Knowledge Capacity





SCIDpda led community design workshops to envision new improvements to Maynard Alley, located in Seattle on the south side of Jackson Street between Maynard Avenue and 7th Avenue, and Nihonmachi Alley, located on the north side of Jackson Street between 6th and Maynard Avenues

Knowledge capacity is an organization's ability to generate, share, and apply knowledge in ways that build collective understanding, leadership, and power—especially in partnership with the communities it serves. For community-focused organizations, knowledge capacity goes beyond formal education or expertise. It includes the ability to recognize lived experience as knowledge, create inclusive learning environments, and develop leadership grounded in cultural and community wisdom. Using specific spatial, textural, and cultural cues, organizers can affirm residents' memory and legacies. When residents see their stories reflected back, they may be more comfortable and more likely to participate in activities and leadership opportunities.

Knowledge capacity may include:

- Offering accessible, culturally responsive education and training that supports both staff and community learning (learning opportunities);
- Valuing and elevating knowledge generated by residents through storytelling, research, organizing, and lived experience (community knowledge production); and Creating pathways for community members—especially those from marginalized groups—to grow as leaders, decision-makers, and change agents (leadership development).

In short, knowledge capacity helps organizations shift from being providers of information to being facilitators of shared learning, reflection, and leadership.

How Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda) Builds Knowledge Capacity

SCIDpda's mission is to preserve, promote, and develop the Seattle Chinatown International District as a vibrant community and unique ethnic neighborhood. For SCIDpda's community projects, it was clear that they should draw on local neighborhood knowledge, as community members were the real leaders and driving force behind the projects. On one project, the redevelopment of Donnie Chin International Children's Park, SCIDpda joined the project after it had already been started by community members who needed guidance on how to move it forward. On another project, Nihonmachi Alley, revitalization efforts were already ongoing before SCIDpda joined. Both serve as examples of placekeeping where the community sought to maintain the space as

an amenity and develop it for current and future residents to enjoy.

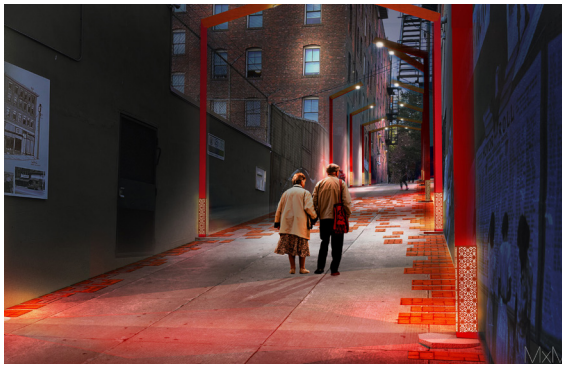
At their heart, these projects are community spaces that serve the multigenerational community of the Chinatown International District (CID). These projects leaned heavily on community support, as well as the collective knowledge and history of the CID. Community advisory boards were formed for each project to ensure that the visions of different parts of the community were always represented. The projects and their development processes affirm that these spaces are built by and for the community. Both spaces serve as sorely needed third spaces for the urban neighborhood and CID community.

Nihonmachi Alley is located in the center of Seattle's Japantown and serves as a community hub, multimodal thoroughfare, and utilitarian amenity for waste management. The alley features art installations in multiple mediums that represent the history of the community and neighborhood. This includes a wheat paste mural featuring imagery from Japanese incarceration by local artist Erin Shigaki, interpretive signage that shows historic landmark businesses in Japantown featuring art by the late Amy Nikitani, an artistic sculpture gate illustrating the population numbers of Japanese Americans in Seattle starting when the first Japanese immigrants arrived in 1896, and throughout years since. The Nihonmachi Alley Concept Plan proposes to add to these art installations to further reinforce the identity and sense of place in the alley. The plan also considers the current and future use of the alley as a thoroughfare and encourages repaving it as the first step toward greater accessibility and safety in the alley.

The Donnie Chin International Children's Park is one of four public parks in the CID. It is, at its core, a space for the neighborhood children, and the park was redesigned and eventually renovated in 2012 to "bring children back to the Children's Park." The redesign of the park was created to serve the multigenerational families in the CID, maintaining a single level that allows users to access all parts of the park regardless of mobility. The park has featured a bronze dragon sculpture by Gerry Tsutakawa since its original opening in 1981, earning it the nickname "Dragon Park." The park redesign added new bronze sculptures by local artist Stuart Nakamura, created to resemble toys from the Asian diaspora, reflecting the diverse community of the CID. SCIDpda regularly activates the park to bring the community together for Lunar New Year and the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival.

Another aspect of the knowledge capacity built through these projects is their connection to relational and political capacity as key relationships and community power were built through them. One of the biggest outcomes of these projects was the connections made, and staff still connect with city departments and community partners. For the Children's Park, SCIDpda built a relationship and rapport with the city agency, Seattle Parks, which facilitated collaboration on future park placemaking work. For Nihonmachi Alley, SCIDpda built relationships with the Seattle Department of Transportation and Seattle Public Utilities, and it still relies on those contacts to move the project forward. On both projects, SCIDpda received buy-in and investment from community partners, businesses, and residents, ensuring that community voices were heard and represented in the final designs. These projects also served as a professional development tool for many SCIDpda staff and project partners. By allowing these staff members to lead alongside the community, these projects brought the next generation of community leaders into the fold who continue to support and shape the neighborhood.





These renderings are part of the Nihonmachi Ally Concept Plan that considers the current and future use, which would provide the alley with greater accessibility and safety.

NATIONAL CAPACD

About National CAPACD: The National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development's (National CAPACD's) Community Arts Framework is six interrelated dimensions of capacity-building—knowledge, creative, relational, political, affective, and economic. National CAPACD advances equity and creates vibrant, healthy neighborhoods by mobilizing and strengthening a powerful coalition of community-based organizations working in low-income Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.