

## Editor's Note

# HOUSTON CHRONICLE

## Food Diversity Big Draw at Dun Huang Plaza

By By DAVID KAPLAN/ HOUSTON CHRONICLE (05/17/2009)

Among the many shopping centers in Chinatown, Dun Huang Plaza stands out. It looks more upscale than most projects and is one of the few to offer leveled parking. What makes it more exceptional is the diversity of food offerings. It has 16 Asian eateries, including Korean barbecue, Japanese hot pot, Chinese and Malaysian. There are also several dessert bars offering cold treats like avocado coffee milk shaved ice.

Houstonian Suzy Smith - who has visited Dun Huang Plaza more than a dozen times - was there a few days ago with her friend Beverly Shaeffer, a first-timer.

'It's just so unusual,' Shaeffer said. 'Where else can you go that's this authentic and fun? It's like being on vacation.'

What makes Dun Huang Plaza 'feel unique is that it's designed with small footprints,' said Donnie Chang, owner of ABC Realty Advisors. Each unit is about 1,100 square feet, which makes it more pedestrian-friendly, he said.

Like a few other centers in Chinatown, Dun Huang Plaza is a retail condo project. In some instances the property owner operates the business, while in other cases the owner of the space leases to a tenant. Robert Lim, owner of the Malaysian restaurant Banana Leaf, rents from the condo owner. The East Wall Chinese Restaurant, one of the first restaurants in the center, is owned and operated by Netjoy Leung. Michelle Choi, owner of the Korean barbecue restaurant Tofu Village, owns her space.

Dun Huang Plaza contains an Asian supermarket, fitness center, medical clinic and more, but it's the mom-and-pop restaurants that are the most prevalent.

'You could have a food festival here,' joked Helen Go, a real estate adviser with Re/Max and a property manager at three of the restaurants there.

More than one restaurant owner told Go that they decided to open in Dun Huang Plaza because it has new construction, which they find attractive, and they like the location near Beltway 8, she said.

'That center probably has one of the better collection of restaurants in Chinatown and one of the most varied,' said Justin Yu, chef and food writer for the Fearless Critic Houston Restaurant Guide.

'There are many approaches to Asian cuisine, and it's pretty much all there,' he said.

### New Chinatown FACTS:

#### LOCATION:

West part of SW Houston. Along Bellaire business corridor from S Gessner to W Sam Houston Parkway S (Beltway 8). Dun Huang Plaza is located in the center of the New Chinatown.

#### DEMOGRAPHICS:

New chinatown serves 300,000+ Chinese-American in the Southern States as the Culture, Religious, Retailing/Business and Financial Center. Within 5 miles radius, there are 600,000 population in daytime. And average household income in 5 mile radius is \$68,053

#### ECONOMY:

There are nine (9) Chinese American Ownership Banks plus Five (5) Mainstream Banks at or around the intersection of Bellaire Blvd. and Corporate Dr., the highest density of banks in Texas. The total assets of the nine (9) Chinese American Ownership banks are close to \$20 billion.

There are over 200 Chinese American Ownership commercial properties to be accessed by Harris County Appraisal District around \$180 million in the area .

By 2009, there will be over 2,000,000 square feet of NEW constructions being completed with an estimated increased value of \$400 million in the area .

Over 2,000 Chinese American owned business in the area including 400 retail stores featuring at least 150 Asian restaurants.