Consuming Chinatown
A Tale of Two Cities

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Chinese concentrations

1991

2001
Central Chinatown
Pacific Mall
Objective

To examine the processes that bring about the commodification of Chinese ethnic retail spaces in Toronto
Findings (1)

• many direct actors
  – local businesses
  – developers/real estate agents (ethnic, ethnic other)
  – community organizations
  – municipal politicians
  – city staff (planning, economic development)
  – Customers (locals, tourists, ethnic, ethnic other)

• multiple agenda
  – economic (survival, profit, development)
  – political (votes, status)
  – cultural (identity creation/expression)
The transformation is collective work combining bottom-up initiative generated by ethnic business people and top-down reinforcement implemented by city officials, with community agencies and city politicians playing a bridging role.

The transformation reflects the political economy of the time: recession, affluent migrants, investor program.