



日本町の経済発展・計画・保存

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING & PRESERVATION OF JAPANTOWN

**NOTES FROM THE LAND USE/TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE**

1765 SUTTER STREET (ONLINE VIA RING CENTRAL)
THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2020

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Glynis Nakahara, Jeremy Chan, Rich Hashimoto, Alice Kawahatsu, Sandy Mori, Ros Tonai

STAFF PRESENT:

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto

OTHERS PRESENT:

Tomo Hirai, Linda Walsh

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS:

AD HOC JAPAN CENTER TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Sandy gave a recap of the second ad hoc committee meeting. Daniel Byron, the 3D Investments Asset Manager, came to speak with the committee. They plan to invite the other related property owners as well, including the AMC Kabuki, Kinokuniya, etc.

Daniel Byron spoke about how the tenants have received a 3 month deferment (delay) in rent, and is not currently considering rent reduction or rent forgiveness as they also have property taxes / mortgage and other bills to pay. They do not plan to sell at this time, and have no development plans. He spoke about how because the structure is old / obsolete, as well as insular facing (as opposed to externally facing the community - there are no windows, etc.) it would be hard to retrofit the building, and any development might have to involve tearing down and rebuilding the entire structure.

Karen said she spoke to merchants who had no idea that Daniel Byron was meeting with the Task Force, and suggested that JTF do better outreach with merchants.

SFMTA CONGESTION PRICING

Rich spoke about the SFMTA's congestion pricing proposal, which will charge drivers to drive through locations including downtown and Masonic.

They would like to schedule a public meeting with Japantown community members, and prepared to have at least 3. They are suggesting 6pm 9/22, 9/24, and 9/29 (9/29 is a Peace Plaza meeting).

It was discussed to know the comprehensive plan and receive materials in advance so we can analyze the information. Depending on where the pricing zones are placed, it may have an impact on traffic to Japantown. It is at a policy level, but not at an engineering level. Karen spoke about

how it affects seniors in particular, who may have to drive to get to Japantown.

More information here, but the timeline has shifted due to Covid - <https://www.sfcta.org/downtown>

IT was decided to have the meeting on Thursday 9/24

It was discussed to share this event with the JTF listserv, posted on the JTF social media and website, and shared specifically with the CBD to send with their list serve.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

HOTEL BUCHANAN

Currently the hotel houses 120 residents.

The nonprofit Providence is situated in and providing services in the hotel.

JTF and other community organizations include the JCCCNC, CBD, NLF, and Kimochi met with Providence last Thursday. Emily Glick from Hotel Buchanan will no longer be the point person; community members should instead speak to two representatives from Providence and the City. This group will meet monthly to discuss updates. The purpose of this is also so that Providence can learn more about the Japantown neighborhood.

There have not been any large issues. It's been relatively quiet. They have been speaking with NLF about smoking, since NLF has programming on Saturdays.

Generally, no visitors are allowed. Any visitors must be cleared by staff. The program is currently scheduled for until October 1, but they may extend it further.

Ros asked if Kimpton Buchanan plans to sell their building to the City. We've asked, but have not received any information. Sandy said to be cautious so that the neighborhood isn't perceived as a "NIMBY" with respect to the homeless crisis.

Alice asked about a white van. Grace Horikiri has spoken to the police about this, and Sandy said they can bring it up with the Providence representatives to see if it's related or not related to the residents.

Rich reported that SFMTA is allowing homeless encampments to be set up in shutdown garages, such as the Performing Arts Garage. Currently the Fillmore Annex of the Japan Center Garage is closed, but there are no homeless encampments set up there. There are no plans to close the main Japan Center Garage, particularly because CPMC hospital staff park there.

PEACE PLAZA RENOVATION BOND MEASURE

The bond measure is now officially called Proposition A: Health and Homeless, Parks, and Streets Bond. JTF has also submitted a statement that will be included in the ballot handbook.

JAPANTOWN CULTURAL DISTRICT / CHHESS DRAFT + BUDGET

Nina thanked the committees for providing feedback on the CHHESS report. Some of the topics will require additional dialogue during the board meeting, and would also like to schedule individual phone meetings with committee members.

The updated deadline for receiving feedback is Friday 8/21. At the August meeting, there will be a redlined version prior to the September board meeting.

Glynis said that she has been thinking about the CHHESS reports and her thoughts have changed since her initial comments. She appreciates hearing from other perspectives as they have changed her views.

Ros said she is working on a section that discusses the history of CBOs in Japantown.

Nina also invited people to come to the JTF board meeting next week to give comments on the CHHESS report.

Nina clarified that the most recent draft is the July 24th version, but it will be revised again based on people's comments.

Glynis will host an additional meeting before August 21 for committee members who are interested in having another discussion about the report.

Nina discussed that a diversity of groups, including younger generations and Japanese-speaking populations, have expressed an interest in environmental issues. Glynis said that she appreciated Elena's comment during the Cultural Heritage committee meeting about how environmental issues have activated certain groups within the Japanese American community, and cautioned against curbing their enthusiasm.

Glynis suggested that graphics can help reduce the number of pages as well as convey complex ideas more effectively.

JTF has been discussing with JCBD to focus on helping small businesses, and so Cultural District funding may be shifted to prioritize those projects. Other projects (such as potentially developing Kinmon Gakuen) are being put on hold since they are impractical during COVID. Ros cautioned that the JCBD receives revenue from a different source (property owners), when it's commercial tenants that are most directly impacted by COVID.

Glynis discussed recent legislation about using building vacancies. She isn't sure if mall vacancies fit the requirements but will forward correspondence about it to Nina and other committee members in case non profits, including JTF and other organizations can leverage it for space.

Interested LUT committee members will meet on Monday 8/17 at 6pm to discuss and provide additional feedback. Karen stressed to Nina the importance of doing additional outreach to the struggling merchants.

GEARY CROSSWALK MEDIAN

There is a new crosswalk planned at Geary and Buchanan, connecting the Peace Plaza and St. Francis Square, and including a decorative railing and explanatory panels depicting Japantown, the Fillmore, and St. Francis Square. Karen and Kaz have been working to find an appropriate contractor for the railing.

Linda asked if the London Plane trees could be reconsidered; Karen will speak with Linda further about this issue. This is a good time to work on trees due to the reduced traffic.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Sandy discussed that on Tuesday 8/11 morning, there was a fatal pedestrian accident on Geary and Gough. The driver was driving eastbound, going over 80 miles per hour, ran through a red light, and killed the pedestrian. The driver is cooperating with the police. The police have asked the JCBD for camera footage from Geary and Laguna.

It was discussed that Geary BRT measures may help to calm traffic in this area and reduce fatalities. Tomo commented that sometimes flashing red and blue lights (that imitate a police car) can be more effective than yellow/white flashing lights for a crosswalk.

See <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Driver-arrested-after-fatally-striking-SF-15477206.php>

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

The next meeting will be at 6:00 p.m., September 10, 2020 online.