

japantown task force, inc.
a planning, preservation, and development organization

JTF Board Meeting
January 26, 2004 @ 6:00 p.m.
1765 Sutter St.
Minutes

A. Board: Rosalyn Tonai, David Ishida, Caryl Ito, Akira Minamiura, Mark Moriguchi, Tak Matsuba, Jeff Mori, Linda Jofuku (staff), Ernie Yoshikawa (staff), Yo Hironaka (advisory), Karen Kai (advisory), Sandy Mori (advisory).

Unexcused Absences: Sheila Chung, Doug Dawkins, Seiko Fujimoto, Colin Gomez, Bob Otsuka.

Guests: Michael Gowe (B&E Development Committee, Geary CAC), Ken Rich (Planning), Alicia Klein (MOH), Shirley Wysinger (SFRA).

B. Recognition of Quorum: No quorum was established

C. Presentation: Alicia Klein, Planning and Monitoring Director, Mayor's Office of Housing.– The Housing Element

Alicia Klein, of MOH made the following remarks regarding the Housing Element and Housing in general in the city:

- Over 10,000 affordable housing units have been completed or are under construction in the city since 1996. \$1.8 billion dollars was required to produce those 10,000 units.
- Funds to create such housing come from local and federal sources. Local sources include the hotel tax, or developer linkage fees. State sources however, do require an approved housing element, so the city has so far missed out on \$1,000,000 in state funds for affordable housing.
- The 10,000 units however, are still a “drop in the bucket” as far as the city’s affordable housing needs.
- Over the next six years, in order to meet incremental housing needs, the city needs to produce 2,600 units a year. This figure however, does not include the built-in, pent up housing need.
- Affordable housing is defined as housing that requires 30% of a household’s income for rent or mortgage payments. Those who qualify for such programs must make no more than 60% of the area median income (AMI). For example, in 2003, 60% of the AMI for a family of four is \$55,000.
- For more information, individuals can visit www.sfgov.org/moh

Amit Ghosh, of City Planning made the following parts regarding the Housing Element:

- The Housing Element was due to the state by December of 2001. Planning started in July of 2000 with little staff assigned to the state required and city-mandated Housing Element of the City’s General Plan.
- The General Plan is adopted by the Planning Commission and approved by the board, and includes objectives and policies regarding land use in the city. The General Plan guides decision making in specific cases, and the policies themselves do not implement any changes.

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- Subsequent projects have their own public processes that includes review and possibly an EIR.
- The housing element will then be implemented through the citywide action plan.
- Initially, City Planning was aware that it would not be able to conduct a full citywide discussion and public outreach on the Housing Element. Planning then went to the Supervisors to notify them of their limited outreach process, which they, as well as the state, approved (the outreach only).
- It is anticipated that the soonest the HE can be adopted is in April. However if the appeals are upheld, it can take up to 18 additional months.
- Since the city does not have a conforming state-approved HE, they are ineligible for most state funds.
- The HE does not change zoning controls.
- Once the element is passed, if there are proposed changes to reduce parking and increase density, the following steps will need to be taken. A code amendment will need to be initiated by Planning before the Commission, an EIR will be required, and a hearing before the board will be required.
- Regarding the protection of neighborhoods, the language was revised to include neighborhood input and support as a requisite prior to changes.

Linda requested the most recent version of the HE from Planning.

D. Presentation: Rob Kawamura – Japantown Landmarks

Rob Kawamura, project manager for the Japantown Community Landmark project, presented a mock-up of the Japantown landmark for community input. Each landmark will include a plaque explaining the significance of the landmarks and Japantowns. Comments arose around naming the buildings in the background after local businesses, but concerns were also expressed about promoting individual businesses. A suggestion was made that the hotel in the background be named Aki Hotel, which no longer exists. It was also brought up that the “50% off” sign was not very accurate or appropriate, as well as the use of “evacuation.” People felt that the “I AM AMERICAN” sign that is often shown in photographs is a powerful and accurate reflection of the sentiment at the time. Ros was concerned that the landmark may obstruct the view of the pagoda and the sightline from the Buchanan mall. The planned completion date is summer of 2004, however it is expected that they will have to file for an extension to finish the program. Karen brought up questions around the “cultural” panel remarking that it did not really convey the spirit or life of community festivals. No board members were opposed to the project.

E. Chair’s Report:

1. SB307 Committee Status Report

Linda reports that the SB307 resolution is in place to funnel money through the redevelopment agency. An SFRA resolution should also go before the SFRA commission and the SFRA will have to file an application to the state.

2. Budget

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Linda was initially concerned that there was not enough funds to sustain the organization until SB307 monies arrived. However, after discussion with Rich and adjustments to the budget, Linda was able to bridge the gap between contracts.

3. Board Vacancies

Jeff appointed himself, David, and Seiko to the nominations committee to fill board vacancies. Jeff will look into finding one or two more committee members.

F. Director's Report:

a. MTA Citizens Advisory Committee

Michael Gowe has been appointed to the Geary Transit Corridor Study CAC. Linda adds that the JTF has recently requested that Japantown be added to MUNI maps, and that "via Japantown" be included in the destination signs on the 2,3,4, and 38 lines. Karen brought up concerns around soliciting community input in the process and increasing outreach efforts.

b. San Francisco Conventions & Visitors Bureau Tour Guide Orientation 1/21

The SFCVB initiated an orientation with 28 tour guides from around the country with the Task Force and merchants association. The SFCVB is planning a "Gateway to the Pacific" tour which includes Chinatown, the Asian Art Museum, and Japantown as stops. The Smithsonian is also doing tours, and the JTF hopes to connect them with Ikenobo Ikebana and cultural activities at Paper Tree, and other businesses. Kathy Reyes brought up concerns that tours which arrive from Geary will have to go up the Peace Plaza stairs which is often littered with trash. Shirley suggests that the Task Force contact MONS representative Joe Flood, to see how the mayor's office can help with clean-up efforts. Linda adds that Olivia Swilley is no longer with the Mayor's Office, and is now with Mark Leno's office.

c. Security Cooperative Meeting

There will be a security cooperative meeting on January 27th with the merchants, Command Security, and Linda. Complaints arose that the SFPD was not responding in a timely manner to Command Security calls, which will be addressed at the meeting.

d. Peace Plaza Walk Through

DPW did a walk through the Peace Plaza to identify problem areas. Recently, an elderly person tripped and injured themselves due to uneven sidewalks, so DPW will be following through with repairs.

e. Signage Update

An order for 135 bilingual street signs has been made. At the time of installation, Linda will plan a photo opp. for the media.

f. SB307 Update

G. Committee Reports:

1. Fundraising Committee

No report.

2. Finance Committee

No report.

3. Business and Economic Development Committee

No report.

4. Health and Safety Committee

5. Cultural and Historical Preservation Committee

Ros reports that the preservation committee is looking for nominations for non-JTF community members (residents, property owners, or business owners) who can be appointed to the SB307 committee. So far, Ros, Linda, Rod Henmi, Pamela Wu, and Caryl Ito appointed to the committee from the Task Force.

6. Communications & Marketing Committee

David reports that the C&M committee will be formalizing their recent discussions and prepare to present it at the next board meeting.

H. Other Business and Announcements:

Shirley reports that the Western Addition CAC has two vacancies that need to be filled. Interested individuals can contact Shirley.

I. Next Meeting:

Executive: To be Rescheduled
Communications: Thursday, February 18 @ noon
Preservation: Friday, February 19 @ noon
Board: Monday, February 23 @ 6:00
Business and Economic Development: TBA
Health and Safety: TBA