

# japantown task force, inc.

a planning, preservation, and development organization

**JTF Board Meeting  
August 28, 2006 @ 6:00 p.m.  
Union Bank of California Conference Room  
Meeting minutes - DRAFT**

**Attendees:** Doug Dawkins, Seiko Fujimoto, Denis Henmi, Caryl Ito, Tak Matsuba, Sandy Mori (Pres.), Benh Nakajo, Rosalyn Tonai  
**Staff:** Darryl Abantao, Bob Hamaguchi  
**Guests:** Jay Adams, Gaynell Armstrong, Denise Blades, Tony Bond, Nancy Gribler, Seiji Horibuchi, Karen Kai, Sarah Karlinsky, Keith Nagayama, Penny Nakatsu, Thomas Reynolds, Dave Sayder, Leah Segawa, Kenji Taguma, Jason Tran, J.K. Yamamoto, Kumi Yamauchi, Lisa Zayas-Chien  
**Excused:** Michael Gowe, Mark Moriguchi

**Recognition of Quorum established by 6 members.**

**Meeting called to order: 6:07 p.m. by Sandy Mori, President**

A. **Approval of Minutes:** Board Meeting Minutes for the month of July with the following amendments; spelling error of pursuing in Item B page 1, correction to Hotel Nikko on Item E page 3 and removal of Benh Nakajo listed as excused.

**B. Shogakukan – Draft EIR Status – Denise Blades, Seiji Horibuchi & Leah Segawa**

Denis Henmi made a presentation with pictures of the new JPop Center to be located at 1746 Post St. Henmi said that the architectural design contained various design elements reflecting the Japanese culture. Some of these elements include the white walls signifying peace and serenity, the red border having a double significance of the Golden Gate Bridge and the torii gates leading inside a temple, night lights glowing like a Japanese lantern and a bridge inside that would be linking the western culture to the Japanese pop culture. Caryl Ito asked if the building would be taller building than initially presented. The building has a 50-foot limit with the basement, a high first floor and two 12-foot office levels. Inside the building there would be the 150-seat theatre, a bookstore (most likely Kinokuniya), café, DJ radiobroadcast booth, and office space for Viz Media and Hokubei Mainichi.

Due to the age of the building, Denise Blades said it would be unclear on the impacts with this project and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Any issues would need to be further studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Report. Elevation Architects and Carey & Co., Inc were asked their professional opinion if the building would be eligible as national, state or local landmark. Elevation Architects said that it is ineligible for national, state and local registers, while Carey & Co., Inc. said it is possible to be designated a San Francisco Landmark. A third company, McGrew Architecture said it would not be eligible for national, state or local designation under CEQA. Caryl Ito commented how the community needs to be involved in what is historical to the Japanese Community. She said there is a need for a meeting with the state conference to participate in determining what is historic and a landmark to the Japanese community. The team responded that three historical people have looked at the 1746 Post St. project and three themes have

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emerged from their findings; 1) prior use by a Japanese church and continual use as office for Hokubei Mainichi, 2) older building since the 1920s with the fact it survived Urban Renewal, and 3) the building was designed by James Placek who has other work designated as landmarks.

Currently the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is in a 45-day public review that will end on September 11, 2006. They have received only one minor comment on the draft EIR. The SFRA will then prepare a Comment and Response Document that will list every response and the issues with comments. It will then be certified as a final EIR sometime in the fall. At this same meeting there will be an Owner Participation Agreement and the density to be approved.

Doug Dawkins moved and Tak Matsuba seconded a motion for JTF to approve the draft EIR. As to the historical resource, JTF recognizes the history of the building but supports the demolition of the building due to the economic value it will add to the community. It is JTFs understanding that the sponsor will create an exhibit in the building that will chronicle the history of the building.

## **C. Sundance Cinema – Preliminary Designs – Tony Bond & Nancy Gribler**

Nancy Gribler presented the preliminary concept design for the Kabuki theatre using a flipbook created by ELS. Many new changes will be made to the theatre including, evocative atrium lighting, stadium seating, bamboo accents, ticket booths and kiosks, a snack bar redesigned with gourmet foods as well as popcorn and soda, a redesigned bar and bistro on the second floor. This is the first venue to have reserved seating available.

JTF Board members had many questions regarding the community use and new upgrades. Denis Henmi asked what types of films would be shown. The types of films that would be shown include Art/Independent world cinema, Sundance film festival films and others that would not be seen elsewhere. One screen will be calendared each month for special events. Caryl Ito stressed that in the past many organizations have used the Kabuki theatre for various events and the community would need a timeline for the remodel in order to search for other venues for their events, otherwise each organize should talk to you. Tony Bond responded that many organizations have already contacted him but he currently has no timeline for the remodel. Sandy Mori asked if Sundance would be open to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the community. Gribler said she would contact Paul Richardson regarding this matter. Benh Nakajo asked if anyone knew of a beautiful curtain that was complimentary from Dream Corp. It was cut into pieces and some of them were displayed on the walls. Tony Bond knew of the art, but was not familiar with the location of the curtain. He said he would set up a meeting with someone to search for it. Doug Dawkins asked if the capacity would change with the new stadium seating. Nancy Gribler responded that there may be a decrease in total seat, but not the number of screens and was unaware of how many exactly. Tak Matsuba questioned if Sundance would operate the restaurant or if an outside company would. Nancy Gribler responded that Sundance would operate the restaurant serving American cuisine. There was also concern regarding the liquor license for the restaurant and the hours it would serve alcohol. Nancy Gribler said

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alcohol will only be served during operating hours and will not be available after hours.

Caryl Ito made the motion and Seiko Fujimoto seconded the motion to support the preliminary concept design and by consensus the liquor is not an issue and that there would be a minor reduction in seating with the stipulation that an MOU be constructed between Sundance and the community with details to be discussed at a later time.

## **D. Interim Formula Retail Regulation for RDA Area #2 Update - Gaynell Armstrong & Lisa Zayas-Chien (SFRDA)**

Bob asked Gaynell Armstrong to come back again with Lisa Zayas-Chien to discuss this matter again. Last month, JTF passed a motion for the new ordinance to be consistent with the Planning Code so it is the same for both sides of Post St.

Caryl Ito moved and Tak Matsuba seconded a motion to withdraw last months previous motion and to approve the proposed RDA Formula Retail Policy outlined above.

Subsequent to our last meeting it was clarified that in the view of the Japantown Special Use District on the Southside of Post Street it was not possible to a totally consistent temporary formula-retail ordinance. The proposed Redevelopment Agency (RDA) Formula Retail Policy closest to mirror the SUD is as follows:

- Uses Section 312 as the basis for a 30-day neighborhood notification period and process when a formula retail use is proposed.
- Stakeholders can request a hearing before the Redevelopment Commission.
- Redevelopment Commission reviews formula retail use for compatibility with Redevelopment Plan.

## **E. Go Geary Coalition – Sarah Karlinsky, SPUR**

Caryl Ito and Sandy Mori are members on the SPUR board and thought it would be informative for Sarah to come to JTF to introduce the board to SPUR since the Geary BRT Project will heavily effect Japantown. Muni has experienced a downward spiral with fee increases and that is when SPUR became involved. Approximately 50,000 passengers ride the Geary Bus and a more faster and more frequent solution is needed. Go Geary is an educational entity of SPUR to educate citizens on the Geary BRT project. Dave Sayder asked when the appropriate time for the JTF Board to take a formal position on this matter and Sarah Karlinsky replied that the next set of workshops is set for October. They will be in the conceptual phase in March and an EIR approximately at the same time will take place. Japantown in the past has opposed putting a bike lane on Post St. in the past and Dave Sayder, who used to be part of the Bike Coalition said that Post St. is not the ideal route because Post St. does not go through to the Richmond District where Geary does. Dave will look into this matter and pass it on to the Coalition.

## **F. Report from Bob Hamaguchi, Independent Contractor Grant Projects Status**

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**DPH – Pedestrian/Traffic Safety Community Plan** – We are on schedule with the DPH Project with reference to tab 3 as supporting materials. Tab 4 is Darryl Abantao's draft of the Japantown Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Community Plan. We have formed a small committee including Benh Nakajo, Cathy Inamasu, Officer Kiyo Kanemori, Charlie Morimoto, Kathy Reyes, and Ana Validzic. We encourage everyone to attend the Sept. 14 Town Hall Meeting from 3pm to 4:30 pm at the Sequoias.

**MTA – Geary Corridor BRT** – There are stakeholder workshops scheduled in October. A Meeting including Jim Meisener, SFCTA staff, and community stakeholders will be scheduled in September

**Financial Statement – July 31, 2006 & Garage Budget Request Letter-** There is an updated Funding Sources Report for the upcoming year. A letter is also included with a revised budget and request to the Japantown Garage Board. The revised budget still needs to be approved by DPT staff. This year we cannot spend \$22K in capital improvements. The request will not increase the total \$100,000 budgeted, but will reallocate the budget in order to fund salaries, rent, insurance and telephone

**Police Foot Patrols Ordinance proposed by Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi** – Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi is seeking community support on his Police Foot Patrol Ordinance. The SFPD feels cars are most effective and Supervisor Mirkarimi is proposing to an ordinance for a pilot program to increase foot patrols.

Caryl Ito moved and Tak Matsuba seconded a motion that JTF does not support the ordinance as written.

**EDAW – Policy and Regulatory Analysis of Japantown** – EDAW is an architecture and land use planning firm contracted by 3D Investments. EDAW would look at how to maximize the property and stay within regulatory and community requirements. JTF will take the administrative lead of assisting EDAW in obtaining community requirements. JTF supports more foot patrolling by SFPD and do not want to see our beat officers time reduced in Japantown. At the same time, it does not want to see the cost of SFPD to increase cost to the community.

**Community Benefit Districts – September 7, 2006 Meeting** – Bob has a meeting planned on September 7, 2006 including various property owners in Japantown to discuss forming a steering committee for a Community Benefit District.

**New Japantown Task Force Model** – Bob is concerned that the JTF Board does not have a good cross representation of the Japantown community as a whole and would like to see a few more board members from key organizations in the community.

Benh Nakajo made a motion and Tak Matsuba seconded the motion for JTF to approach the Merchants Association to designate a representative to sit on the JTF Board.

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## **G. Other Business and Announcements**

1. Search for Executive Director (Rosalyn Tonai)
2. 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner  
A reminder that the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Dinner is Saturday September 2, 2006 at the Westin St. Francis Hotel.
3. Community Town Hall Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Meeting:  
On September 14, 2006, JTF will host a community town hall meeting to present the Japantown Pedestrian Traffic and Safety Community Plan at the Sequoias, 1400 Geary Blvd. from 3pm to 4:30pm. Guest speakers in attendance will be from the Department of Public Health, the Municipal Transportation Agency, San Francisco County Transportation Authority, and San Francisco Police Department.
4. Press Clippings

Meeting went into closed Executive Session at 8:46 pm to discuss personnel matters.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm