

# japantown task force, inc.

a planning, preservation, and development organization

## JTF Board Meeting February 23, 2009 @ 6:00 p.m. Union Bank of California – Hospitality Room Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Denis Henmi, Caryl Ito, Sandy Mori (President), Mark Moriguchi, Rosalyn Tonai  
Staff: Darryl Abantao, Bob Hamaguchi  
Guests: Walter Kaye,  
Absent: Seiko Fujimoto, Tak Matsuba, Benh Nakajo, Lisa Watada

Recognition of Quorum established by 8 members.  
Meeting called to order: 6:08 p.m. by Sandy Mori, President

- A. Approval of Minutes: Meeting of September 22, 2008
- B. Report from Bob Hamaguchi, Executive Director

Financials/Funding Sources – A handout was distributed including the financial statement through January 31, 2009. The Mayor's Office of Community Investment (MOCI) grant application for \$25,000 is still pending but we do not anticipate receiving the full amount. MOCI has now merged with the Mayor's Office of Workforce and Economic Development with JTF funding to be administered in a central location.

Better Neighborhood Plan Update – The Plan is still scheduled for completion by the end of April 2009. There is a BNP Steering Committee Meeting on February 24, 2009 to review the draft chapters for the Public Realm and Land Use chapters. That leaves four more topic areas to still be written and reviewed. There is also going to be a meeting on Thursday, February 26, 2009 for property owners as part of the historic preservation study done as part of the plan to evaluate historical background of Japantown and the context statement that was written. After the completion of the preservation study and the historic context statement, there are two potential districts in Japantown.

- Buchanan Mall
- Northeast portion of the plan area encompassing the Buddhist temples and individual properties such as the Nihonmachi Little Friends building and Kinmon Gakuen

If any of the property owners were to apply for a permit, they would need to document the historic significance anyway so the plan will already provide the necessary information and documentation. For certain properties, being designated as historically significant has clear advantages especially if they are planning on doing a major rehabilitation of the facility. Instead of being restricted to local City planning code, they would follow a more lenient State planning code for historically significant buildings.

CBD Formation Preliminary Survey – JTF is funded by the SF Redevelopment Agency to do a preliminary study and gauging interest in a formation of a Japantown Community Benefit District (CBD). At this time with the current economic situation, there is no support from merchants or property owners to proceed to form a CBD at this time. There has been support for the idea of a CBD, but the timing is not good.

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Bob has met with SFRA and requested that we amend our contract by extending it by 12 months, but possibly 6 months. We would also expand the scope of work to work with merchants to create an economic stimulus budget for Japantown merchants.

Japantown Merchants Association Presentation (Draft) – Included in the JTF Board of Directors packet is a draft of a presentation to be shown at the next JMA Executive Committee Meeting. It tells the members who JTF is and where we are funded from as well as suggestions for improving business and the projects JTF is contributing to.

Community Clean Up Schedule (Darryl Abantao) – Darryl continues to work with the Department of Public Works and the Graffiti Watch Unit to complete a series of six Community Clean Up Days in Japantown in 2009. There will be general clean up days and graffiti abatement days. Darryl has been working with community organizations and businesses to collaborate volunteers and donations.

JPop Center Update – The JPop Center plans to open for operation in mid-June of 2009. The grand opening is scheduled for August 1, 2009. They will be participating in the Cherry Blossom Festival with space in front of the building to showcase what is soon to come. There is a 125-seat theater and replacing the Kinokuniya bookstore will be a manga/anime gift and novelties space. On the second floor, there will be Jpop and new fashion from Japan. Three of the seven available fashion retailers have been identified.

Rosalyn Tonai commented that we are not on schedule for the oral histories. In order for the historic piece to be completed, they need the oral histories. The interviews from the oral histories are still being transcribed by SFSU students.

3D Meeting February 3 – On March 2, 2009 a meeting with Josef Daneshgar, 3D Investments was held to discuss concerns about Japan Center at the request of Robert Hamaguchi, Richard Hashimoto, Sandy Mori, Steve Nakajo, and Paul Osaki. 3D says that there will be no major changes for five to seven years. Throughout the Japan Center, there are improvements such as being more clean and the old rock store is a more professional attempt to lease the vacant space. Annual parking in Japan Center garage has increased by 10% over past years previous months. We anticipate a public announcement from 3D Investments in the next 30 to 60 days.

Japanese Tea Garden – Bob thanked Doug for participating on the selection committee of the Japanese Tea Garden RFP. Last Thursday, the commission approved negotiating with the panel selection of Carol Murata, Café Hana to operate the concession stand. The details are to be worked out but a bright part of her proposal included a \$500,000 contribution by Jack Hirose. Hirose has agreed to the contribution with some control over what improvements are made and would receive a 501-(c)3 tax donation. At the commission meeting, over ten people testified including Hirose. Bob commended the community at the amount of support that filled the room from Japantown community members.

Doug Dawkins added that it was a good experience with a lot of quality proposals. There were five members on the panel and there was unanimous decision of the top proposals. All proposals referenced the fact that the existing condition of the concession stand was not in good shape with significant changes. Dawkins believes there will be more cultural

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relevance with future changes and is hopeful for the Japanese Tea Garden concession stand.

JTF New Year's Greeting Donations – The total to date for donations received in support of the 2009 JTF New Year's Greeting is \$1,570. Darryl Abantao will email the Board members a detailed list so Board members can thank donors.

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

PG&E Grant Application – Travis Kiyota, PG&E continues to be very supportive of JTF and assisted with funding JTF for the amount of \$8,000 for general funds.

Certificate of Preference Meeting January 23 – Steve Nakajo and Bob Hamaguchi attended a meeting at the SF Redevelopment Agency on an update for the search of the Certificate of Preference holders. It was emphasized that there needs to be expanded outreach for Japantown individuals and the important thing is that the list for those individuals they have lost contact with throughout the years needs to be provided. There are continued concerns with issues from the legal standpoint and privacy.

## D. Other Business and Announcements

1. Community Calendar
2. Press Clippings
3. NJAHS Many faces of manga exhibit to honor Willy Ito and Kenji Murase.

The meeting went into closed session at 7:10 p.m.