guyana, Haiti, Columbia, Korea, India, Ecuador, the Philippines, Trinidad & Tobago and the former Soviet Union. (30. NYC Planning Commission 1992)

The second reason why this is important is the effect of these population flows on the demographics of the nation's urban neighborhoods. As the anecdotes in the beginning of this section depicted, throughout the nation many of these immigrants are succeeding other ethnic groups as the residents of urban neighborhoods. Most remarkably, the influx of foreign-born people into cities has resulted in the number of foreign-born residents of several cities exceeding one-half of the popula-

tion. These cities include Miami, FL (60% foreign-born), Huntington Park, CA (59%), Union City, NJ (55%) and Santa Anna, CA (51%). (28. Time 1993) Aside from the cities such as these that are close to common ports-of-entry, many immigrants have pursued employment opportunities that have led to such "heartland" areas as Garden City, Kansas in which "(a)t least 20% of the town is now foreign born . . ." (22. Sontag 1993)

As the beginning of this chapter alluded to, sequent occupancy long been a topic of study in the social sciences and the Chicago School of Sociology, in developing a program of systematic urban research in the 1920's and thirties, incorporated it as a fundamental tenet of their conception of human ecology. In noting the fact that environmental "... succession has been so conspicuous a phenomenon . . ." historically in Chicago, Paul Cressey (39. 1938) identified a process of succession in both immigrant and "American" neighborhoods.

Patterned after the cyclical nature of a biological-ecological model, this process of succession involved stages of: invasion, conflict, recession and reorganization. To briefly summarize the process, the first stage involves the introduction of a new element into an established setting in either minute or overwhelming numbers. Then, depending on the degree of dissimilarity between the newcomer and the established tenant, this act could instigate some degree of tension and conflict, as further newcomers are introduced. Then the newcomer supplants the previous occupant as the majority occupant, which is followed by a period of reorganization of the

newly established group's lifestyle to accommodate the new situation, environs and opportunities.

In the light of this seemingly workable model of sequent occupancy and the abundance of data regarding recent trends in immigration, an argument could be made for the necessity of urban design to accommodate the environmental requirements of our increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse population. Fundamental to this argument would be the design of urban neighborhood architecture that is "open-ended," and based on the assumption of synchronic change, of sequent occupancy and of diachronic variability.

### Cultural Landscapes

The depictions of the street scenes in New York City and Lowell, MA used in the previous section are descriptions of cultural landscapes recently created by immigrant populations in neighborhoods that already existed prior to their arrival. It has been argued (39. Rapoport 1992) that cultural landscapes ought, in fact, to be the basis of environmental design research. Following this logic, the creation of an identifiable cultural landscape could be seen as the nexus between a sociological model of sequent occupancy and the built environment, or "design." In accord with this view, this thesis project is founded on the analysis of change in these cultural landscapes in order to develop of a model of "urban frameworks" for application in design. To accomplish these ends, we must first precisely define "cultural landscape."

The simplest definition of a cultural landscape is that it is the product of the interaction of humans and the physical environment. This rather broad definition can be made increasingly specific and hence, useful to design by considering that "(i)f all landscapes are at the very least modified through human action, are lived in and have meaning, this makes them cultural, since culture defines all human beings, while at the same time dividing them into groups." (39. Rapoport 1992) Through this clarification, we can begin to see that if the actors in this process are themselves divided into distinct cultural groups, it is likely that the landscapes that they are creating are as readily identifiable as their "designers." If this is so, the question then becomes, how are these environments made to be identifiable and how can we perceive this organization?

Rapoport (39. 1992) argues that cultural landscapes are created over a long period of time and they involve decisions made by innumerable numbers of people. These decisions, he continues, adhere to a system of informal or formally codified rules which are related to shared images of idealized environments. Through adherence to these systems of rules, the decisions made by independent actors all have a coherence with one another and they begin, over time, to cumulatively create an environment that is, as nearly as possible, congruent with an idealized vision shared by that cultural group. Conversely, if the individuals, in making their respective decisions, are not adhering to a shared system of rules, the resulting landscape will not have a coherence that would identify it as an artifact of any one cultural group.

This last situation is analogous to the heterogeneity of many contemporary environments in the industrialized world which could lead to conflicting decisions and result in tension. These conflicts are often resolved by the imposition of formalized rule systems (which nonetheless, enforces someone's idealized image of the landscape) that the individuals must adhere to. (39. Rapoport 1992)

To further identify the cultural landscape as a concept, we need to identify the intent of the decisions being made regarding the landscape. These decisions can be seen as largely regarding the creation of a "system of settings" that support "systems of activities." (39. Rapoport 1977 & 1992) These two systems, and the relationship of the environment to behavior, can be observed through the use of the concept of the behavior setting, which can be described as "... a standing (or recurring) pattern of behavior and a milieu (a physical pattern), which act as a unit for a period of time." (39. Lang 1994)

Behavior settings, as components of cultural landscapes, are derived from the organization of space, time, communication and meaning (39. Rapoport 1977; 1982a, 1990; 1992) and the organization of space can also be further defined as the organization of fixed, semi-fixed, and non-fixed features (the latter of which are deemed "informal" in Hall's work). (39. Rapoport 1977; 39. Hall 1966) The decisions made in creating these behavior settings intend (consciously or not) to communicate information to the occupants through cues embedded in these fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed features in the

environment. Through the ability to recognize these culturally-specific cues, "... a set of expectations about what will happen next in a well-understood situation..." (39. Schank 1990) might be recalled from memory which enables a person to comprehend the actions of others in the setting, to understand their own role in the setting, and to identify actions considered appropriate in the context. It should be noted though that behavior settings generally only facilitate or inhibit behavior through these cues. In some instances however, the environment has been configured to make some desired behavior virtually impossible. (39. Rapoport 1977; Gehl 1987)

To consider the culturally-specific cues incorporated into behavior settings in context with the decisions being made in the creation of the cultural landscape, it becomes apparent that consistency in interpretation is related to the issue of shared rule systems. The more consistent that the decisions made by the population are in creating the cultural landscape, the more consistent the behaviors that the environment will elicit from the users of the environment from that same group. This leads to another important concept in considering immigrant populations in a heterogeneous society like the United States. Succinctly stated, this concept suggests that "... when there is no interference, a clustering process tends to occur in cities based upon perceived homogeneity, differing interpretations of environmental quality, lifestyles, symbol systems and defenses against overload and stress." (39. Rapoport 1977) This tendency can clearly be related to the discussion above and it can also be considered a function of the perceived "cognitive dis-

tance" between groups sharing the environment.

Through this tendency to cluster, in a contemporary American city, several cultural landscapes could be expected to exist within close proximity to one another. As demonstrated in the previous section, these cultural landscapes are often created in environments that were "inherited" from groups that relinquished control over them and accordingly, the fixed features comprising these landscapes are quite often also "handed-down." The predetermined structure of the fixed-features requires that the new occupants rely more heavily on semi-fixed and non-fixed features to provide the cues discussed above. (39. Rapoport 1982a, 1990) This observation will become important as we move to discuss the concept of "frameworks" in the next section.

### Frameworks

Frameworks can be conceived of quite simply as structures designed to act as "supports" for change to occur within (describing the relation of "support" to "infil," in N. J. Habraken's terms) and they can be conceived of as being physical frameworks and legal frameworks. Before addressing these distinctions, one question that might be posed in considering frameworks is: why design to accommodate change? In considering this question, Rapoport (23. 1990-1991) presents an array of variables, which may be present in situations requiring a change in the use or configuration of the environment. These variables are Instrumental, involving new technologies, new

functions, new standards and new uses of space; Expressive/Latent, involving personalization and meaning; Social, involving interpersonal relationships; Cultural, involving intra-group communication via shared symbol systems, world views, lifestyles, activity systems, etc.; Demographic, involving variations in groups of people including family units, and also such factors as age, ethnicity, race, health, and economic status; and Economic, involving income and availability of resources.

So far, a case has been presented that argues that sequent occupancy by distinct cultural groups is a rationale to consider in designing for change. This argument can be substantiated and further developed through consideration of these six variables. Through the discussion of cultural landscapes in the last section, the importance of the Cultural, Expressive/Latent, and to some extent, the Demographic and Social, variables have been introduced. Through this notion of sequent occupancy, or environmental succession, the argument has thus far considered a need for frameworks to respond to diachronic variability, change over time. This perspective permits the evaluation of the creation, or modification, of cultural landscapes within the same environment.

The aforementioned variables also indicate that other scenarios are possible that need to be considered. As Rapoport (23. 1990-1991; 39. 1992) has pointed out, populations are becoming increasingly more diverse and there is increasing variability even within distinct groups. Among the issues that can arise, considering this information, are generational differences, involving differen-

tial degrees of acculturation, education, aging, health, lifestyle, economic status, etc., as well as culture change, fashion, household constitution, and occupation. While these can be observed diachronically as well, they indicate that there is potential for synchronic variability (diversity) in the environment too. In an immigrant population, local services might, for example, be required by a less acculturated portion of the group, while the more acculturated portion might have a greater "home range" within which they can satisfy their needs, leading to potential modifications in the local retail mix or use of space. (Conversely, assimilated people may return to the area for ethnic goods not available elsewhere.)

The potential for these two degrees of variability in an environment, considered as change (diachronic variability) and diversity (synchronic variability), indicate a need for designs that are "flexible" or "open-ended." Through the accommodation of variability, the environment can be seen as more supportive of its occupants' environmental preferences and needs, and thusly more likely to avoid environmental obsolescence. (23. Rapoport 1990-1991) The occupants' preferences have been conceptualized as an "environmental quality profile" with which the environment is evaluated. The more congruent the environment is with this profile, the more highly it will be esteemed by the users and the more successful it will be in terms of supporting their lifestyle. (39. Rapoport 1977) If the environment is not congruent with the profile, Rapoport (39. 1977; 23. 1990-1991) suggests that one of several things might occur: the people might leave the environment, they might modify their lifestyle,

change their expectations, become resigned to the incongruity, or they might modify the use or the physical structure of the environment to achieve congruence. (39. Rapoport 1990-1991) In seeking to achieve this congruence, the rule systems discussed in the previous section play a significant role and accordingly, the latent aspects (e.g., meaning) of the environment are just as important, if not more so, as the manifest aspects. (39. Rapoport 1977; 39. 1982a/1990; 23. 1990-1991)

In the discussion above, we have been considering synchronic and diachronic variability, as effected by a single occupant group or through the process of sequent occupancy, that is facilitated or inhibited by the environment. This quality of the environment has been identified by several terms, but this paper will use "open-endedness" as the overarching concept. Open-endedness has been defined as "... the overall capacity to accommodate a wide range of user needs and wants, at one time or over time . . ." and this concept encompasses two strategies: adaptability and flexibility. (23. Rapoport 1990-1991)

Adaptability, in this conception, can also be characterized by the terms "loose-fit" (23. Rapoport 1990-1991) or "breathing room" (27. Vernez Moudon 1986a). Its application in design, as the terms suggest, is a means of providing environments that, without the need for reconfiguration, facilitate an array of differing (and potentially unforeseen) uses. The Victorian house (23. Moudon 1986a; 24. Rapoport 1968; 23. Rapoport 1990-1991) or the Georgian terrace, (24. Cowan 1963) are of-

ten provided as examples of building types that are adaptable. Through the generous allocation of space, the independent circulation system, fenestration in most significant rooms, the ability of adjacent spaces to "overspill" into one another, and the use of simple room geometries, these buildings' interiors have often accommodated a great variety of occupants over their history. Some houses, through the "anonymity" of the rooms within, have been converted from single family occupancy to apartment units, and often back to single family occupancy, while others have been converted to retail and office uses. (24. Rapoport 1968; 27. Vernez Moudon 1986a) The 19th Century rowhouse in New York City is another example of a building type that has served equally well in single family, multi-family or commercial use.

Flexibility, on the other hand, is characterized by the ability of the environment to be physically reconfigured/modified. This ability enables the environment to be incrementally changed to suit new conditions. In typical design proposals, flexibility is manifest in moveable partitions. Habraken (27. 1988) describes a more vernacular example through a discussion of the development of the component-based, wood-frame, residential construction industry in the United States. This vernacular construction system easily accommodates a tendency to "do-it-yourself" and a manifestation of flexibility within this system can be seen in the ability to add dormers in the unfinished attic of the original Levittown Cape Cod houses, which provide new, upstairs rooms and personalizes the exterior. Another example is provided by a study of wood-frame, "manufactured" housing con-

structed at Indian Head, Maryland during World War II. The study found that common modifications of these detached dwellings included the addition of "... picture windows, shutters ... carports and fireplaces. The majority of residents also made major changes by adding space to the dwelling." (24. Rabinowitz & Stanek 1970) Both of these examples return to the issue of latent and manifest aspects of the environment and it should be reiterated that both need to be accommodated through "open-endedness."

Building upon the findings of studies of open-ended residential buildings, Cynthia Doll (24. 1987) developed a matrix of 78 criteria that could be used to assess multi-family housing proposals for their potential flexibility and adaptability. These criteria consider a range of functional and expressive requirements and were used to evaluate nine different design schemes that were represented as being open-ended.

While most of the work presented so far has been drawn from housing – the majority of the work on "open-endedness" has been focused primarily on housing – Francis Duffy (23. Brand 1994) has developed a model around differential rates of change applicable to commercial buildings. The model has four categories: Shell, Services, Scenery and Set. The shell is comprised of the long-lived structure of the building; the services are the utilities; the scenery is the partitions and ceilings, and the set, the furniture. Stewart Brand (23. 1994) has elaborated on these, and moved away from Duffy's exclusive focus on commercial interiors, to develop a six-level

model, comprised of: Site, Structure, Skin, Services, Space Plan, and Stuff. Called "shearing layers of change," the elements on each of the six-levels, due to their differing rates of obsolescence, replacement and change, result in a building that is continuously "... tearing itself apart."

At the largest scale that he has identified, Brand argues that the "Site is eternal" and by this he means that elements of the environment falling in his first category, like lots, tend to "... outlast generations of ephemeral buildings." This implies a rigidity though that would appear to be more true of larger scale elements than lots (e.g., streets, blocks or districts). Lots, particularly those situated near corners, tend to vary considerably over time and often to accommodate new buildings. (see: 27. Groth 1981; 27. Moudon 1986a & 1986b; or Chapter Three of this study). His next category, Structure, is exactly what it claims to be, the load-bearing portions of the building. Structure he argues, *is* the building, as a result of its tendency to remain consistent throughout the life-cycle of the building in contrast to the other elements. Skin, the exterior surface of the building, tends to change approximately every twenty-years in response to fashion, technology or wear. Services, the utilities, last only 7 to 15 years and he states that many buildings are demolished if their services are too difficult to change. The life-span of a building's Space Plan (walls, doors, ceilings ...) varies from 3 years on average for a commercial interior, to 30 for some homes. His final category, Stuff, is comprised of semi-fixed features like furniture, and they can change on a daily basis.

All of these together require "an adaptive" (flexible in this project's terminology) building that "... has to allow slippage between the differently-paced systems..." Interestingly, he states that standard stud-wall construction "over-connects" these six-levels which restricts their ability to change. The two examples cited above, Habraken's observation and Moudon's study (27. 1986a) seem to indicate exactly the opposite.

Urban-scale research has been limited largely to Moudon's 1986(a) study, *Built for Change* and some of N.J. Habraken's work (e.g., *Transformations of the Site*, 1988, 3rd ed.) Other works have focused on the street grid as a framework that provides the structure for open-endedness at smaller scales. (27. Groth, 1981; 26. Marshall, n.d.) Groth does move to a finer scale in discussing lots as "infill" in the framework and he touches upon their variability and the implications of differential lot size in bringing "variety" to the streetscape, as well as influencing the location of structures and alleyways. Moudon (27. 1986a, 1986b) has made similar observations that will be discussed later.

Transportation infrastructure as the framework for a variable infill was also a fundamental consideration in the design of the English New Town of Milton Keynes. Rejecting the concept of a "neighborhood unit" as a fundamental component of urban design, the new town was to be "... a field of possibilities ..." without the predetermined focal points and imagery, or the classified land use typical of other urban plans. (27. Brett 1994) Based on the idea that if "... there is to be

freedom of choice, there must be freedom of movement ..." (27. Llewellyn-Davies 1972) a grid of roadways was established, with intersections roughly one-kilometer apart (approx. 2/3 of a mile) to act as the neutral framework for adaptable infill development. The framework concept was not carried below the grand scale of the one-kilometer grid though, and this unfortunately presents limited opportunity for insights at scales below the "district" level.

Rapoport (39. 1977) suggests that in looking at open-endedness and frameworks, with regard to scale, that in an urban environment larger scale elements require more consistency and that as the scale of the elements decreases the need for variability/open-endedness increases. Accordingly, the larger scale elements become the static framework for the finer-scale "infill." This would permit the city as a whole to be comprehensible to the entire population while also supporting increasingly idiosyncratic preferences/needs of the subgroups present at smaller scales. Elsewhere, Rapoport (23. 1990-1991) proposes a hierarchy of elements arranged in terms of decreasing scale that may provide conceptual clarity in looking at open-endedness in the city. These elements range from: Settlement; Neighborhood; Micro-Neighborhood; Subsystem of Neighborhood; Block, Dwelling Cluster, Dwelling, Subsystems of Dwellings, Room, and Smaller than Room.

Anne Vernez Moudon (27. 1986a, pg. 89-90) has proposed a similar model for the "neighborhood architecture" of San Francisco consisting of: Peninsula, Roads

and Streets; City Blocks (& Lots); Buildings; and Rooms. (The “smaller than room” category is recognized but considered outside of the scope of the project.) In seeking to disclose open-endedness across the range of scales, the study pays particular attention to environmental resilience and “breathing space” (synonymous with adaptability, and the term I will continue to use.) Features identified at the larger scales (with overlap at the build-

In regard to the issues of personalization and flexibility, the study concludes that “remodelling is . . . a necessary act of appropriation . . .” and that these actions are somewhat independent (“infill”) of the larger scale elements defining the street which are more dependant on “...facade rhythms, including building bulk, fenestration and recurrence of entries, than on detailing . . .” Also in developing conclusions regarding the study, Vernez Moudon recommends that future urban scale designs consider a “ . . . simple, straight-forward and easily legible urban framework . . . ” with small lots, which she argues, ensure variety by focusing control at a smaller-scale, which in turn prevents rapid, large-scale change. (27. Moudon, 1986a)

N. J. Habraken (27. 1988) also has developed a hierarchical classification which he presents in a table, (pg. 97) in order of decreasing scale. (see Figure 1-1)

The table is structured to present a list of components, or to use his term, “elements,” of the urban environment in column A. These components comprise the environmental features presented to the right, in column B, and these features, in turn, define the spaces listed in column C. The relationship that he is describing here is developed from his belief that the components listed in column A describe spaces and that environments accordingly transform by the manipulation of such components. This then leads to a fairly elaborate discussion of the interrelationship of power/control over the various components comprising the environment and how the influence travels along the con-

	A	B	C
Level	Nominal Class	Configuration Mode	Space Within
1	Major Arteries	City Structure	
2	Roads	District	Block
3	Building Elements	Building	Built Space
4	Partitions	Floorplan	Room
5	Furniture	Interior Arrangement	Place
6	Body & Utensils	-	-

ing scale) that provide for adaptability are generous street widths, small lots, sideyards, front setbacks, recesses in the buildings, and backyards. Flexibility is found in elements such as building bases, basements, attics and roofs, in addition to finishes, entries, fenestration, and awnings. (Many of Moudon’s findings regarding the interior of the Victorian buildings have already been introduced above.)

**Figure 1-1 -- Habraken's Model**

tinuum of adjacent scales. Also of note is his consideration of "Understanding." This is an influence that transcends the relations established by adjacency in the model and is represented by "shared values."

### **The Legal Framework: The Role of Formalized Rule Systems**

As the previous section indicated, formal rule systems can also be considered in terms of frameworks and a survey of works that have studied the effect of formal rule systems on the environment has disclosed a small body of work of wide ranging geographic focus. The researchers/architects that have focused attention on the legal framework with regard to open-endedness and/or influence on the cultural landscape, include: Anne Vernez Moudon (27. 1986a), Jorge Rigau (38. 1992), Jonathan Barnett (38. 1981 & 1974), Richard Plunz (35. 1990 & 38. 1993), Besim Hakim (38. 1994 & 1988) Norman Williams, Jr., Edmund Kellog & Peter Lavigne (38. 1987) and Robert Greenstreet (38. 1991).

These formal rule systems are of considerable import in the contemporary design process and can be set within a similar context of "support" and "infill" conceptually. (38. Rapoport 1977 & 1992, verbal communication) Historically, these formal rule systems tended to be implemented as the informal systems began to fail in the face of increasing social, cultural, demographic and technological change. As the populations of settlements became increasingly diverse and new territories were made

available for settlement, codes and regulations regarding the construction and maintenance of the physical environment became accepted as fundamental to the ability to accommodate and guide change. (38. Haar & Wolf 1989; 38. Rigau 1992; 39. Rapoport 1977)

Outgrowths of this philosophy important to this discussion include: zoning ordinances, master plans, special districts, historic districts, design guidelines, building codes, housing ordinances, fire codes, sign ordinances and even peddling and parking regulations. The relation of each of these to change can be seen as analogous to "supports" considering that they often proscribe change, or constrain it to conform to a particular model. The former is supported by the following statement that initially zoning "... simply had to reinforce existing land use patterns, not predict future ones." (38. Kelly 1988) However, in response to the initial inability of zoning ordinances to effect more specific, and localized, control over change, an array of "special techniques" was developed. Among these techniques were special districts, which are "...overlay districts, superimposed on one or more existing zoning districts... that can be tailored to fit the needs of specific districts, providing flexibility to control specific aspects of uses..." (38. Shirvani 1985) These districts have been extensively enacted and New York City had established by 1984, 44 historic districts that contained over 16,000 buildings, (38. Haar & Wolf 1989) and 38 more general special districts, one of which was later removed. (38. Shirvani 1985; Marcus 1993) These districts, which endeavor to preserve environments considered of special historical, cultural or architectural

significance obviously have considerable impact on change and the creation of new cultural landscapes (see: 38. Williams, Kellog & Lavigne 1987 or: Essex County Council 1973).

The “conservative” nature of these districts is of great significance in the creation of an environment that accommodates change. If used injudiciously, they can unwittingly become political weapons in the “conflict” between the “invading” and the “receding” populations (in terms drawn from Cressey’s (39. 1938) model). For example, during a public session of the NYC Board of Estimate, addressing the creation of the Little Italy Special District to protect the character of the rapidly disappearing Little Italy before the encroaching Chinatown, one Chinese spokesman stated, “How can you propose what no longer exists?” (19. Solochek 1977) Of course, many issues factor into such designations, including the city’s desire to establish “ethnic festival marketplaces” to attract tourists downtown (see: 5. Margulis 1992) and, in the Little Italy case, the strong identification of an assimilated population with the neighborhood.

These frameworks have also been effected to create new cultural landscapes, and codes and regulations are, in fact, the foundation of the Neo-traditional planning movement as practiced by the firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) (Rigau (38. 1992) also presents a historical view of the role of codes in the creation of cultural landscapes in Puerto Rico). DPZ’s standard town-planning practice is to develop a clearly articulated, and concise set of codes that include: the Regulating Plan, which

defines streets, lots, open spaces, and public buildings; the Urban Regulations, which define building uses, placement (e.g. setbacks, required frontage & max. footprint) on the lot, height, outbuildings and required parking and its placement; the Architectural Regulations, which regulate materials, configurations and construction techniques; the Street Types, which provides dimensions for the street sections including travel and parking lanes, sidewalks, planting locations and building heights; and Landscape Regulations, which specify appropriate species and location of plantings. (40. Krieger & Lennertz 1991) Architect Peter Calthorpe has also developed a set of guidelines for “transit-oriented” communities that share much in common with the work of DPZ. (40. Calthorpe 1993)

DPZ’s model of the “city,” comprised of the “development,” streets and open spaces, blocks, lots and buildings, is quite similar to Moudon’s, presented in the previous section, and its major structural difference is that it stops short of the scales finer than the building scale (more specifically, it doesn’t address the interiors of the buildings.) It is of course, philosophically opposed to the other models in the degree of the “supports” that it imposes, which include components of the environment that are significant to the expression of latent aspects of cultural landscapes. It shares this in common with many special districts that often restrain the location of entries, window placement, window size, materials, colors, signage, setbacks, etc. The aforementioned work by Williams, Kellog and Lavigne (38. 1987) entitled *Vermont Townscape*, discusses similar controls that have been

applied in Woodstock and Wilmington, Vermont. These controls constrain height, setback, elevational proportions, solid/void relationships, materials, signage, colors, “architectural features,” orientation, roof shape and landscape features.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has endeavored to lay the groundwork for the case study presented in the following chapters. This groundwork is based upon the three concepts of: sequent occupancy, cultural landscapes and physical and legal frameworks. As the case study is introduced in the following chapter, these concepts will become increasingly intertwined in the discussion and a model of urban frameworks specific to this project will emerge. To set this process in motion, the next chapter begins with a broad discussion of the study’s historical, social and environmental context on the Lower East Side of New York City.

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## ***A BRIEF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY***

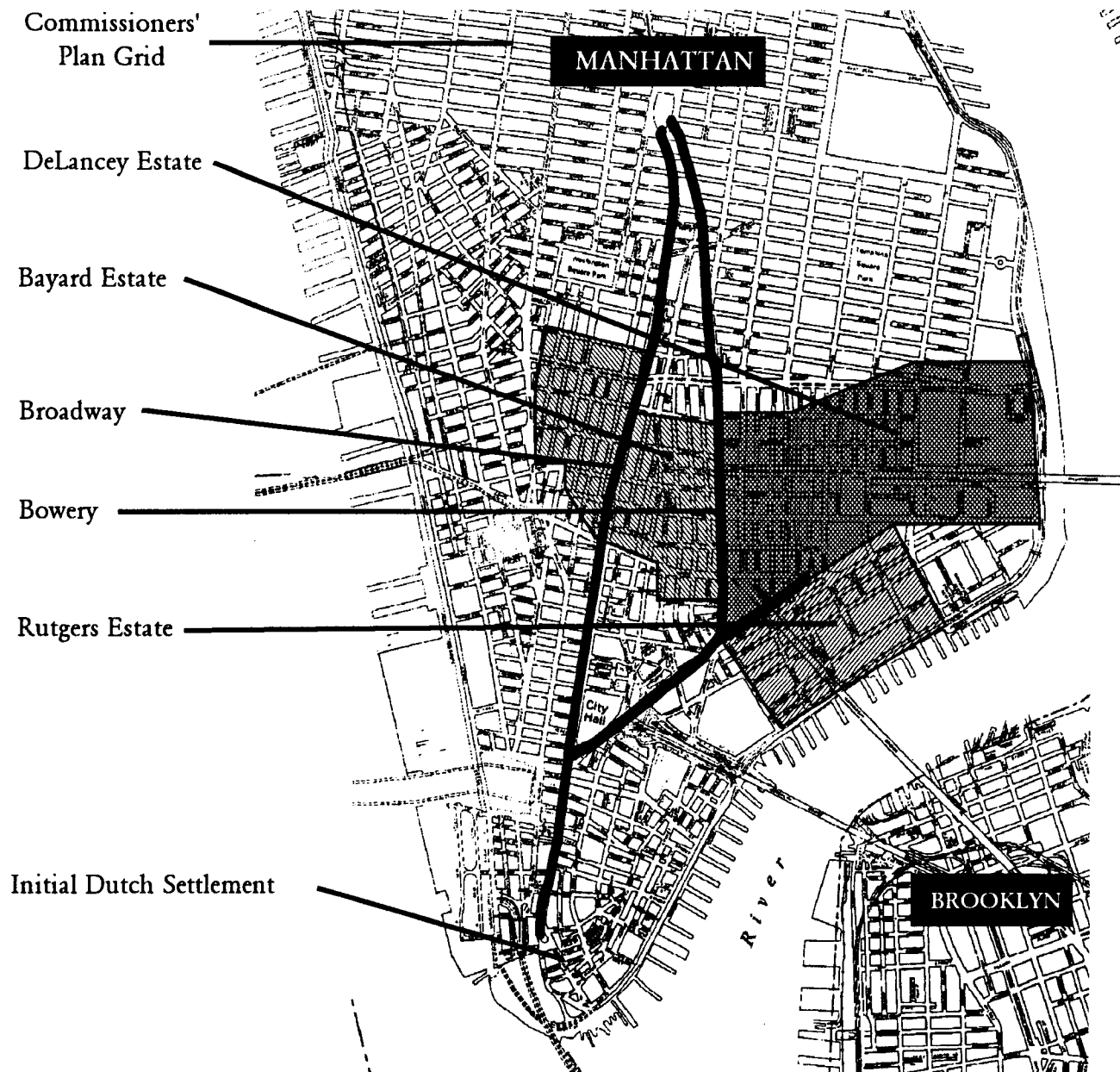
This chapter has two goals. The first is to act as a transition into the following two chapters which focus on a small portion of the urban environment and the second is to provide information on a scale that will not be addressed, due to time constraints, in those chapters. Reaching the first goal involves providing historical and environmental context for the case study. This context is vitally important in a study dealing with sequent occupancy on an urban scale. The second goal is related to the first in that it will provide insights at the District level, the scale on which neighborhood dynamics occur and the next logical extension of the research.

With that last statement in mind, it should be noted that this chapter does not provide a comprehensive history of either the social or environmental dynamics of the study area. What it does provide is a record of relevant evidence found during the project regarding the creation of urban cultural landscapes in the area over time. As such, it addresses many of the same issues of fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed features broadly introduced in the previous chapter and more rigorously analyzed, at a finer scale, in the next chapter. By providing this large-scale context, this chapter also helps to answer many questions that would otherwise have no apparent resolution at the finer scales.

### **The Study Area**

The larger context of the study area will be known as “The Lower East Side” for the purposes of this project. This is somewhat different than the name is used currently in New York, but it has some relation to the historical development of the city. The Lower East Side will be considered here as being comprised largely of land that made up three colonial estates (see Figure 2-1). As this chapter will discuss, these estates were once owned by the Bayard, DeLancey and Rutgers families, and the relevant lands lie east of Broadway.

As noted above, this chapter will move progressively toward discussing smaller portions of the city, until two blocks (“face blocks”) are singled out. Figure 2-2 is a diagram of that progression, showing the same cropped image of lower Manhattan and Brooklyn as Figure 2-1, with an “exploded” view of the southeast corner of the Bayard estate (with some other relevant land south of Bayard Street). Then the two case study blocks are indicated by the footprints of the buildings that currently occupy them.



*Figure 2-1 -- The Approximate Borders of  
Three Colonial Estates*  
(Plan from: NYC Dept. of City Planning Sectional Maps)

## **A Brief Environmental & Social History of the Lower East Side**

Documentation regarding land use in the Lower East Side dates at least to the mid-17th Century when Manhattan was still under Dutch control. The off-site Dutch West India Company bureaucratic structure had developed an explicit, but not quite site specific, plan for the outlying, exurban areas of the city. The local officials endeavored to implement the plan as best they could, considering that the topography deviated from the assumed regularity underlying the plan. What was implemented was a series of 12 farms, which had either 55 or 80 rods of frontage, on either side of a public thoroughfare that led away, northward, from the heart of the settlement at the tip of the island. (33. Stokes 1916) Farm, by the way, in the Dutch language, reportedly translates as “bouwerie,” and part of the environmental legacy of this era is that the thoroughfare later assumed the logical name of the Bowery.

These farms were intended to be held in separate ownership and they were relatively distant from the built up portion of the city in the 1600's, lying a mile and a half from the fort. (32. Blackmar 1989) After the English assumed control in 1664, the city breached its old defensive wall and began to expand, in a piecemeal fashion, along the East River towards the bouweries. (33. Reps 1965) In the late 17th century, as this gradual expansion was occurring, the original bouweries and land grants began to be consolidated by several powerful families into a few large, country estates. (32. Blackmar 1989)

These estates grew to considerable size, and those held by the Bayard, Rutgers and DeLancey families were estimated to contain 200, 108 and 300 acres, respectively. (32. Blackmar 1989; 33. Stokes 1916) The boundaries between the estates were apparently somewhat indeterminate in the beginning, particularly between the Rutgers and DeLancey estates which both fell on the east side of the Bowery and extended to the river. Bayard's estate lay to the west of the street and extended well beyond Broadway's current right-of-way. (33. Stokes 1916)

The indeterminacy of the property boundaries was not to last. The Bowery was, in the 1700's, the High Road to Boston, which no doubt, attracted a degree of potential revenue generating traffic. Additionally, in the thirty years between 1730 and 1760, “. . . the volume of shipping doubled and the town's population grew to 20,000.” (32. Blackmar 1989) This prosperity created a demand for additional land to build upon (33. Reps 1965) and the aforementioned country estates were well situated to capitalize on the prospect.

Apparently seizing the opportunity, “. . . Hendrick Rutgers, who had a portion of his farm laid out in streets and lots . . . in 1765, agreed with James DeLancey on a boundary line between their farms, running along Division and Little Division (now Montgomery) Streets.” (33. Stokes 1916) Nicholas Bayard also recognized the development potential of his property having, in 1752, laid out the southern portion of his estate, “. . . the part of the farm east of Rhynders (Centre) Street, and south of the road to the mansion (Broome Street) over to the



**Figure 2-2 The Case Study Blocks in Context**  
 (Plan from: NYC Dept. of City Planning Sectional Maps)

Bowery Road . . .,” in lots. (33. Stokes 1916)

The subdivisions on both the Bayard and DeLancey estates were platted by Francis Maersch and in contrast to the largely irregular blocks that typified the incremental growth of the city to the south, these new subdivisions were comprised of rectangular blocks. (see The Ratzen Plan - Figure 2-3) (33. Reys 1965) The simple rectangular geometry of the blocks, which displayed little regard for topographical features like Mount Pleasant at the future intersection of Grand and Baxter Streets, still displayed some irregularity in response to issues such as the estate's boundaries. As has been noted for the cities of Chicago and Leeds, England, “(t)he urban plan was not simply imposed on the preexisting rural landscape by an arbitrary subdivision of this landscape into building units . . . (The) land holdings of the rural landscape acted as a framework within which . . . the subsequent building activity had to be adjusted.” (26. Ward 1962) The most significant adjustment evident on the Bayard estate is the slight bend in a number of blocks to respond to a similarly bent estate boundary on the Bowery. This bend, in effect, kept the newly platted approximately north-south streets parallel to the adjacent Bowery.

However, most of the blocks are rectangular, and this geometry was apparently selected for the same pragmatic values that influenced the Commissioners' Plan of 1811 to utilize a similar, but more elongated geometry. As the Commissioners argued, idiosyncratic block configurations, such as circles, ovals and stars, did offer some

benefits of variety, but at the expense of “. . . convenience and utility.” The regular blocks of the newly planned areas of the city would readily accommodate constructions that were “. . . principally composed of the habitations of men, and that straight-sided and right-angled houses are the most cheap and convenient to live in.” (32. Blackmar 1989)

Once subdivided, rather than being sold for a one-time only capital gain, the city's landowners typically leased lots for periods of fifteen to ninety-nine years. The leases were often for unimproved land and in improving the property the tenant was often constrained by restrictive covenant to particular choices in land use, siting and construction. For example, Henry Rutgers' leases specified that the tenant should construct a “...good, substantial and workmanlike brick building not less than two stories in height and not less than thirty-six feet in depth... so as to cover the whole front(age)...” At the expiration of the lease, any improvements were either to be removed from the property, or, if suitably constructed, the landlord would purchase the improvements from the tenant. (32. Blackmar 1989)

The Rutgers' estate had an apparent locational advantage though over Bayard's and DeLancey's, by virtue of being further south, closer to the port's advancing development and by its considerable frontage on the East River. Accordingly, the pace and quality of construction seem to have been more lax on the other estates. As depicted in a painting (Figure 2-4) executed from Mount Pitt in 1793, Rutgers' estate, in the background,



- Bayard Mansion
- Crest of Mount Pleasant
- Mott Street Case Study Face Block
- Approximate Location of Figure 2-5
- Partially Defined Mulberry Street Case Study Face Block
- Approximate Location of Figure 2-6
- Collect Pond

*Figure 2-3 A portion of the  
Ratzen Plan of 1767  
(Plan from: 33. Repts 1965)*

has an array of buildings located on the shore of the river while the foreground, the former DeLancey estate, is still largely unimproved. (The DeLancey estate was confiscated, and sold off in block-size increments, after the Revolution as a result of the family's loyalist sympathies. (32. Homberger 1994)) The pace of development can also be seen in a description penned by John Lambert, an English visitor to New York, in 1807:

upon, or consists only of unfinished streets and detached buildings. (33. Stokes 1916, p. 399)

Construction was occurring on the Bayard and DeLancey estates though, as depicted in a nearly contemporary painting (Figure 2-5) executed in 1810, showing a new, two-story wood-frame building being raised on Grand Street between two existing buildings. Another paint-



*(left) Figure 2-4 A View Across the Former DeLancey Estate - 1793*  
(Painting from: 33. Kouwenhoven 1953)



*(right) Figure 2-5 House Raising on Grand Street - 1810*  
(Painting from: 33. Kouwenhoven 1953)

The Broadway and the Bowery Road are the two finest avenues in the city . . . The Bowery Road commences from Chatham Street, which branches off from the Broadway to the right . . . After proceeding about a mile and a half it joins the Broadway and terminates the plan . . . for the enlargement of the city. Much of the intermediate space between these large streets, and from thence to the Hudson and East Rivers, is yet unbuilt

ing (Figure 2-6) executed in 1809, shows several houses and an African Methodist Meeting House on Elizabeth Street, between Canal and Hester Streets. Lying just west of Elizabeth Street, Mott and Mulberry Streets are shown by a contemporary street directory as having numbered houses extending just north of their intersections with Hester Street. Beyond that point, many houses also appear to have already existed. These buildings were unnumbered at the time and were listed "... in rotation as they follow in the street." (31. Elliot's 1812) Individual

unnumbered houses were not clearly identified, but if the density of occupancy was the same for these unnumbered houses as for the numbered houses, which had an average of just under three persons listed per house, the unnumbered houses on Mulberry Street would have included an additional 40 buildings. If these buildings occupied both sides of Mulberry Street, north of Hester Street, construction would appear to have moved at least one block further north, past Grand Street. (31. Elliot's 1812)

These buildings were indicative of the active transformation of the area's rural character at that time, and one individual recalled disdainfully, that in 1811, "(a)ll that was romantic in the scenery and prepossessing in the cultivated grounds immediately above Canal Street was... doomed. The city was on the march and every form of hill and dale and pleasant valley must be sacrificed." (33. Stokes 1916) One of the hills sacrificed was the one that crested at Grand and Baxter Streets, the fill from which was apparently used in the land-filling of the Collect Pond lying just to the south, a project proposed in 1802 but not completed until 1812. (33. Stokes 1916)

The significance of this land-filling could be interpreted as representing, not just a topographical transformation, but a social one as well, since the Collect had long been a focal point for noxious trades, including tanneries, slaughterhouses, breweries and ropewalks. In the wake of the earthwork, many buildings were erected on the Bayard and DeLancey estates. These buildings typically housed space for small shops or crafts-shops, and resi-

dences which were often occupied by mechanics and artisans employed on the docks and in the shipyards. (32. Blackmar 1989) The inevitable result of this advancing development is evidenced in a description of the area from 1828, which describes "(t)he section of the city east of the Bowery . . . (as being) . . . occupied by a dense population, principally inhabiting small, two-story, wooden or brick buildings." (33. Stokes 1916)

The Erie Canal had opened in 1825 and the city was booming. Three thousand new houses were built in the city, which was still contained largely, below 14th Street, but a housing shortage still existed. (32. Ellis 1966) The first of the many waves of immigration had begun to arrive and thousands of formerly rural Irish landed in New York, many of whom initially settled in

the area of southern Mulberry Street known as "The Bend." It is reported that so many people emigrated from Ireland that New York soon contained a larger Irish population than any other municipality outside of Dublin. (32. Ellis 1966) The rural Irish, many of whom were young, poor and without family ties in the new country, were scorned by many of the more established residents of the city and flight from the older neighborhoods, discrimination and even violence fostered the creation of an Irish ethnic enclave in the area. (32. Ellis 1966)



*Figure 2-5 -- Elizabeth Street between Canal and Hester - 1809*  
(Painting from: 33. Kouwenhoven 1953)

By 1851, many of the lots comprising the blocks of Bayard's original plat appear to have been "improved," as indicated by only ten of the 208 listed addresses on Mulberry Street being described as "vacant lot" in a contemporary street directory. (31. Doggett's 1851) In response to the increased demand for housing coming with the immigrant influx, many landowners had begun construct three and four-story tenements on the rear of many lots in the area, behind the existing two and three-story wood and brick buildings. In 1845, for example, 17 such buildings were constructed on Mulberry and Mott Streets. (32. Blackmar 1989) Jacob Riis, a pioneering 19th-century photo-journalist and social reformer, described the transformation of the area's building stock:

Washington had moved . . . far out of town . . . Now the old residents followed his example . . . Their comfortable dwellings in the once fashionable streets along the East River front fell into the hands of real estate agents and boarding-house keepers . . . '(I)n its beginning the tenant-house became a real blessing to that class of industrious poor whose small earnings limited their expenses, and whose employment in workshops, stores or about the warehouses and thoroughfares, render a near residence of much importance.' (Now) the old house suddenly became valuable... Their '*large* rooms were partitioned into *several smaller ones*, without regard to light or ventilation . . . and they soon became filled from cellar to garret with a class of tenantry living hand to mouth . . . (T)he old houses . . . were not intended to last . . . (s)till the pressure of the crowds did not abate, and in

the old garden . . . a rear house was built, generally of wood, two stories high at first. Presently it was carried up another story, and another. Where two families had lived ten moved in . . . (W)hat the rear house had left of the garden (became) a "court." (19. Riis 1890, pgs. 5-7)

The influx of Irish immigrants was reinforced, in the 1840's by the Potato Famine, but by this time they were also joined by German immigrants. Following the revolution in Germany of 1848-49, the Germans came to comprise the second largest group of foreign-born residents of the city after the Irish. (32. Ellis 1966) The Germans concentrated largely east of the Bowery, in an area that became known as Kleindeutschland or in a misinterpretation of Deutsche, as "Dutchtown." (32. Homberger 1994) Here, in addition to a significant commercial presence on Canal and Grand Streets, they established an expansive cultural network of beer halls, theaters, concert halls, cafes and restaurants. (15. Sanders 1969) The Germans also resided west of the Bowery as Riis notes the multi-ethnic atmosphere of the "Five Points" at the southern most extent of Mulberry Street.

However, the successor to the Irish community on the East Side was to wait until after a shift in the demographics of immigration into the nation occurred in the 1880's. Replacing the Northern Europeans, were Eastern European Jews fleeing the pogroms in the Russian Pale and Italians departing the turmoil left after the unification of the northern and southern portions of their homeland.

In 1880, the Italian-born population of New York was approximately 12,000. (32. Ellis 1966) Many of these early immigrants were from Northern Italy, however, in the ensuing 44 years most of their compatriots who would join them would be from Southern Italy. Growing from an initial base in the Bend, the Italian district gradually expanded northward to occupy a majority of the old Bayard estate replacing, north of Canal Street, the previous diverse Irish, Black and German Jewish population. This influx would comprise the largest immigration in the history of the United States, with the total number of Italian immigrants reaching an annual average of 616,000 people between the years of 1901 and 1914. (19. Gallo 1974)

Reformers, during this period, were appalled at the squalor of some of the housing conditions in the area, and the Tenement House Acts of 1867 and 1879 were passed as an attempt to counter "... the tenement house system - that plan by which the greatest amount of profit is sought to be realized from the least possible amount of space with little or no regard for the health, comfort or protection of the lives of the tenants . . ." The speaker continues to describe conditions similar to those described by Riis where "...many of these buildings were occupied on the first floor or two as shops . . . to the rear of such houses were other houses of the same kind that were not 'alley houses,' but had to be reached through the hallways of the fronting structures . . ." (35. Comer 1942) The new law was difficult to enforce though and in effect a compromise was reached by default in what became known as the "dumbbell" tenement building.

(35. Plunz 1990) The design of these dumbbell tenements was based upon a central stair with four, three-room "railroad" flats per floor, and they occupied a greater portion of the lot than the typical pre-law tenement building. (see Figures 4-2 and 4-3 on pgs. 83-84)

The housing accommodations were only part of the immigrants' environment though and it has been argued that the larger social and environmental context of Little Italy was quite supportive of the immigrants' lifestyles and ambitions. (19. Gabaccia 1984) Indications of this larger social context was noted by *The New York Times* in 1896, when they described the Italian enclave as something of a self-contained city. Little Italy provided "... all sorts of stores, boarding houses, grocery and fruit emporiums, tailors, shoemakers, wine merchants, musical stores, and toy and clay molders." (19. Mangione & Morreale 1992) Similarly, another observer noted that "... it was as if part of the old communities had been bodily transplanted to an American street. Signs and posters were in the Italian language, Italian tradesmen set up shop and peddlers sold food through the streets." (19. Gallo 1974)

Reformer Jacob Riis also looked outside of the tenements to provide a view of the daily, public activity in the Italian enclave in the 1890's, when the Italians were principally located south of Canal Street. Writing of the environs of southern Mulberry Street, he states that along:

...Bayard Street . . . Hebrew faces, Hebrew signs, and . . . chatter . . . attend the curious wanderer to

the very corner of Mulberry Street. But the moment he turns the corner the scene changes abruptly. Before him lies spread out what might better be the market-place in some town in Southern Italy than a street in New York – all but the houses; they are still the same old tenements of the unromantic type. But for once they do not make the foreground in a slum picture from the American metropolis. The interest centres not in them, but in the crowd they shelter only when the street is not preferable, and that . . . is only when it rains . . . When the sun shines the entire population seeks the street, carrying on its household work, its bargaining, its love-making, on street or sidewalk, or idling there . . . Along the curb women sit in rows . . . haggling over baskets of frowsy weeds, some sort of salad probably, stale tomatoes, and oranges not above suspicion. Ash-barrels serve them as counters, and not infrequently does the arrival of the official cart en route for the dump cause a temporary suspension of trade until the barrels have been emptied and restored. Hucksters' and peddlers' carts make two rows of booths in the street itself, and along the houses is still another – a perpetual market doing a very lively trade in its own queer staples, found nowhere on American ground save in the "Bend." (19. Riis 1890, pgs. 43-44)

While the scene apparently struck Riis as alien and peculiar, a southern Italian immigrant probably would have found it familiar. Describing everyday life in turn-of-

the-century Sicily, one immigrant said, "(i)n my country peoples (sic) cook out of doors . . . wash out of doors, eat out of doors, tailor out of doors, make macaroni out of doors . . . And we use the house only in the night time to . . . sleep." (19. Gabaccia 1984)

As the northward expansion of the Italian community continued from its base in The Bend, and consequent contraction of the Irish community continued, some inter-group hostility arose and for a period, Canal Street appears to have acted as the recognized border between the adjacent communities. This is described by a young Italian-American, who after recognizing an impending violent altercation between groups of young men from both communities, stated that ". . . I took to my heels and did not stop running until I reached Canal Street." (19. La Sorte 1985)

The Italian district soon expanded across the Canal Street border though, and its population subdivided itself into clusters based on the region or village that the immigrants left behind in Italy. These clusters soon became identified with the streets on which they located and in moving from street to street one could identify the subgroup by the dialect overhead in conversation there. (41. Mott St. Senior Center, personal communication 1994) Elaborate feasts (see Figures 3-10 on pg. 44 and 3-14 on pg. 49) for regional patron saints were held annually on the street dominated by immigrants from that locale. Moving east to west, in the early decades of the 20th century, along three adjacent blocks, one could find Sicilians on Elizabeth Street, Calabrians on Mott Street,

and Neapolitans on Mulberry Street. (41. Mott St. Senior Center personal communication; 19. Mangione & Morreale 1992; Gabaccia 1984; 38. Ramati 1981)

As the Italian community began to grow northward along the length of Mulberry Street, another group of immigrants was expanding into quarters just a block east of the Bend, in lower Mott Street, in the short length of Pell Street and in the intersecting, 90-degree curve described by Doyers Street. This group was of Chinese origin and the community was initially founded in 1844. (4. Pan 1994) The community, which was estimated to have 120 residents in the 1860 census (13. Zhou 1992) was largely comprised of rural Cantonese laborers who had moved east across the United States from points of entry on the west coast. By 1880, 700 people of Chinese-origin or descent were reported to live in this area, however, many Irish, Italian and Jewish names were recorded as residents of these streets too. (13. Jones n.d.)

Just as the Italian immigration was beginning to mount, the Exclusion Act was passed in 1882, and Chinese immigration was halted. The Chinese community, like others in the U.S. and Canada, then began a long period of stagnation and decline. In 1943, when the Italian community had come to dominate the area from the southern tip of Mulberry Street north to Bleeker Street, the Exclusion Act was repealed, enabling the reunification of many immigrant Chinese with their families. This provided an initial infusion of new people into Chinatown's aging population and the previously "three-street town" expanded to approximately 25,000 people

by the early 1960's and encompassed the eight-block area roughly defined on the west by the Civic Center, the east by the Bowery, and on the north by Canal Street. (see Figure 2-7) As the Italian community ceded the area south of Canal to the next successor, this street apparently again became a social/cultural boundary. Anecdotal reference is often made that residents of adjacent communities wouldn't cross this boundary without fear of incident,



and Canal Street again seems to have developed as a significant barrier, this time between the Chinese and Italian communities. (13. Zhou 1992)

Eventually, the second and third generation members of the Italian community began to assimilate and move to the City's outer boroughs and its suburbs. As the Italian-American population diminished north of Canal Street, the Chinese and Hispanic communities, south and north

**Figure 2-7 -- Chinatown's Expansion**

***This page - Left: circa 1900***

(Based upon 13. Zhou 1992)

***This page - Right: circa 1950***

(Source: NY Times, circa 1977)

***Opposite page - Left: 1994***

(Based on: 13. Zhou 1992 & Personal Observation)

of Little Italy respectively, began to take advantage of the additional housing opportunities. This process was heightened, when in 1965, Congress passed the Hart-Cellers Act which significantly altered the composition of immigration into the country. In the face of a tremendous increase of immigrants from Asia, the “traditional” borders between Chinatown and Little Italy quickly fell and Chinese businesses and households be-

1974 – “Little Italy Risorgimento” – of the 31-blocks north of Canal Street comprising Little Italy (see Figure 2-8). In 1976, the results of the study were used by the City Planning Commission to propose the “Little Italy Special District,” which was then adopted in early 1977. (38. Babcock & Larsen 1990)



gan to establish themselves north of Canal. This began to significantly affect the ambience of the streets and soon a public struggle for control of the area ensued.

The Little Italy Restoration Association was organized in the early 1970's by residents of the Italian community and they soon began lobbying the city to help “preserve the character of the neighborhood.” (19. Prial 1974) The city responded by executing a planning study in

Special districts were a relatively new zoning “overlay” that the planning commission had been experimenting with since the creation of its Urban Design Group in 1967. (38. Barnett 1982) Like the previously implemented Lincoln Square and Fifth Avenue districts, the Little Italy Special District was “conservative” in nature, and its express goals were “. . . to restore and improve the kind of historic ethnic neighborhood that enriches our city.” (19. The Mayor's Office 1974) As this statement alludes to, this action was not only a measure to bolster the “special Italian identity” (19. Moritz 1974) of the area though, but to create what some have deemed an “ethnic festival marketplace,” (5. Margulis 1993) an idea similar to that being expressed at that time by the Rouse Company for a festival market place at the historic South Street Seaport.

The environmental features that the Urban Design Group considered fundamental to the preservation of the community's Italian identity were codified in a set of design guidelines. The guidelines sought to control several environmental features, including Bulk, Storefronts, Signage and Sidewalk Improvements. (38. NYC Planning Commission 1991) When these regulations were ultimately presented to the community, Italians no longer

**Figure 2-8 (This page - Right) --  
The Little Italy Special District**  
(Source: NY Times, circa 1977)

represented a majority in the area and at contentious public meetings many Chinese residents and landowners complained that they had not been consulted in the development of the regulations and that they would prevent them from "... building new storefronts in the Chinese style ..." within the district. (19. Hirschfeld 1976) One resident, expressing his exasperation with the districting at a Board of Estimate meeting, asked, "(h)ow can you propose what no longer exists?" (19. Solocheck 1977)

This prescience of this comment is apparent in the fact that even by 1979, the Italians represented less than 40% of the district's population, versus the 98% that they represented in 1932. (19. Levanthes 1979) Land was quickly changing hands also, and by 1980, 70% of the property in the 31-block area was Chinese-owned.

The intent to attract tourists to the district appears to have born fruit, yet the neighborhood doesn't seem to have reaped nearly what they had hoped. Some new housing was built but, the proposed "piazzas" were never developed, and the "pedestrianization" of Mulberry Street apparently lasted only one summer. The remaining storefronts, which had previously served the Italian community, gradually began to serve the tourist trade as restaurants replaced local services (19. Solocheck 1977) and Chinese businesses continued to open.

One of the Urban Design Group's leaders appears to have anticipated the transformation of the area into an ethnic festival marketplace as she quoted one person say-

ing: "You see a wine and cheese store opening and you think of a few years ago when stores were closing. You see another well-designed quality restaurant; a new installed cafe, and it makes you walk down Mulberry Street with pride." (38. Ramati 1981) Ten years later, when Gennaro's Grocery on Mott Street was one of the few Italian stores remaining on the once bustling, two-block long, Italian market street (19. Hays 1990) one commentator more acerbically stated that Little Italy had turned into "... a Mediterranean version of Colonial Williamsburg." (19. Hampson 1990)

Instead of halting the succession and retaining the historic cultural landscape of Little Italy in lieu of that of Chinatown, the Special District fostered the creation of a third. This third cultural landscape is a tourist's environment, a nostalgic vision of a Little Italy that hadn't existed before. The two-block long, ethnic festival marketplace on Mulberry Street, comprised largely of newly-established restaurants, has little relation to what had historically existed in the neighborhood. As one longtime resident stated: "We never had the restaurants; it's just (these past) few years now ... There was a few, one, or two ... not as many as today. Mulberry Street full of restaurants! We never had that ..." (41. Mott St. Senior Center, personal communication 1994)

Norman Marcus, longtime General Counsel to the Planning Commission, expressed reservations about the ultimate success of the district, stating that "(t)here are many districts that are meaningless. The Little Italy district was ... because, actually, most of Little Italy was owned and

occupied by the Chinese . . . \* (38. Babcock & Larsen 1990)

### *Conclusion*

As was stated in its beginning, this chapter had two goals, both generally concerning the provision of context for the following chapters. One component of this context was provided through a discussion of the physical environment that touched upon the process of subdivision of private rural estates and their subsequent "improvement." The improvement of these estates was shown to have involved construction and modification of the original building stock and its eventual replacement. The next chapter will continue to build upon these observations, where the cycle of construction will become more evident and important to the project's argument.

The other goal of this chapter was to provide a social context. Here the dynamics of sequent occupancy were depicted indicating that the urban physical environment of the Lower East Side has historically accommodated several distinct social/cultural groups existing adjacent to one another at one time. The chapter also displayed the expansion of one community into areas previously occupied by another. This latter situation often resulted in tension, and political conflict in the case of the Little Italy Special District, regarding the "identity" of the area as Cressey's (39. 1938) model of sequent occupancy (see Chapter One) would have predicted.

The discussion of both of these components began to converge on Mott and Mulberry Streets at the end of the chapter. A portion of these two streets will accordingly become the focus of the next two chapters where the concepts of sequent occupancy, cultural landscapes and frameworks will be observed at a finer scale.

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## **MOTT & MULBERRY STREETS: A CASE STUDY**

In the previous chapter, the process of development on the Lower East Side was broadly discussed, as was the process of social change. The purpose of this large scale exploration was to provide a context for further exploration at a finer scale. This context could then be seen as having focused on a scale that might be considered the District. As the case study continues in this chapter, the largest complete component of the urban fabric that will be considered is the Block. Since the block can conceptually be considered a finer scale component of the District, it becomes evident that the Block also has several components nested at even finer scales within it. These components include a system of Lots, Buildings and a collection of elements that will be collected under the rubric of "Smaller than Buildings." With the addition of one larger scale element, the Street, a component closely tied to the larger District, this conceptual hierarchy of components can be used to analyze the fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed features of a representative portion of the urban environment for signs of change and diversity.

Before utilizing this hierarchy to continue the analysis of a small portion of the Lower East Side, the concept of Block needs to be further refined. There are two generally acknowledged conceptions of a block. One is related to a plan-based view of the environment that identifies a block as a module of potentially buildable land, isolated on all sides by public thoroughfares (e.g., Streets). This can be visualized by considering that Roman planners deemed such modules as "insulae," or islands within a larger public realm.

The second conception of a block is characterized by the term "face block." Sidney Brower coined this term to indicate that a block can also be the space between, and defined by, two "insulae." This conception incorporates, and internalizes, the Street, whereas in the former conception the Street is at the periphery and is the defining element, as opposed to the "insulae." In addition to the street, a face block includes the private property fronting on that street, which means that both definitions of the Block share the same elements but concentrate attention on different relationships between them.

Both concepts of the Block are useful and accordingly, both will be used in the analysis when appropriate. Hereafter, the term "block" will denote the former conception (of insulae,) and "face block" will be used to indicate the latter conception.

## LOOKING FOR CHANGE IN NEW YORK'S BLOCKS 236, 237 AND 238

In refining the scale of analysis, two face blocks have been selected that are in many ways similar to one another and representative of the larger context. As Figure 2-2 (on pg. 18) has shown, these face blocks lie adjacent, and parallel, to one another, and they share a block (no. 237) between them. This places the face blocks literally "around the block" from one another.

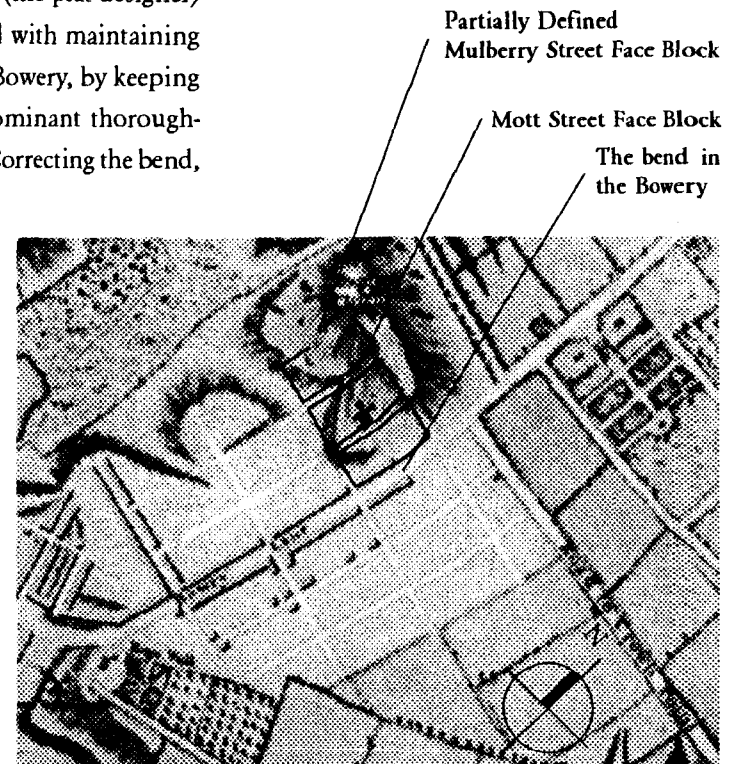
The first face block occupies a roughly 400-foot length of Mott Street that is defined by Blocks 237 and 238 (these numbers are how the City identifies them) and lies between Grand and Hester Streets. The second face block is a similar length of Mulberry Street that is defined by Blocks 236 and 237. A completely defined Mott Street face block and a partially defined Mulberry Street face block appear in the earliest remaining plans of the platting of the Bayard Estate. (see Figure 3-1 - The Montessor Plan, or Figure 2-3 - The Ratzen Plan on pg. 20)

### Streets and Blocks

In looking at the two face blocks, it becomes apparent that the defining blocks are not purely rectangular in plan. About two hundred feet north of Hester Street each of the three blocks is bent about four degrees to the northwest, giving both Mott and Mulberry Streets the appearance of a slight curve along the length of the face

blocks. This bend is more like a change in axis, or a fold, than an actual curve and it appears to be a legacy of the Bayard Estate's similarly "bent" property boundary at the Bowery, just to the east. Maerschallck (the plat designer) and Bayard may have been concerned with maintaining more uninterrupted frontage on the Bowery, by keeping the adjacent streets parallel to the dominant thoroughfare even as it turned northwestward. Correcting the bend, by maintaining straight streets in the blocks immediately adjacent to the Bowery, would have introduced numerous intersections and triangular blocks on the Bowery. While their intent is known only through plans and the existing fabric, it might be safe to assume that since this was a private subdivision, that profitable frontage and regular lots were regarded highly. (This is in contrast to the City's Commissioners' Plan of 1811, which was drafted by the government and which did not generally conform to individual property boundaries. (33. Reps 1965))

The bend in the blocks does however, disappear and re-appear in early plans. There might be several explanations for this, including that there was some intent to keep the streets straight anyway, but the most convincing is that the adjacent streets were only nominally open late in the 18th century and surveyors were often speculating as to actual or planned conditions. (Recall also that about



*Figure 3-1 -- A portion of  
The Montessor Plan of 1766  
(Plan from: 33. Kouwenhoven 1953)*

this time, DeLancey and Rutgers had to resolve their uncertainty regarding the common boundary of their estates.) The Montessor Plan of 1766, (Figure 3-1) a plan made for the British Military in case of a local uprising, presumably depicts existing conditions as opposed to planned conditions, a distinction that can be seen by comparing the Montessor Plan with the Ratzen Plan of 1767 (Figure 2-3). The Montessor Plan clearly shows the bend in a completely defined Block 238 and a partially defined Block 237.

Once the streets had been fully opened, which has been demonstrated to have occurred in the years around 1812, the bend became an enduring and subtle characteristic of the two face blocks. Aside from this bend, Mott and Mulberry Streets appear to have changed dimensionally very little, if at all, and both have maintained a right-of-way width of fifty-feet throughout their existence.

Since blocks and streets have a zero-sum relationship in an urban grid, a change in one effects a change in the other. Accordingly, Blocks 236, 237 and 238 have not changed their boundaries on Mott or Mulberry Street, with one possible exception. This exception is the movement twenty-five feet to the north of the point at which the change in axis, or the bend, occurs on the east side of Block 236 (from the southern limit of 139 Mulberry to the southern limit of 141 Mulberry) after 1855. However, the movement of this point could just be a result of an error in recording the block's boundaries on the tax plans (33. Amerman 1855) used in the analysis, since a contemporary (33. Perris 1855) fire insurance map de-

picts a building already conforming to the post-1855 location of the bend.

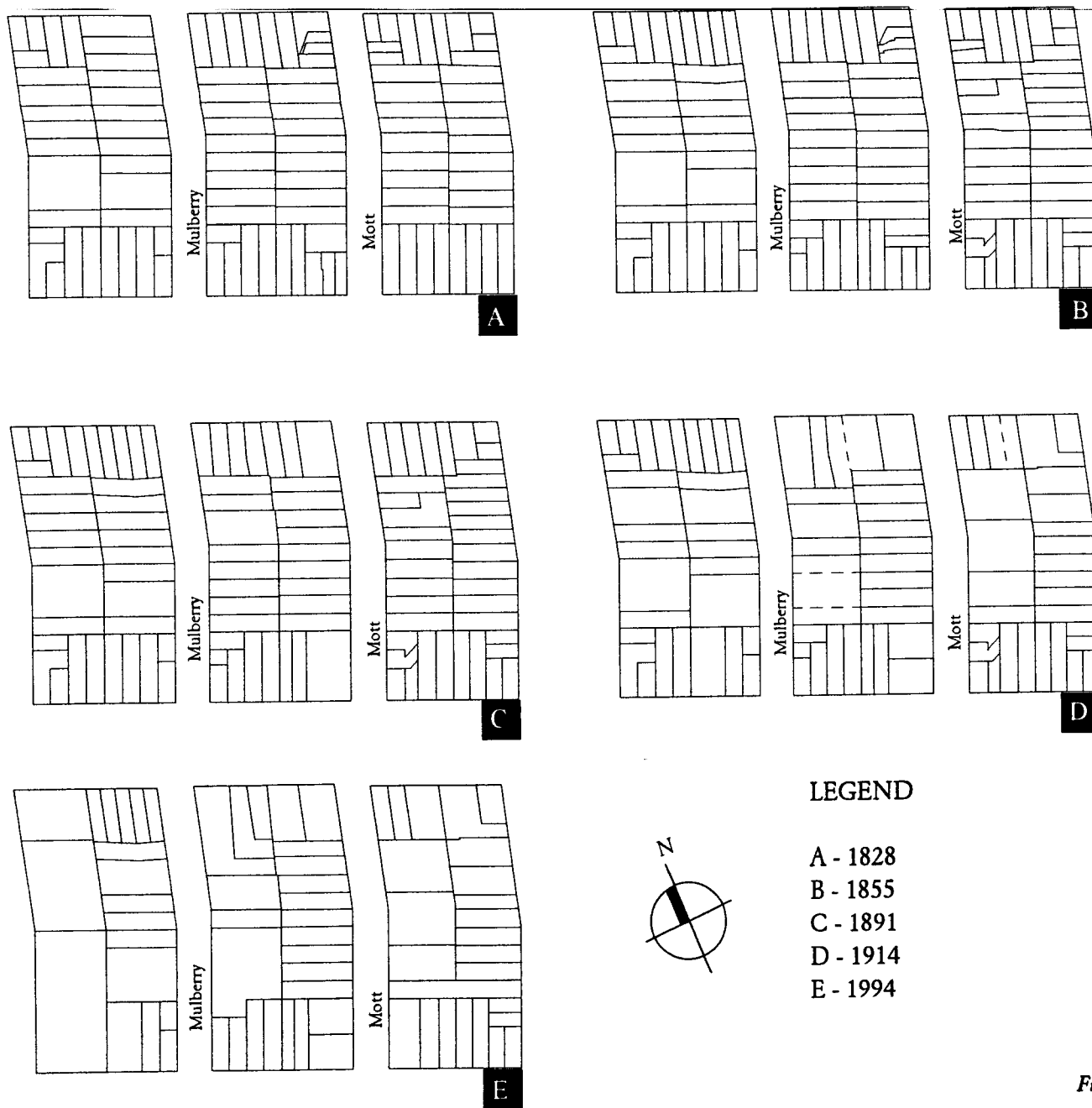
In summary, the two largest scale elements of the case study site, Streets and Blocks, have remained virtually unchanged dimensionally.

### **Lots and Buildings**

In contrast to Streets and Blocks, over the past 166 years (a span of time determined by the earliest plan (33. Ludlam 1828) located for the study that depicts lots) the lots, as a group, fronting on these two face blocks have undergone considerable change. (see Figure 3-2 – Lot Configuration Through Time) In fact, if one assumes that the original platting of these face blocks consisted of sixty-four, roughly 25 by 100-foot lots, with their long dimension oriented east-west and one short side fronting on Mott or Mulberry, only eleven lots remain unmodified in 1995. This great degree of deviation from the original design can be understood by observing two trends, corner reconfiguration and lot consolidation.

### *Corner Reconfiguration*

The first example of corner lot reconfiguration, at the north-west side of Mulberry Street at Grand, (see Figure 3-3 – Corner Lot Reconfiguration) appears to disclose several important facts, both about the blocks' original lot configuration and about most of the site's lots that fall within 75 to 100-feet of the corners. The first obser-



**Figure 3-2 -- Lot Configuration through Time**  
 (Sources: 33. Ludlam 1828; Amerman 1855; Perris 1855;  
 Bromley 1891; Bromley 1914; Sanborn 1994)

vation is that in 1828, this corner was comprised of an array of approximately 25 by 100-foot (the corner lot was 30 by 100-feet) lots, all oriented roughly east-west and all with approximately 25-foot frontages on Mulberry Street. This orientation might appear to be simply the most convenient configuration but recall that in 1752, when these blocks were platted, that the “developed” city lay entirely to the south. With that in mind, the more valuable frontage, the more trafficked, would have been on the north-south thoroughfares, like the Bowery, Mott or Mulberry. However, as development enveloped these blocks, Grand and Hester Streets became major commercial thoroughfares, and this likely led to this corner’s deviation from the original lot configuration.

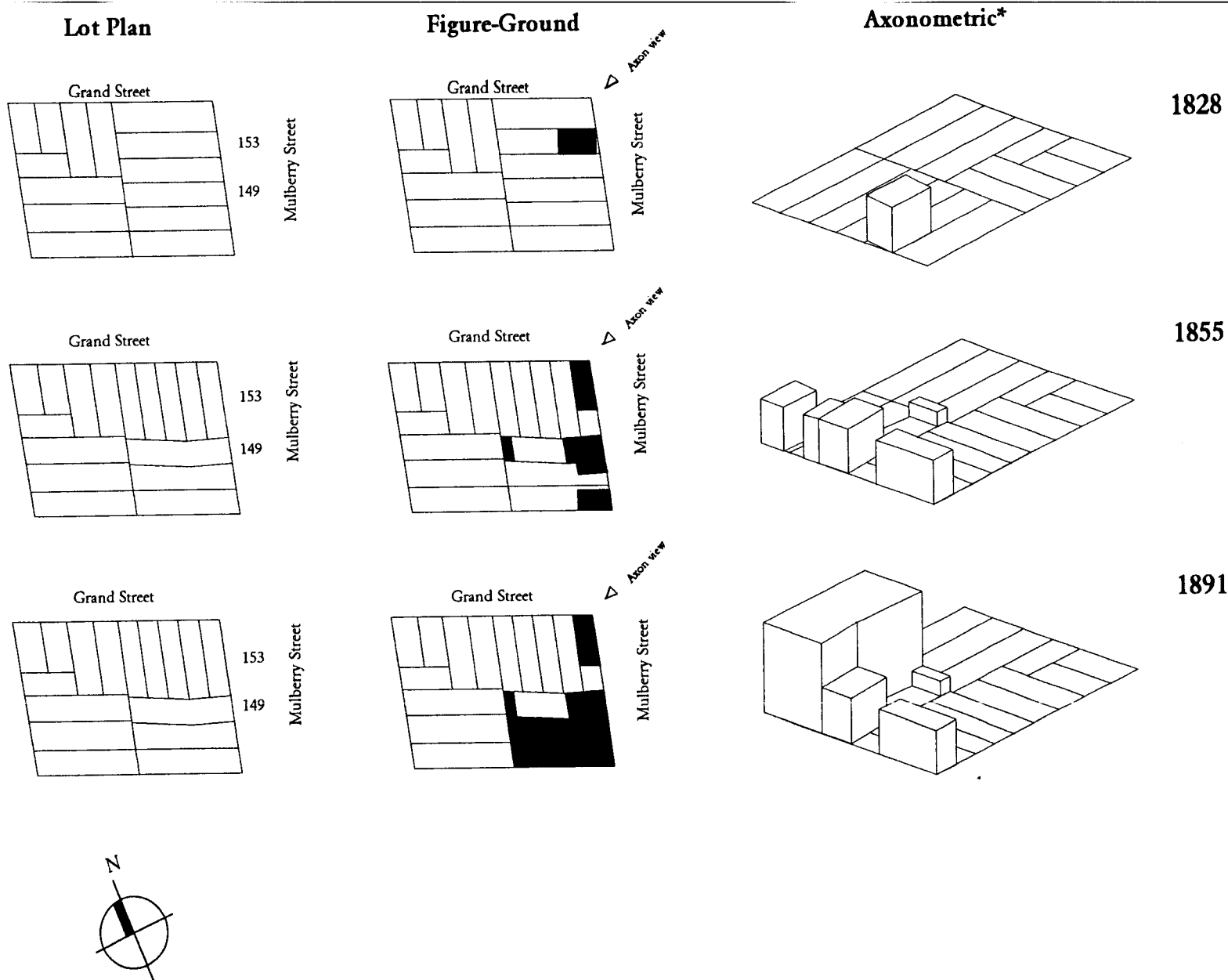
As the diagram depicts, the five lots near the corner (147 to 155 Mulberry) were affected and the three lots that were closest to the corner were replaced by five approximately 20 by 75-foot lots, oriented north-south. The two lots to the south (147 and 149 Mulberry) of these five new lots retained their east-west orientation but the lot lines along two of their long sides were modified. These modified lot lines were replatted with a bend for an unknown reason and one of these bent lot lines is shared with the back of the five new lots on Grand.

On the same diagrams, looking just west, actually off of the project’s site but still on Block 236, the results of another reconfiguration can be seen. Like the corner of Mulberry and Grand, idiosyncratic lot boundaries are depicted where the original five, east-west lots would have

been. The lots just to the south remain regular with those on Mulberry as indicated by a continuous lot line running through the width of the block.

A second example that had apparently, prior to 1828, already undergone at least one reconfiguration is the southwest corner of Mott Street, at Hester. (see Figure 3-4 – Corner Lot Reconfiguration 2) In 1828, five lots of varying frontage, are oriented north-south. Two of these lots have depths of 100-feet, but the three closest to the corner have had a wide and shallow, east-west lot created out of the “back” of their lots. This wide lot takes advantage of the frontage on Mott Street by utilizing what had been formerly less valuable, and largely isolated, back lot space.

The reconfigurations then involve the subdivision of the wide and shallow lot on Mott Street in 1855 and then the consolidation of five of the seven lots into one corner lot. After 1891, the consolidated, 62 by 100-foot corner lot was again subdivided by being divided into two lots of equal frontage on Mott Street. However, this last occurrence, the late-19th century subdivision of a large consolidated lot, is unusual. The typical sequence of events that can be observed on six of the eight corners of the site involves: first, reorientation and the addition of idiosyncratic small lots, followed by consolidation and removal of the idiosyncratic lots.



**Figure 3-3 -- Corner Lot Reconfiguration**  
 (Sources: 33. Ludlam 1828; Amerman 1855; Perris 1855;  
 Bromley 1891; Bromley 1914)

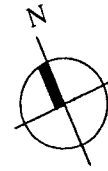
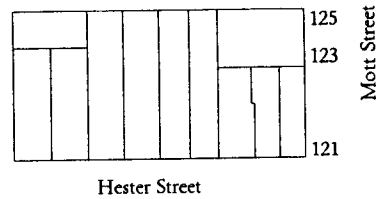
\* The heights of the buildings at 145 & 147 Mulberry in 1855 are based upon speculation.

## Lot Plan

## Figure-Ground

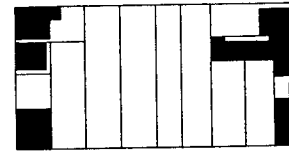
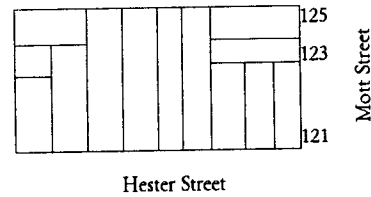
## Axonometric\*

1828



*No available data for 1828 in these categories.*

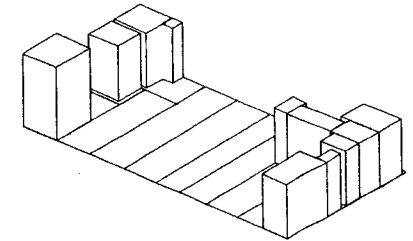
1855



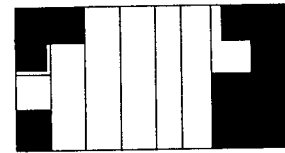
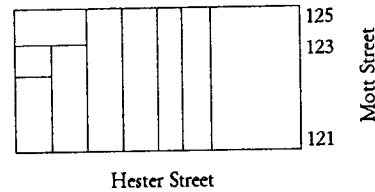
Mott Street

Hester Street

Axon view



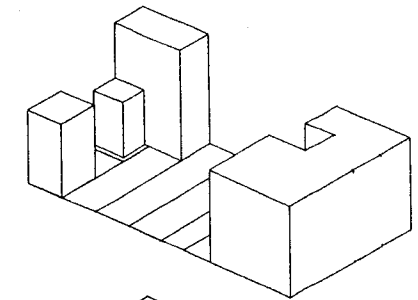
1891



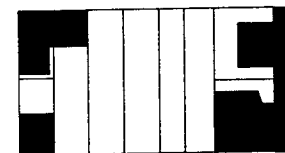
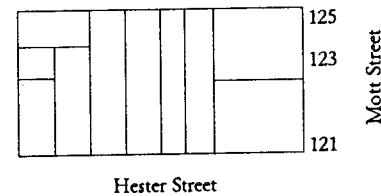
Mott Street

Hester Street

Axon view



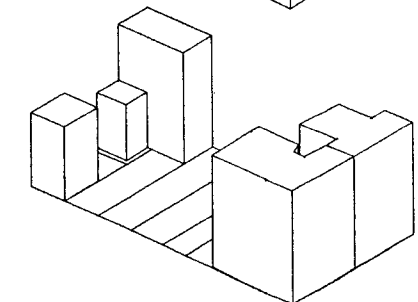
1914



Mott Street

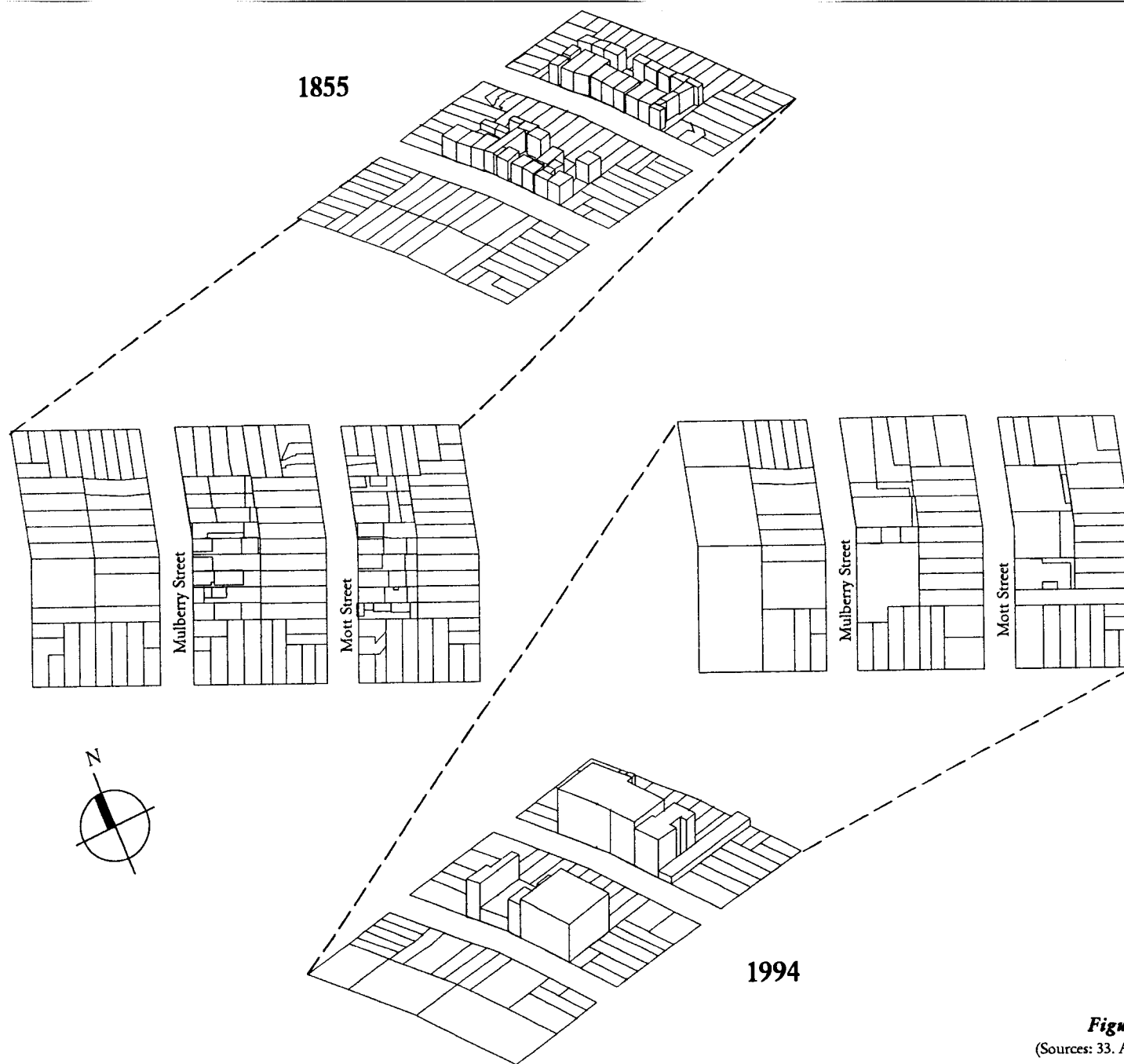
Hester Street

Axon view



**Figure 3-4 -- Corner Lot Reconfiguration 2**  
(Sources: 33. Ludlam 1828; Amerman 1855; Perris 1855;  
Bromley 1891; Bromley 1914)

\* The heights of all but two buildings in 1855 are based upon speculation as is the height of 121 Mott in 1891.



**Figure 3-5 -- Mid-Block Coarsening**  
 (Sources: 33. Amerman 1855; Perris 1855; Sanborn 1994)

### *Lot Consolidation*

Lot consolidation is not unique to the corners of the site. As indicated in Figure 3-5 (Mid-Block Coarsening) over the period beginning in 1855 and ending in 1994,

lot consolidation occurred on an even greater scale in the middle of the face blocks. This is particularly evident on the east sides of Mott and Mulberry Streets, where collectively eighteen, 25 by 100-foot lots were consolidated into eight. Of these eight, the two largest on the east side of Mott are only nominally independent as they contain two halves of the "Meitz Building." Another, on the north-west corner of Mulberry, has become part of an L-shaped, corner lot consolidation.

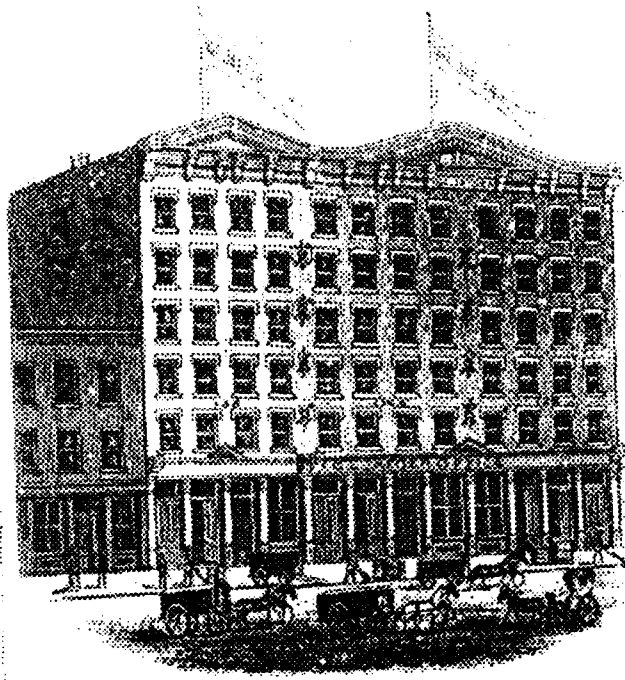
### **Buildings**

Lot consolidation proceeded hand-in-hand with a change in scale of buildings and the likelihood of an attendant simplification of activities occurring on large portions of the face blocks. As Blackmar (32. 1989) has suggested, the residence was, in the early 19th century, commonly a site of work as well. The consolidation of lots was typically preparing the way for the construction of a comparatively massive, "loft" manufacturing buildings, like the Meitz Building or the G.L. Jaeger Building (see Figure 3-6). These two buildings, and their resident large manufacturing con-

cerns, replaced 16 buildings (counting front-lot buildings and unattached back-lot buildings, but not attached additions to the front buildings) that had 29 listed residents in 1851. (31. Doggett's 1851) The listed occupations of some of these residents includes shoemakers and tailors, who along with similarly employed neighbors, apparently formed a "trade neighborhood," a concentration of people who shared a common trade/industry that was typical in the Lower East Side at the time. (32. Blackmar 1989)

The introduction of large-scale manufacturing concerns in lieu of small proprietorships is indicative of both a coarsening of the scale of buildings fronting on the face blocks and possibly, a coarsening of activities. The small buildings that housed multi-tenant residential, crafts-production and retail facilities were replaced by buildings including: a furniture factory (121-125 Mott, constructed before 1891, demolished prior to 1914), a tobacco factory (133-135 Mulberry, constructed before 1891), a paper box manufacturer (142-144 Mulberry; constructed prior to 1891, demolished after 1914) a straw board and lining factory (G.L. Jaeger, 132-138 Mulberry, first portion constructed in 1880) and the Meitz Building, an "iron factory" (Mott St. Senior Center, personal communication 1994) (128-138 Mott, constructed before 1914). (33. Bromley 1891; Bromley 1914; G.L. Jaeger Co. circa 1880's)

The loft buildings were not the only structures replacing the buildings found on the fire insurance plans of 1855 (33. Perris 1855). Many of the buildings lying on

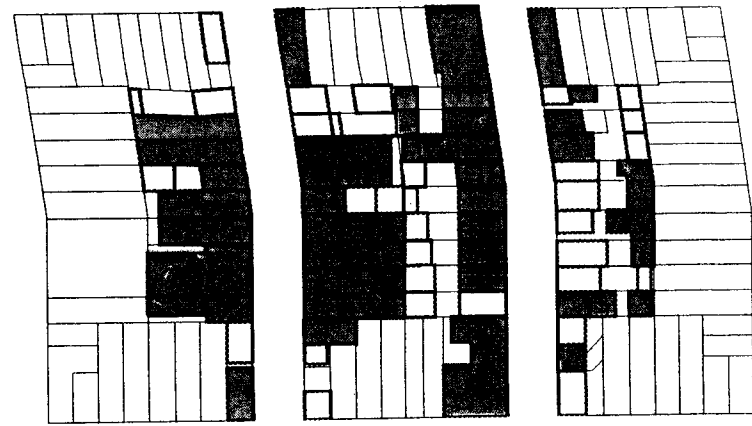


**Figure 3-6 -- The G.L. Jaeger Building  
- circa 1880**

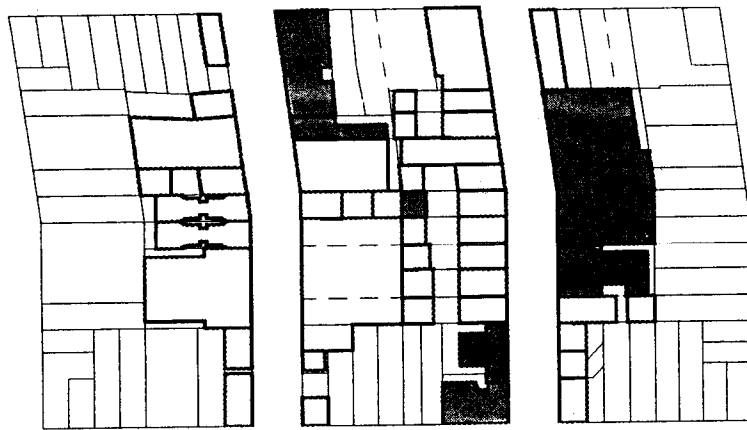
(Source: The New York Historical Society)



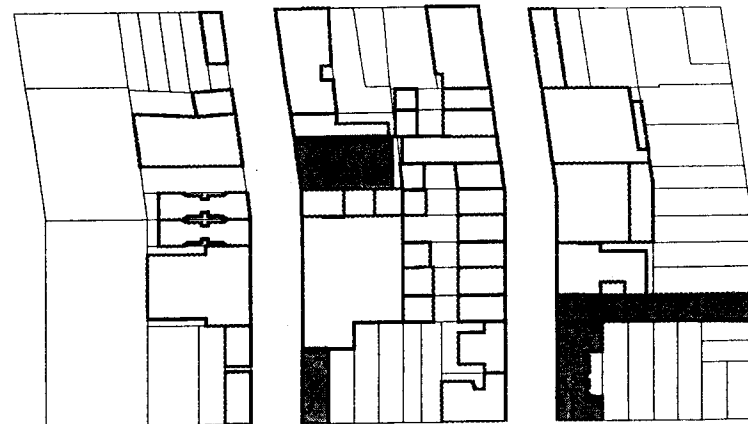
1855



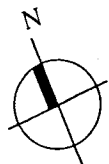
1891



1914



1994

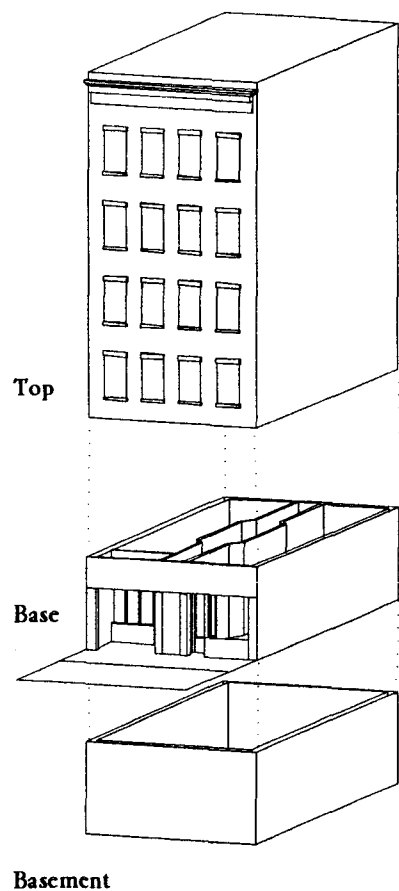


Shaded portions indicate a new, or significantly modified, building.

As in most drawings created specifically for this document, only buildings on lots fronting on the Mott & Mulberry Street face blocks are depicted here.

**Figure 3-7 -- Face Block Buildings Over Time**

(Sources: 33. Ludlam 1828; Amerman 1855; Perris 1855; Bromley 1891; Bromley 1914; Sanborn 1994)



**Figure 3-8 -- Basement-Base-Top**

the street frontage of the lots, with their outbuildings and attached additions, were replaced after 1855, with "Pre-Law" tenements. (see Figure 4-2 on pg. 83) These buildings were typically 5-stories tall, occupied a larger portion of the lot and often retained the 3 and 4-story back-lot tenements that existing prior to 1855. Later, two "Old Law" tenements were constructed at 139 and 141 Mulberry Street and sometime after 1901, several "New Law" tenement buildings were constructed.

The "New Law" buildings often differed from the "Pre-law" and "Old Law" tenements in their massing, which required that they occupy a lot derived from consolidation and several of these New Law buildings occupy corner sites.

The common features of the tenements and the loft buildings, include: the prevalence of brick on the upper portions of their street elevations, their siting directly on the front lot line, increasing lot coverage in the newer buildings, their occupancy of 100% of the street frontage and a sectional (functional) organization that might be considered Basement-Base-Top. This sectional organization will be considered in more depth in the Smaller than Buildings section later in this chapter, but to briefly introduce these three components (see Figure 3-8) their characteristics include:

#### Basement

- Below grade
- Often accessed via entries embedded in the side walk in front of the building

Functionally can be independent, or tied to activities in the Base and/or Top.

#### Base

- At grade, or with a few steps up to the first floor
- enclosure treatment generally different than that of the Top
- Characteristically, more transparent - an appearance of columns and infill would be a typical enclosure system versus the Top's continuous plane of brick with "punched" window openings.
- Location of public entries to (often independent) functions in the Base, the Top, and sometimes, to the rear yard.

*Note:* Some of the later, post-1891, buildings (e.g. the Meitz Building, 150 Mulberry/191 Grand, 121 and 125 Mott) adopted a more ornate, Neo-classical, tripartite elevational vocabulary (base-middle-top) that extended some of the base treatment over the second floor (using motifs like rustication, cornices and pilasters) and emphasized "top" by treating the upper floor elevation differently as well. These compositional changes however do not reflect apparent changes in the usage of the 2nd or top floors and they can still be considered to have used an "infill" strategy on the ground floor in contrast to the upper floors. The older buildings (e.g. G.L. Jaeger) while also compositionally/visually having a tripar-

tite elevation, were more austere in its implementation and the ornamentation more closely paralleled the functional categories of “Base” and “Top.”

#### Top

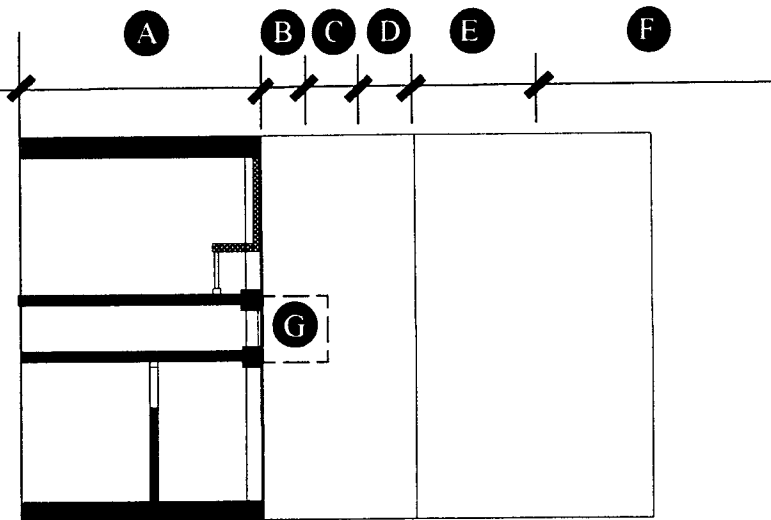
- functionally, occupies the 2nd through the upper floors (usually the 5th, 6th or 7th).
- Often houses a different activity than that occupying the base (e.g., housing vs. a shop), or a different component of that activity (e.g., actual manufacturing vs. front-office, as was apparently the case in G.L. Jaeger’s building.)

To summarize change at the Building scale, two generations of buildings can be considered to have been constructed on the face blocks. The first were smaller structures that most likely functioned as both residences and places of business. As the housing demand grew, separate buildings were constructed in the back portions of many of these original buildings’ lots and ultimately most of these buildings were replaced. This new generation of buildings was constructed over a period of approximately 40 years and the buildings were generally larger than their predecessors. Initially, these buildings either mixed upper floor residential and ground floor retail uses or they were exclusively used for manufacturing. The structures existing from this second generation were all constructed prior to 1914, with the exception of 116-120 Mott Street and 142-144 Mulberry, which were apparently built shortly thereafter, and 122 Mott Street, a one-story, through-block, utility company building.

#### Smaller Than Buildings

Unlike the previous categories, this one is not exclusively about large-scale artifacts, like buildings, or about legally documented boundaries. It begins to treat all of the aforementioned categories – streets, blocks, lots and buildings – more as the context for human occupation and action. Accordingly, it begins to describe a search for who was doing what and where, and how that is affected by, and how it has affected, the environment provided by this context. Following the addition of the last building to the face blocks, it logically follows that much of the human action in the environment fits into a finer-scale category, even activities that transcend the boundaries of the physical and legal artifacts found in the larger-scale categories.

To help identify and analyze the site at the Smaller Than Building scale, a simple model has been developed to locate semi-fixed and non-fixed features in the public domain. The model is based on a series of conceptual (and flexible) zones that were observed, and used to record data, during the project’s field work. Seven zones have been identified and Figure 3-9 illustrates their location in a plan view of a Pre-Law tenement building’s street frontage. These zones overlap the lot line and are



**Figure 3-9 -- The 7 Zones  
(in plan view)**

#### Legend:

- A - Building Interior
- B - Inner Sidewalk
- C - Middle Sidewalk
- D - Outer Sidewalk
- E - Parking Strip
- F - Thoroughfare (the diagram only depicts part of this zone)
- G - Upper Floor Entry

centered on three sidewalk zones. These sidewalk zones are the most commonly referred to in this document and they can be defined as:

The Inner Sidewalk - an area that runs parallel, and adjacent to, the building elevation. In the study area it is frequently occupied by semi-fixed features and it may extend 2-3 feet away from the building.

The Middle Sidewalk - a band of space that runs parallel to the Inner Sidewalk and which occupies the "middle" of the sidewalk. This zone ranges from 2-6 feet and is often where people walk.

The Outer Sidewalk - another parallel band that lies outside of the previous two zones and which extends to the curb. It may be 2-3 feet wide and semi-fixed features are often left there for short periods of time. Parking meters are commonly found in this zone too.

#### *Mott and Mulberry Streets: At the Height of Little Italy*

In the 1930's, both Mott and Mulberry Streets, between Hester and Grand Streets, were located well within the boundaries of Little Italy. (98% of the population, living within the 31-block area north of Canal Street considered to comprise Little Italy, was reported as being Italian in 1932 (19. Levanthes 1979)). As noted before, immigrant Italians had initially settled into differing blocks of the enclave according to the Italian region of

their origin. Calabrians had settled on Mott Street and Neapolitans on Mulberry. (41. Mott St. Senior's Center personal communication 1994; 19. Mangione & Morreale 1992; Gabbaccia 1984; 38. Ramati 1981) This segregation by region most evidently manifested itself in the annual feasts honoring the particular region's patron saint. Crowds would gather in the relevant streets and large, architectural constructions would house altars to the saint. (see Figure 3-10 - Festa SS Immacolata - 1937) Aside from the visual clues provided by these special occasions, the children of some of the immigrants recall that you could identify the regional dialect spoken among the residents of each street. (41. Mott St. Senior's Center personal communication 1994)

#### *Mott Street*

One 79-year-old woman - who was born, and grew up, on Elizabeth Street, around the block from Mott Street - also recalled the more mundane activities on the face block. In the 1930's, on an ordinary day, the street was part of an important neighborhood marketplace, as she stated:

"...they (the pushcart peddlers) would sell mostly vegetables . . . The fish was never outside, always in the store . . . They (the peddlers) would be on the street . . . (for) two blocks, just from Broome (south) to Hester Street, that's it . . . We had the butcher there. We had the bakery in those two blocks . . . We had the pork store there. In those two blocks we had everything. We didn't have to go out of the



MOTT STREET 1937 <i>Feast of SS Immacolata</i> <i>- Looking at Southeast Corner - 116 Mott</i>	ZONES					
	Building Wall	Inner Sidewalk	Middle Sidewalk	Outer Sidewalk	Parking	Thoroughfare
Fixed Features	<b>A</b> CORNICE on Building Base  <b>B</b> Wood & Glass STOREFRONT with recessed entry  FIRE ESCAPE	None Apparent	None	None Apparent	None	None
Semi-Fixed Features	<b>C</b> Retracted Canvas AWNING advertising florist  <b>D</b> Canvas AWNING extended over entire sidewalk  <b>E</b> SIGN for corner store reading "Public Market"	None Apparent	None Apparent	<b>F</b> Four-story, but relatively two- dimensional, ALTAR of Baroque, Neo- Classical design - with statuary, many electric lights and candles.	<b>I</b> PUSH CART located on Hester - seen beneath the corner awning.  <b>J</b> PUSH CARTS on Mott, near altar.	<b>K</b> CAR in the middle of the street, with passenger door slightly open  <b>L</b> SIGN in Italian, about the "Festa" suspended above the street by cords.
Non-Fixed Features	None	<b>H</b> PEOPLE STANDING behind the altar, on left of photo	<b>G</b> MANY PEOPLE STANDING around the altar, posing for the photo. Including a MARCHING BAND and many CHILDREN in the foreground.			

*Figure 3-10 -- Feast of S.S. Immacolata  
on Mott Street - 1937*

(Photo from: the Collections of the  
New York Public Library)



	ZONES					
	Building Wall	Inner Sidewalk	Middle Sidewalk	Outer Sidewalk	Parking	Thoroughfare
Fixed Features	A Wood-Frame, Bayed DISPLAY WINDOW	H BASEMENT ENTRY Doors - beneath Awning	None	J FIRE HYDRANT	None	None
Semi-Fixed Features	B Perpendicular SIGN reading: "E Il Migliore Caffe" C Retractable Canvas AWNING reading: "Jersey Pork" D Canvas AWNING further down street reading: "Groceries"	I Crude Wood BENCH G Wood BASKETS & BOXES	None	K BOXES near pushcart in foreground	Many PUSHCARTS L SCALES and UMBRELLAS on Pushcarts BOXES near pushcart in foreground	O TRUCK
Non-Fixed Features	None	None	H PERSON STANDING in shadow of near awning I WOMAN WALKING in background	L Two MEN STANDING close together, looking at camera M WOMAN LOOKING at boxes PEOPLE in distance	None	None

**Figure 3-11 -- View North Along the West Side of Mott Street - 1936**  
(Photo from: the Collections of the New York Public Library)

neighborhood to shop. We even had a store where we used to buy macaroni, homemade - they would keep it in drawers . . . That was on that (the west) side of the street." (Mott Street Senior Center personal communication 1994)

In a photograph (Figure 3-11) taken of the west side of the street in 1936 (and incidentally, found after the interview) Mott appears much as it was described. Two men stand near the curb, looking at the camera, one in a fedora and jacket and the other in a peak hat and a sweater, while a woman with her back turned, looks down toward boxes on the outer portion of the sidewalk, near the curb. Parked at the curb, and apparently along the length of the block, is a row of small pushcarts, the closest of which has a scale hanging from a wooden boom. On the far side of the pushcarts a truck is moving through the center of the street.

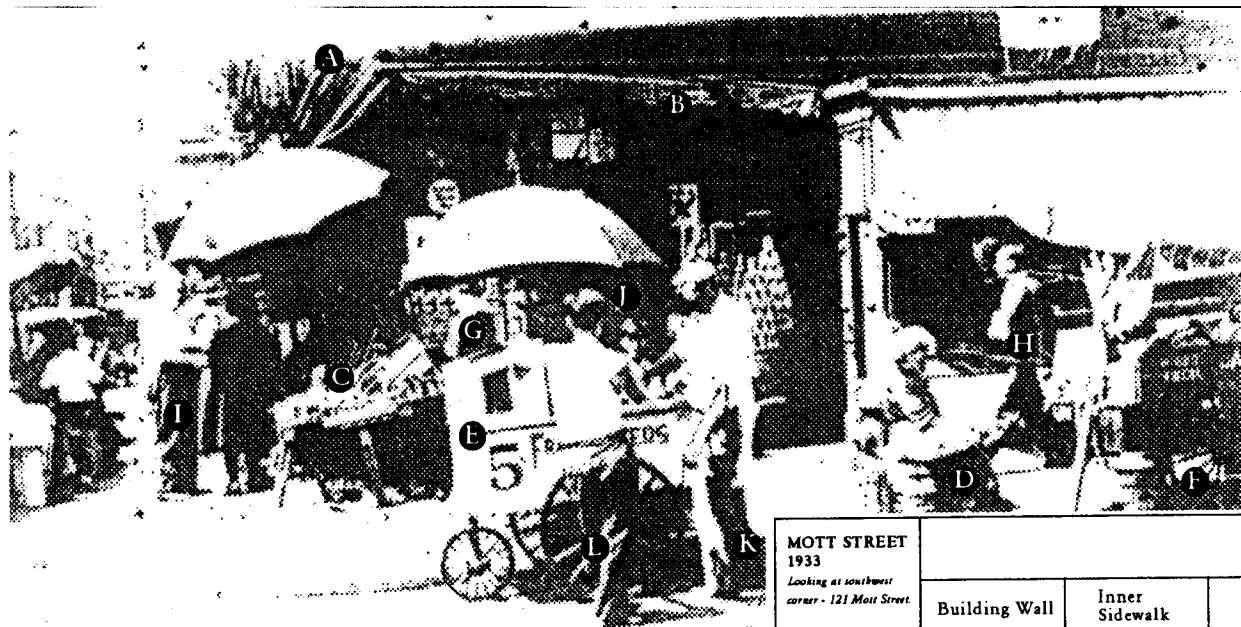
On the left are several storefronts. Several of these storefronts have wood and glass bay (display) windows, supported by large brackets and protruding a short distance over the sidewalk. In front of the closest window is a low, "crudely" constructed wood bench and some baskets - possibly the location of an ancillary display of the shop's goods. Next door, a large, low-hanging, retractable canvas awning shades, and advertises, Jersey Pork. Just beyond the awning, a rectangular sign, hung perpendicularly from the building advertises the presence of 'E Il Migliore Caffè and another canvas awning is seen further down the street.

A photograph (Figure 3-12) taken in 1933, shows a similar scene at the southwest corner of Mott Street. Several men stand in the street, and a boy on the curb, around an umbrella-covered pushcart that is being used to vend hotdogs. Another pushcart stands at the curb, a few feet to the north (to the right). There is also an array of goods displayed on the sidewalk in front of the corner storefront and an umbrella shades a portion of them. Nearby, two people stand in apparent conversation. Over the storefront, a canvas awning hangs retracted.

Looking back at the photo (Figure 3-10) taken during the feast, depicting the opposite corner, the most apparent features are semi-fixed and non-fixed as a large group of people poses for the camera in front of the three-story, Neo-classical altar and beneath a small temporary sign lettered in Italian and suspended above the roadway. (The sign indicates that this group is associated with the region around the southeastern Italian city of Bari.) More mundane features include two storefronts, a "Public Market" and a florist. The latter is notable for its wooden storefront, and the former for its large, extended awning. Also of note is the continuous, Neo-classical cornice capping the Base of the building.

#### Mulberry Street

Mulberry Street at this time appears to have had a different ambience. First of all, the pushcarts were apparently confined to Mott Street (41. Mott St. Senior Center, personal communication 1994) and due to the presence of several large loft buildings, it didn't have the continuous



MOTT STREET 1933 <i>Looking at southwest corner - 121 Mott Street.</i>	ZONES					
	Building Wall	Inner Sidewalk	Middle Sidewalk	Outer Sidewalk	Parking	Thoroughfare
Fixed Features	<b>A</b> CORNICE above Base	None	None	None	None	None
Semi-Fixed Features	<b>B</b> Canvas AWNING - retracted  Several small SIGNS	<b>C</b> Several TABLES of Stacked GOODS - including cans.  UMBRELLAS shading some tables.	None	<b>D</b> A small pile of BASKETS and CLOTH between the two pushcarts  <b>E</b> BOXES further down on Hester Street.	<b>F</b> A small, 3- wheeled Hot- dog PUSHCART with umbrella - close to corner.  <b>G</b> A larger PUSHCART about five feet to the north of the other.	None
Non-Fixed Features	None	None	<b>H</b> WOMAN WALKING south on Mott, towards corner  <b>I</b> MAN WALKING wearing suit, 10-12 feet behind woman.  <b>J</b> MAN & WOMAN STANDING close to inner sidewalk tables, apparently conversing	<b>K</b> Young BOY STANDING on sidewalk, on the opposite side of Hot-dog pushcart.  <b>L</b> MEN STANDING, apparently in conversation, further down Hester Street.	<b>M</b> Two MEN STANDING in the street, on the north side of the Hot-dog pushcart.	MAN (peddler?) wearing slacks and tank-top shirt, standing in street next to pushcart. His back is to the camera.

**Figure 3-12 -- Southwest Corner of  
Mott Street 1933**

(Photo from: the Collections of the  
New York Public Library)

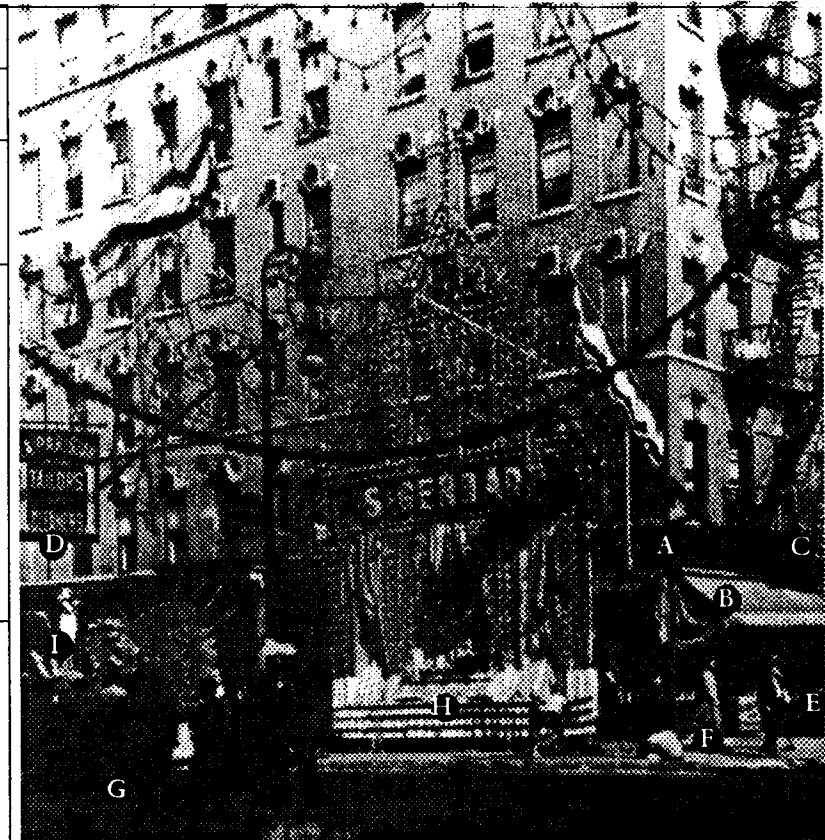


MULBERRY STREET 1932 <i>Looking South at 149 and 151 Mulberry.</i>	ZONES					
	Building Wall	Inner Sidewalk	Middle Sidewalk	Outer Sidewalk	Parking	Thoroughfare
Fixed Features	<p>A 149 Mulberry has an ELEVATED FIRST FLOOR several feet above the sidewalk.</p> <p>B "Framed" ENTRY door at 149 Mulberry.</p> <p>C One-story STOREFRONT with 2 glass and wood-frame DISPLAY WINDOWS &amp; center ENTRY.</p>	<p>Two STAIRCASES with iron balusters and handrails, one at the entry to 149 and one next door to 151, leading to elevated first floors.</p> <p>D STAIRCASE descending to 149's basement (behind the iron railing).</p>	None	None	None	None
Semi-Fixed Features	<p>E SIGN for the "Villa Nova Restaurant" perpendicular to the wall at 149 Mulberry.</p> <p>F SIGN reading "Restaurant" below 149's 1st floor windows.</p> <p>G SIGN reading "Store for Rent" in window at 149.</p> <p>H Canvas AWNING at 151 reading "Caffe Bella Napoli"</p> <p>I LETTERING ("Caffe," "Pasticceria" &amp; "Dolceria.") in window of 151.</p> <p>J Large SIGN/BILLBOARD in Italian, for neighboring Banca Stabile.</p>	None	None	None	<p>K One CAR parked in front of 151.</p> <p>L One CAR parked one east side of street, close to photographer.</p>	None
Non-Fixed Features	None	None	None	<p>M Three MEN STANDING</p> <p>N Two MEN CONVERSING</p>	None	None

**Figure 3-13 -- View of the West Side of Mulberry Street -- 1932**

(Photo from: the Collections of the New York Public Library)

MULBERRY STREET 1930 <i>Looking northeast at 130 Mulberry, during the Feast of San Gennaro.</i>	ZONES					
	Building Wall	Inner Sidewalk	Middle Sidewalk	Outer Sidewalk	Parking	Thoroughfare
Fixed Features	<b>A</b> CORNICE at Base of Building  FIRE ESCAPE	None Apparent	None	None	None	None
Semi-Fixed Features	<b>B</b> Canvas AWNING extended at 130.  <b>C</b> American FLAG hanging from fire escape.  <b>D</b> SIGN (in foreground) reading "La Parisian Tailors and Cleaners" at 129.	<b>E</b> TABLE in front of 130 (on Hester).	None Apparent	Large, 3-story <b>F</b> ALTAR with many electric lights.	<b>I</b> FLOATS?	None Apparent
Non-Fixed Features	None	None Apparent	<b>F</b> Several PEOPLE WALKING separately toward the corner in front of 130.  <b>G</b> GROUP OF PEOPLE WALKING on West Side.	None	None Apparent	None Apparent



*Figure 3-14 -- Southeast Corner of  
Mulberry Street During San Gennaro -  
- 1930*

(Photo from: the Collections of the  
New York Public Library)

stretch of stores that the west side of Mott did.

However, the street was not without some stores as a photo (Figure 3-13) taken in 1932 displays. In the oldest building on the site (originally constructed as a residence in 1816 at 153 Mulberry and moved during the corner reconfiguration to 149 Mulberry (35. NYC Landmarks Commission 1969)) a sign for the Villa Nova Restaurant (note the use of the English “restaurant” versus “ristorante”) hangs perpendicular to the wall and another spans the base of the building. The restaurant, if still open when the photo was taken, apparently occupies the basement of the building, since the upstairs windows indicate that the ground floor is for rent and was previously occupied by a billards parlor.

Next door at 151 Mulberry, the Caffè Bella Napoli, a “pasticceria” and “dolceria” occupies a one-story extension in the backyard of the second oldest building on the site. Bay display windows, similar to those found on Mott Street, straddle the caffè’s recessed entrance and a retracted canvas awning hangs above the storefront. On the roof of this extension, a very large sign, a billboard in essence, advertises in Italian, the Banca Stabile, which occupies the corner storefront (out of view to the right).

The street is noticeably less crowded than Mott with only two cars parked at the curbs in lieu of the many push-carts found along Mott. Several hatted men stand next to one car and two other men stand further down the sidewalk, in front of the restaurant. Just beyond the Villa Nova Restaurant is one of the loft buildings.

Catholic Feasts also occurred on Mulberry Street (and in 1995, they are the most vital of the feasts that still occur – see Figure 4-10 on pg. 94). Figure 3-14 shows an altar that was constructed on the southeast corner of the face block for the Feast of San Gennaro in 1930. The placement of the altar on the east side of the street, like the altar for SS Immacolata, permits the congregants to face east towards Jerusalem, as they would in a typical Catholic church. No explanation is readily apparent as to why both were located on a southern corner of the block versus a northern one though.

Also depicted by the photo are decorations strung across Hester and Mulberry, a sign for a tailor at 129 Mulberry and a canvas awning hanging above the store at 130 Mulberry/191 Hester. Also, several people are walking alone on the corner near the altar as is a group on the closer corner.

#### *Mott and Mulberry: After the Little Italy Special District*

We never had the restaurants; it’s been just (these past) few years now . . . there was a few, one or two . . . not as many as they have today. Mulberry Street full of restaurants! We never had that . . . We had pastry stores . . . that we had . . .

This quote, from the same woman who described Mott Street above, succinctly describes the changes that have occurred on Mulberry Street from the 1930’s to 1994.

The tailor, the pasticceria and even the Villa Nova Restaurant shown in the previous subsection, are gone. As Chapter Two described, Little Italy began a gradual decline in the 1950's and by the 1970's, the Chinese community to the south had made substantial inroads above Canal Street and both Mott and Mulberry Streets were changing in character. Then the City intervened and in 1977, the Little Italy Special District was created.

Change continued even after the District was implemented as Figure 3-15 (New Ground Floor Stores) indicates. Each dot on the plans represents a new/changed telephone listing for the ground floor occupants from the previous period. The diagram's base year is 1971, several years before the Special District was implemented, and the analysis proceeds in ten year increments. The third plan shows the latest, mid-decade situation and the squares indicate new storefronts that opened too recently to have made the 1994 directory, but were observed during this project's field work.

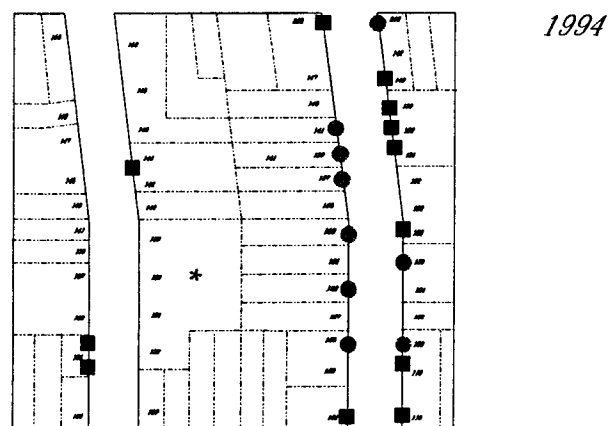
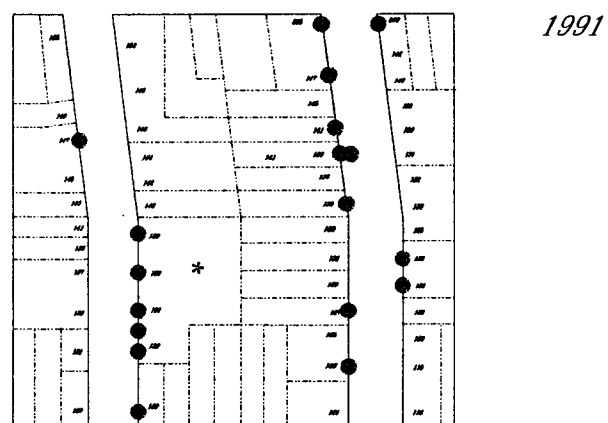
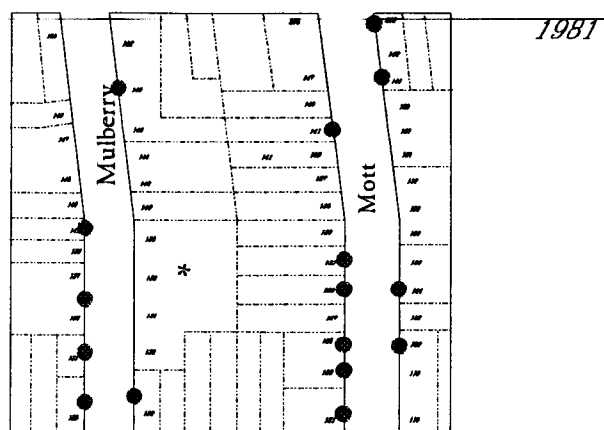
Figure 3-15 shows several things about the face blocks in the last 24 years. The first is that the stores on the west side of Mott have turned over more rapidly than those on Mulberry. The second is the impact of the transformation of the ground floors of the loft buildings. When the Jaeger Building's ground floor was converted, five new storefronts appear in a short period of time on Mulberry Street – as shown on the 1991 plan. The Meitz Building on Mott Street is presently undergoing a similar transformation with a similar street-level impact. Even before the ground floor conversion is complete, four

new stores have opened. As the following sections will describe, these two conversions have partially reversed the effects of the lot coarsening discussed earlier in the chapter.

#### Mott Street in the 1990's

The Mott Street face block is now generally recognized as part of Chinatown. As of 1994, all of the Italian-owned storefronts had closed and most have been reconstructed and reopened. The first photo (Figure 3-16 – 133-135 Mott Street) appears to show the same stretch of stores and sidewalk (note the fire hydrant) that appeared in the 1936, mid-block photo of Mott Street (Figure 3-11).

In comparing the two photos, one of the most striking observations is that the wooden bay window in the foreground of Figure 3-11 has been completely removed. This storefront, 133 Mott, in the photo taken in the summer of 1994, is completely open to the sidewalk. Low tables and boxes of goods are set up in the inner sidewalk and the interior of the store is also open to shoppers. 135 Mott, apparently occupied by Jersey Pork in the 1930's, now has a common variation on the open storefront with a window and door assembly set back several feet (in this case 6-feet) behind the building's main elevation. This provides for ample display space adjacent to the area provided by the inner sidewalk. (see Figure 4-5 on pg. 87 for a diagram of a "setback" storefront elevation versus a completely enclosed storefront.)



● Indicates a change has occurred in a ground-floor tenant during the previous period (Change is determined by a different listing in the Reverse Phone Directory for that year)

■ Indicates a change has occurred in a ground-floor tenant since the previous 10-year interval but was too recent to be listed in the current directory. These changes were observed during site visits instead.

\* The G.L. Jaeger Building

**Figure 3-15 -- New Storefronts 1971-1994**

(Source: 31. Cole's Cross-Reference Directory, 1971; 1981; 1991 & 1994)

Other notable features of the new storefronts include the fixed metal or plastic awnings that have replaced the retractable canvas canopies found here in the 1930's; the large horizontal signage, in both Chinese and English; the temporary sign tied onto the bollard next to the fire hydrant; the table and boxes of goods at the

green and white here too. Red, yellow and green are "auspicious" colors in Chinese culture. White has negative connotations and its presence, according to Feng Shui practice, should be mitigated somehow, e.g. by the addition of an auspicious color. (3. Rossbach 1983)



inner sidewalk/building transitional space; the small, portable lights attached to the awnings and walls to illuminate the goods; the bags and scales; and the small signs on the tables and taped to the walls.

Also important to note are the colors used, red and yellow being the most prominent on the block with some

There are also many more people on the sidewalk in the 1994 picture (Figure 3-16) than in the view from the 1930's (Figure 3-11). The importance of this is however, difficult to determine, since the circumstances surrounding the earlier photo are unknown. For example, one can guess that it is morning in the early photo since the sun is in the east, and possibly that it is spring or fall from the somewhat heavy dress of the people in the foreground. The more recent photo was taken in the afternoon on a weekday in early August of last year. The people are mostly lightly and casually dressed, except for the employees of the store at the left who have on white "lab" coats and baseball hats.

In the next set of photos (Figure 3-17) the change is more recent. The first photo, the one with the piles of snow, was taken in March of 1993 and the other was taken in August of 1994. In the first photo, 143a Mott is occupied by open-fronted produce stand that has all of its goods displayed on two tables in the inner sidewalk area. An employee stands between the tables as a woman looks at the fruit. Two other people talk inside the store and an older woman walks by with a red plastic bag typical of those used to hold purchases made on the block. Bags also hang from the left table and from the column in the opening. A tall wooden partition is

**Figure 3-16 -- 133-135 Mott Street  
in 1994**

also located to the left of the leftmost table. These appear often between adjacent sidewalk displays to apparently distinguish the goods of one store from the other's. (It also occurs at similar displays in San Francisco's Chinatown.)

In the back of the store a painting and a small red sign hang and further back, a shrine to a Buddha can be identified by the two orange electric lights. The store has no exterior signage other than those stating the prices of the produce. (The projecting sign on the second floor appears to be from a previous tenant, Hoi TAT Photo, Inc., that was listed in a 1991 reverse directory, but not in 1994's. (31. Cole's 1991 & 1994)) Also, two white struts hang loosely from the fire escape, suggesting that an awning like the one over the storefront to the right has been removed. The lack of this awning, has exposed the rolling security door assembly, above the store opening, that is used to close-up the store and which is a common feature on the block.

In the 1994 photo, the produce stand has been replaced by the Wen Wah Fashion Co., one of the only dry-goods shops on the face block. A red and yellow metal canopy has been put up, using the struts noted above, and from its underside, many pieces of clothing hang above the inner sidewalk. So much clothing is hanging in fact that it's very difficult to see into the open storefront. Clothing has also been hung from the now black partition between this store and the neighboring one to the left. The entry into the store has moved as a result of one large table being used to display clothing out front in-

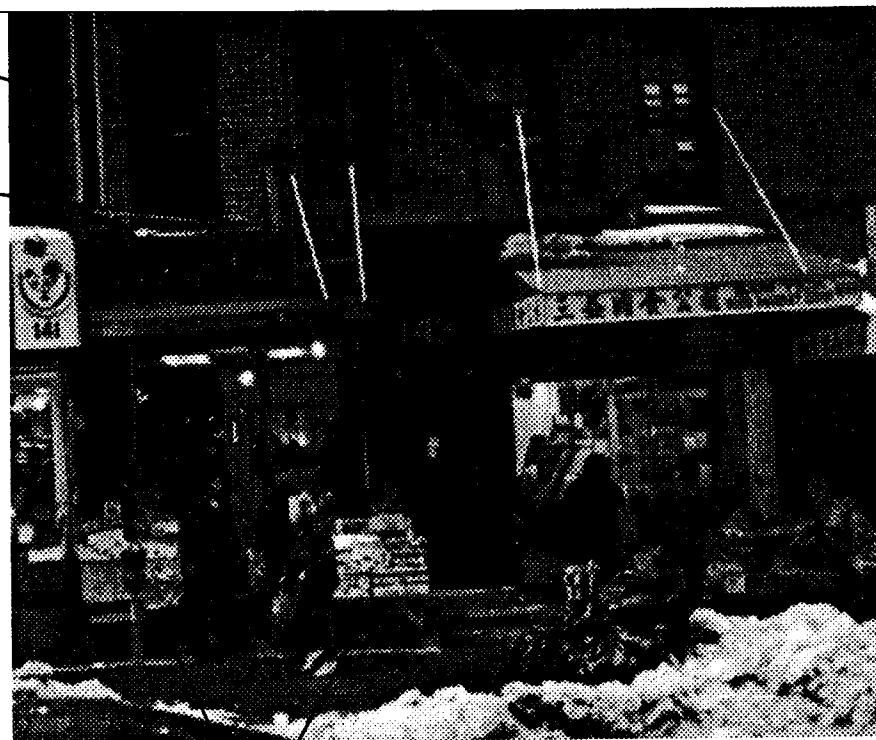
stead of the previous two. Two mats, one red and one green lie on the ground before the entry. The meaning of these is unclear however.

The tenant in 143b, the Sam Yick Food Market to the right, has a similar 9-foot frontage, and in the earlier photo it apparently has a partial window assembly set back several feet from the building's front elevation. The rolling security door is partially down and the store has a green and yellow metal awning with red lettering very similar to Wen Wah Fashion's. Unlike the 1993 tenant in 143a, Sam Yick's has refrigerated display cases in the interior of the store. So, in addition to the sidewalk display, customers can move into the storefront too. In the 1994 photo, Sam Yick's is still present and the most evident change is that a complete window and door assembly has replaced the previous partial enclosure but this assembly is still set back from the building's main elevation (note the position of the slender column).

To further describe these stores, one other view is presented of them. This one (Figure 3-18) presents a view closer to that of a person shopping on the west side of the street and it was taken in the early afternoon in August 1994. It shows how close the produce (or clothing) is to the pedestrian and several people in the foreground are apparently looking at the merchandise as they walk, even though they are already carrying bags. Several people have stopped and are looking over merchandise at Sam Yick's store (just beyond the plywood separator) and Wen Wah's clothing display is also evident. Also of note are the parked cars, vans and trucks. This view is typical of

Projecting Sign

Struts



New "Setback" Enclosure

Display Tables

Colored Mats



*Figure 3-17 -- 143 Mott Street in 1993  
(top) and 1994 (bottom)*

the street midday when most spots are taken. A handtruck also sits further down, in the outer sidewalk, an area now defined partly by parking meters.

Each of these four storefronts has been located in one of two Pre-Law tenements (see the next chapter for more about this designation). Both of these tenements have upper floor entries centered in their ground floors. In a building constructed on a lot with 25-feet of frontage, when the upper floor access also has to continue through the building to access the rear of the lot, a center entry divides the ground floor in two. This division creates two isolated storefronts on the ground floor with approximately 9-feet of frontage. An exception to this is the Cheong Charn Meat Co. (Figure 3-19 - also partly seen in Figure 3-16) which has cut through a party wall (or taken advantage of an existing opening) to occupy two 9-foot wide storefronts in two adjacent Pre-Law tenements. The buildings are quite similar, possibly built at the same time, but the division between the two buildings can be discerned above the center of the plastic awning.

However, not all Pre-Law tenements have a center entry. On the west side of Mott in fact, there are four Pre-Law tenements with center entries and five with side entries. Figure 3-20 shows a building (with similar but not the same upper floor window details as those in Figure 3-19) that has an upper floor entry located next to the party wall, on the left. The Bip Po Meat Co.'s open storefront has accordingly occupied most of the ground floor. (A portion of this store also appears in Fig. 3-16.) At the beginning of this subsection, mention was made

of the transformation of the Meitz Building, an industrial loft building that occupies at least a third of the east side of Mott Street. Figure 3-21 shows a series of photos (taken in August and November 1994 and January 1995) that trace the reconstruction of the northernmost bays of this building's ground floor. In the first photo, the original wood infill doors can still be seen behind the frames of the newly installed rolling security gates. In the next, the infill has been demolished and several new stores have been constructed and opened

The two stores on the left are more enclosed than many on the west side of the block. They use common materials, including a masonry tile used to completely obscure the original rusticated brick columns of the building and anodized aluminum door and window frames. Shortly after opening, neither store had actively setup on the sidewalk.

The storefront just to the south, partly seen in the photos of Figure 3-21 and completely in Figure 3-22, has selected a different elevational design. This store, like the Kam Lee Meat Market in Figure 3-21 occupies a storefront of about 20-feet in frontage, but it operates partly as an open storefront. No additional masonry has been used and anodized aluminum window and door frames have been

Clothes Hanging at 143 Mott



"Scprator" Board

*Figure 3-18 -- View South past 143 Mott Street in August 1994*

infilled between the original brick columns, leaving the columns visible. Aside from selling seafood inside, the store also sells fish at the sidewalk through the doors at the left of the second picture, where the employee is setting up.

and walls. The latter two stores have the standard array of scales and red plastic bags near their display tables and the last store has several potted plants out front and a prominently displayed Buddhist shrine, with two red electric lights, high on the back wall of the store.

In the southern most bay of the building, a third elevational strategy, and the most traditional, has been

Other changes have also occurred on Mott since 1993. Each of the corner buildings has had at least one new

Party Wall



*Figure 3-19 (left) -- Store Straddling Party Wall - 1993*

Upper Floor Entry

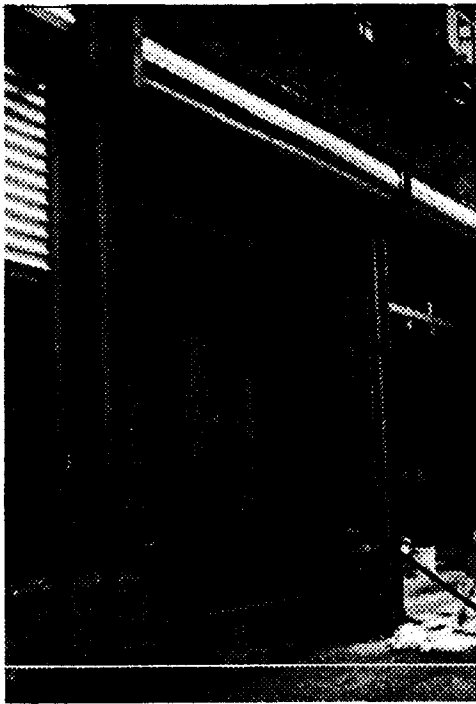


used (see Figure 4-23). Here, in half of a bay, a completely open storefront is selling fish from a display oriented toward the sidewalk. The interior of the store is used for preparation and several employees, in baseball hats, can be seen working.

storefront constructed, and in some case several have been built. (see Figure 4-7 – Mott Street Corners on pg.s 90-91) As the before-and-after views show, the last of the Italian storefronts had held onto the corner storefronts, most likely due to their frontage on Grand and Hester Streets. Fretta Brothers meat shop also had the last of the “traditional,” retractable canvas awnings noted on the face block.

The semi-fixed features of each of these new stores include, banners and signs celebrating their grand opening and many small red signs tapped to the windows

*Figure 3-20 (right) -- Open Storefront Occupying all of Building's Base*



New Metal Awning Spans the Entire Base

Only Some Signage Currently in Place. More has been added in Photo Below.

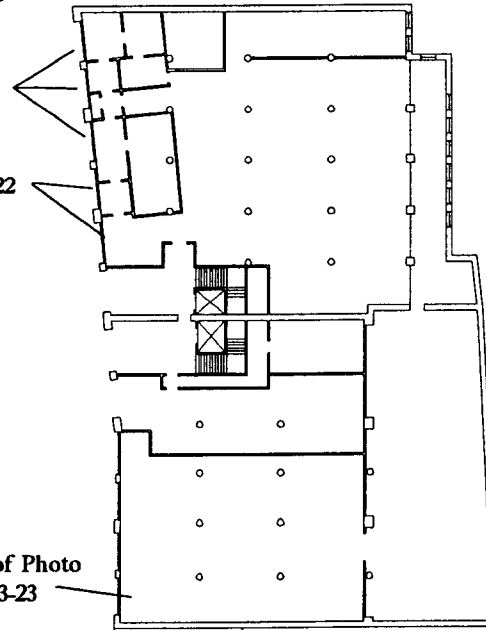
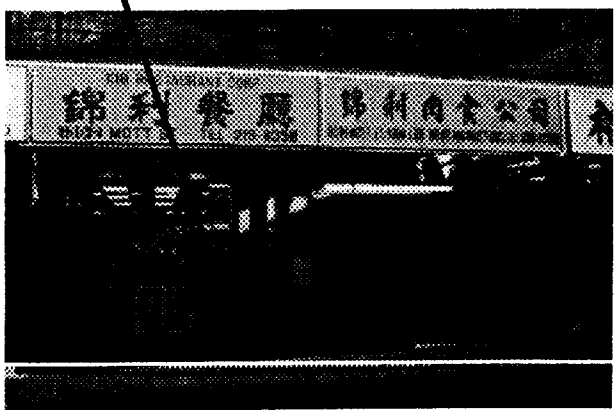
New Rolling Security Gates

Old Wood Infill Doors

All of the photos of Figure 3-21 are of these bays

Both of the photos of Figure 3-22 are of these bays

New Masonry Elevational Finish



Location of Photo in Figure 3-23

Ground Floor Plan of Meitz Building before Reconstruction

Figure 3-21 -- Transformation of the Meitz Building's Base -- 1993-1994

*Figure 3-22 (near & far right) -- Two views of a New Storefront in Meitz Building's Base - 1994*

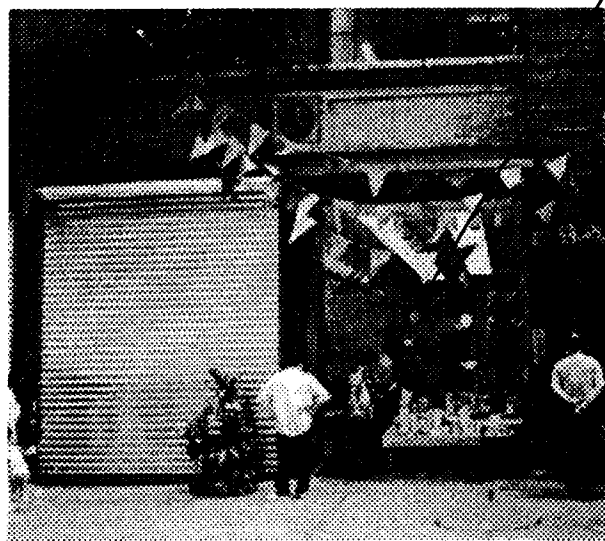


Employee Setting up a Sidewalk Display



Temporary Signage

*Figure 3-23 (near right) -- New Open Storefront in Meitz Building's Base - 1994*



Shrine on Back Wall

Woman Sitting

*Figure 3-24 (far right) -- Woman Sitting & Listening to Radio on West Side of Mott Street*



As of 1994, the only vestige of the Italian community on the Mott Street face block appears to be the occasional presence of some of the older Italian residents (an annual Feast of Saint Anthony also occurs one block further south). However, their presence appears to be very infrequent and it was noted only once in the behavioral mapping process. This instance is recorded in Figure 3-24 which shows an older woman sitting in a folding chair and listening to a portable radio. On a day that was hazy and about 90 degrees according to the field notes, she had located her chair in front of an upper floor entry and in the shade of a Chinese storefront's awning.

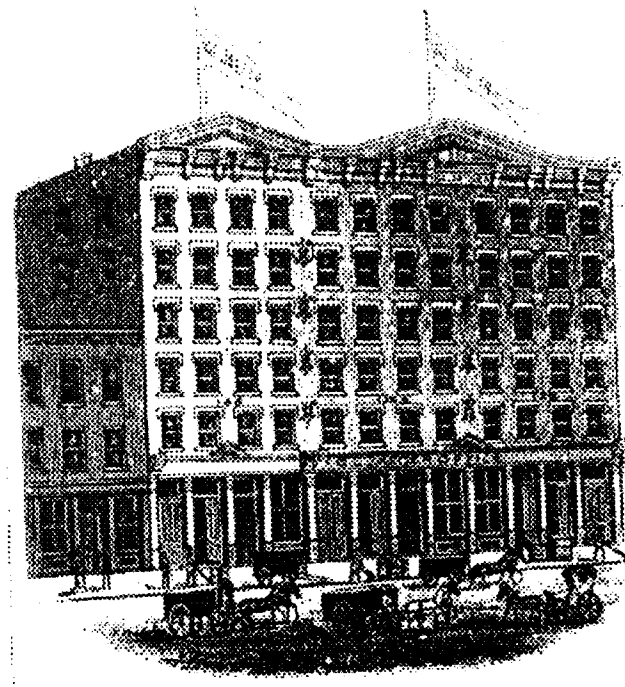
#### Mulberry Street in the 1990's

Figure 3-15 (New Ground Floor Stores) has shown that change in occupancy on the ground floor of Mulberry Street has not been as volatile as it has on Mott Street over the past two years. After the conversion of the ground floor of the Jaeger Building in the mid-1980's, only three new stores have been added to the block and none have closed. The three new stores that have opened since the beginning of the study opened in spaces that had apparently been vacant for sometime. These storefronts are also different from the others on the face block and may indicate a new trend, but this will be discussed a bit later.

The first building to be discussed is the G.L. Jaeger loft building. In the middle 1980's, the Jaeger building underwent the same transformation that the Meitz Build-

ing is currently undergoing and Figure 3-26 shows the entire Base of the Jaeger as of August 1995. Compared with the rendering of the building from the late 1800's, (Figure 3-25) the recent photo shows a significantly modified ground floor. The Neo-classical cornice has been removed and in many cases the cast-iron columns have been covered up, removed or painted. In any case, the "infill" between the exterior columns has been changed. In some places, elevator shafts have been inserted just behind the elevation, and there the infill has changed to brick surrounding the ground floor elevator door. The restaurants have generally infilled between the original columns with large pieces of plate glass. Both types of infill can be seen in Figure 3-27, (taken in December 1994) where an elevator shaft is on the left and Il Fornaio restaurant is on the right. Il Fornaio has retained the cast-iron columns, but the neighboring Costa Azzura and Paesano restaurants have covered the columns with wood. (Figure 3-28 - taken in March 1993)

These three photos of the Base of the Jaeger Building also show the use of awnings by the restaurants. Figure 4-26 shows that each restaurant has also chosen a different design strategy than the others. Four of the five have an awning that projects outward over their entry and of those, one (Pellegrino's) also has a small awning that runs horizontal to the elevation. Sorrento, in the middle of the group, has chosen a design that seems to emulate the



*Figure 3-25 -- The G.L. Jaeger Building - circa 1880*

(Source: The New York Historical Society)

Portion of the Jaeger Building  
Depicted in the 1880's Rendering



Original Storefront  
in Pre-Law Tenement

Pelligrino's

Pacsano

Costa Azzurra

Sorrento

Il Fornaio

*Figure 3-26 -- The G.L. Jaeger Building in  
August 1994*

form of the old retractable canvas awnings.

Each restaurant has chosen a different color scheme, possibly to consciously differentiate themselves. For example, Paesano's color scheme is directly related to the Italian flag and neighboring Pellegrino's is probably the furthest from an identifiably ethnic scheme. These awnings also often take the place of large signs having lettering on both their fronts and sides (the next chapter will discuss constraints on signage on this block). However, Sorrento and Il Fornaio both have horizontal signs on the old cornice line and Costa Azzura and Paesano have projecting signs. Paesano's sign is actually a large canvas banner.

In comparing Figure 3-26 to Figure 3-27 some change is apparent in the design of one of the restaurants. Il Fornaio has added a retractable canvas awning (and lights), beneath its horizontal sign. This appears to be part of a trend on the block since two other restaurants have installed similar retractable canvas awnings. Figure 3-29 shows Angelo's restaurant, further north on the block, with the old aqua-blue, plastic and metal frame awning and just after the installation of the new red, retractable canvas awning. Across the street, Sal Anthony's SPQR restaurant, which occupies a very large frontage, has also installed green canvas, retractable awnings along the length of the elevation.

These new awnings might simply represent a change in fashion, but they might also represent a movement toward a more "ethnically Italian" (or traditional NYC

Little Italy-Italian) appearance. As was noted on Mott Street, the Chinese storefronts are typically made of sheet metal or plastic stretched over a metal frame. The latter are the kind that are being replaced on Mulberry Street. This idea might also be supported by the colors that are being selected for the new canvas awnings. These colors can be identified with the colors of the Italian flag. Angelo's old awnings were aqua-colored and SPQR's old, and small, entry awning was grey/black.

If the desire for a more coherent, traditional Italian identity is partly underlying the changes, the causes of this intention might be the continuing change over of storefronts in the area to Chinese use. The recent closing of Dom's Quality Meats and Fretta Brothers, (see Figure 4-7 on pg.s 90-91) the last identifiably Italian stores on the Mott Street face block, is indicative of this change. Also, three new storefronts were noted as having been established on Mulberry Street recently. All of these stores are gift/novelty shops with little apparent connection to Little Italy, aside from their efforts to tap into the area's tourist trade.

One of these stores is the Happy Together Gifts Shopping Center next door to Angelo's restaurant (see Figure 3-29). This store has taken over the ground floor of a two-story, industrial/car storage building. Aside from the use of the color red, the graphics on its awning are unusual for Mulberry Street and its name is not evocative of an Italian heritage like the other stores, as for example, the long established E. Rossi Co. gift shop (see the corner storefront in Figure 4-10 – San Gennaro on

*Figure 3-27 (near right) -- H Fornaio Restaurant in December of 1994*

*Figure 3-28 (far right) -- Paesano Restaurant in March 1993*

Elevator to  
Upper Floor Factory

Original Cast-iron Columns  
(Painted Green)

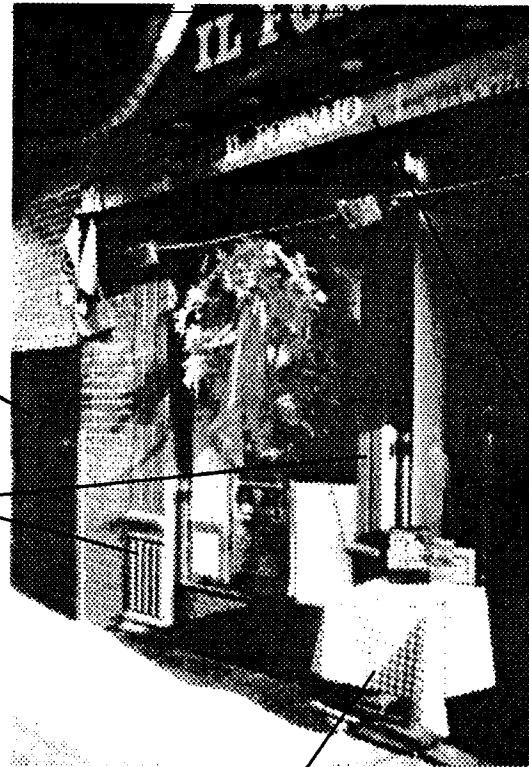


Table Setting Advertising  
The Day's Specials



Wood Elevational Finishes

New Canvas Awnings

Happy Together Gifts



*Figure 3-29 -- Angelo's with old awning (left) and with new canvas (right)*



New Gift Shops

SPQR with new  
canvas awning

*Figure 3-30 -- West Side of Mulberry -  
August 1994*

pg. 94). The other new gift shops are located in the building next door to SPQR and can be seen in Figure 3-30.

These two stores only modestly changed the previously empty storefronts, but one significant change has been made. These two storefronts now have rolling security gates above their display windows and entries. While these gates are routinely used on Mott Street, they are virtually never found on a storefront in Little Italy. As well, these shops sell merchandise that is not obviously related to Little Italy. In Figure 3-30, for example, straw hats, costume jewelry and T-shirts with the logos of Broadway Shows are evident.

Moving across the street to the restaurants in the Base of the Jaeger Building again, the semi-fixed features more commonly found on the block are evident, as is the seasonal use of the sidewalk. Figures 3-26 and 3-31 were taken on the same August day and show two different views of the sidewalk, one from across the street and one taken from a table in front of Pellegrino's restaurant.

In either view two rows of tables are apparent, one at the outer sidewalk and another in the inner sidewalk, against the building wall. The tables in the outer sidewalk zone are usually small with round or square tops and two to four chairs. In the inner sidewalk zone, two more tables are often located side-by-side which can be abutted to accommodate larger groups. The tables in the outer sidewalk zone often run continuously down the street, without interruption. Each table is easily identified with

a particular restaurant however, through table settings and ancillary elements unique to each establishment.

In Figure 3-31, for example, the table in the left-center foreground is the last table belonging to Pellegrino's, but the tables a few feet down the sidewalk are Paesano's. Pellegrino's has a colorful flowered print tablecloth, flowers and a candle on the table and the chairs are white plastic. Paesano's tables have a mono-colored pink tablecloth with a relatively spare table setting. Paesano uses several different types of chairs including: black metal folding, stained wood and white wire frame chairs. Note that there is a gap between the two restaurants' tables in the inner sidewalk. This is the location of an upper floor elevator and a useful boundary. Other indicators of ownership are the large umbrellas on the tables in the outer sidewalk zone. Each restaurant uses one design consistently, often with colors that suit the storefront's color scheme, and the umbrellas sometimes have the establishment's name printed on the valances (Sorrento, Costa Azzurra and Il Fornaio's do not).

Other frequently used semi-fixed features are plants. Pellegrino's and Paesano have hung potted plants from the underside of their awnings. Costa Azzurra, on the other hand, has used two large potted plants, in concrete planters, to define its territory. These plants can be seen best in Figure 3-26, where all of the outer sidewalk is filled with tables except between these planters. (Costa Azzurra later set up tables in this zone.)

Temporary signage is also important. In Figure 3-31,

several signs have been hung advertising the specials and the prices. Pellegrino's has hung one flat against a cast-iron column (on the left of the photo). Paesano has also hung several on the columns and has, like Costa Azzurra, hung similar, but smaller, signs from their awning.

The waiters often linger in the doorways of their respective restaurants, watching the tables and often engaging people who stop to read the menus. They also act as hosts for seating inside of the restaurant where many people choose to dine because it's air-conditioned. Even when they're inside though, people prefer to sit by the windows. (41. Restaurant Staff, personal communication 1994)

In the winter, with the absence of the sidewalk cafes, the ambience of the street is very different. Even in the winter months, not all of the semi-fixed features are removed as Figure 3-28 and especially Figure 3-27 show. Aside from the wreath hanging in front of the window at Il Fornaio, a table has been set near the door with a menu and a small sign. This is a common practice for the other restaurants too. Figure 3-28 shows the streets before the restaurants open in the late morning, when deliveries are made to both the restaurants and to the garment factories in the upper floors of the buildings. In the Jaeger Building, the restaurants' only basement access is shared with the garment factories, via the elevators. (41. Restaurant Staff, personal communication 1994)

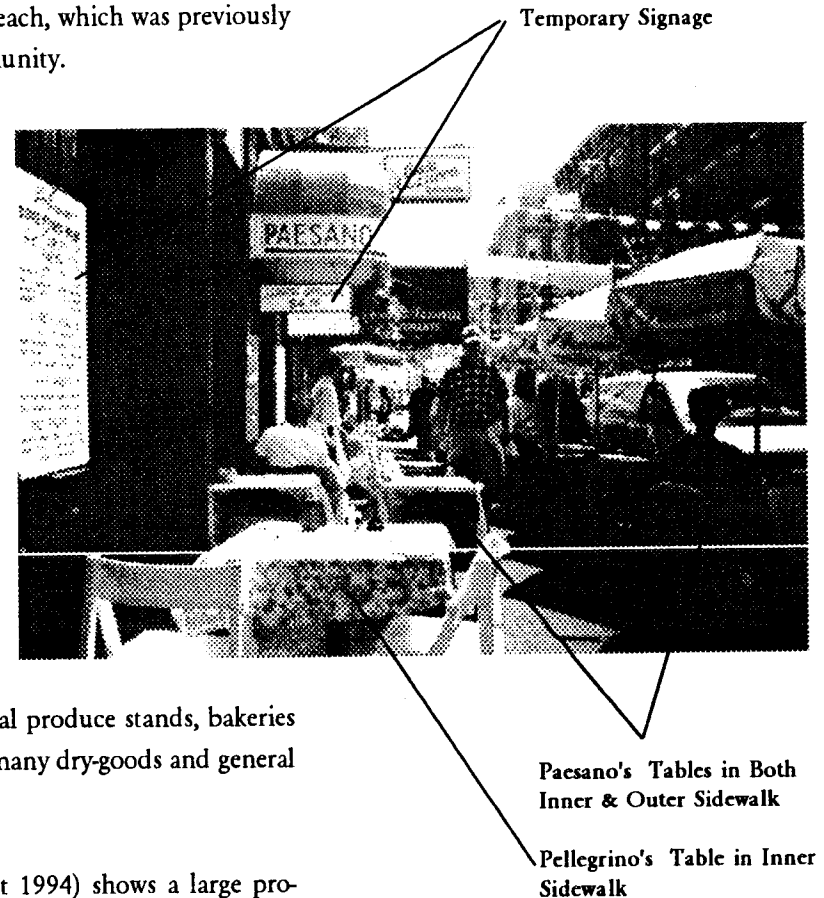
### *Similar Settings in Different Cities*

To broaden the basis for comparison, several storefronts and "streetscapes" from other cities will be discussed within this section. The most frequently referred to will be San Francisco where Chinatown has grown to occupy much of the area of North Beach, which was previously occupied by an Italian community.

#### San Francisco's Chinatown - Stockton Street

Stockton Street, in San Francisco's Chinatown, is currently a commercial street that serves both the local community and people from outside of the area looking for ethnic goods unavailable elsewhere. In this way, it is much like Mott Street in New York. Along Stockton's length are a variety of stores, including several produce stands, bakeries and food stores. It also has many dry-goods and general merchandise stores.

Figure 3-32 (taken in August 1994) shows a large produce store, the Wo Soon Produce Co., which has a completely open storefront. Merchandise is displayed both in the inner sidewalk zone and throughout the ground floor of the store. A large green canvas awning spans the



*Figure 3-31 -- View South of Sidewalk  
Cafe on Mulberry Street  
- Aug. of 1994*



Tourist(?)

Wo Soon

Boxes in Parking Strip  
& Outer Sidewalk

*Figure 3-32 -- Wo Soon Produce Co.,  
Stockton Street, San Francisco --  
August 1994*

entire storefront and large Chinese characters have been painted onto the store's clerestory. A great number of boxes have been stacked in the outer sidewalk zone and in the parking strip. These boxes and the number of shoppers have made the sidewalk crowded enough that a pedestrian (possibly a tourist) has opted to walk in the street past the storefront.

Just to the left of the Wo Soon Produce Co. is another open storefront, the Little Saigon Coffee Shop. Figure 3-33 shows this shop from the other side. This store has a red awning similar to the plastic and metal frame awnings in New York and large displays of produce are set up in the inner sidewalk zone. Customers can also walk into the storefront, as a number of people appear to have done. Boxes are also stacked on the curb and in the parking strip here and some are being used to "hold" a parking space.

An example of a dry-goods store can be seen in Figure 3-34. Here again the store has a completely open storefront and merchandise is displayed both in the inner sidewalk and in the interior of the shop. The store has a blue cloth and frame awning and a red and white temporary sign hangs from it. In lieu of rolling security gates, the store has a sliding metal gate (seen folded up at the left of the storefront).

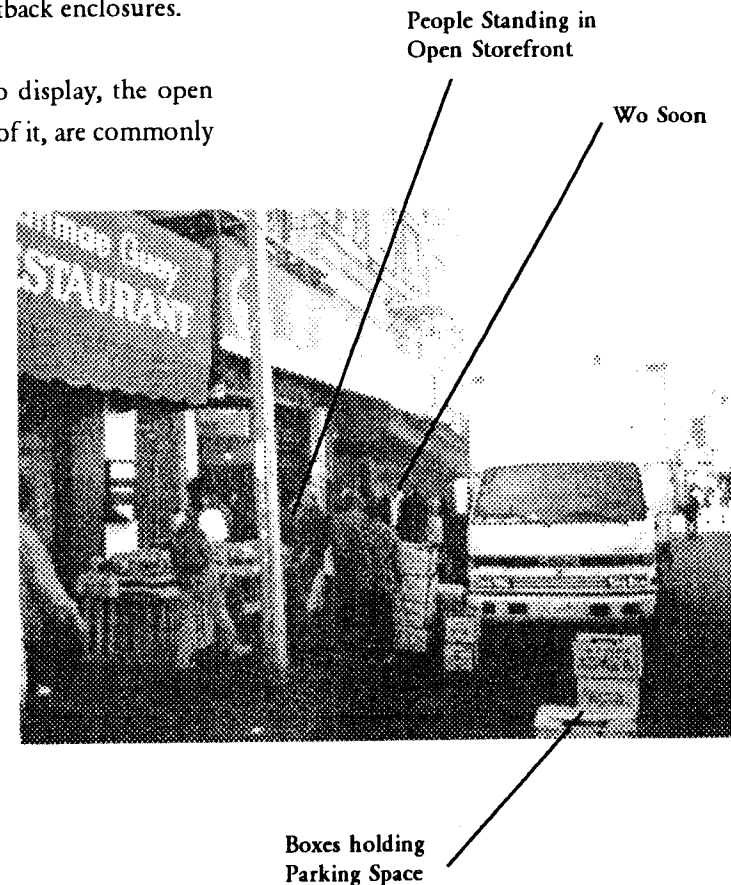
The Wing Sun Co. produce market has a setback enclosure (see Figure 3-35) similar to some of those found on Mott Street. This setback presents several "layers" of merchandise. The first being accessible directly from

the sidewalk, the second being within the building's footprint but outside of the store's enclosure and the third being within the store's enclosure (corresponding to: the right, center and left of the photo). Several corner storefronts on Stockton have similarly setback enclosures.

As these pictures are endeavoring to display, the open storefront and the setback variation of it, are commonly used in San Francisco. In the course of the project, they have also been seen in the newer Chinatowns in San Francisco's Richmond District, Oakland, CA and Flushing, NY. Interestingly, two people who were interviewed for this project observed that the use of open storefronts in San Francisco has only recently been revived. Apparently not uncommon in the turn-of-the century, pre-fire Chinatown, (34. Tchen 1984) the practice faded until after the post-1965 immigration influx. The new immigrants then resumed the use of them. (41. Lau; Choy, personal communication 1994)

San Francisco's North Beach (Little Italy)

San Francisco's Italian community began to dwindle about the same time as Little Italy in New York and the adjacent Chinatown expanded into North Beach in a simi-



*Figure 3-33 -- View of Wo Soon Produce and Neighboring Open Storefront -- August 1994*

**Figures 3-34 & 35 -- (near right) Open Storefront Selling Dry Goods; (far right) Between the sidewalk and the Enclosure of a Setback Storefront.**

*Both Photos taken on Stockton Street, San Francisco - August 1994*



Sliding Metal Security Gate



Sidewalk

Setback Storefront Enclosure

Large Openings in Wall with "Open-air" Seating Behind



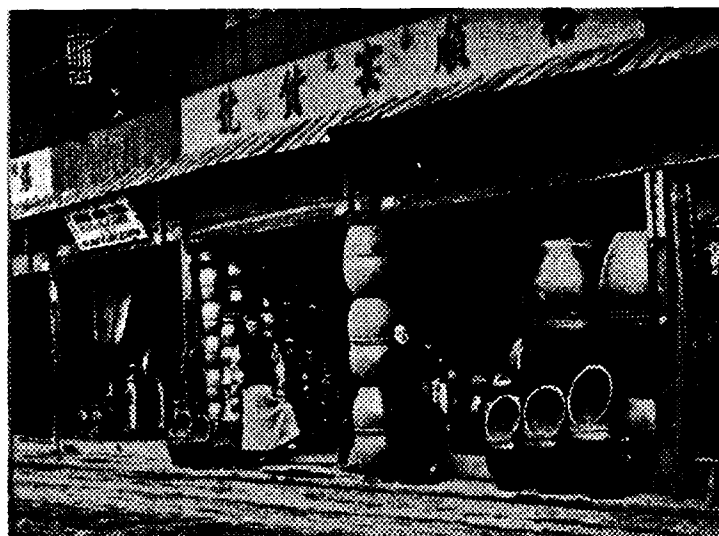
Large Sliding Windows



**Figures 3-36 & 37 -- Two Views of Italian Restaurants on Grant Avenue, San Francisco.**  
*Near right - Elevation with large openings*  
*Far right - Interior with Sliding Windows*

lar fashion. However, in a quick survey of the area, there doesn't appear to be a close analog to Mulberry Street. The area hasn't really assumed the role of "ethnic marketplace" as much as it has of a fashionable, downtown residential and bar district. Considering North Beach's association with the "Bohemian" Beat movement of the 1950 and 1960's, the area could probably be considered more closely analogous to New York City's Greenwich

trated as on Mulberry Street and the sidewalk cafe is not a major feature of these restaurants. Figure 3-36 shows a portion of one of these restaurants on Grant Avenue, a street that runs parallel to Stockton and that was once a major Italian retail street. (41. North Beach Resident, personal communication 1994) This restaurant shows a common feature of the restaurants in North Beach, large windows that permit the restaurant to open up partially



Village, which was also the location of an old Italian community. Like Greenwich Village, North Beach's Italian community has largely been assimilated and their cultural landscape is gone – with the exception of the buildings that they built following the fire of 1906.

However, like New York there are Italian restaurants in the area that cater to downtown office workers, tourists, college students, etc., but they are not nearly as concen-

to the sidewalk. In this view, the two windows on the left, beneath the red, white and green cornice-like element, are completely open. Other restaurants, like the Viva Caffè (Figure 3-37), have sliding windows that do not entirely provide a clear opening.

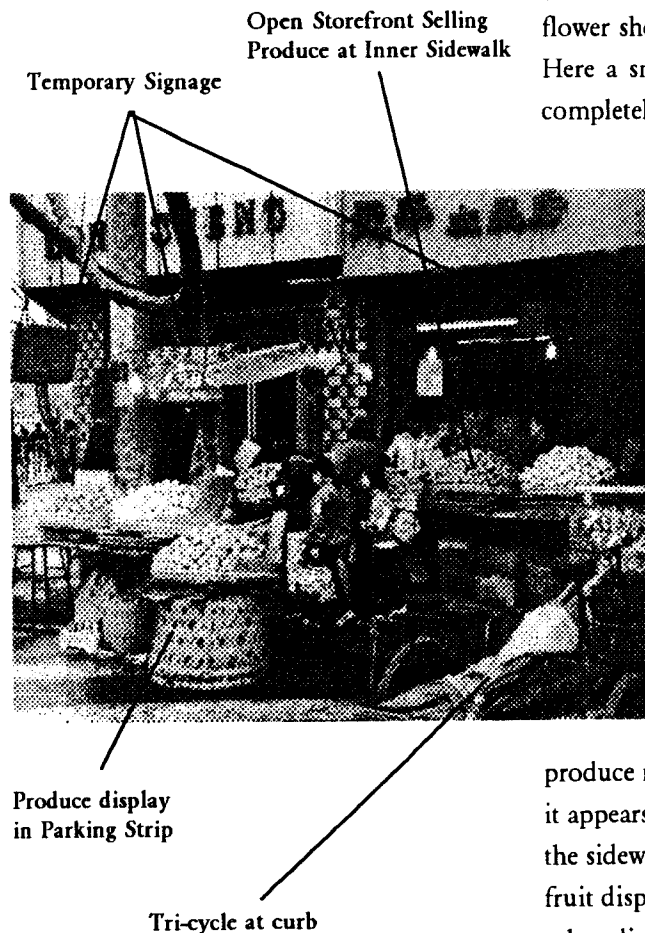
China & the Pacific Rim

The open storefront is a relatively old method of setting

*Figures 3-38 & 39 -- Two Views of 19th Century Open Storefronts in Southern China.*

*Left - Painting of Artificial Flower Shop in Canton* (Source: 3. Crosby 1979)

*Right - Pottery Shop* (Source 3. Beers 1978)



**Figure 3-40 -- Open Storefront in Contemporary (Eastern) China**  
(Source: 3. Simmonds 1990)

up a store in southern China. Figures 3-38 and 3-39 show two 19th century open storefronts. The first is one of numerous paintings produced by Chinese artists for English merchants in Canton between 1825 and 1830. (3. Forbes 1979) It shows the interior of an artificial flower shop but it is the exterior that is most relevant. Here a small awning extends along the length of the completely open storefront and a sign hangs from the awning's left support. Another sign is propped up against the wall. The second figure (3-39) is a photo of several open storefronts in southern China. These storefronts are similar to the one in the painting except that goods appear to be oriented more toward the street than the interior and a large sign appears above the awning (another sign appears below the awning further to the left, and has a large quantity of English text.)

Figure 3-40 shows a more recent view of a street in eastern China (the location was not precisely identified in the source). Here a produce market operates out of an open storefront and it appears that most of the merchandise is displayed on the sidewalk only. The inner sidewalk has large piles of fruit displayed on a table top and baskets beneath. Another display sits in the parking strip near a large tri-cycle. Temporary signs are stuck in the fruit, hung from the display table and hung on the tree. Within the store, what seem to be bags hang next to a light bulb and a retractable awning extends over the store.

### Summary - Chapter Three

In this chapter, 230 years of change was analyzed on Mott and Mulberry Streets. In looking at change through the five-scale model of the environment, several general observations become apparent. These observations, by scale are:

**Streets** - The Streets have remained virtually unchanged dimensionally throughout their history.

**Blocks** - Since they are involved with the Streets in a zero-sum relationship, the Blocks have also not changed dimensionally through their history.

**Lots** - This is the first (and largest) of the five scales to have exhibited considerable change. Only eleven of the roughly 25 by 100-foot original lots appear to remain in their original configuration. The other 53 original lots have undergone a series of lot reconfigurations and consolidations. These reconfigurations and consolidations have resulted in a markedly coarser array of lots on the face blocks.

**Buildings** - Two generations of buildings have been constructed on the face blocks. The first were small, often wood structures that housed residences and businesses. After a period of additions and construction of buildings in the backyards of these buildings, a new generation of large buildings replaced the majority of the original structures. The new buildings generally occupied a greater percentage of the lot, were taller and

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were either occupied by ground-floor retail and upper-floor residential uses or they were exclusively industrial. Building-scale construction on the face blocks ended around the turn of this century.

**Smaller Than Buildings** - Change on these two face blocks was concentrated in this scale during the 20th century. The Base of the buildings was the locus of change in the public domain and numerous modifications have been, and are currently being, made to ground floor uses, elevations and floor plans. Change has also occurred in the usage of the space in front of the buildings. These changes have often been related to the changes within the Base of the buildings.

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## **MOTT & MULBERRY STREETS: THE ROLE OF FORMAL RULE SYSTEMS**

Richard Tseng-yu Lai (38. 1988) has identified two different bases that urban design practice is typically founded upon. The first, and the more traditional, basis is that of urban design as a "... progeny and variation of architecture, albeit at a generally greater scale and complexity." The second basis is that of urban design as an outgrowth of public policy. (see also 38. Barnett 1974 & 1982) If the material discussed in the previous chapter was to be classified according to these criteria, it would likely be identified with the former basis. Its discussion of change in the physical/tangible elements of the environment over time is a perspective that is approachable from the project-oriented, single-client position that most architects hold with regard to urban design.

This chapter however, will adopt the latter basis and look at change in the same environment from the perspective of public policy or more precisely, of the law. This perspective is an important one to adopt in discussing the creation of cultural landscapes because as Richard Tseng-yu Lai (38. 1988) has argued, and Robert Greenstreet (38. 1991) has expressed, law "... exerts a profound impact upon the city ... (and it has) shaped the city to a far greater degree than is commonly believed ... " Accordingly, with regard to this study, new populations migrating to existing urban neighborhoods since the mid-nineteenth century often not only inherited a stock of predetermined fixed features (streets, blocks, buildings, etc.), they have also inherited an array of governmental controls that constrain the use or modification of those fixed features, and semi-fixed and non-fixed features as well.

The potency of law with regard to the design of cultural landscapes has not gone unnoticed of course, and the most obvious of contemporary land-use controls, zoning, has expressly manipulated cultural landscapes for nearly 80 years. (38. Crane 1960) Lately contemporary urban design practice has also, to paraphrase Jonathan Barnett, shifted to designing cities through the application of codes and regulations, in lieu of designing individual buildings. (see 38. Barnett, 1974 & 1982; Williams, Kellogg & LaVigne, 1987; or 40. Krieger & Lennertz, 1991.)

However, those regulations, which have been expressly developed to manipulate the cultural landscape, are not the only regulations warranting consideration. The law is often an "... indeliberate and even accidental ordainer of city form ... " (38. Lai 1988) Many regulations that ostensibly concern only public health, morals, welfare and safety, also often have specific impacts on the urban environment and are relevant to a study of cultural landscapes. A small body of previous work has considered these issues in a variety of settings (see for example, 38. Hakim, 1979

& 1994; Rigau, 1994; Plunz, 1993 & 35. 1990).

Mott and Mulberry Street, by virtue of their comparatively long history and by their situation in New York City, present an interesting opportunity to observe the history of regulations that have had both deliberate and unintentional impacts on the cultural landscape, from an urban design perspective. (It is important to reiterate that this project is concerned with cultural landscapes that are comprised of fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed features. The array of applicable regulations is accordingly broader than if the study had the more common focus on fixed features alone.) Among the regulations identified as having had a role in the manipulation of the cultural landscape are:

- The Zoning Resolution (as first enacted in 1916 and revised in 1961)
- The Little Italy Special District (a "special zoning technique")
- Building Laws (known after the consolidation of New York City in 1897, as the Building Code)
- Housing Laws
- Peddling/Vending/Retailing Laws/Controls (including licensing requirements placed upon these activities by public agencies like the NYC Department of Health.)

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#### - Language/Signage Laws

#### - Traffic Laws/Controls

Others that will not be explored here, but that would warrant further consideration are: any fire regulations outside of the aforementioned laws, labor or "factory" laws, the new Americans with Disabilities Act, and any laws designed to control public assembly, e.g., laws concerning loitering (see 22. Stains 1994).

In approaching the study area from the perspective of the law, the same analytical devices used in the previous chapter will be applied here, i.e., the varying scales and the distinction between fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed features. As will be shown, some regulations are wide reaching in their scope and they span several of the scales used (i.e., Street, Block, Lot, Building, Smaller Than Building).

It should also be reiterated that this analysis does not present a complete picture of the regulatory framework in effect on the study site, either currently or through history. It is also important to recall that this study is focused on the public domain and accordingly, only elements of the relevant regulations that affect this portion of the urban environment will be addressed. Other limitations of this study include a gap, as of this writing, with regard to the building laws early in the 20th century and, due to time constraints, only a brief consideration of the amendment process associated with Zoning.

## Streets and Blocks

Of all of the components of the inherited environment comprising Mott and Mulberry Streets, the Streets and Blocks have been demonstrated, in the previous chapter, to be the least changed dimensionally over time. One explanation for this is the opposing role that these two categories typically occupy with regard to public/private ownership. Directly related to the prominent role of property rights in American Constitutional Law (i.e., Articles 5 and 14 of the *Bill of Rights*), legal boundaries at the juncture of the public/private domains have been demonstrated historically as being remarkably durable. As Christine Meisner Rosen (26. 1986) and T.F. Reddaway (26. 1965) have demonstrated, private property boundaries, in both American and English cities, have resisted public encroachments even when substantial portions of the urban environment were razed following massive conflagrations. A source of great frustration to some Progressives and Reformers, (26. Rosen 1986) the only recourse to markedly changing urban structure at such a fundamental level is via governmental fiat.

This authority has been mustered for particular projects on the Lower East Side of New York for both large-scale Urban Renewal and transportation projects. These projects have, at the scale of Streets and Blocks, manifested themselves in street closings and widenings, and in the creation of "super-blocks." However, this activity has been largely confined to the areas east of the Bowery, on the old DeLancey and Rutgers estates. (See Figure 2-1 - The Colonial Estates on pg. 16) The site of the initial

Bayard platting has not undergone such transformation. (Robert Moses did propose the Lower Manhattan Expressway in the 1950's, which would have cut through Little Italy and SoHo, but the communities mobilized and successfully opposed the plan. Jane Jacobs' 1961 book: *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was at least in part inspired by this battle.)

With this in mind, the discussion will focus on some of the regulatory powers that wield authority concerning the use of the Street and the Block more than their modification. However, much of the regulatory effort is focussed on smaller-scale environmental features and they will be discussed later in the finer-scale sections of this chapter, as appropriate.

## Streets

There is a host of public, semi-public and private enterprises that have jurisdiction over portions of the Street as a large-scale entity, but in the scope of this study and at this scale of analysis, the purview of two agencies is of primary concern. These agencies are the New York City Department of Transportation, which maintains the local city streets, and the Department of Traffic, which enforces traffic regulations. In terms of fixed features, the Department of Transportation determines, in part, the width of the thoroughfare versus the sidewalk within the right-of-way. It also determines the use of these features with regard to traffic flow and the use of air-rights over the thoroughfare.

Both Mott and Mulberry are one-way streets (Mott containing southbound traffic and Mulberry, northbound) which, aside from their direction, is typical of most of the streets in Manhattan. Together with the decision to permit limited parallel parking on both sides of the streets, this has created a single, narrow traffic lane through both face blocks. Traffic regulations also endeavor to limit truck traffic to local delivery service on both streets in order to minimize through traffic to and from the nearby Manhattan Bridge. Parking, on both Mott and Mulberry, is restricted on the east side of the streets during certain hours, (9am-6pm on Mott and 8am-6pm on Mulberry) to accommodate delivery trucks. The west side of both streets is restricted by metered parking (with 1-hour meters on Mott, and 2-hour meters on Mulberry).

### *Blocks*

The most important regulatory device designed to act at, or near, the block scale is the Zoning Resolution, which was first applied in New York City in 1916. The "district" level control of the Zoning Resolution of 1916, in some ways, was the logical culmination of decades of increasingly stringent, public control at the building-scale. As New York City's Commission on the Building Districts and Restrictions argued in support of the original Resolution:

Special regulations have . . . been passed with relation to tenement houses, factories, garages, theatres

and others classes of buildings. Such regulations are often rendered wholly or partially ineffective by failure to control the environment of the building. The Tenement House Law provides for minimum size yards and outer courts which really depend for their adequacy on their being supplemented by similar yards and courts in adjoining lots. If, however, a towering loft building or warehouse is built next to a tenement, the standards of light and air aimed at in the Tenement Houses Law are impaired. (38. Commission on Building Districts and Restrictions 1916)

The aim of the resolution was far greater than resolving issues of frustrated attempts to provide individual tenement houses with adequate light and air though. It was also motivated generally by the era's progressive, Reform ideology and more specifically, by a desire to thwart change in certain areas and to mitigate the effect of activities that were considered to be inappropriately commingled. These aims were readily displayed in disdainful statements made by the Commission, like "(t)his Bronx street was once lined with private residences, each with its lawn and shade trees. Had it been protected against the first small store it would have never have come to this (referring to a photo of a push-cart lined, retail-street scene.) Another reads, "(s)tores on the ground floor have brought these push carts with a consequent congestion of sidewalk and street. Tenants are deprived of their legitimate use of the street and children are robbed of the only 'playground' they might have. Drivers of fire apparatus hate these streets." (38. Commission on Building Districts and Restrictions 1916)

The landmark, 1926 *Ambler Realty Co. v. Village of Euclid*, Ohio Supreme Court decision expresses similar sentiments while addressing the broader concerns of health, safety and welfare. Affirming the implementation of Euclid's zoning ordinance and zoning in general, it states that:

...the segregation of residential, business and industrial buildings will make it easier to provide fire apparatus suitable for the character and intensity of the development in each section; that it will increase the safety and security of home life; greatly tend to prevent street accidents, especially to children, by reducing traffic and resulting confusion in residential sections; decrease noise and other conditions which produce and intensify nervous disorders; preserve a more favorable environment in which to rear children, etc. With particular reference to apartment houses, it is pointed out that (in) the development of detached house sections . . . very often the apartment house is a mere parasite, constructed to take advantage of the open spaces and attractive surroundings created by the residential character of the district. (38. Haar & Wolf 1989, pg. 186)

To accomplish these large-scale goals, the New York City's municipal government had to be granted the authority to regulate construction within the city by the State Legislature. In granting this authority, the Legislature essentially defined the means and methods available to the City:

The board of estimate and apportionment shall have power to regulate and limit the height and bulk of buildings hereafter erected and to determine the area of yards, courts and open spaces. The board may divide the city into districts of such number, shape and area as it may deem best . . . The regulations... shall be uniform for each class of buildings throughout each district. The regulations in one or more districts may differ from those in other districts. Such regulations shall be designed to secure safety from fire and other dangers and to promote the public health and welfare . . . The board of estimate and apportionment may regulate and restrict the location of trades and industries and the location of buildings designed for specified uses . . . Such regulations shall be designed to promote the public health, safety and general welfare . . . (38. New York State Legislature 1916; ch. 497)

As applied in New York City zoning was initially used to “. . . reinforce existing land use patterns, not to predict future ones . . .” (38. Kelly 1988) and it was not retroactive. (38. Commission on Building Districts and Restrictions, 1916) The mixed residential, commercial and industrial character of Mott and Mulberry Streets and their proximity to the central business district, evidently resulted in the streets' inclusion in a large, unrestricted zone. The unrestricted zone was one of three generic zones defined by the 1916 Resolution. The other two, progressively more use-exclusive, zones were “business” and “residential.” Future development in the unrestricted zones was assumed by the Commission to

be for industrial uses. (38. Commission on Building Districts and Restrictions 1916)

As the quoted section of the Enabling Act suggested, in addition to use, zoning would be implemented by controls on height and setbacks. Mott and Mulberry Streets were allocated to a "2" zone regarding height and a B zone regarding setbacks. This meant that any future buildings could reach a height of twice the thoroughfare that they fronted on and the most significant impact of the B zone, according to the Commissioners, was that even industrial buildings had to have a modest rear setback if they backed-up to another lot. This rear setback had to begin 18-feet above the height of the curb in front of the building, which permitted 100% lot coverage on the ground floor. (38. Commission on Building Districts and Restrictions 1916) An example of this coverage and setback can be seen in Figure 4-1 (Meitz Building Rear Setback) which depicts a loft building that generally conforms to this envelope even though it was constructed before the Resolution was adopted.

However, since large-scale construction on the face blocks of Mott and Mulberry Streets has been almost nonexistent since 1914, the restrictions of the 1916 Resolution had limited physical impact on the cultural landscape. The Resolution's lack of amortization\* of non-conformities has resulted in "(z)oning (having) far less relevance or influence where there is little incentive for development." (38. Kintish & Shapiro 1993) It is also possible that the ordinance somehow discouraged development, but most discussions of the 1916 Resolution note its

generally accepted leniency in terms of limiting bulk (38. Strickland 1993; Makielski 1966) and virtually any use could have been made of the unrestricted zone. However, this greater degree of flexibility could also have discouraged some development.

In 1961, after a 45 year period in which over 2,500 amendments were made to the original Resolution, (38. NYC Planning Commission 1985; Marcus 1993) a comprehensive revision of the Zoning Resolution was adopted. Among the significant revisions relevant to this study was the replacement of the height and setback restrictions with Floor Area Ratio (FAR) bulk controls and the re-conceptualizing of the three generic zones. In place of the residential, business and unrestricted zones, the 1961 Resolution created the broad categories of residential, commercial and manufacturing. Noting that the 1916 Resolution did not account for finer-grain control of use, the three 1961 categories were subdivided into 14 residential, 8 commercial and 3 manufacturing zones.

*\* When discussing zoning amortization concerns "... the gradual phasing out of previously existing non-conforming land uses." (38. Lai 1988, pg. 139; see also Haar & Wolf 1989) The term has apparently been derived from a similar concept used in finance involving the gradual "extinguishment" of a debt.*

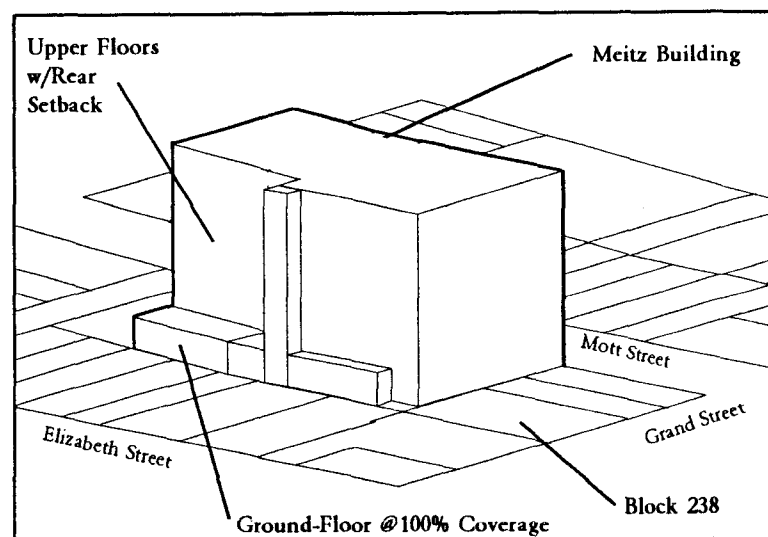


Figure 4-1 -- Meitz Building Rear Setback

Each of the subdivisions could now effect varying, and possibly gradated, intensities of use. For example, among the commercial zones, C1 is for local, neighborhood-oriented, retail use, while C8 is for heavy service (verging on industrial) use only. (38. Strickland 1993; NYC Planning Commission 1988)

Mott and Mulberry Street are currently considered to be part of a C-6-2G zone, a zone established for "high bulk commercial uses" outside the central business district. Within this zone, the blocks can house, as-of-right, a broad range of new commercial and residential, but not industrial, uses. (41. Young, personal communication 1995) However, as discussed above, the Resolution is not retroactive, (38. NYC Planning Commission, 1988) and since most of the buildings on Mott and Mulberry Streets were constructed prior to the enactment of the original 1916 Resolution, many buildings do not conform to the prescribed commercial or residential land-uses. These non-conforming uses, which were permitted as-of-right until the 1961 rezoning, involve primarily manufacturing, and have been grandfathered into the zone. However, if the buildings or spaces housing these uses are converted to a conforming use, the space cannot revert back to the non-conforming use. (41. Young, personal communication 1995) Amortization of non-conforming uses has been implemented in some cities, but the constitutionality of such a decree has generally been held to be conditional to the potential re-use of the structure for a conforming use. (38. Lai 1988) In New York, even amortization clauses limited to signage in the 1961 Zoning Resolution were hotly contested prior to its adop-

tion. (38. Makielski 1966)

In 1977, as was discussed in Chapter Two, the Little Italy Special District was adopted. This district is an "overlay" on the area's current C-6-2G zone. Special districts can be seen partly as location-specific attempts to counteract the influence of the 1961 Zoning Resolution by encouraging more contextual development through the reintroduction of building height and setback requirements. The Resolution's emphasis on FAR requirements had often resulted in the construction of buildings that were "out of character" with existing development. (38. Marcus 1993)

Due to limited, new, large-scale construction on Mott and Mulberry Streets, these contextual regulations have also had little impact on the study area. The Little Italy Special District, following the lead of the 1961 Resolution and of the City's earlier use of the Special District technique, has imposed some new requirements that have had significant impact on the study area's cultural landscape. These requirements operate largely at the Smaller Than Buildings scale though, where the (re)construction cycle often operates at a faster pace, as the previous chapter demonstrated.

### **Lots and Buildings**

Like Streets and Blocks, there is a reciprocal relationship between the two categories of Lots and Buildings. Accordingly, the discussion here will largely tend to fo-

cus on buildings with the lot playing an ancillary role.

## *Zoning*

Zoning determines the use, "... height, length and bulk of a building and its placement on the lot ..." (38. NYC Planning Commission 1988) and it is through these building level controls that zoning also affects both the Street and Block scales of the framework model. Accordingly, much of the discussion relevant to Buildings and Lots has already been addressed. To quickly summarize the zoning regulations that have been placed upon Mott and Mulberry Streets:

### 1916 Zoning Resolution

Unrestricted Zone: Building height was limited to twice the width of the street fronted. Setback rules largely affected side and rear lot areas. Ground floors could occupy 100% of the lot and a rear setback had to occur in the rear of the lot above 18'. (38. Commission on Building Districts and Restrictions 1916)

### 1961 Zoning Resolution

C-6-2G Zone: Commercial FAR = 6.0 (7.2 with bonus) and Residential FAR = .94 to 6.02 (38. NYC Planning Commission 1988)

The C-6-2G zone requires (as indicated by the "G") a permit for the conversion of a non-residential

building to a residential use. However, the city is endeavoring to remove this requirement. (41. Young, personal communication 1995)

### Special District

Little Italy Special District: Maximum height is limited to 7 stories, coverage is restricted to 60 to 70 percent of the lot, the building must maintain the "streetwall" and only "limited" recesses are permitted on the front elevation. (38. Ramati 1981) The coverage requirements are also not applicable for the ground floor up to 23 feet above the curb, i.e., the ground floor can achieve 100% coverage.

### *Building Laws & the Building Code*

As mentioned above, zoning is only a portion of the long history of building regulation in New York. As early as 1648, local law prohibited the construction of wood and plaster chimneys. (35. Comer 1942; Plunz 1990) In the 18th century, Hendrick Rutgers placed restrictive covenants in his leases limiting his tenants' construction activities with regard to materials, siting, and massing. (32. Blackmar 1989) Initially, public regulation was of a more limited scope than Rutgers' covenants and it appears to have been largely targeted at the prevention of fire. Major fires had occurred in New York City in 1776, 1811, 1828, 1835 and 1845 (35. Plunz 1990) and it is probably not coincidental that laws regulating the thicknesses, materials and method of construction of

exterior walls were enacted in 1813, 1822, 1823 and 1830. (35. Comer 1942) Another was enacted in 1849 that mandated that within the city "(a)ll dwelling houses, store, storehouses, and all other buildings . . . be made and constructed . . . of stone, brick or other fireproof materials . . ." This law also prohibited the relocation of wood-frame buildings, within the City's fire limits (then occupying the roughly the southern fourth of Manhattan Island and considerably beyond the study area), from one lot to another and greatly limited their expansion opportunities, including a height restriction of 35 feet. (35. New York State Legislature 1849, ch.84)

These laws were superseded in 1860 by what has been called a "... more or less complete building code for the city . . ." (35. Comer 1942) This Act refined the constraints of the 1849 Act to read "... all outside or party walls of every such dwelling house, store, store-house, or other building, shall be constructed of stone, brick or iron . . ." (35. New York State Legislature 1860, ch.470) By limiting the controls to the exterior walls, an essentially non-fireproof building could still be constructed, with regard to its interior structure and finishes. This Act roughly coincided with the beginning of a period of construction that would be noted for the use of elaborate cast-iron facades. (Just north of the study area is a historic district of loft buildings called, "The Cast-Iron District." (32. Gayle & Gillion, 1974)) Within the study area, a significant change of the building stock was also under way between 1855 to 1914. (see Figure 3-7 – Face Block Buildings Over Time, on pg. 40) Several manufacturing loft buildings were constructed during this pe-

riod, as were many new front-lot tenements. The street elevations of these buildings, in conformance with the building law, were largely built of brick and ultimately all but one of the many wood buildings on the two face blocks were replaced.

The building laws were again amended in 1862 and 1866 and again in 1871. The latter of these amendments apparently had the most impact on the cultural landscape at the building scale. In this version, non-fireproof buildings were limited in width. (35. Fryer 1898) This would appear to be an extension of a requirement of the 1849 Building Act which required an intermediate firewall in dwelling houses or storehouses over thirty feet wide. This wall was intended to reduce the amount of unfireproofed open space within the interior of the building. This firewall requirement and the width restriction possibly explains the division, by a firewall, of the visually-unified (in elevation) Meitz Building, (128-130 Mott Street) into two functional halves in plan. (See the plan included in Figures 3-21 on pg. 58 or 5-5 on pg. 111) The building occupies two unconsolidated lots and the maximum width placed upon buildings might have effectively placed an upper limit on lot consolidation for a time.

The next significant revision of the building laws occurred in 1885, which included a maximum height limit of 85 feet for non-fireproof buildings. This limitation was changed to 70 feet in 1886 and then relaxed to 75 feet in 1897. The latter modification of the height limit, Fryer (35. 1898) noted, ended a 5 year period in which the building laws remained relatively unchanged. This

duration apparently struck him as unusual and with the consolidation of the cities of Brooklyn and New York in 1897, considerable modification of the laws continued. In this year, the consolidated City was granted the authority to issue building regulations on the municipal level and the ensuing regulations were no longer contained within the City's Charter, but were issued as an independent document, the Building Code. (35. Fryer 1898) With regard to height limits in the study area, most significantly, the industrial Mietz Building was apparently constructed under the height restrictions imposed in either 1886 or 1897. Many of the later tenement buildings on the face blocks, constructed just after the turn of the century, were subject to a different set of height restrictions contained within the State's Housing Laws, which will be addressed in the next subsection.

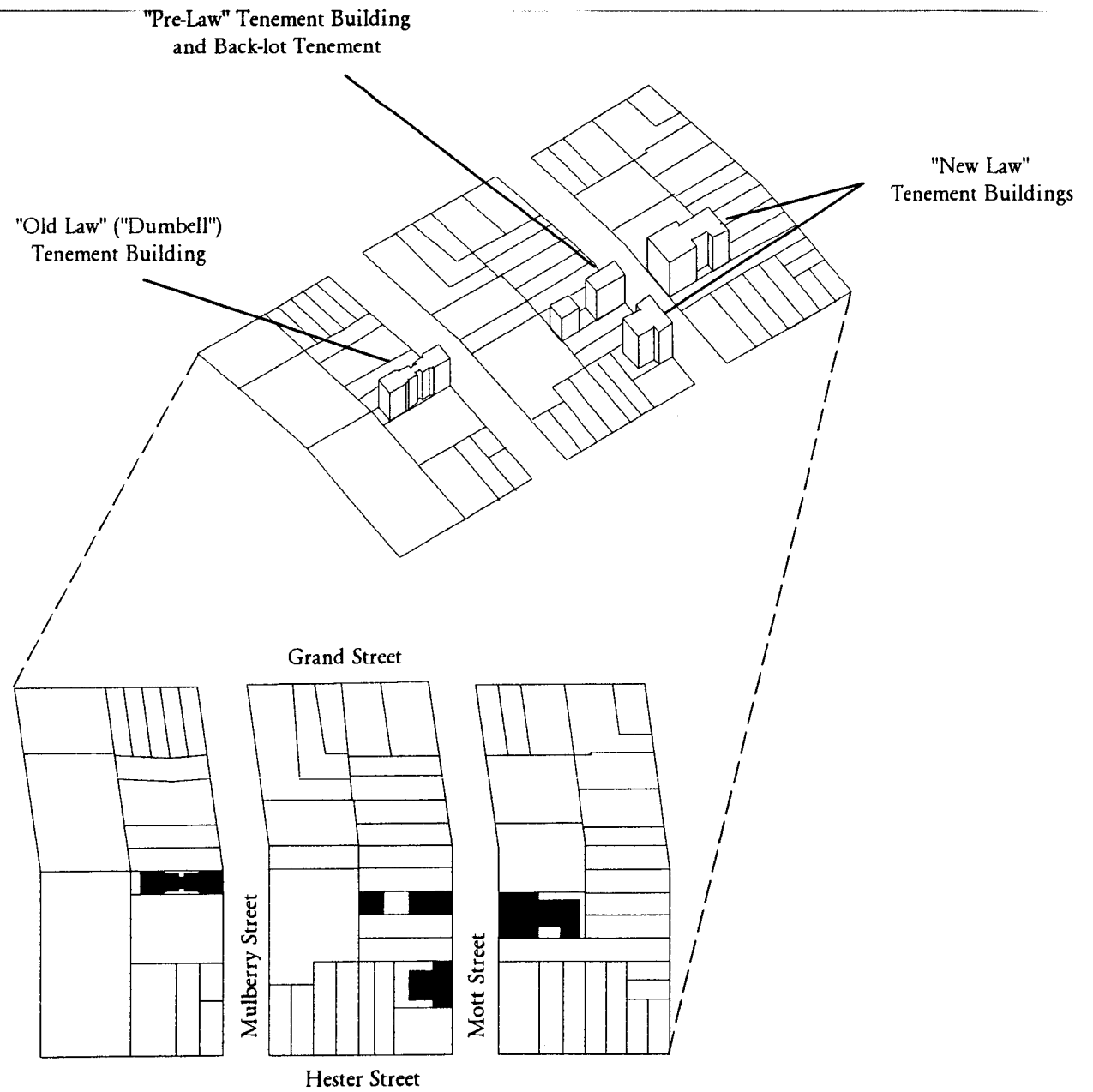
The City's Building Code was revised in 1938 and again in 1968. The 1968 Building Code was last amended in 1993. (35. New York City 1993) However, these revisions had little impact on the Building scale due to the almost total absence of large scale construction on the study area after 1914.

### *Housing Laws*

Fire was not the only concern in the 19th century that generated legislative action with regard to building construction. As many of the original buildings, constructed in the 18th and early 19th century, were replaced by

large tenement buildings, concern about the effects of inadequate light and air on the health of their occupants, in addition to fire prevention, instigated the passage of a series of increasingly stringent housing laws. The first of which was the Tenement House Act of 1867 which, among other requirements, dictated the placement and minimum size of window openings and required an airshaft to ventilate any room smaller than 100 square feet that "...does not communicate directly with the external air." The law also mandated sideyard access to rear lot tenements - in single-family dwelling to tenement conversions or in new tenement construction - and required a rear setback for new rear-lot tenements. (35. New York State Legislature 1867, ch.908)

The Tenement House Act of 1879 actually consisted of several amendments to the 1867 Act. These amendments set a minimum rear setback of ten feet for tenement or lodging houses, and restricted total lot coverage to 65% on "... an ordinary city lot ..." but did not include corner lots. (35. New York State Legislature 1879, ch. 504) The amendments were influenced by a competition to design a model tenement, held by the magazine *Plumber and Sanitary Engineer*. The competition challenged entrants to develop economically-feasible designs that improved upon the qualities of "light, ventilation, sanitation and fireproofing" found in existing tenements. The winning design created a controversy due to what many critics considered to be limited improvements over existing tenement designs, but the design still became the prototype for the "Old-Law" or "dumbbell" tenement legislated by the Act (see Figure 4-2). (35. Plunz 1990)



*Figure 4-2 -- Massing Effects of Housing Law Changes*

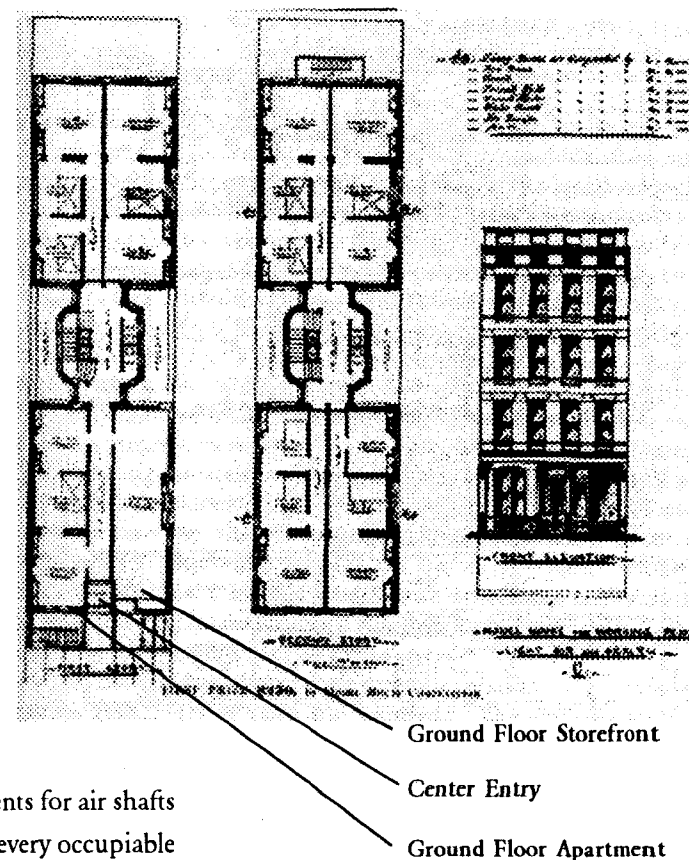
These dumbbell tenements, like the “Pre-Law” buildings, were designed to fit on the standard 25 by 100-foot lot and the prototype featured a functional organization of center entry with an adjacent ground-floor storefront and a ground-floor apartment, and with several floors of flats above. (see Figure 4-3 – Prototypical Old Law Tenement) Two Old Law tenements exist in the study area (139 and 141 Mulberry Street) and from the street, these buildings are nearly indistinguishable from the numerous Pre-Law tenements on the site (nearly all of the buildings on the west side of Mott Street are Pre-Law tenements).

In contrast, when viewed from the street, housing constructed according to the requirements of the Tenement House Act of 1901 does appear significantly different from the older tenements. The new Act had modified the massing requirements placed upon tenement houses in 1879. The Old Law’s coverage requirements had been largely disregarded by developers as being too stringent (35. Plunz 1990) and the New Law struck a compromise by permitting slightly greater allowable coverage. These limits were 90% on a corner lot and 70% on an interior lot. A building’s height was also restricted to a maximum of one-and-a-third times the width of the street that it fronted on. In addition to this maximum, the Act also contained another potentially more important constraint involving height limits and exceptions to these limits. The Act required that:

(e)very tenement house hereafter erected exceeding fifty-seven feet, or exceeding five stories or parts of stories, in height above the curb level, shall be a

fireproof tenement house . . . provided that this . . . shall not apply to a building of a height of six stories or parts of stories in height above the curb level, if such a building shall have a frontage exceeding forty feet. (35. New York State Legislature 1901, ch. 334)

The standard 25 by 100 lot, without considering the Act’s setback requirements, could contain at most, a five-story, non-fireproof building or, considering that frontage on a fifty-foot wide street would permit a maximum height of 66.65 feet, a six-story, fireproof building. As the previous chapter discussed, most of these New Law tenements, in the study area, were built on newly consolidated lots and the buildings are six-stories tall. It appears very likely then, that the non-manufacturing-driven lot consolidation, at the turn of the century was driven by tenement house developers who were taking advantage of this exception. There was also another incentive toward lot consolidation in the Act. The greatly enlarged dimensional requirements for air shafts and setbacks and the requirement that every occupiable room have windows, effectively “. . . eliminated single 25-foot lot development from the mass (housing) market.” (35. Plunz 1990)



**Figure 4-3 -- Prototypical Old Law Tenement**  
(Source: 35. Plunz 1990)

It was still possible to construct a tenement on a 25 by 100 foot-lot, but the plans become very inefficient (according to Plunz (35. 1990)). 146 Mulberry is the only example of a New Law tenement on a 25-foot wide lot in the study area, and behind its street elevation, its footprint becomes quite long and slender. The more common application of the New-Law is depicted in Figure 4-2. In this diagram, the massing of two New-Law buildings in the study area is depicted in relation to a Pre-Law and an Old-Law building. Each of the New Law tenements depicted occupies a significantly larger portion of the street frontage than the older buildings.

The other incentive in the Act, regarding lots, is that buildings placed on corner lots could achieve a higher coverage than was permitted on an interior lot. The New Law buildings in the study area seem to indicate some response to this exemption as they were often constructed on corner lots.

The New Law remained in effect until 1929 when the Multiple Dwelling Law superseded it. The Multiple Dwelling Law continued to refine and develop the regulations set forth in the New Law and was last amended in 1993. (35. New York City 1993) No new tenement buildings (now called "multiple dwellings") were constructed in the study area after the adoption of this law however.

### **Smaller Than Buildings**

Like its counterpart in the previous chapter, the purview of this section is broader than those sections discussing the larger scales. Instead of concentrating on large-scale fixed features, this section is predominantly about small-scale fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed features.

The extant Streets, Blocks, Lots, and Buildings of the study area have been shown to have largely been in place since 1914. When observed at the Smaller Than Buildings scale however, the environment does not have the static quality that might be implied by the consistency of these large-scale fixed-features. As was discussed in both Chapters Two and Three, social change in the area has been quite pronounced since 1914 and many of the small scale features have been modified, replaced and/or removed. Accordingly, the zoning and building laws have had greater influence at this small scale.

### *Zoning and the Little Italy Special District*

As the previous sections have discussed, Mott and Mulberry Streets were initially located in an unrestricted zone and effectively no small-scale constraints were placed upon them by the 1916 Zoning Resolution, an ordinance that was primarily concerned with use and large-scale elements. (The 1916 Zoning Resolution did however, regulate the permissible projection of cornices, to prevent too large a shadow from being cast onto the street.) This changed with the 1961 revision of the Reso-

lution and as discussed above, Mott and Mulberry are currently in a C-6-2G zone. This zone places a number of important constraints on the blocks that affect use, square footage available to particular uses; signage and enclosure requirements.

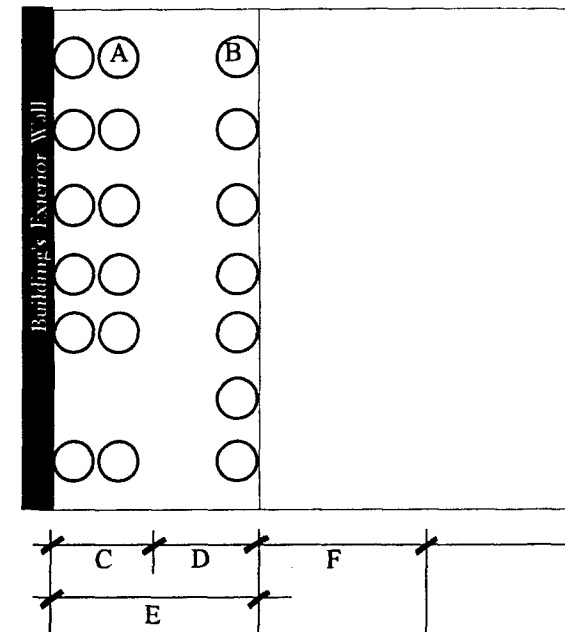
At the Smaller Than Building scale, one of the more important regulations of the Resolution is once again, an exception. The current Zoning Resolution states "... that in all use districts except C7, uses must be located within completely enclosed buildings. Open store fronts and store windows are allowed, however, in ... C6-1 through C6-4 ... districts." (38. NYC Department of City Planning 1988) Accordingly, within a C-6-2G zone, the construction of an open-storefront as typically found on Mott Street, and discussed in the last chapter, is permissible as-of-right.

Also important to the study area and within the scope of the Zoning Resolution are sidewalk cafes. The Resolution permits only unenclosed sidewalk cafes that use only moveable tables and chairs. These semi-fixed features must leave a clear path of at least 8 feet or 50% of the sidewalk, whichever is greater, for pedestrian circulation. As well, no signage, aside from the storefront's permissible signage, is permitted to be among the elements of the cafe and no music, taped or otherwise, can be played. (41. Young, personal communication 1995) The restaurants on Mulberry Street regularly disregard the clearance requirements (see Figure 4-4 – Plan Diagram of Sidewalk Cafe and Figure 3-31 – Sidewalk Cafe on pg. 66) opting to pay the fines instead of losing out

on valuable table space. (41. Restaurant Staff, personal communication 1994)

The Little Italy Special District was part of a movement to refocus the City's Zoning Resolution on "conservation" of existing areas and established neighborhoods. The 1961 Resolution had a decidedly "Modernist" bias and it encouraged non-contextual redevelopment (e.g., by promoting the Corbusian notion of the "tower in the park" in lieu of maintaining continuous urban "streetwalls"). Special Districts provided a tool to effectively introduce specifically designed regulations that addressed issues unique to a single neighborhood. Some have regarded these regulations as really being neighborhood-scale master plans that have been introduced into the City's undifferentiated zones and these "plans" were essentially designed to resist substantial environmental change, or to precisely determine its form at the very least. (38. Marcus 1993)

The Little Italy Special District was designed around three zones; the "Preservation Area," the "Corridors" and the "Mulberry Street Retail Spine." The former encompasses the entire 31-block district and includes regulations largely concerning the building scale. The Corridor zone addresses the periphery of the district and involves manufacturing and industrial uses. The zone of most concern to the study area, and the most heavily regulated, is the Mulberry Street Retail Spine. It encompasses all of the Mulberry Street face block and the first 100 feet of Mott Street closest to Hester and



**Figure 4-4 -- Sidewalk Cafe Plan**

**Legend**

- A - Tables at Inner Sidewalk
- B - Tables at Outer Sidewalk
- C - 1/2 Sidewalk Width (OK to Use for Cafe if E < 16feet)
- D - 1/2 Sidewalk (Required by Law for Pedestrian Path if E is < 16feet)
- E - Sidewalk
- F - Parking Strip

Grand Streets (in other words, it doesn't affect the middle 200 feet of Mott.)

Within this Retail Spine, retail occupancy is required on the ground floor of any new or renovated building (38. Ramati 1981) and two listings of uses have been developed that are considered to contribute to "... the existing retail character of the neighborhood." These listings address 14 "convenience retail" and 39 "retail or service establishments." The former includes such uses as:

restaurants, bakeries, hardware stores, beauty shops and variety stores. The latter includes: antique stores, book stores, tobacco stores, newspaper stands, gift shops, optometrists, social clubs and shoe stores. (38. NYC Planning Commission 1991)

The use groups were developed with the intent of limiting large scale retail and commercial establishments on the ground floor,

in favor of small shops. Accordingly, a number of these uses have had restrictions placed on the square footage that they may occupy or on the total number of people that may occupy the premises at one time. Relevant to the existing uses on both Mott and Mulberry Streets, the restrictions include: Food Stores - limited to 5,000 square feet; Eating Establishments with entertainment - limited to 200 persons; and Clothing or Clothing Accessory Stores - limited to 5,000 square feet. The entry to upper

floor uses is also constrained to no more than 25-feet of frontage. (38. NYC Planning Commission 1991)

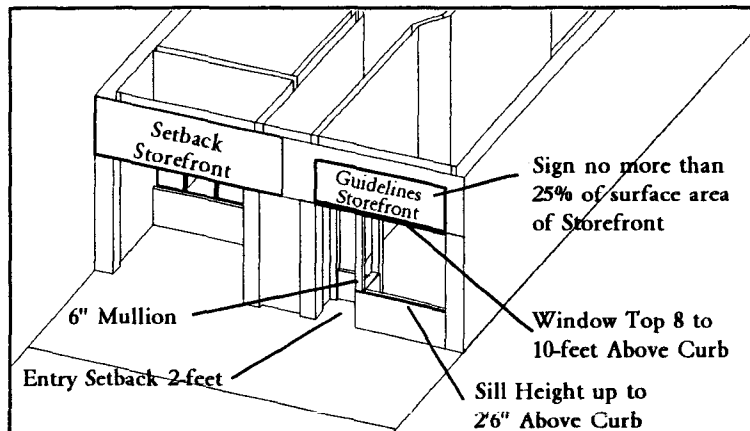
The Special District also has detailed guidelines for new or renovated storefronts within the Mulberry Retail Spine. They were developed to "... preserve the original storefront materials and scale and to relate new storefronts to existing ones." (38. Ramati 1981) "Storefronts ... shall comply with the following standards (see Figure 4-5):

Show Windows shall have a sill height of not more than 2'-6" above curb level and extend to a maximum height between 8'-0" and 10'-0" above curb level.

The storefront shall have transparent areas no more than 10 feet in width, measured horizontally and which transparent areas shall be separated by a mullion of no less than 6" in width.

Storefront entrance doors shall be set back a minimum of 2'-0" behind the vertical surface of show windows." (38. NYC Planning Commission 1991)

The District also adds to the regulation of signage within the Mulberry Retail Spine. These restrictions limit business signs to an area not greater than 25% of the total area of the store front, accessory signs may not cover columns, cornices and sills and permitted signs that project from the building wall must be at least 10-feet above curb level. (38. NYC Planning Commission 1991)



**Figure 4-5 -- Special District Storefront Guidelines (Base of Pre-Law Tenement Building depicted in axon)**

The storefront guidelines have rescinded, within the boundaries of the Mulberry Street Retail Spine, the C-6-2 zoning district's as-of-right opportunity to construct an open storefront. This is an effort to encourage the replication of the original or existing storefronts. Figure 4-5 contrasts a storefront designed according to the guidelines with a "setback" storefront typical of Mott Street. As this diagram and the previous chapter suggest, these guidelines are a significant barrier to construction of the type of open Chinese storefronts found along the middle section of the Mott Street face block and throughout Chinatown.

The District has reiterated the Resolution's earlier coverage exemption for the ground floor with a commercial occupancy and within the Mulberry Street Retail Spine, ground floor lot coverage can reach 100%. This exemption is similar to those in the underlying C-6-2G zone, and is intended to permit the restaurants to expand. (38. Ramati 1981)

The Mulberry Street face block has had many storefronts constructed and reconstructed since the establishment of the Special District and, in contrast to Mott, has no open storefronts. While this is in conformance with the design guidelines, not all of the new storefronts have complied precisely with the regulations. The older photo the Caffè Palermo (Figure 4-6) was used as an illustration of the existing character of the storefronts of Little Italy while the Special District was being developed. (38. Ramati 1981) Sal's Hairstylist, with its slightly recessed entry, was seemingly more of the prototype than the

Caffè Palermo for the guidelines, but they have their similarities in the amount and location of glazing, the location of signs/lettering, the relation of the entry to the display window and the awnings. The recent photo (taken in March 1993) of the Caffè Palermo shows that the restaurant has expanded into Sal's old store, and further "modernized" its storefront. Contrary to the spirit of District's guidelines, the cast-iron column dividing Sal's and the restaurant's entries and the original cornice above the storefronts have been covered up or removed, and in direct conflict with the guidelines, the entry doors are not setback 2-feet behind the display windows.

Even more recently, in the last two years, all four corner storefronts on the Mott Street face block have changed. These four storefronts have either changed from unoccupied spaces (2), to different uses (1) or to a different tenant who retained the same basic use (1). (see Figure 4-7 – Mott Street Corners) Each of these storefronts is in the Mulberry Street Retail Spine and is subject to the guidelines set forth above. Of the four, three comply with the guidelines and one (Fig. 4-7F on the northeast corner of Mott) does not. In the case of non-compliance, the storefront enclosure is set back from the front elevation, and the doors are flush-mounted with the window assembly. The area before the enclosure is used for selling produce as in



Sal's Hairstylist

*Figure 4-6 (This & Facing Page) -- Caffè Palermo Before & After Special District*  
(left photo from: 38. Ramati 1981)

an open storefront. At the rear of this corner building, fronting entirely on Mott, is another new open storefront (Figure 4-8) that is also violating the guidelines.

These violations of the Special District regulations could be indicative of the increasing complexity of the “web” of building controls within the City, a progression that should be apparent from the discussion in this chapter alone. In particular, Marcus (38. 1993) cites the idiosyncrasies of the numerous Special Districts as a cause of

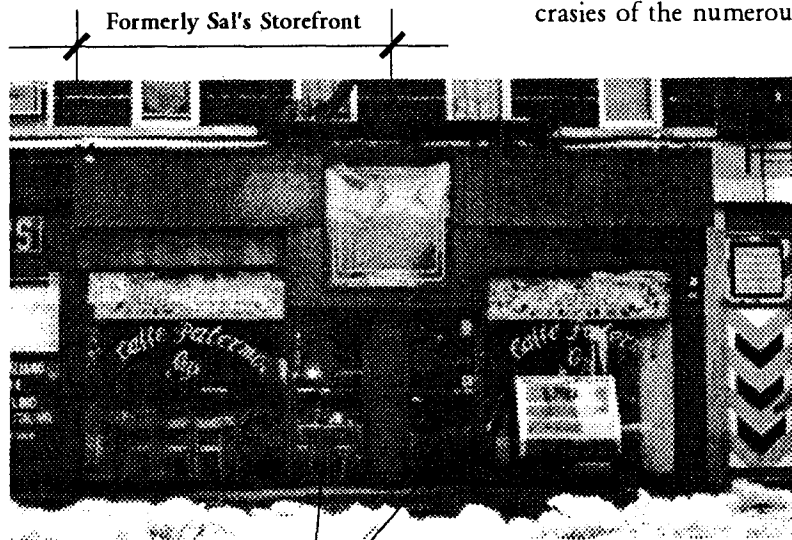
the erosion of zoning enforcement in general, within the City. The Building Department was organized to administer a zoning ordinance comprised of uniform districts and does not, he states, have the resources to also supervise the application of the 37 existing Special Districts. Perhaps one small indication of this is the output of a database of “Work Permit Data”

obtained at the Department. Many of the database’s fields (specific areas for inputting pertinent data) have been left at the presumed default of “N/A,” including the Special District field, with regard to a permit for the “renew(al)” of the storefront at 116 Mott. (35. NYC Building Department, 1995) This storefront, which two years ago was occupied by Fretta Brothers meats, now houses “Optical 88” (Fig. 4-7G-I and it is in the Mulberry Street Retail Spine.

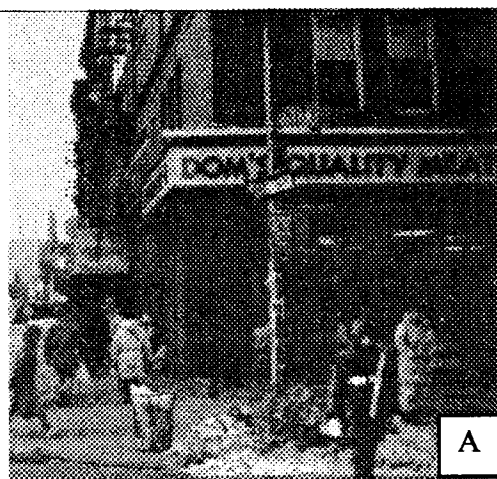
### *Building Codes*

As discussed in the Building scale section, building laws have played an important role in determining the visual quality of the cultural landscape. As the discussion up to this point has observed as well, the larger scale elements of the environment often have not been effected by regulations due to the longevity of these features and the non-retroactive character of many of the requirements. While some of the features of the Smaller Than Building-scale coincide closely with the change of larger scale features, many change much more frequently.

One of the more consistent features is the fire escape, which was first introduced into the building laws in 1860, (referred to as exterior “fireproof balconies” and connecting “fireproof stairs”) but which was limited to “dwelling houses” containing more than eight families, and which apparently required reinforcing by the Tenement House Acts of 1867, 1879 and ultimately, 1901 to be fully implemented. (More on this in the next subsection.) Like fire escapes, many of the features regulated by the building laws can be classified as projections from the elevations of buildings and some of these features were already being controlled in 1849. The 1849 regulations were limited to the means of attaching gutters to the elevation and they required that any wooden gutters be covered with copper, zinc, tin or iron. (35. New York State Legislature 1849, ch. 84) By 1860, the building regulations also regulated exterior cornices - which might also have acted as gutters. No wooden cornice could extend across two or more adjacent buildings. On build-



Entry Doors are not Setback



A

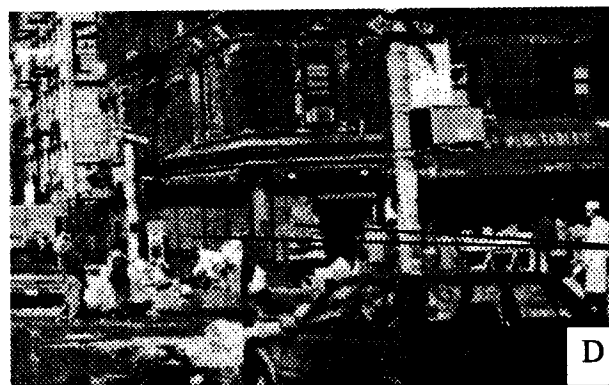


B

Peddler



C



D

Small, Open Produce Stall

Rolling Security Gates



E

Produce Display at Inner Sidewalk

**Figure 4-7 -- Mott Street Corners 1993-1994**

**Legend (This Page)**

A - NorthWest Corner 1993 - view across Grand St.

B - NorthWest Corner 1994 - view across Mott St.

C - NorthWest Corner 1994 - view from intersection of Grand & Mott

D - SouthWest Corner 1993 - view down Hester & across Mott

E - SouthWest Corner 1994 - view across Hester, Mott to right

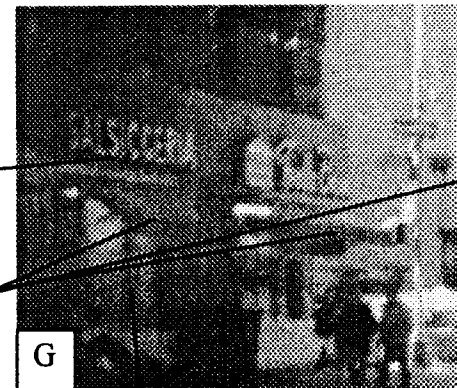
Enclosure has been setback (out of view) and an "open" style produce display has been located in front of it.



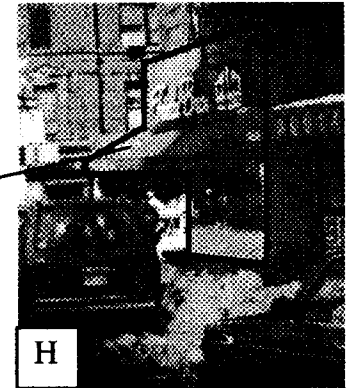
F

Sign in Italian  
(which translates roughly as:  
"pork sausage maker")

Retractable Canvas Awnings



G



H

Change from Glazed to  
Opaque Wall



I

**Figure 4-7 Continued -- Mott Street Corners 1993-1994**

**Legend (This Page)**

*F - NorthEast Corner 1994 - view across Mott St.*

*G - SouthEast Corner 1993 - view across Mott St.*

*H - SouthEast Corner 1993 - view across Hester St.*

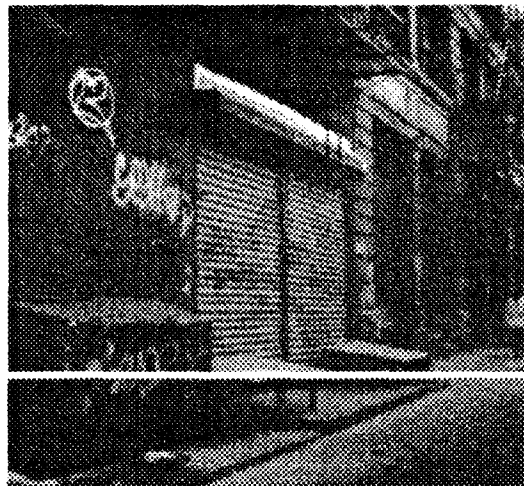
*I - SouthEast Corner 1994 - view down Hester St.*

ings taller than 38-feet (increased to 40 feet in 1866), new cornices were to be fabricated from metal, brick, stone, terra cotta or another fireproof material and appropriately fastened to the wall. When the cornice projected above the roof, parapet walls had to rise to the top of the cornice and no wooden cornice could extend across two or more buildings. While most of the materials of a building elevation were required to be made of fireproof materials by 1860, the building laws permitted the construction of wood bay windows, oriel, "piazzas" (porches), or balconies. (35. New York State Legislature 1860, ch. 470)

By the time that the 1938 Building Code was developed, the scope of the regulations appear to have broadened considerably. This iteration of the Code now began with a statement restricting any projection, on any new or expanded structure, beyond the lot line. Exceptions to the rule were made for columns, pilasters and ornamental projections (cornices, lintels, sills, quoins, rustication . . . ) within definite limits, as long as they could be removed without compromising the building's structural integrity. (35. New York City, 1968)

By the time the current Building Code was developed in 1968, it appears to have grown to display a great degree of control over small-scale features of the urban environment. In addition to the restrictions on projections, "architectural details" and ornamental projections expressed previously, the new Code ultimately included regulations on projections like signage, awnings, marquees, flagpoles, and light fixtures.

Signage, in the Code, is identified largely by the general location of the sign, e.g., wall signs or projecting signs. In general, projecting signs are set perpendicular to the building wall while wall signs are set parallel and flush to the building elevation (see Figure 4-9). Any signage must be hung by a licensed sign hanger and in no instance can a sign be attached to a fire escape or exterior stair. Wall signs cannot project further than 12 inches beyond the lot line into the street and in Manhattan, they must be



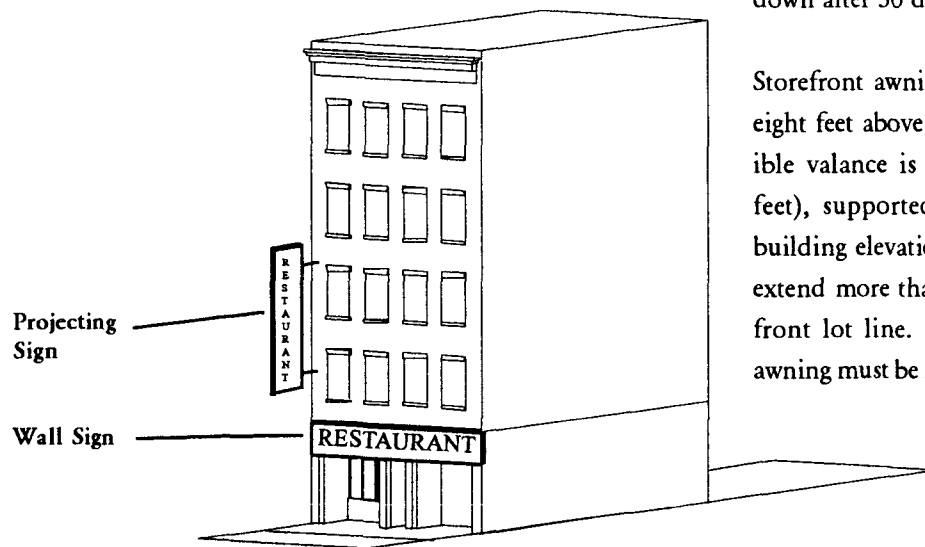
End of Happy Tree Market's  
Awning (see Fig. 4-7F)

New Open Storefront

made of noncombustible material. Projecting signs are allowed to extend ten feet beyond the front lot line, with the constraint that they cannot come within 2 feet of the curb, which is measured as if a plane was projected upwards to meet the horizontal projection of the sign. They also must be at least ten feet above the sidewalk and a sign narrower than two feet may extend 5 feet above the roof.

**Figure 4-8 -- New Open Storefront**  
(right) at 146 Mott Street within Mulberry  
Street Retail Spine.  
(left) View of vacant Storefront in 1993.

Two other relevant categories of signage are illuminated signs and temporary signs. Illuminated signage requires that any projecting reflector cannot extend horizontally any closer to the curb than two feet. Temporary signage of less than 500 square feet can be constructed of combustible material and if combustible, they cannot extend further than 1 foot into the street (i.e., past the curb) without the permission of the Department of Transportation. The sign also must be taken down after 30 days.



Storefront awnings must be at least eight feet above the sidewalk (a flexible valance is permitted within 7 feet), supported entirely from the building elevation, and they cannot extend more than 8 feet beyond the front lot line. The frames of any awning must be made of noncombustible materials and covered with flame-proofed canvas, slow-burning

plastic, sheet metal or similar material. As well, awnings cannot block any fire escape drop ladder. (35. New York City, 1993)

Clearly, on Mott and Mulberry Streets, signage and awnings have long been part of the cultural landscape (see nearly any historic or contemporary photograph of the site contained in this document.) Aside from the func-

tional aspects of some of the awnings, they clearly occupy an important role in establishing the identity of the storefront on which they are located and of the block as a whole. Accordingly, in practice the distinction between signage and awning is somewhat blurred. Many awnings are adorned with the same graphics, colors and text that would be found on a sign, in effect making them projecting signs. However, the Building Department still distinguishes between the two. For example, the output of the Building Department's Work Permit Data database (35. NYC Building Department 1995) shows that some awnings are granted permits with the understanding that they carry no text, but the awning as constructed may actually feature text. (see Happy Tree Market, Figure 4-7F)

The temporary signage requirements are also important to the study area as Mulberry Street today is regularly decorated with banners hung across the street. Recently, for example, a large banner hung mid-block, welcoming the Italian soccer team to the United States for the World Cup matches. These signs are particularly evident during the holiday seasons of Easter and Christmas, and especially during Feast of San Gennaro, when decorations spanning across the street are located along the entire length of "Little Italy's" portion of Mulberry Street. (see Figure 4-10)

**Figure 4-9 -- Sign Type**  
*According to NYC Building Code*

## *Housing Laws*

The Tenement House Acts of 1867 and 1879 contributed one important feature to the public domain at this scale. This was due to the reiteration of the building laws' requirement of fire escapes. However, this requirement apparently left much open to interpretation, e.g., "(e)very such house shall be provided with a proper fire escape" (35. New York State Legislature 1867, ch.908) and initially it was often disregarded. (35. Plunz 1990) In principle this Act had, in conjunction with the building laws, "... legislated a major impact on the aesthetic character of New York streets ... " (35. Plunz 1990) To mitigate any ambiguity in the previous Acts, the Tenement House Act of 1901 (the "New-Law") contained a lengthy exposition on the design and placement of the fire escapes, making the fire escape a ubiquitous element in lower Manhattan's neighborhoods to this day.

The New Law also specified a minimum entry dimension to the dwelling units (3'-6") and it also required an entry leading directly to the basement from outside of the building. (35. New York State Legislature 1901, ch. 334) This entry, usually accessed through an encroachment into the sidewalk, is a common feature even on the Pre-Law and Old-Law buildings, which were not originally required to have them according to the previous Acts.

The influence of the Multiple Dwelling Law of 1929 has been limited, but one provision may be important. It states that unless otherwise prohibited, business may be

conducted in a multiple dwelling with the restriction that in a non-fireproof building the partitions enclosing the business activity must be fire-retardant. (35. New York State Legislature 1929, ch. 713)

## *Other Regulations*

In the creation of cultural landscapes, during the process of sequent occupancy in the United States, semi-fixed and non-fixed features play a prominent role. Accordingly, when endeavoring to discover the determining role of regulations in these environments, one can not only look at codes directed exclusively at the fixed features. In this section, a few of these regulations will be addressed, including a regulation that has played a very prominent role in the history of the Lower East Side and New York in general, and another that has played more of a role in communities outside the Lower East Side but is none-the-less important to recognize.

## *Restrictions on Peddling*

New York has had a long history of pushcart peddling on neighborhood streets and it also has a lengthy history of trying to control such activity. As Chapters Two and Three discussed, outdoor markets were an important part of community activity in both the Italian and Jewish dis-

Temporary Archway  
over Mulberry Street



*Figure 4-10 -- Feast of San Gennaro  
- circa 1970's*

(Source: E. Rossi & Co. postcard)

tricts in the Lower East Side at the turn of the century. As Chapter Two illustrated, these outdoor markets were comprised of numerous peddlers who sold their wares typically from pushcarts lined up at the curb. At the same time, tables of goods would be stacked in front of the adjacent storefronts creating what Jacob Riis (19. 1890) described as "... two rows of booths in the street itself, and along the houses is still another ... " As Riis also pointed out, the character of the area was not principally determined by the houses, which were "...still the same old tenements ... " but by the market.

Not everyone found the markets picturesque, or at least useful, and regulations restricting peddling dates back to the middle of the 19th century and in 1894, the New York State Legislature passed a law granting disabled veterans "special consideration" with regard to peddling. This exemption was suspended for four years beginning in 1991 to prevent some qualifying peddlers from evading attempts to create a no-peddling zone in Midtown Manhattan. The State legislature is to consider permanently suspending this exemption before July 1, 1995. (37. Martin 1995; Lee 1990) Otherwise, Suzanne Rachel Wasserman (37. 1990) states that "(t)he City of New York did little to regulate the markets before 1906. For almost forty years, from about 1866 until 1906, a few local statutes governed the regulation of the markets. Among the statutes was one that prohibited peddlers from stopping in one place for more than half an hour."

After 1906, a series of commissions were set up to resolve the problems believed to be caused by significant increases in the number of peddlers working on the streets at the turn-of-the-century. One commission found, in 1913, that pushcarts "... caused congestion and were a menace to health and safety ... impeded use of the street and were a fire hazard." (37. Wasserman 1990) The relationship between peddlers and shop-owners varied from one of financial symbiosis, where the peddler paid the shop-owner for the right to consistently occupy the space in front of their storefront, (19. Gabbacia 1984) to one of apparent animosity and perceived competition. (37. Wasserman 1990) The latter found support in the commission's various findings regarding, ostensibly, health and safety issues. Attacking the "old world" way of conducting business, the City along with the support of some Lower East Side merchants, in the 1930's, began to aggressively police the streets for unlicensed peddlers, stopping some and the moving others into stalls in new, carefully regulated, centrally located, indoor market buildings. They also restricted the outdoor locations available to licensed peddlers. (37. Wasserman 1990) The store owners did not escape similar scrutiny of their "old-world" practices either. The common Lower East Side practice of "pulling-in" was made illegal when a law was passed making it "... unlawful for any person to stand ... in front of, or in the entrance or hallway of any store or building for the purpose of calling the attention of passersby to goods, wares or merchandise displayed or on sale in such store ... " (37. New York State Legislature, Local Law No. 29, 1939)

A year later, store owners on the Lower East Side again bore the brunt of the City's effort to "transform the East Side." This time, the Department of Markets began issuing summons for "stoop stands" set up in front many shopfronts. A short-lived compromise permitted Department-authorized displays as long as the display was operated by the store owner. The City reversed this decision though and later outlawed all "... peddling, hawking or selling of any wares or merchandise on city streets." (37. Wasserman 1990)

Whether or not the complete ban was ever effectively implemented, the City is still fighting to control vending on the streets, and each of the last three recent mayoral administrations has been drawn into contentious public battles with the peddlers. The Giuliani administration is currently reliving the LaGuardia administration's experience of the 1930's by forcing the relocation of the extensive 125th Street outdoor market to a centrally located site and by cracking down on illegal vendors. (37. Hicks 1994)

Legal vending in the city is administered by two agencies, general merchandise is the purview of the Department of Consumer Affairs, and food vending is controlled by the Department of Health. The Departments respectively issue 853 general merchandise and 3000 food vending licenses. (37. Hicks 1994) However, the Department of Consumer Affairs has a waiting list of 5,000 people (37. New York Times 1994) and there are estimates of 8,000 to 10,000 unlicensed general merchandise vendors. (37. Hicks 1994; Marriott 1988)

Licensed food vendors must comply with a variety of regulations regarding the construction of their displays and the equipment that it must contain (i.e., for food processing carts: hot and cold water, hot or cold food storage, waste disposal, etc.) Food vendors are also limited in the location that they can set up. The limitations specify that:

No mobile food unit shall be placed upon a sidewalk unless said sidewalk has at least twelve foot clear pedestrian path to be measured from the boundary of any private property to any obstruction in or on the sidewalk . . . in no event shall any mobile food unit be placed on any part of a sidewalk other than that which abuts the curb . . .

No mobile food unit shall occupy more than ten linear feet parallel to the curb, on any sidewalk.

No mobile food unit shall be located against display windows or fixed location businesses, nor shall such mobile vending unit be within twenty feet from any entranceway to a building, store, restaurant . . .

No food vendor shall operate within . . . ten feet of any . . . crosswalk at any intersection . . .

No food vendor shall operate within twenty feet of another vendor.

A food vendor shall not place a vehicle, pushcart or stand, or conduct a business in the roadway in a

metered parking space unless such vendor has complied with the coin requirements of such meter. A food vendor shall not remain in a metered parking space for a period of time in excess of the maximum time permitted at such space. (37. New York City Department of Health, no date)

Clearly, many of these regulations alone, would make any "mobile food vending" illegal on Mott or Mulberry Streets, although itinerant peddlers do appear frequently on Mott Street. They often locate at the curb across from a building's upper floor entrance or along a blank wall, and they use small shopping carts or luggage carts to display and transport their goods. (see Figure 4-7B) Other vendors have "leased" the space in front of the storefronts to display their wares. Whether or not it is intentionally designed to frustrate peddling enforcement, one shopper has found that in his experience, it is sometimes unclear whether the storefront displays are affiliated directly with the store, or are independent "lessee's." (41. Mott Street Shopper, personal communication 1994)

#### Language Laws, or the Content of Signs

While the subject of language laws has not arisen with regard to Mott or Mulberry Streets, it is directly relevant and it has become a topic of debate many times in other communities. These other communities are as close as Flushing, Queens, the location of New York's "second Chinatown." (36. Pierson 1990)

Language laws, as they affect the public domain, are generally targeted at the content of signs and apparently arise in public discourse most often during times of change, as in Flushing or Monterey Park, CA; (9. Fong 1994) or even in places as distant as Jakarta, Indonesia (36. The Wall Street Journal 1993) or Moscow, Russia. (36. Bohlen 1993) The typical argument made is that all signs should at least carry a translation of any language not spoken by the majority. The opposite situation has also been played out between Anglophone and Francophone residents of Quebec over a French-only commercial signage law that ultimately became an issue to be ruled upon by the United Nations. The U.N. found that the monolingual requirement was a violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. (36. Farnsworth 1993)

In the United States, similar requirements have run afoul of the First Amendment to the Constitution. For example, in Monterey Park, CA the City Attorney's concern that a divisive law regulating the language of signs would be unconstitutional was partly responsible for its failure to be adopted. (9. Fong 1994) In Pomona, CA a similar law was in fact ruled unconstitutional by the courts. (36. Shell 1993)

In the case study area, this issue might have been effectively diffused by the prevalence of English translations on much of Mott Street's business signage. It is not clear why English is commonly used in conjunction with Chinese characters on Mott Street but not in some Chinatowns elsewhere. In Flushing, Queens, for ex-

ample, signs are often without an English language translation (and they are often more vertical than horizontal in their design, in contrast to those on Mott Street). Possibly, the greater apparent ethnic diversity of Flushing is partly responsible. The presence of Korean, Malaysian and Indian stores in addition to Taiwanese and Chinese shops, has introduced a greater array of languages onto the area's signage. (Flushing accordingly, might better be considered an "Asiatown" instead of a Chinatown.)

As Chapter Three demonstrated, signs in Little Italy in the 1930's were commonly in Italian and without English translation. (Some were in English, however.) The question that arises then is whether or not the language displayed on signage was an issue in the Little Italy of the 1930's or elsewhere at the time, or whether this is a more recent phenomenon. It seems possible, in either case, that the debate over signage is closely linked to the process of sequent occupancy and the inter-group tension that arises from it. If this is so, then it seems that this debate is more likely to arise in a community in the early stages of transition than in a community that has become as well-established as Manhattan's Chinatown is now, north of Canal Street.

### Summary - Formal Rule Systems

This chapter has endeavored to display the remarkable breadth of public control wielded over the design of cultural landscapes. It has also tried to demonstrate

that this control grew progressively over the past 150 years from the regulation of particular small scale features of individual buildings to sweeping control over numerous fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed features that comprise the cultural landscape.

The regulations that have been developed over this period also span each of the scales used in this study. However, many of the regulations intended to control the larger scale features of the environment have not had considerable impact on the case study face blocks. This was a result of the adoption of the relevant regulations after the construction of many of these features, like the majority of the extant buildings. At the Smaller Than Buildings scale however, the cycle of (re)construction is more frequent and as a result, regulation has played an important role at this level.

In discussing regulation across the scales and particularly at the Smaller Than Building scale, this chapter has also attempted to indicate the importance of what Lai (38, 1988) called "indeliberate" determinants of form within our society's body of law. Regulations that have profound impact on the cultural landscape that might not be considered deliberate determinants are: elements of the building laws and housing laws, peddling/vending laws and language laws.

In Chapter One, the concepts of cultural landscapes, sequent occupancy and frameworks were introduced. In the ensuing three chapters, the case study endeavored to use these three concepts to observe a small portion of New York City through time. This final chapter will try to draw these observations together, link them to relevant work performed previously, and to provide some generalizable conclusions useful in the practice of urban design.

Before linking the physical and legal frameworks together, each will be reviewed independently and in the conclusion an attempt will be made to relate them.

### **THE PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK**

The urban physical environment in this case study has been conceptualized as being comprised of five different scales: Streets, Blocks, Lots, Buildings, and Smaller Than Buildings. As Chapter Three indicated, change tends to occur within these different scales at different rates. For example, the largest scales used in the case study, Streets and Blocks, have been shown to be quite durable, retaining their essential configuration for over 200 years. However, during this same period of time a dramatic series of transformations occurred at the scales of Lots and Buildings. Then, after the Lots and Buildings settled into a long period of stability in the 20th century, another series of transformations occurred at the Smaller Than Building scale.

Two observations can be made immediately from this example. The first is that some of the scales often change in conjunction with one of the other scales, while some scales appear to be somewhat independent of change in others. For example, change in Lots and Buildings has often occurred simultaneously, while a change in Lots has not coincided with a change in the Blocks. The Block in this case is a "support" for the variable "infill" of the Lots and Buildings. The scales of the Block and the Street have also been demonstrated to be united in a zero-sum relationship in which change in one would result in change in the other. Accordingly, this observation suggests that a better array for the conceptualization of frameworks might be three scales with the largest two having two subdivisions, e.g., (Streets & Blocks), (Lots & Buildings) and (Smaller Than Buildings). However, for continuity, the five scales will still be used in this chapter.

apparent. Among the seemingly more important characteristics of this grid is its interconnected mesh of streets – which provides a unified network overlying all three early estates – and the numerous orthogonal blocks that are defined by these streets. Another characteristic of grids in general that may have contributed to their success over-time is their historic and continuing use in a variety of different cultures. (Rapoport, personal communication 1995) This would suggest that an element of familiarity, in conjunction with the aforementioned characteristics, has apparently contributed to the success of the case study's grid in accommodating two centuries of sequent occupancy and technological change.

Regarding the Lower East Side's support of the process of sequent occupancy, interconnectedness appears to play an important role in accommodating both expanding and contracting communities and to often accommodating several different communities at one time. As was shown in Chapter Two, both the Italian and Chinese communities began south of Canal Street and grew, one after the other, to encompass very large portions of the grid north of Canal. (see Figure 2-6 – Chinatown's Expansion, on pg.s 26-27) The Chinese community has also expanded eastward across the Bowery, into a portion of the grid previously occupied by an Eastern European Jewish community. At the same time, a Hispanic community has been moving into the same area from the north. The implication here is that while Canal Street and the Bowery have often been identified as boundaries within the grid and between communities, they are not insurmountable. As N.J. Habraken (27. 1988) noted

"... physical differences in the built environment are not necessarily obeyed by the subsequent social divisions that become neighborhoods. Nor can we expect that within the limits of one architecturally distinct district only one social entity may find its place."

So while the case study did not delve deeply into the District level it seems to be apparent that much of the change at the smaller scales was facilitated by the qualities of interconnectedness of the grid at this scale. This quality readily accommodated the process of sequent occupancy and has kept many areas in the Lower East Side bustling and is helping to revitalize others.

Additional areas of research needed on the District scale include:

How do communities move into adjacent areas? By progressively advancing up a street? By scattering about until the "tipping point" is reached? Both? Is there a difference in how retail (local community services) moves versus residential?

How do the boundaries work? What makes them noticeable? How do they work with the responses to the previous question?

How have less interconnected, but still adjacent, areas worked comparatively? Does less interconnection inhibit sequent occupancy? If so, how much interconnection, or lack thereof, is involved?

## Streets

M.R.G. Conzen (26. 1960) noted, "(t)he street is . . . the most refractory element of the town plan . . ." and the case study would appear to support this observation. Streets (synonymous with the public right-of-way here) in the United States require extraordinary effort to modify after an area has been settled and Clarence Stein (40. 1957) even discussed a fruitless attempt to "demap" several streets in Queens, NY that at that point only existed on the City's official map. Accordingly, the implication with regard to Streets is that they need to be adaptable. The means of achieving adaptability appears to be the establishment of streets of a generous width during the initial platting to ensure that the public right-of-way can accommodate unforeseen future uses. The most obvious question that then arises is: how wide should the right-of-way be?

The Neo-Traditional planning firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk has proposed the creation of streets as narrow as 28-feet in the new village of Windsor, Fl. (40. Krieger & Lennertz 1991) Another source states that many modern subdivision codes call for right-of-way widths of 70 to 80-feet for local streets. (40. Bookout 1992) A study similar to this one, (27. Moudon 1986a) has indicated that in San Francisco, many streets laid out in the 19th century are 68-feet 9-inches wide and have successfully ". . . met later needs for on-street parking or have allowed for wide sidewalks and street plantings." The latter reference differs from the former two in that it is expressed in terms of accommodating unforeseen con-

ditions while the former are apparently responding to precisely projected uses. It is the unforeseen that adaptability addresses and this will be the focus of looking at street width here.

Over 200 years, Mott and Mulberry Streets' 50-foot right-of-way has accommodated great technological and social change having been platted in an era when most residents probably traveled exclusively as pedestrians. In the 1930's, before the tremendous growth in the use of the automobile, Mott Street housed a pushcart market located along the curb and "stoop" stands in front of the stores, a traffic lane in the center of the street and areas for loading and unloading manufactured goods. Anecdotal evidence also indicates that in the summer, people would sit in front of the buildings to socialize, and to escape the heat inside.

On both Mott and Mulberry in the 1990's, on a summer day semi-fixed features occupy much of the sidewalks and pedestrian traffic winds through produce and grocery stands and their patrons on Mott, or tables of diners on Mulberry. Men pushing wheeled racks bound for the blocks' garment factories, and others pushing hand-trucks full of produce, negotiate the tables, boxes and stands along with the pedestrians, or they venture out into the thoroughfare to avoid the crowds. The parking strip on Mott, formerly occupied by pushcarts, is dominated by parked cars and trucks, and traffic slowly moves through the center of the thoroughfare.

Virtually every square foot of the right-of-way has been

put to use. However, this does not indicate that more space is necessarily needed. More comparative work between similar settings on different streets needs to be performed to reach such a conclusion. In one example of comparative research, Liu (41. 1994) found though that a Taiwanese market on a wide, 20th century street essentially recreated the layout found on an older and narrower, traditional market street. As well, the inten-

sity of use of Mulberry Street varies considerably over the year. In the winter, when there are few semi-fixed objects placed upon the sidewalks by the restaurants, the sidewalks are frequented only by an occasional pedestrian, or people loading delivery trucks.

To provide some comparison to the case study blocks, Stockton Street, a shopping street similar to Mott Street in San Francisco's Chinatown, is 68-feet 9-inches

wide. It accommodates two lanes of traffic, parking on both sides of the street and has sidewalks that vary in width from similar to those on Mott and Mulberry to considerably more generous. In some places, when the market stalls are open, the sidewalk is just as crowded as on Mott. In these situations, a second "aisle" of produce is often being displayed or stored near the curb, or in the parking strip (see Figures 3-32 & 3-33 on pgs 67-68). In other places there appears to be ample "breath-

ing room" left on the sidewalk.

This breathing room can be seen by comparing similar produce stands on Mott Street, Stockton Street, Grant Avenue, and in Oakland, CA. Figure 3-18 (pg. 56) shows a midday view down the sidewalk of Mott and Figure 5-1 shows a similar view down Stockton Street. In both photos, there is parking at the curb, room for people to linger in the outer sidewalk zone and produce displays in the inner sidewalk zone. Stockton Street also accommodates more traffic, a "trackless trolley" line (the pole in the foreground is a support for the catenary) and the sidewalk also has enough room for a group of people to cluster in the middle/inner sidewalk zones and still maintain a passable walkway (even with a large mail-drop box in the outer sidewalk zone where the men are standing). Mott is much more constrained in comparison.

On the 46-foot wide Grant Avenue, the produce stand and the sidewalk (Figure 5-2) appear to be even more of a "tight fit." If it were desirable to widen the sidewalk to provide a more spacious area for the display of goods as in Calgary's Chinatown (41. Maas, personal communication 1994), the space could only come at the expense of a parking strip. At the time of the photo, much of the space has been taken up by produce being unloaded from a truck. In Oakland's booming "Asiatown" a very generous sidewalk (Figure 5-3) accommodates truck unloading, newspaper racks, parking meters, even small trees in the outer sidewalk as well as a relatively wide (measured from the building wall outward) produce dis-



*People gathered*

*Men Standing*

**Figure 5-1-- Stockton Street, San Francisco**

play at the inner sidewalk zone, without limiting the walkway considerably.

If Anne Vernez Moudon (27. 1986a) is correct in stating that it is desirable to "... reach a congested state as late as possible in the ... evolution of a city." The implication might be then that a 50-foot right-of-way can accommodate different cultural landscapes, but is approaching "congestion" and is effectively the minimum for an adaptable urban Street, but that closer to 70-feet would be more desirable. The 70-foot wide street could comfortably accommodate current usage and still possess some degree of adaptability to address new or different circumstances, where the 50-foot street appears to be approaching "pushing the limits."

This is not to suggest that rights-of-way should be made tremendously wide though. As portions of both Grant Avenue and Mulberry Street are very popular tourist attractions, narrow streets may present some particularly attractive attributes to pedestrians as Amos Rapoport (40. 1990) and William H. Whyte (40. 1988) have suggested. Jan Gehl (39. 1987) has also implied that rights-of-way can be too large with regard to people's perception of the environment, by stating that many spaces designed since the 1930's have often been "... too large, too wide and too straight." Gehl also noted a study performed in San Francisco that found that pedestrian-oriented activity decreases with increased vehicular traffic (which could be controlled by narrowing the thoroughfare only.)

Additional areas of research needed include:

More comparative and historical work on street width with regard to adaptability.

Work endeavoring to integrate the perceptual qualities of street width with the concept of frameworks.

### **Blocks**

Since they occupy a zero-sum relationship with the Streets in a grid, the Blocks in the case study have been demonstrated to have also survived essentially intact from their initial platting. Their dimensions of approximately 200 by 400 feet provides the District's grid with a relatively fine-grain in comparison to the 200 by 800-foot blocks of the 1811 Commissioners' Plan. Fine grain blocks of this general size have been praised by both Whyte (40. 1988) and by the Neo-traditional planning firm of Duany-Plater Zyberk for their accommodation of pedestrian activity and Whyte particularly extolls the greater number of corners introduced into a grid by smaller blocks. While Whyte's concern with corners is based upon their use as informal locations of social interaction, the fine grain of the grid brought about by the small blocks is also possibly linked to the successful accommodation of the changing con-



*Handtruck*

*Boxes*

*Produce Display*

**Figure 5-2 -- Grant Avenue in  
San Francisco's Chinatown**

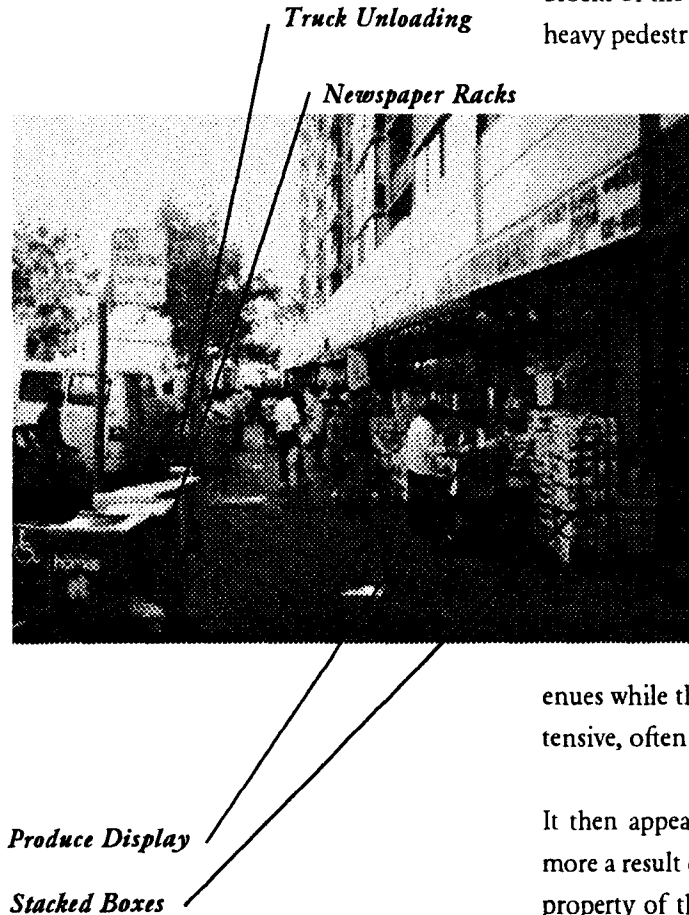
text. The fine-grain grid appears to foster movement in an east-west direction as well as north-south.

In considering movement around the blocks though, the optimal dimensions of a block within a grid is, at this time, somewhat uncertain. While the 200 by 400-foot blocks of the study area work apparently quite well with heavy pedestrian traffic, is not apparent that a grid comprised of blocks with long-sides of even 800-feet does not work as well. The Commissioners' Plan grid, it has been suggested, was laid out with the expectation that east-west traffic between the Hudson and East Rivers would predominate (38. City Planning Commission 1985) but the great majority of contemporary vehicular traffic through the City moves north-south along the short side of the blocks. Accordingly, the first 100-feet of each Commissioners Plan block is generally occupied by street-related commercial development and is oriented toward the north-south Avenues while the east-west blocks are occupied by less intensive, often residential, uses.

It then appears possible that the success of a block is more a result of its accommodation of its "infill" than a property of the block's role in defining the grain of a grid. The 200 by 400-foot blocks in the study area permitted the reorientation of a considerable portion of the blocks' infill to address the increasing importance of the

east-west streets. However, only the ends of the blocks, the first 100 feet or so from the corner, appear to be useful in these reorientations. This suggests that, on a 200 by 400-foot block, the middle 200 feet of the long side is limited to one possible frontage (with the exception of a through-block lot and lot consolidations that occupy much of the block). Carrying this observation over to a 200 by 800-foot block, it becomes apparent that a considerably higher percentage of this block's area can have only one possible frontage. This might indicate that the larger block is closer to biasing the grid in favor of one axis over the other.

Dimensions for the short side of a block, other than 200-feet, have also been used throughout history and Kostof (26. 1991) and Moudon (27. 1986a) discuss several variations with very generous proportions. These large blocks, Kostof argues, have a greater likelihood of being subdivided by alleys and streets. For example, the blocks south of San Francisco's Market Street were initially platted at 550 by 825-feet and as time passed, the typical block had alleyways or streets cut into it to effectively create two or more blocks from the one. Other than the south of Market Street area, much of San Francisco was platted with blocks measuring 275 by 412-feet. In the Alamo Square area, an alleyway was occasionally inserted into a block, but this was the exception. (27. Moudon 1986a) In San Francisco's Chinatown and North Beach areas however, many short alleyways and streets have been introduced into the blocks. In these latter instances, the alleys and streets frequently run parallel to the short side of the block in contrast to those



*Figure 5-3 -- Sidewalk in Oakland, CA's "Asiatown"*

typically found in blocks on the East Side of Milwaukee.

On the more conservative end of the spectrum, William Lennertz (40. Krieger & Lennertz 1991) states that Duany Plater-Zyberk generally use a block no larger than 230 by 600-feet. In their plans, the width in excess of 200-feet on the short side of the block is often allocated to an alleyway.

Questions for further research:

Is there an optimal size for a Block? Does this vary according to culture?

Have larger blocks undergone infill reconfiguration like the case study blocks?

How has the introduction of an alleyway worked with lot reconfiguration? Has it constrained reconfiguration/consolidation?

## Lots

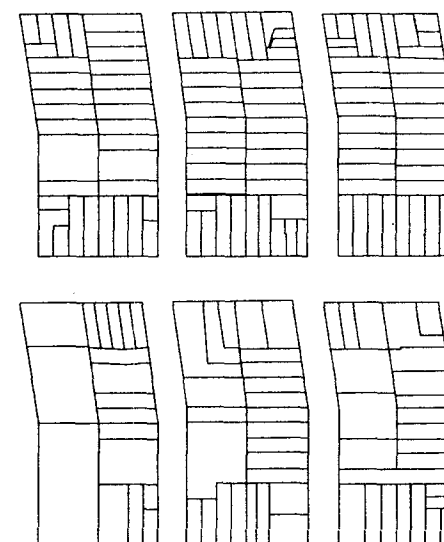
The lots are the first large scale feature to have shown considerable change in the case study. The 64 east-west oriented, approximately 25 by 100-foot lots on the two face blocks underwent reorientation in many cases to address a changing urban context, and many lots were consolidated with others to accommodate larger buildings. The configuration of the lots followed a trajectory

of change (see Figure 3-2 – Lots Configuration through Time, on pg. 34) marked by initial simplicity, which became increasingly complex and idiosyncratic via lot reconfiguration, and then became coarser-grained and more simple via lot consolidation.

The reorientation of lots has apparently played an important role in the success of the District scale's accommodation of change. As Chapter Two portrayed, the grid on Bayard's estate was at the periphery of the city when initially platted. Development lay to the south and the grid was laid out with each of the oblong block's long sides parallel to the existing Bowery – the High Road to Boston. With the grid so oriented, considerable frontage was provided on the north-south streets leading to and from the bulk of the city.

When the city enveloped the estate, and large communities settled into areas on the old DeLancey estate to the east, the east-west streets connecting both estates, like Grand and Hester, became desirable commercial thoroughfares. (Grand Street was described by one long-time resident of Little Italy as having been "... our Fifth Avenue," (41. Mott Street Senior Center, personal communication 1994) which favorably compares Grand with the City's most upscale retailing avenue.) To take advantage of this, a considerable number of the lots on the case study blocks were realigned to provide frontage on these east-west streets.

The case study also indicated that Lot Consolidation was common on the case study blocks. Consolidation was



**Figure 5-4 -- Lot Configurations Compared**

*Three NYC Case Study Blocks (This Page)*  
1828 - Top  
1890 - Bottom

*San Francisco's Alamo Square Block (Facing Page)*  
1890's - Top Left  
1890's to 1970's - Top Right & Bottom Left  
1970's Bottom Right  
(San Francisco Blocks not to scale & drawn after 27. Moudon 1986b)

also an important factor in the Block's ability to house new, and larger, building types. Among the building types introduced into the blocks through this process were the New Law Tenement and the industrial loft building.

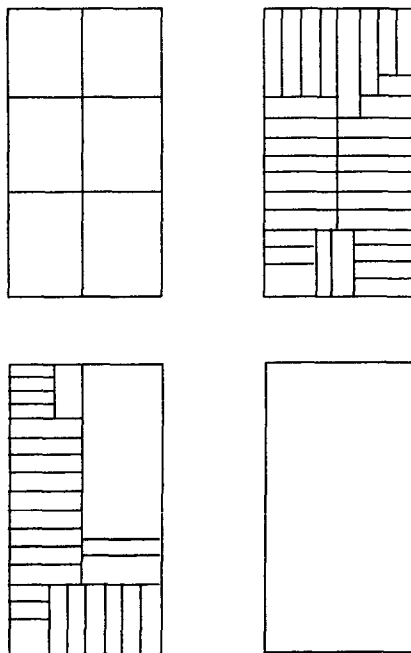
In considering these two processes, a logical question arises. What is an appropriate size for an urban lot designed for change and how should they be distributed? Anne Vernez Moudon (27. 1986a & 1986b) has presented a case for narrow and deep lots when initially subdividing blocks. These lots, she argues, distribute control over the environment among many individual owners and this would tend to promote greater variety. Another approach to creating variety is by varying the grain of the lots fronting on the street. This approach involves establishing an increment of frontage that can be assembled into lots that are multiples of the standard unit. Groth (27. 1981) discusses this as a practice typical of early American land subdivision and it has since been adopted by Duany-Plater Zyberk. (40. Krieger & Lennertz 1991) They first employed this practice in a 1988 plan for Belmont, Virginia where a 16-foot (the equivalent of the colonial measure of a "rod") increment was established.

In the absence of legal constraints, this practice would seem destined to achieve the same results as delineating narrow and deep lots. For example, the approximately 25 by 100-foot lots found in the study area were initially considered the standard buildable lot. This buildable lot size, Spiro Kostof (26. 1991) argues, has historically

been derived from the "leading type" of building initially considered for that area. It would follow then that the leading type, in similar circumstances, would tend to result in similar lot dimensions. Had the 25-foot frontage been found unsuitable in accommodating the leading type, consolidation would probably have occurred immediately during the initial process of development, accelerating the introduction of varying lot sizes.

A different approach, also often used in early American land subdivision, is the initial delineation of lots with large frontages. With six or eight lots on a block, the process of change typically involved the subdivision of the large lots into small lots of often idiosyncratic frontages, which are later reconsolidated into very large lots. (27. Habraken 1988; Moudon 1986a & 1986b; Groth 1981; 26. Kostof 1991) When the history of blocks having this type of initial lot configuration, as applied to the grid in San Francisco, is compared to the history of the case study blocks, it becomes apparent that both approaches have ultimately resulted in very similar lot configurations. (see Figure 5-4 - Lot Configurations Compared)

In either case, it would seem that left to its own devices, and particularly without regulatory constraint, the market would arrive at the most desirable lot dimension if faced with either situation. This would appear to be true even if it involves consolidation of several lots only to immediately subdivide them again into lots of a more appropriate size. This apparently happened with several lots on the east side of Mott Street between 1828 and



1855.

Lot consolidation and initially large lots would tend to favor more affluent investors though and would likely be more prone to the construction of unified “projects” (as in Milwaukee’s recent East Point development) instead of subdivision. Small lots would tend to permit the less-capitalized investor to influence the process earlier, which would probably generate more variety. (27. Groth 1981) Also, the more individual owners involved, the more difficult it would be to create the “assemblage” of lots required to consolidate into one.

In terms of determining an appropriate lot frontage, two suggestions might be useful in considering initial minimum lot sizes in a contemporary urban environment. The first suggestion was made in the zoning study in *Built for Change* (27. Moudon 1986a) and this was a frontage of 35-feet (measured from building entry to entry). This was a compromise, to better accommodate “contemporary residential design” from the more desirable 25-foot frontage traditionally used in the city. The second is derived from Duany-Plater Zyberk’s use of the 16-foot increment for varying lot assemblage. They state that it “... fits current building types exceedingly well...” (40. Krieger & Lennertz 1991) and considering that in practice, the smallest viable lot size has 32-feet of frontage, this claim falls very close to Moudon’s pragmatic suggestion. Within the case study face blocks, the 25-foot frontage has been apparently successful for ground floor usage, but the upper floors have long been considered inadequate for multi-unit housing (the reason why

the Tenement House Acts ultimately led to lot consolidation). At this point, a lot with 32 to 35-feet of frontage would appear to be more adaptable which would require less immediate lot consolidation.

Additional questions include:

Is the 32 to 35-foot lot frontage actually optimal?

How deep should a lot be?

Does the optimal frontage vary according to culture, or region?

To what degree is variety of lot dimension desirable versus promoting a more building scale-based variety? The former might be seen as being advocated by DPZ and the latter by Moudon.

How have the colonial lots developed around a standard frontage increment changed over time? Is there an appropriate standard unit for use in contemporary planning? How has the use of a 16-foot unit in the new town of Belmont worked?

### ***Buildings***

The existing buildings in the case study were constructed generally as tenements with ground-floor storefronts, or as industrial loft buildings. Even considering this disparity of uses, these mid to late 19th and early 20th cen-

tury buildings had several things in common that appear to have factored into their use and re-use. These common features include a similar treatment of the ground floor versus the upper floors, and that all of the buildings have no front setback.

### *The elevation*

In the Pre-Law and Old-Law tenements the ground floor was visually divided from the upper floors by a cornice spanning most of the width of the building. Beneath this cornice, the elevation was treated as "infill" which was typically comprised of an upper level entry and one or two storefront(s) with large display windows held in a wooden or cast-iron structure. Above the ground-floor cornice, the elevation was constructed as a solid plane of brick with "punched" openings for windows. (New Law Tenements have greater frontage and often have expanses of brick on the ground floor in addition to infill storefronts.)

As discussed in Chapter Three, the industrial loft buildings also treated the ground floor as "infill." The Jaeger Building (see Figure 3-6 – The G.L. Jaeger Building, on pg. 39) had a tri-partite elevation quite similar to an Old-Law tenement (although with far greater frontage). On the ground floor, the company had offices in lieu of shops, and manufacturing occurred in the floors above. The later, and more ornate Meitz Building still made an elevational distinction between the ground floor and the upper floors. In this case, the Meitz Building's ground floor initially had wooden doors, infilled between ma-

sonry columns, that were used for entries and loading and unloading.

By sharing a common setback and ground-floor treatment with the tenement buildings, the loft buildings have proven to be easily converted to storefronts, as the ground-floors of both the Jaeger and the Meitz Buildings have been in the past 15 years. One building, an Old Law Tenement in the case study area, has also had its ground-floor converted to residential use. These observations permit the conceptualization of the buildings on the case study as being comprised of a "Base" and a "Top." (see Figure 3-8 – Basement-Base-Top, on pg. 41) This conceptualization is similar to Ann Vernez Moudon's (27. 1986a) observations regarding wood frame buildings in San Francisco. N.J. Habraken (27. 1988) has also noted the independence of the ground floor of mixed-use commercial/residential buildings.

Commercial form transforms faster, it seems, than residential form. When shop after shop is adapted over time to new styles and fashions, this sidewalk oriented zone becomes divorced from the architecture above, living its own life. The result in today's cities is the almost autonomous band of commercial spaces lining the major arteries, displaying its facades as quite separate entities from those above. We see the historic facades floating in the air while under them the continuous transformation of shop facades takes place . . . (p. 127)

### *The ground floor plan*

Also important to the independence of the ground floor are the simple open ground-floor plans found in most of the buildings. However, within this similarity there is a noticeable distinction between floor plans of the types of buildings found on the face blocks. This distinction is based upon how much unobstructed square-footage is available. There is a clear distinction between the Old-Law and Pre-Law tenements versus the New-Law tenements and the loft buildings in terms of total square footage. There is even a difference among the Pre-Law tenements, however. This difference is a function of where the upper floor entry was located and whether or not it extended all of the way through the ground floor.

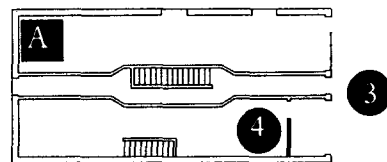
If the entry extended all of the way through the building (see Figure 5-5) and was located in the center of the ground floor elevation, the ground floor plan was irretrievably cut in two. If the entry was located adjacent to a party wall, the bulk of the ground floor was made available for use by one store alone. On a 25-foot wide lot, the former situation results in two storefronts with roughly nine-feet of frontage, and in the latter, either one store with 18-feet of frontage, or two with roughly nine-feet of frontage each are possible.

On any 25-foot wide lot in the study area, any building having the ability to house a larger, approximately 18-foot-wide storefront does. In the case of 135-137 Mott Street, (Figure 3-19 on pg. 57) an unusual situation has developed where a party wall was pierced to connect two

9-foot-wide frontages in two adjacent buildings. (These party wall "punctures" are represented in Building A in Figure 5-5) Even considering this action, there is still an apparent demand for the smaller storefronts too. In the buildings with the largest frontages (e.g., the loft buildings and the New Law tenements), and the opportunity to house larger storefronts, there are several stores with 9 to 10-foot frontages. (see Figure 5-5) The key would appear to be the ability to choose.

A more adaptable upper floor center entry is commonly found in San Francisco. For example, in the Figoni Hardware store at 1351 Grant Avenue, (Figure 5-6) the upper floor entry hall does not run all of the way through the ground floor. Instead, it only extends far enough back to contain a modest ground floor landing and the rise of the staircase to the second floor. This permits a connection to be made between the two frontages behind the stair, or in other words, the storefront "wraps-around" the entry. Again, two storefronts could also easily be accommodated. The catch is providing rear lot access if necessary, and resolving the upper floors in terms of adaptability.

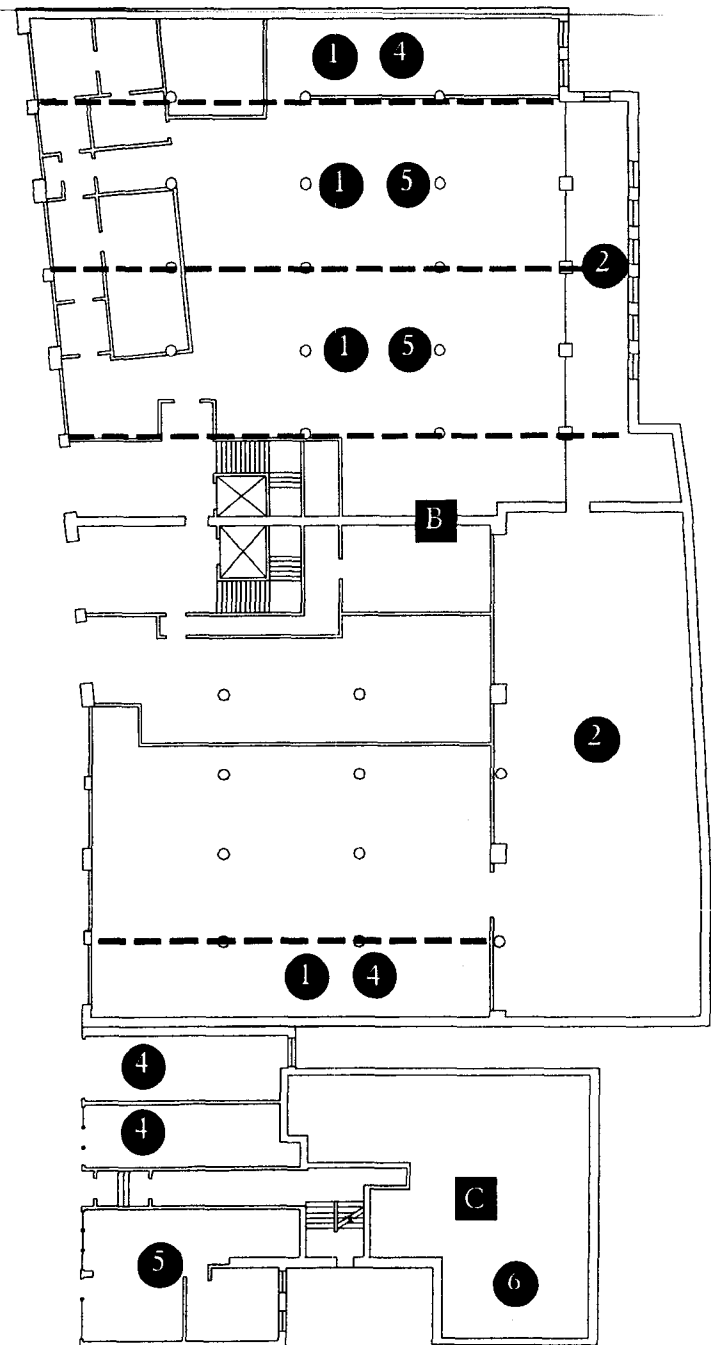
Moving back to the study area, open floor plans were also made even more flexible in most of the later buildings by opportunities to expand the ground floor into rear or side yards, independent of the setbacks required of the upper floors (this also involves legal issues and will be discussed in that section). Ground-floor expansion has occurred into rear yards of several buildings on the site as depicted in Figure 4-1 (pg. 78) and 5-5. This



# **LEGEND**

- A - Pre-Law Tenement
- B - Loft Building (The Meitz Building before Reconstruction)
- C - New Law Tenement
- 1 - Approx. Space of New Storefront
- 2 - 1-story Extension into rear of lot
- 3 - Center Entry running through Bldg.
- 4 - 9 to 10foot store frontage
- 5 - 20 to 25foot store frontage
- 6 - Undetailed Apts.

**Figure 5-5 -- Ground Floor Plans**  
 Shown in their relative locations on  
 Mott Street and at the same scale  
 (Base Plans from NYC Bldg. Dept.w/  
 elements added from field observation)



expansion is particularly notable when the portion of the lot being expanded into fronts on the street. An example of this can be seen in the view of Mulberry Street in 1932 (Figure 3-13 on pg. 48). The one-story storefront below the "billboard" occupies the backyard of the corner building. Figure 3-29 (pg. 63) shows a similar expansion of the ground floor of Angelo's restaurant, laterally (leftward) toward the corner building.

Related to the expansion of the ground floor is the control of the sidewalk in front of the building, which can also become an extension of the business's operations. This is linked to the flexibility of the ground floor elevation and is clearly important in the case study area.

### *Smaller Than Buildings*

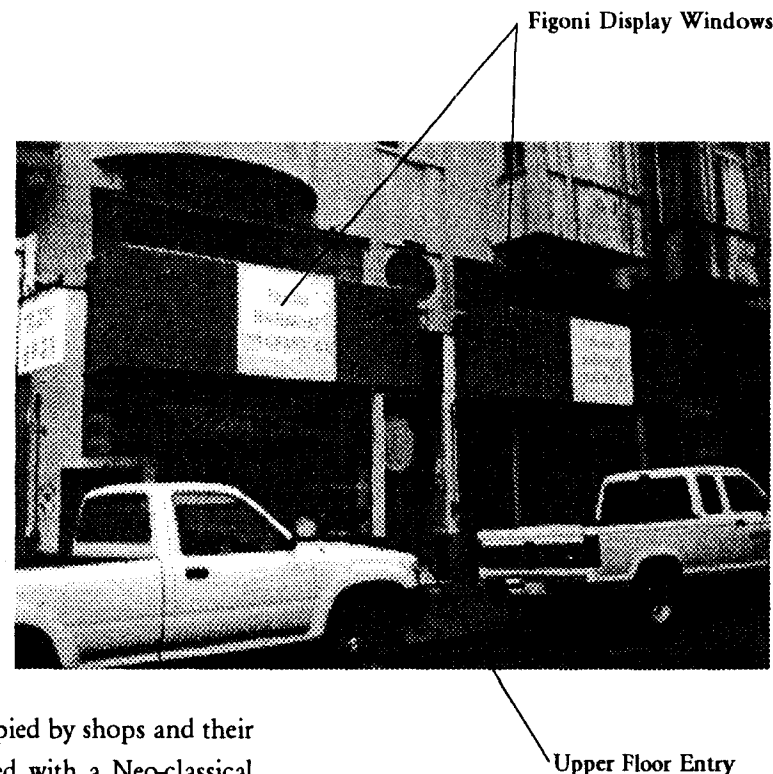
Since the preceding section began to focus on the component parts of the building this section can focus more quickly. The top floors of the buildings, with regard to the public domain, have changed relatively little since they were constructed. The most significant changes involved the addition of fire escapes, some windows were replaced or "bricked-up," some buildings have been painted and one has had stucco applied to it. (for one example, see Figure 3-30 (pg. 64) - Where the Top of the building housing the gift shops has been recently painted "brick" red.) During the 20th century, the ground floors have been the locus of physical change on the case study blocks. This is even more apparent when one considers that much of the activity on the sidewalk is an extension of the activity on the ground floor of the adjacent build-

ings, or that the stores and the activity are in a symbiotic relationship. For example, the "stoop stands" in front of the storefronts on Mott Street were often an extension of the retail functions of the store, but the independent pushcart peddlers, in conjunction with the stores, created a two-block long, indoor and outdoor market in the 1930's.

Accordingly, change at this scale involves non-fixed and semi-fixed features as well as fixed-features and it is not confined to the legal boundaries of the preceding scale.

### *The Building Enclosure*

As the previous section noted, the ground floor elevations of the buildings on the case study site were designed differently than those of the upper floors. The ground floors of the tenement buildings were often occupied by shops and their elevations were initially designed with a Neo-classical cornice topping a bay window(s) adjacent to a recessed entry door. Adjacent to the storefront would be a door leading to the upper floors. (A good existing example can be seen to the left in Figure 3-26 on pg. 61) The stores also typically had large, retractable canvas awnings. The loft buildings also followed this pattern with the exception that office windows or large loading doors



*Figure 5-6 -- Figoni Hardware*

would have replaced the storefronts.

Over time, the storefronts in the tenement buildings have followed somewhat diverging paths of change depending on the street that they are located on. On Mulberry Street, many of the original storefronts have been “modernized” over time. (see Figure 4-6 – The Caffè Palermo, on pg.s 88-89) This process of modernization has often involved a change in exterior materials, the use of large single panes of glass in lieu of smaller divided panes, an increase in the glazed area if possible, new signage, occasionally the addition of lighting, new awnings, and new entries. The original bay windowed storefront with its ground floor Neo-classical cornice (for another example, see Sal’s Hairstylist in Figure 4-6) is now a rarity in the study area. The original storefronts are usually found only in locations that have been essentially withdrawn from the market or that have an interest in the “traditional” character of the street. For example, the Banca Stabile storefront at 151 Mulberry Street has been held vacant for years by the Stabile family as a “personal landmark.” (32. Willensky and White 1988)

Loft buildings like the Jaeger Building, have also had similar changes in their ground floor elevations as they were subdivided into separate storefronts. These changes possibly had more impact on the visual characteristics of the street than the former due to the scale of the transformation. The Jaeger Building alone occupies a third of the frontage on the east side of Mulberry Street. (For another example of differing frontages among building, see Figure 5-5) Accordingly, when the ground floor was

changed into storefronts it represented something of a reversal of the lot consolidation process that had created a large uniform ground floor across the building. During this building’s transformation each of the roughly twenty foot wide storefronts that were introduced into the ground floor adopted a different elevational appearance. The original ground floor cornice was removed and the stores’ replacement strategy varied from the use of wood to conceal any trace of the old cast-iron columns to painting the columns and infilling around them with new glazing, brick and metal. Each storefront has also adopted different colors – ranging from the colors of the Italian flag, or blue and aqua, to black and pink - which have carried over into many of the semi-fixed features, and in the signs and canvas and plastic awnings. These last elements, particularly the awnings, have been shown to change even when the restaurant remains the same.

On Mott Street change has also been occurring but the results have been somewhat different. The most apparent difference is that while some of the original storefronts have been replaced by similar “modernized” enclosures, as on Mulberry Street, many have also been removed entirely or the new enclosure has been set back several feet into the building. In either case, rolling metal security gates are routinely installed in place of, or just below, the old cornice (these gates are generally absent on Mulberry). Metal or plastic awnings cover these gates and together with the signs attached to the wall above them, they play a large role in establishing the identity of the business and Chinese-language char-

acters and the colors red, yellow and green predominate in the design of these features.

### *Semi-fixed features*

Mott and Mulberry Streets appear to have had different ambiances for much of the twentieth century, with the possible exception of the feast days early in the century (see Figures 3-10 on pg. 44 & 3-14 on pg. 49). In the 1930's, Mott was a largely a marketplace with the storefronts and the pushcarts selling meat, produce and pasta to the local Italian community. Mulberry seems to have been a quieter street in the sense that much of its frontage was occupied by manufacturing concerns with a few isolated storefronts. In the 1990's, both streets have had dramatic changes in ambience and together with the aforementioned elevational changes, semi-fixed features have had a large role in the transformation.

Today, instead of pushcarts, cars and trucks line the curbs of Mott Street and the sidewalks are filled with tables displaying produce and fish. Boxes are frequently stacked at the curb as the stands setup for business. Bags, portable lights and scales hang from the awnings, boards divide one enterprise's tables from the next and small paper signs are taped to walls and windows or stuck in the produce. On occasion, a peddler still appears, usually with a shopping cart or a luggage cart full of goods for sale. At the end of the day, most of the features are packed away leaving only the large wooden or iron tables on the sidewalk before the closed security gates that conceal the storefronts.

This inventory is pretty constant throughout the year, and the street has been a part of Chinatown for several years now, but change is still occurring at this level as Chapter Three discussed. There have been many new immigrants from places other than southern China since the 1980's, so the goods for sale have been changing also, according to new and differing tastes. For example, more food associated with Taiwanese and Vietnamese cuisine has been appearing. The same change has been occurring in San Francisco's Chinatown. (41. Chan, personal communication; Lau, personal communication 1994)

On Mulberry, since the numerous restaurants have been established in the ground floors of the loft buildings, in fair weather sidewalk cafes appear along much of the west side and especially the east side of the block. Most of the restaurants set up tables similarly, along the building and in the outer sidewalk zone and the tables typically have large umbrellas. Even in continuous stretches of tables, the portion of the cafe controlled by each restaurant is clearly identifiable though, through different table settings, the patterns and colors of the table cloths, and by the colors and lettering on the umbrellas. Also, temporary signs and plants often hang from the awnings and the building wall and potted plants mark the boundaries of some restaurants' claims to the sidewalk. Temporary signage, as the last chapter has displayed, also frequently spans the thoroughfare.

### *Summary - The Physical Framework*

In Chapter One, there were several variables presented that might require a change in the use or the reconfiguration of a portion of the environment. These variables involve change for Instrumental, Expressive/Latent, Social, Cultural, Demographic and Economic reasons. Demographic and Cultural change has been shown to be underlying the whole process of sequent occupancy on the face blocks, and in the Lower East Side in general. The diverging cultural factors contributing to the use of space on Mott and Mulberry have particularly been driving the creation of two different cultural landscapes. Instrumental change is most evident through the introduction of the car into the face blocks and particularly in the transformation of the parking strip from a fairly active and flexible, pedestrian-oriented space to a space largely used for car storage. Expressive/Latent change is evident in the disparity between, and the variability within, the two "inventories" of features comprising the Italian and Chinese storefronts.

Disparity between the two inventories has often been apparent in the selection of materials (metal versus canvas awnings), in the color palate (which overlaps in red and green, but differs regarding yellow), in color application (a red background versus white for a hand-lettered temporary sign), in religious iconography (Images of Saints versus Buddhas) and most obviously in storefront enclosure (often open versus always enclosed).

Variability within the inventories addresses personaliza-

tion and can be seen in how each storefront has taken the basic elements of the inventory and applied them differently than similar storefronts on the street. Within each face block, different choices have been made regarding awning and signage color, material and design and storefront and interior elevational finishes. Personalization is also apparent in the features that are not shared among the two inventories, including the different table settings and umbrellas on Mulberry. It should also be noted that the decisions made in personalizing a store are not static, they change over time, e.g., the recent replacement/addition of awnings on Mulberry Street.

*In simply reviewing these variables in the light of the changes identified in the case study blocks, it becomes apparent that the creation of cultural landscapes in this environment is largely a factor of being able to express identity on a cultural and small group/individual basis. This expression occurs through change at the smallest scale of the environment - at least in cases of sequent occupancy. Providing the requisite flexibility and adaptability at this scale should be the ultimate focus of designing for change.*

In endeavoring to further develop this concept it should be noted that the environment that the case study was based in is only one of many different environments found in a long-established, contemporary American city. The area has a relatively high-density and it has long been characterized by a mix of uses. It has also undergone periods of intense redevelopment. For these reasons, with regard to urban frameworks, it can only pro-

vide a portion of the data necessary to develop such a concept. Anne Vernez Moudon's (27. 1986a) study has delved further into "neighborhood" architecture, and has done so on a grander scale, in an area of slightly more recent vintage.

However, many cases of sequent occupancy are occurring on the periphery of the city now, or in suburbia, and the concept needs to address change in these areas also. Many of them are low-density, of homogeneous use, were established after zoning was implemented, and their original building stock is intact. Through additional comparative research, these environments can help to answer questions regarding the effect of change on areas with segregated land-uses and to provide material in addition to that provided by these older "inner city" areas.

## THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework came into existence in a different sequence than the physical framework. (see Figure 5-7 – Regulations Compared to Periods of Construction) It began with controls on particular elements of urban buildings and developed into a system of complementary and overlapping regulations regarding building components, buildings and their context. As Chapter Four demonstrated, many of the large scale regulations were implemented too late to have affected the cultural landscape of Mott and Mulberry Streets however, other regulations, that were not necessarily intended to affect the

cultural landscape, did have considerable impact. As well, many of the later regulations began to wield greater control over Smaller Than Building scale elements and they also have had a great impact due to the more rapid construction/reconstruction cycle operating at this scale.

### *Blocks and Streets*

At this scale, there are currently several types of regulations available to planners, two of which can be found affecting the case study site. These two are the Zoning Resolution and The Special District, and the third is the Historic District. Chapter Four has shown that none of these regulations have had a substantial impact on the visual characteristics of the site at these scales. However, in the event of another series of redevelopment, these regulations will have a profound impact. This situation is not unlikely considering the continuing expansion of the Civic Center to the south or the recent, and substantial, investment in the area from Hong Kong. In this event, these regulations will have influence on the blocks' buildings in numerous ways including massing, setbacks, FAR, and height.

The Zoning Resolution and the Special District have had some influence in the use of the blocks. Since the transformation to largely industrial use never materialized in the area as the 1916 Zoning Resolution predicted, the area was rezoned to commercial usage in 1961. This had a constraint stating that existing buildings could not be converted to residential uses without a permit. The Special District also added a requirement for ground-floor

REGULATION IN EFFECT COMPARED TO PERIODS OF CONSTRUCTION																								
REGULATION	18th Century				19th Century										20th Century									
	6 0	7 0	8 0	9 0	0. 0	1 0	2 0	3 0	4 0	5 0	6 0	7 0	8 0	9 0	0. 0	1 0	2 0	3 0	4 0	5 0	6 0	7 0	8 0	9 0
Building																								
Housing											6 7													
Zoning																1 6								
Peddling/Vending																								
Special District																						7 7		
CONSTRUCTION BY SCALE																								
Street																								
Block																								
Lots																								
Building																								
Smaller Than Bldg.																								

**Figure 5-7 -- Regulation in Effect vs. Periods of Construction**

Construction periods are based upon broad estimates, particularly in the Smaller Than Building scale. Numbers in cells to the left of shaded cells indicate that a regulation was adopted in the latter half of the preceding decade.

retail use in new and renovated buildings.

### ***Lots and Buildings***

Zoning and the Special District are designed to carry out Block scale goals via coordinated impact at the Lot and Building scales. Again however, the effect of these regulations has been negligible in the case study area due to a lack of large scale redevelopment since their implementation. The construction in place on the site did respond to a considerable array of different regulations though. Building laws/codes and housing laws had been becoming increasingly stringent since the early 1800's and by the late 1860's, comprehensive building laws and more narrowly targeted housing laws began to significantly affect the cultural landscape on this large scale. In a process of frequent revision and amendment, regulations concerning materials, building height, massing, width, frontage and setbacks were put into place.

As the laws responded to existing conditions, they left a legacy of buildings that describe their path to increasing stringency. This path can be seen in the form of the many tenement buildings on the two face blocks. Even the earliest of these buildings has a front elevation of brick, in response to one of the earliest requirements for fireproof external construction. This, by itself, marked a great change from the many wood-clad buildings that appear to have occupied the streets before. Then the massing of the tenements on the 25-foot wide lots increased as the rear-lot tenement was banned, a maximum limit on coverage was implemented, and ventilation stan-

dards grew more strict. Finally, responding to an exception made for non-fireproof construction in relation to a maximum height limit, and increased setback requirements, the New Law tenements were constructed on large consolidated lots that had considerably more frontage than their predecessors.

### ***Smaller Than Buildings***

The regulation of the elements in the Smaller Than Buildings category has been present in the City since the 1600's, and was somewhat common by the mid-1800's. In the 20th century though, the regulation of smaller scale elements of the cultural landscape came to fruition. Prior to the 1916 Zoning Resolution the impact of the law on the cultural landscape was apparently not given great consideration. With the original Resolution this changed and it explicitly sought to control the large scale elements of the environment with an eye toward attaining a particular image of the City.

The Resolution was not retroactive however, and the older areas of the City remained largely unaffected. The Resolution's controls were also not specifically targeted at the small-scale features of the environment. Consciously designed, small-scale regulation of the cultural landscape had not yet come of age in 1916. In the 1930's however, Reformers had begun to gain support for the implementation of a variety of regulations that would rid the Lower East Side of its "old-world" ways and consequently, peddling, stoop stands and "pulling-in" be-

came largely illegal. At approximately this time, the building laws also began to expand their scope and numerous small-scale elements were brought under the Building Department's consideration. These ultimately included features like signage, awnings, sidewalk cafes and exterior lighting. In 1961, the Zoning Resolution was revised and the scope of its regulations also expanded into the control of small scale features, including storefront enclosures, signage, and sidewalk cafes.

The progression toward increasing control over the elements (as discussed above) that were most often manipulated in the (re)creation of cultural landscapes continued and it culminated in the creation of the Historic District and the Special District. Both of these had specific agendas for the maintenance of particular urban cultural landscapes and have been applied liberally in New York City.

The Little Italy Special District displays the detailed control of small scale elements now available to public authority. The guidelines in the Mulberry Street Retail Spine for example, have been explicitly developed to require new stores to recreate the essence of the late 19th and early 20th century wood and cast-iron storefronts commonly found at that time in Little Italy. However, these storefronts were apparently typical of Pre-Law and Old-Law tenements throughout the City and were not characteristically Italian.

As the discussion in the previous section suggested, regulation of elements at this scale can interfere with the

creation of a cultural landscape. In many places within the Mulberry Street Retail Spine this appears to be happening since the options available to some Chinese storefronts are limited when the regulations are enforced, e.g., an open storefront is not a possibility. In any event, even the Chinese storefronts built under these guidelines are unmistakably part of Chinatown, not Little Italy.

### *Summary - The Legal Framework*

Clearly, contemporary law has come to exert great control over every scale of the urban environment and its scope encompasses an extraordinary range of fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed features. Some have used an analogy to a web of legal issues but this seems to diminish their combined complexity. The range of laws and overseeing bodies would more appropriately be described as layered. In the regulations that are consciously designed to manipulate the cultural landscape, their controls are increasingly conservative and resistant to change. Also, many relevant regulations have not been traditionally considered as determinants of cultural landscapes. The question then becomes one of how to reconcile the "deliberate" and "indeliberate" determinants of city form within the legal system with each other and with the needs of the inevitable process of sequent occupancy.

As the previous section suggested, flexibility and adaptability at the smallest scales of the environment are crucial to designing for change. The case study has indi-

cated a trend in legal frameworks that has run contrary to this for much of this century. Accordingly, as discussions of land-use regulation have moved, within the last few years, to a consideration of "flexible" zoning, the effects of regulation on the smallest scales of the environment would warrant consideration.

To qualify the conclusions of this case study, with regard to the legal framework, it must be recognized that they have been developed without extensive comparative work during the project. Further research is needed in similar situations in other cities. The most evident location is San Francisco which has been shown to have similarities to New York with regard to sequent occupancy. It also has made extensive use of the Special District. Cross-cultural studies outside of the United States would also be useful. Aside from delving further into case studies of legal frameworks, future research on legal controls could potentially tap into the expanding abilities of computer modelling and simulation. Such modeling could become a tool useful in identifying unforeseen consequences within the complex interactions of the law.

## SYNTHESIZING THE PHYSICAL & LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

In considering the physical and legal frameworks together, it becomes apparent that there is a range of actors responsible for "designing" the urban environment. The actors include: individual architects, urban designers, planners, engineers, interior designers, contractors, residents, tenants, property owners, speculators, investors, developers, zoning officials, housing authorities, building departments, lawyers, financiers, state and local legislatures, etc. The efforts of these actors are rarely coordinated and in some circumstances, one party may be working to constrain the efforts of another. Decisions made by this collection of actors are also distributed across time and are, as this thesis has endeavored to demonstrate, linked to the differing scales of the urban environment.

In light of this, how can these frameworks be designed to accommodate change in cultural landscapes? Assuming that the ability to accommodate change is accepted as a valuable characteristic of the urban environment, it appears that each actor needs to recognize their role in relation to the scales used within the model. They also need to recognize which of the two frameworks it is that they have influence on. For example, an individual architect working on the design of a single building only wields influence over the Building and Smaller Than Buildings scale and can really only work to accommodate change at the smallest scale – *the most important scale in dealing with change in contemporary urban cultural landscapes*. This

architect has to work within the “supports” provided by the actors who designed all of the larger-scale elements of the environment and they cannot, usually, affect any of the regulations placed upon the environment, at any scale. Accordingly, it is in the architect’s interest that the larger scales – the supports of the Building scale – have been designed to accommodate their building program. Likewise, it is the architect’s responsibility to provide the necessary supports to accommodate the necessary degree of open-endedness at the Smaller Than Building scale. This argument applies to each actor involved in the process, across all of the scales and in both the physical and legal frameworks.

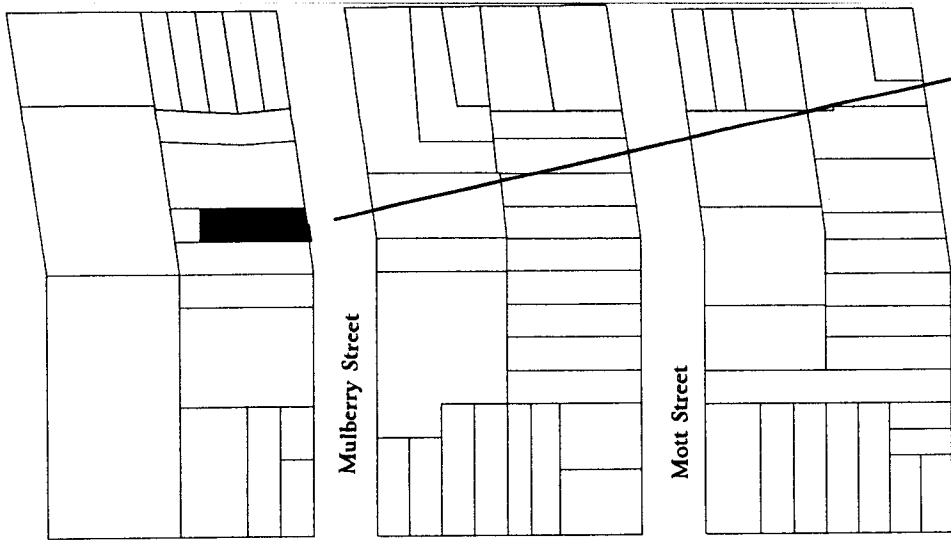
### ***143 Mulberry Street***

To conclude this project, and to act as a demonstration of the application of the position advocated above, the results of a brief (literally about 24-hours) and incomplete, one-person design charrette will be presented in this section. The goals of this charrette were to develop a schematic design of a building that would foster the necessary degree of open-endedness on the Smaller Than Buildings scale. In displaying this process, it is hoped that the interconnectedness and determining roles of both frameworks become readily apparent.

In addition to creating the supports for change at the Smaller Than Building scale, other goals for the charrette included pushing the building to “the limits.” In other words, the design would try to achieve the maximum zoning envelope, e.g., the largest massing permissible.

In trying to accomplish this goal, each of the relevant building regulations in effect on the site was consulted. However, other aspects of these codes have not been thoroughly considered and accordingly, the building should not be considered a prototype of a building “designed for change.” It is only intended to be a demonstration and it is very diagrammatic. Many issues are unresolved in its current state. It is most useful to display the convergence of the two frameworks in one building.

The design will be discussed largely via diagrams and annotations but to provide some background: the site is 143 Mulberry Street, a slightly irregular 25 by 100-foot, interior lot, which is currently occupied by private car parking. The last buildings to appear on it were two Pre-Law tenements, one on the front of the lot and the other in the rear, which were demolished after 1914.



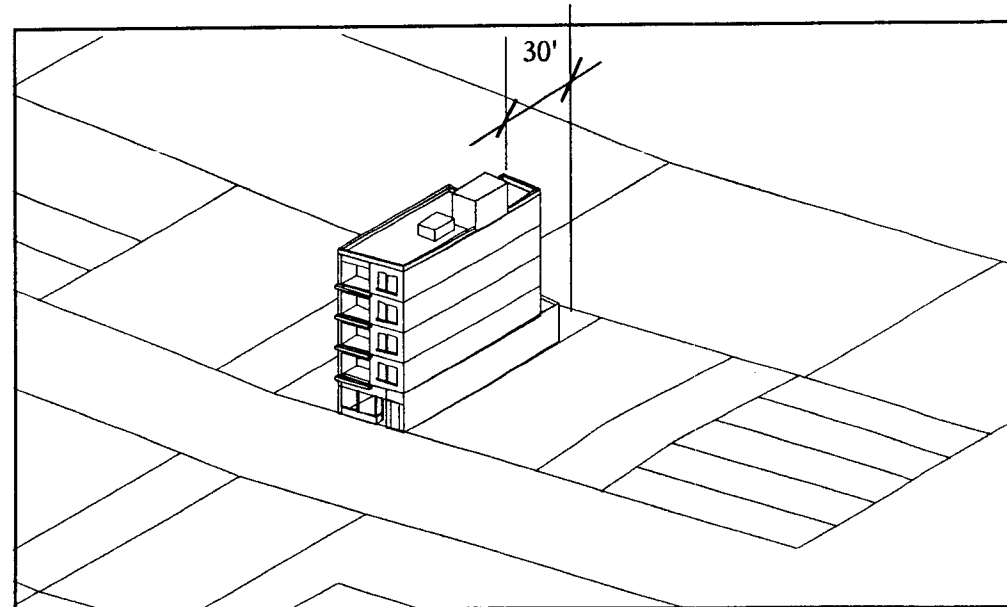
## STEP ONE - SITING

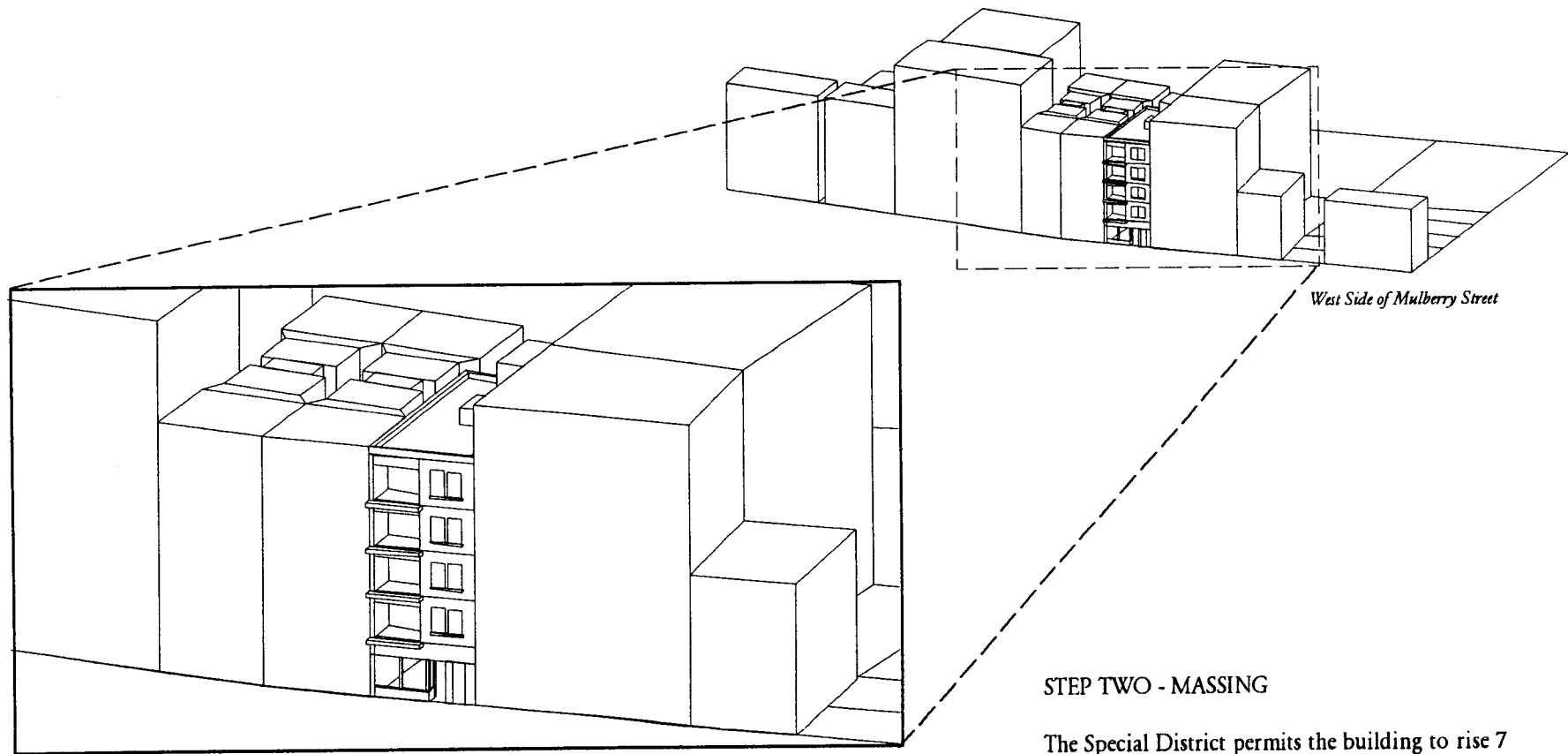
The Building is located in the Mulberry Street Retail Spine. As a condition of the Special District, it has to maintain the "streetwall." Accordingly, there is no front setback, which is in keeping with the case study findings that similar front setbacks among buildings on the face block promoted some ground floor flexibility.

There is no requirement for a sideyard in any of the regulations so the building occupies 100% of the width of the lot to take advantage of the frontage.

## STEP ONE - SITING (continued)

At the rear of the lot, there are several regulations that influenced the design. The first is a requirement by the Special District that the building can achieve 100% coverage on the ground floor, but is restricted on the upper floors to 60-70% coverage. Since this is intended to be a mixed-use building with the upper floors capable of being used for residences, the Multiple Dwelling Law factors in too. This law requires a 30-foot rear setback for a building of this height.





## STEP TWO - MASSING

The Special District permits the building to rise 7 stories, as long as the building has a front setback above 60-feet. The Zoning Resolution also places a FAR limitation of 6.02 on the building. As the drawings display, the building is only 5-stories high. This is a result of a constraint placed upon it by the Building Code. This constraint is directly linked to the decision to use only a single fire-stair because of the building's limited footprint. The Code permits a building of occupancy groups J-2 (apt. bldg.s) or E (some types of commercial use) to have one fire stair if the building is fireproof and *not taller than 60'*. (The Multiple Dwelling Law would have permitted a six-story building with one fire-stair.)

### STEP THREE - BASE & TOP

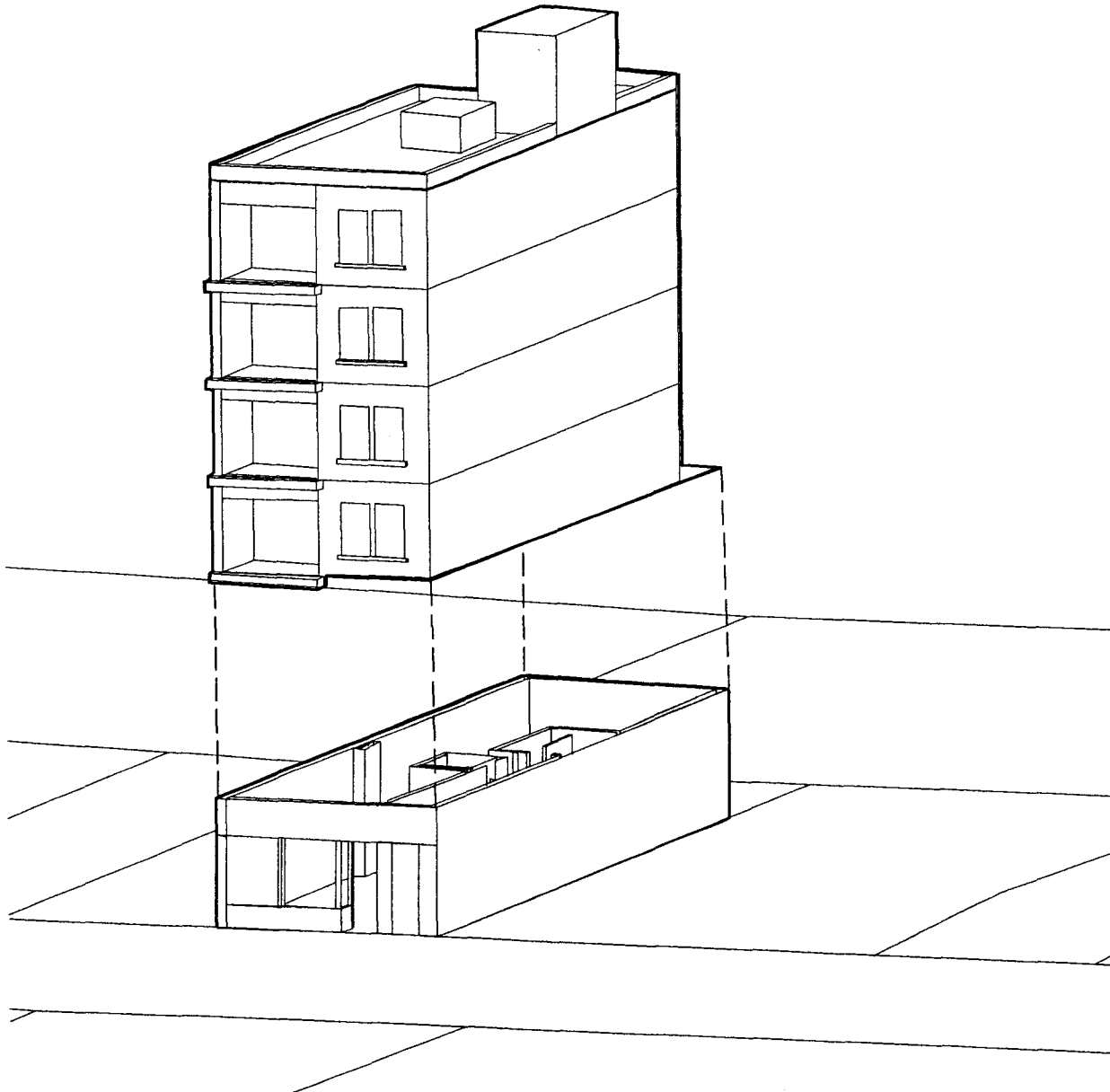
Like the other buildings on the site, the building was designed with the Base and Top elevational and functional strategy. The Base, which is required by the Special District to be occupied by a retail use, has an upper floor entry flush against the northern party wall. The remainder of the Base Elevation is treated as "infill" and is intended to be visually distinct from the Top (this distinction, as Habraken (27. 1988) indicated would be likely to increase with time).

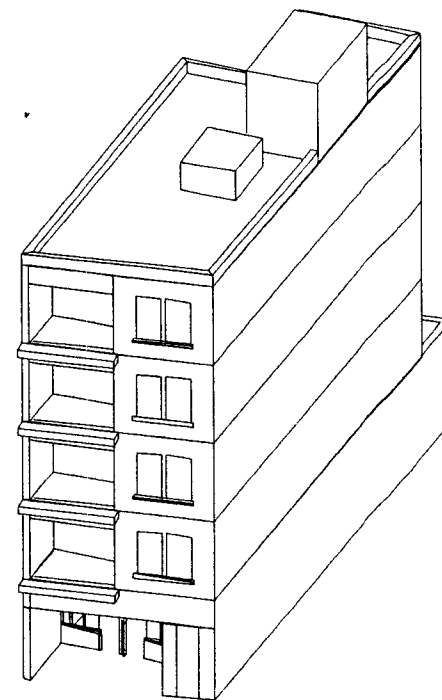
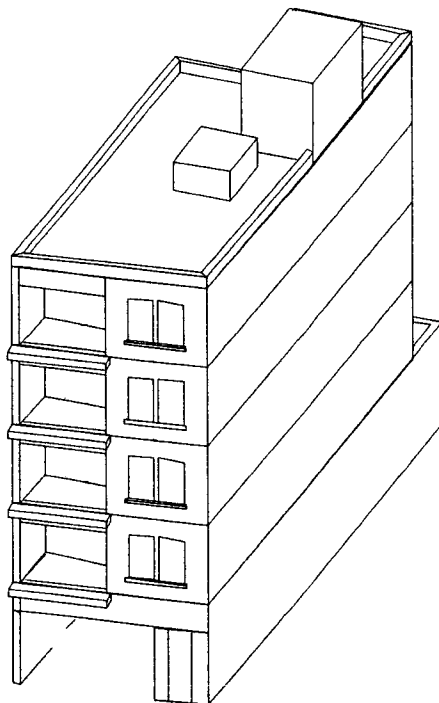
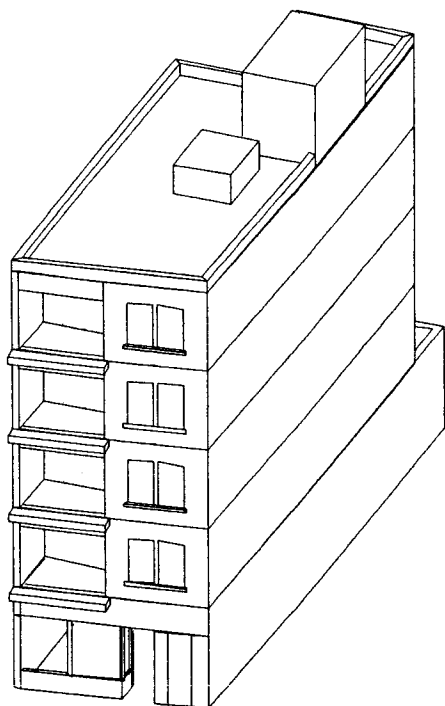
In other words, the storefront can be removed, replaced or modified (see facing page) and all of the Base's elevational materials would be "flexible." A commonly used storefront material like metal panels could be used for the opaque surfaces to begin with. Each ground floor tenant could then manipulate these finishes as desired.

The largest opaque surface on the Base is a band above the storefront and the upper floor entry. This band is four-feet high and spans the elevation. This area is available for attaching signs, lights, awnings, etc. It begins ten-feet above the sidewalk, which is the maximum height for a display window according to the Special District and the lowest point that the Building Code permits signage to hang above a sidewalk.

The upper floors, which the case study indicates do not need to be as flexible in elevation as the Base, could be finished in brick like the other buildings on the block.

Since the Special District permits some elevational recesses, each upper floor features a balcony with the maximum projection permitted by the Building Code. (22")





#### Variations on the Storefront Enclosure

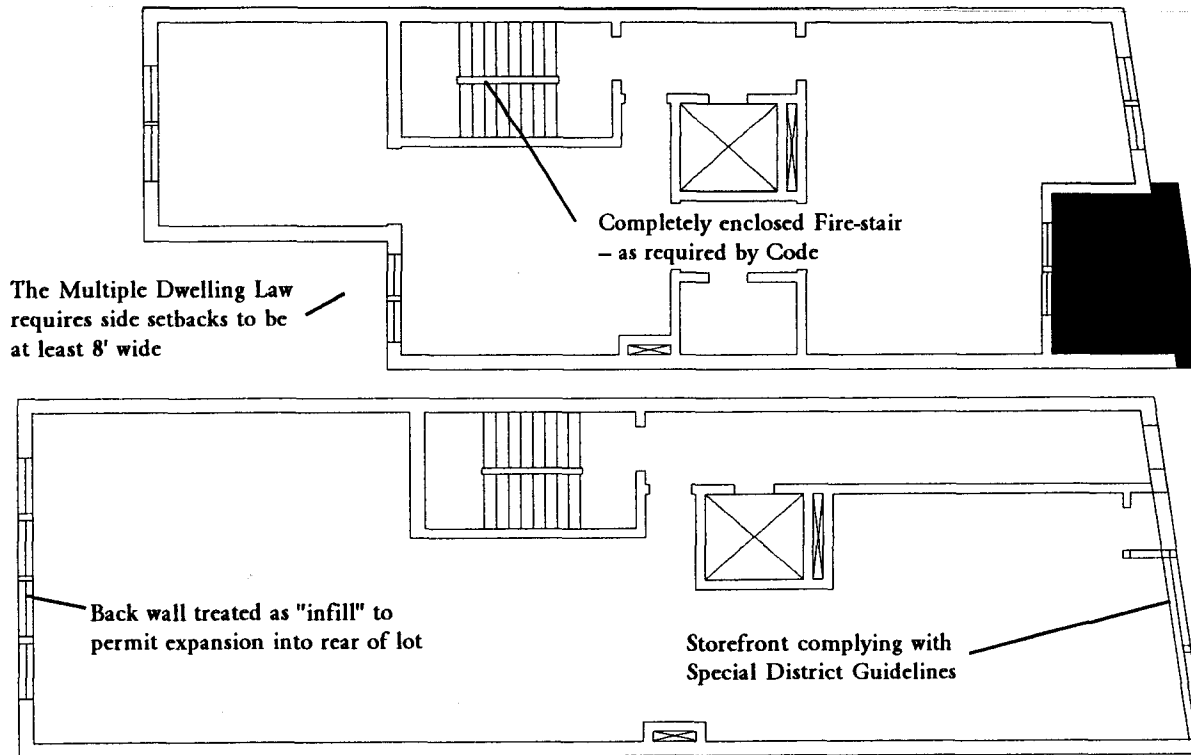
*Left* - A design conforming to the Special District Guidelines

*Middle* - An Open Storefront possible only if the Special District Guidelines are changed.

*Right* - A Setback Storefront, also only possible if the Special District Guidelines are changed.

While two of these designs are not possible under the present regulatory circumstances, the case study has shown that buildings often outlast specific legal controls.

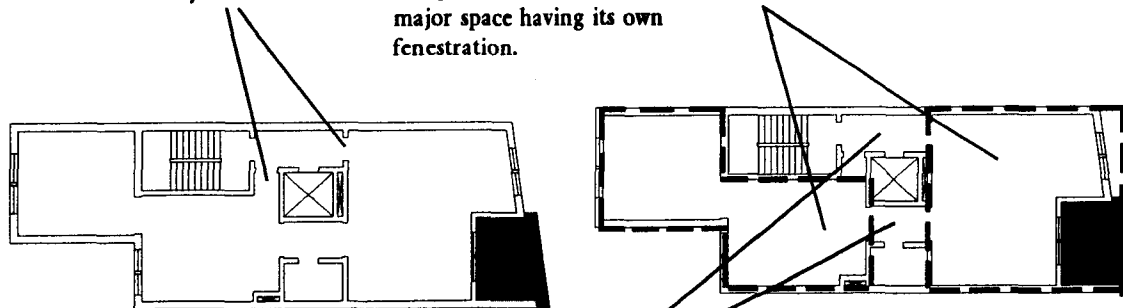
## STEP FOUR - FLOOR PLANS



Two entries are located on each floor with a shared lobby

There are two potentially independent zones, with each major space having its own fenestration.

Upper Floor (Top)  
Ground Floor (above)  
Upper Floor Diagrams (Below)



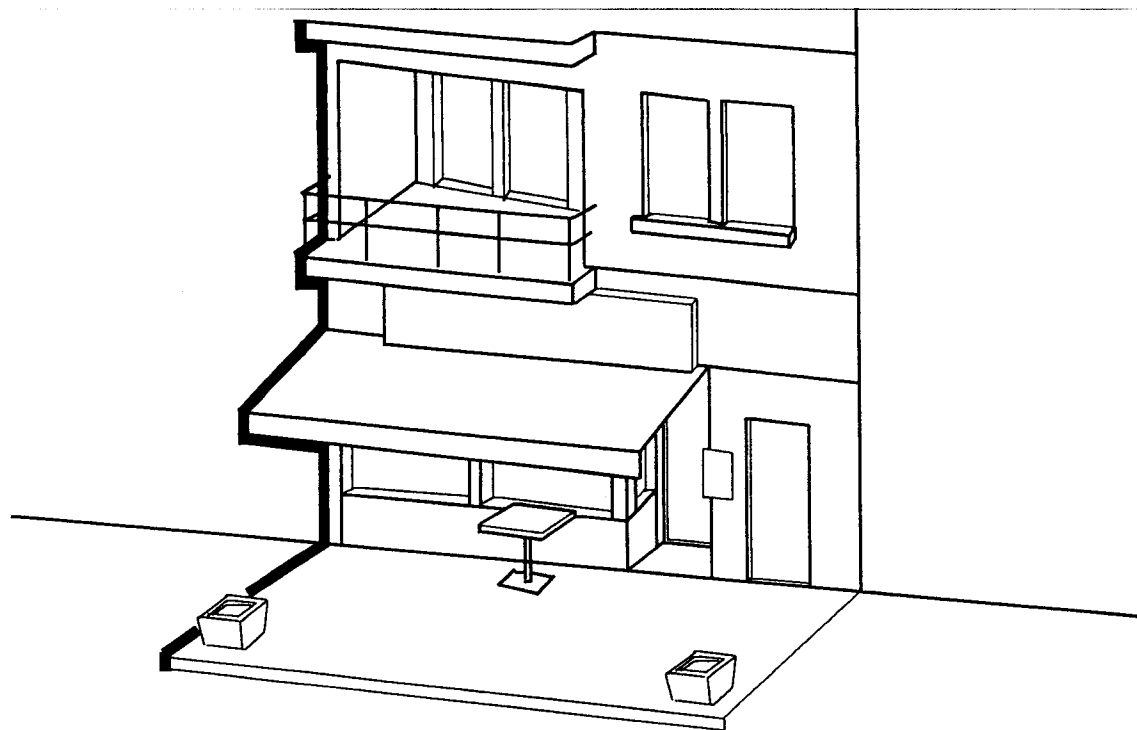
In considering the floor plans, an attempt was made to design them to be adaptable. On the ground floor (within the public domain and the floor closest to the focus of this study) this manifests itself in placing the upper floor entry to the side, against a party wall. This provides the maximum uninterrupted frontage for a single storefront. It also permits the subdivision of that frontage into two storefronts, if desired.

The upper floor access continues along the party wall to the center of the building where the firestair and an elevator are located. The elevator was considered necessary when the building was thought to be capable of rising seven stories. At five stories, the elevator might be an extravagance. However, if the upper floors were used as commercial space the elevator might be an important feature. This is one aspect of the plans that would need to be resolved.

The elevator and the fire-stair divide the "front" of the storefront from the "back." The latter is typically the location of food preparation and storage in both the Italian restaurants and the Chinese storefronts.

In any event, the rear wall, like the front wall, is treated as "infill" to permit the ground floor to expand to fill 100% of the lot if desired. This expansion is permitted by the Special District.

The upper floor is the most unresolved portion of this schematic design. As already mentioned, the upper floors could house residences or some commercial uses, like professional offices. With these differing uses in mind, a redundant circulation (and entry) system has been introduced that would permit each floor to house 1 large apartment, 2 small apt.s or 1 or 2 offices.



*A diagram of 143 Mulberry Street as it might look with an Italian Restaurant*

## THE LAST WORD

This design charrette was intended to be a simple demonstration of the interaction of the two frameworks. Even considering its brevity and limited scope, the impact of the legal framework on the design was considerable as were the large-scale features such as the 25-foot wide lot. The resulting design should not be construed as having attained its full potential with regard to the regulations in effect, however. For example, there are exceptions to some of the regulations that might permit the building to add an extra story. In other words, this building, like this thesis, is just a brief introduction to some of the principles involved in accommodating change in our urban cultural landscapes.

The italicized words are also defined within the Glossary.

Block	A four sided module of land that is generally defined by public <i>Streets</i> on each side. The Romans used the word "insulae" – which translates as "islands" – to describe these modules. As opposed to: <i>Face Block</i>
Enclosure	The vertical plane that is a physical barrier between the "inside" of a building and the "outside." (Outside meaning largely exposed to the open-air, including recessed space in a building elevation, i.e. balconies.) It is typically used here to describe window and door combinations used in some storefronts.
Ethnic Marketplace	A variation on the "festival marketplace" concept (i.e. Baltimore's Harborplace) that uses the ethnic character of a community to attract tourists. This character is usually fictionalized to depict the general public's perception of a particular ethnicity versus a true depiction of a neighborhood's (possibly no longer existing) cultural landscape.
Face Block	A conception of a "block" in which a <i>Street</i> is defined by private property on both sides. It includes the private property. See also <i>Block</i> .
Fixed Feature	Features of the environment that are generally long-lived and "fixed" to a location. They are often used to delineate space. A group of buildings around a plaza would be one example of fixed features defining space.
Front-lot Tenement	A tenement that is located on the front (street-side) lot line and which often has a separate tenement behind it on the back of the lot. See <i>Rear-lot Tenement</i> .
Lower East Side	Used in this paper somewhat differently than typically used in New York today, the Lower East Side in this paper refers to the land that was largely occupied by the Bayard, DeLancey and Rutgers estates. (see Ch. 3) This is to unite them to their common

beginnings and to avoid confusion by disassociating the land from any explicitly ethnic neighborhood names. For example, the lands of the Bayard estate, east of Broadway, are more commonly referred to as Little Italy today, and the area east of the Bowery is the Lower East Side.

New Law Tenement	In more contemporary terminology, an apartment building, or “multiple dwelling,” that was built when the Tenement House Act of 1901 was in effect. Unlike the <i>Pre-Law Tenements</i> or the <i>Old Law Tenements</i> , these buildings generally occupied lots larger than the standard 25 by 100-foot lot and they accordingly, often have greater street frontage. (See Figure 4-2 – Massing Effects of Housing Law Changes)
Non-Fixed Features	More appropriately discussed as non-fixed feature Space, this phrase could be considered inter-personal space. Being directly related to a person's body, this space moves with that individual.
Old Law Tenement	In more contemporary terminology, an apartment building, or “multiple dwelling,” that was built when the Tenement House Act of 1867 or 1879 was in effect. Typically, these buildings were constructed on 25 by 100-foot lots and they had very high lot coverage. See also: <i>Pre-Law Tenement</i> or <i>New Law Tenement</i> . (See Figure 4-2 – Massing Effects of Housing Law Changes)
Open Storefront	A storefront that has no <i>Enclosure</i> dividing the bulk of its floor area from the <i>Street</i> .
Pre-Law Tenement	In more contemporary terminology, an apartment building, or “multiple dwelling,” that was built before the adoption of the Tenement House Acts of 1867 or 1879. Like the later <i>Old Law Tenements</i> , these buildings were often constructed on 25 by 100-foot lots but they often covered a smaller percentage of the lot than those built under the aforementioned Acts. They often could be distinguished by their location on the lot as either <i>Front-lot Tenements</i> or <i>Rear-lot Tenements</i> . See also: <i>New Law Tenement</i> . (See Figure 4-2 – Massing Effects of Housing Law Changes)
Rear-lot Tenement	A tenement that is located in the back of a lot, usually behind and not attached to a

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tenement that occupies the front (street-side) of the lot.

Semi-Fixed Features

Features of the environment that are capable of being moved or are of a temporary nature. Like *Fixed Features*, they are often used to delineate space. A cluster of chairs would be one example of semi-fixed features.

Sidewalk

(Inner, Middle & Outer)

A means of identifying where semi-fixed objects are on the sidewalk. In between the curb and the property line, the Inner Sidewalk extends from the property line out some distance (2-feet or so) until it reaches the Middle Sidewalk which occupies a zone roughly centered in the width of the sidewalk, and the Outer Sidewalk extends from the middle sidewalk to the curb. As a generic example, Stoops are generally located in the Inner Sidewalk. Pedestrians often walk in the Middle Sidewalk and parking meters (in American cities) are located in the Outer Sidewalk. (See Figure 3-9 – The 7 Zones)

Street

The public right-of-way contained between adjacent private property boundaries, or where these boundaries would typically be in the event that a public property fronts on the Street, i.e. a park. The Street includes elements such as the sidewalk, the parking strip, and the *Thoroughfare*.

Thoroughfare

The portion of a *Street* or right-of-way that is typically used by moving vehicles. This is generally the center portion of the Street.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Due to the extent and the range of its contents, this bibliography has been developed around a series of classifications. These classifications are patterned after the standard library card catalog filing system in which a general category is presented first in the heading, followed by a succession of refinements as needed. For example: Ethnic Communities - Chinatown - United States - General. This conveys that this section contains general works about American Chinatowns. The category names have been selected to locate related categories near to one another, thus the broadest category here is "Ethnic Communities." Gathering all of the references regarding these communities together ensures that similar information regarding Little Italy is close by.

*Each classification has been given a number, which is presented in ascending order. The number corresponds to the 1 or 2 digit number found with the reference in the text. For example: (2. Ittelson, et al, 1976) This indicates that the 1976 Ittelson reference can be found alphabetically listed in classification number 2 - Behavioral Mapping just below. At some locations in the text, a group of references are identified that are located in the same classification in the Bibliography. In these instances, the classification number for the first reference is applicable to each of those included within the parentheses. For example, (2. Francis 1984; Nasar & Yurdakul 1990) indicates that both works can be found in classification 2 - Behavioral Mapping.*

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### **2. Behavioral Mapping**

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#### **41. Additional Sources - Interviews & Other Correspondence**

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Choy, Philip (August 1994) - A taped conversation with a prominent historian of the Chinese-American experience, past-President of the Chinese Historical Society of America, and architect. Mr. Choy works in San Francisco.

Lau, G. (August 1994) - A conversation that was partially taped, and partially recorded in notes, with Mr. Lau, in San Francisco's Chinatown. Mr. Lau grew up in Chinatown.

Liu, Chi-Wen (Spring 1993/Fall 1994) - Ms. Lui is a recently graduated PhD from the School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Wisconsin. Milwaukee, WI. A resident of Taiwan, her dissertation topic was also relevant as she was studying market streets in Taiwan.

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Maas, Paul (1994) - A letter written in response to an inquiry about the state of planning for immigrant communities in Canada. Mr. Maas is a practicing architect in Calgary, Canada and a PhD candidate at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Wisconsin. Milwaukee, WI.

Mott Street Deli Patron (July 1994) - A brief conversation recorded in handwritten notes, with an older gentleman possibly of Italian-American heritage.

Mott Street Senior Center (July 1994) - A taped conversation with a group of Italian-American women that had grown up in, and have lived their lives in, New York City's Little Italy.

North Beach Resident (August 1994) - A phone conversation recorded in handwritten notes, with a woman who has been a life-long resident of North Beach, San Francisco.

Restaurant Staff (July 1994) - A conversation recorded in handwritten notes, with a waiter and a busboy at an Italian Restaurant on Mulberry Street in the NYC study area.

Young, John (March 1995) - A phone conversation recorded in handwritten notes, regarding several zoning questions, with a planner employed by the New York City Planning Commission.

Yuan, T.C. (July 1994) - A phone conversation recorded in handwritten notes, with an architect who had just completed a new mixed-use building at 159 Mott Street in NYC. The building is a few "doors" north of the block used in the study, on an interior, 25-foot wide lot, just across Grand Street.