

# japantown task force, inc.

a planning, preservation, and development organization

## **JTF Board Meeting November 26, 2007 @ 6:00 p.m. Japantown Better Neighborhood Plan Planning Room Meeting minutes**

**Attendees:** Seiko Fujimoto, Denis Henmi, Caryl Ito, Tak Matsuba, Sandy Mori (President), Mark Moriguchi, and Rosalyn Tonai  
**Staff:** Darryl Abantao, Bob Hamaguchi  
**Guests:** Jay Adams, Elizabeth Bent, Kenji Dohl, Walter Kaye, Yoko Morihoro, Noel Seale, Jason Tran, James Woodard, and J.K. Yamamoto  
**Absent:** Doug Dawkins, Stephen Engblom, Benh Nakajo

**Recognition of Quorum established by 7 members.  
Meeting called to order: 6:12 p.m. by Sandy Mori, President**

### **A. Approval of Minutes: Meeting of October 22, 2007**

Tak Matsuba moved and Seiko Fujimoto seconded a motion to adopt the minutes for the JTF Board Meeting on October 22, 2007.

### **B. JPop Center Plans / Historical Elements (Kenji Dohi & Denis Henmi) -**

On Friday, November 16 there was a public walk-thru followed by Torikowashi Kiyome Harai, a Shinto purification ceremony for preparation of the J-Pop Center building, which was conducted by Reverend Koichi Barrish of Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America.

They are currently soliciting potential tenants for the retail area that will include a series of individual boutiques without hard walls separating them. A handout that was distributed showed various sketches of each level. The theater would include artwork on the walls and there would also be a display case for various tenants to showcase their merchandise next to the Kinokuniya bookstore. The theater has a capacity of 140 people with high-quality sound and picture. When the theater is not in use, it can support community meetings or lectures.

The easement for emergency exit to from the rear of the building was not resolved and the building was redesigned to include a fire exit in the front of the building.

Sandy Mori voiced concern that there has yet to be a written agreement between the J-Pop Center and space for the previous owner, Hokubei Mainichi Newspaper. Denis Henmi commented that although there is no written agreement as of yet, they have designed the area to accommodate Hokubei Mainichi with 2500 square feet.

Lynn Horiuchi was hired to do the oral history of the building. She has completed eight interviews with the rest scheduled for December 2007. The building was denied the highest level of protection, but the documentation of the building will include photographs, oral histories, but a plaque and exhibit has not totally been resolved yet. Some of the interviewees include Don Funabiki, Delphine Hirosono, June-ko Nakagawa, J.K. Yamamoto, and Don Yamate.

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Sandy Mori suggested that because the content of the historical preservation of the project is not complete that the J-Pop Center Team work with Bob Hamaguchi, JTF's Executive Director and he will have final comments representing this organization. Any additional volunteers or members of the JTF Board of Directors who want to be involved should contact Hamaguchi. Horiuchi requested that she be able to make a presentation at a future meeting regarding the oral histories.

## C. Geary BRT Update (Zabe Bent, SFCTA)

Zabe Bent gave an update on the project of the Geary Bus Rapid Transit project. They have concluded the feasibility study earlier this year and are starting their request for proposals for their environmental study in the next few months. After giving a brief history of the project, Bent described the environmental study as Market Street to the ocean with greater emphasis on the corridor. In the feasibility study, only Van Ness to 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue was studied. The environmental study will examine where problems will specifically occur and what mitigations can be taken.

Construction time for the entire project would take anywhere from 1.5 to 2 years. To reduce the amount of time each area is impacted by construction, the areas have been divided into segments along the corridor. Depending on the extent of change in the area, each segment will have different construction times. Along Geary Blvd., there will always be a minimum of 2 lanes dedicated to traffic. In areas that currently have 3 lanes of traffic, will be reduced to 2 dedicated lanes for auto traffic and 1 dedicated bus lane. In areas with 2 lanes dedicated for auto traffic and slot parking, the parking will be changed to parallel parking to accommodate the dedicated bus lane.

There has been concern of removed or synthesized bus lanes would result in serious breakdown conditions, but simulated studies projected only 1 or 2 minutes added to each auto trip in contrast to a 8 to 10 minute reduction in transit rider trips.

Bicycle lanes will also be studied for Geary Blvd. In the feasibility study, they surveyed where bicycles are currently riding on and with the improvements along Geary Blvd., would there be an increased demand for bicycles to ride on Geary than in current conditions.

## D. Report from Bob Hamaguchi, Executive Director

**Funding Sources - 09/30/07 & Financial Statement 09/30/07** – The financials have been slow due to JCYC temporarily relocating. There has not been much activity since last month's budget approval.

**Better Neighborhood Plan Status** – There will be a Community Town Hall Meeting on Saturday, December 1 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC) with a presentation from 3D Investments and their concepts for a new Japan Center. They will be presenting mass design drawings that include shapes and sizes, but no real architecture or design. He reported that they have integrated a lot of what is coming out of the Better Neighborhoods process. There will also be a presentation by the 1481 Post Street Project. They will show the plans for a proposed 40-story building next to the

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Sequoias. The meeting will also include an update from Rosie with progress and emerging priorities coming out of the project, introducing the next phase, and will conclude with a breakout session.

**Greater Communities Coalition Training** – Bob attended a two-day training session that was sponsored by TALC about transit-oriented developments (TOD). TOD's are planning along major transit corridors or where BART stations are located having fewer cars, less parking and higher density. The training sessions educated attendees on how to present different alternatives and training on negotiating Community Benefit Agreements. The Better Neighborhood Plans are much inline with this thinking. TALC has not worked with other BNP's but TALC has contributed to the Emeryville Fruitvale Station, Sunnyvale and San Jose.

Sandy Mori commented that TALC has assigned Anne Cheng to attend many of the BNP meetings because Japantown was selected by TALC as a geographic study area.

## E. President of the Board Report from Sandy Mori

**Fred Blackwell Visit to Japantown** - Executive Director of the SF Redevelopment Agency came for a tour and discussion of the Japantown issues, including the transitioning out of the SFRA from Western Addition A2 project area, which includes a portion of Japantown. Our ED, Bob Hamaguchi, submitted in writing to Mr. Blackwell, the important issues related to Japantown.

**Certificate of Preference Update** - Sandy Mori is serving on a workgroup committee of the SFRA on the Certificate of Preference Loan Program. The purpose of the workgroup is to come up with proposed changes to the Certificate of Preference program and develop criteria in allocating \$4 million from the sale of the 1210 Scott St. property for a loan program for certificate holders.

## F. Other Business and Announcements

1. Press Clippings
2. BNP Community Meeting #3 – Saturday, December 1