



JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE

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

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2019

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Glynis Nakahara, Kenta Takamori, Sandy Mori

STAFF PRESENT:

Wes Nihei, Nina Bazan-Sakamoto

OTHERS PRESENT:

Karen Kai, Bob Rusky, Jeremy Chan, Daryl Higashi

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

BIKESHARE

This is for the bikeshare station on Post St. Glynis reached out to Adrian and Justin, and there are no new updates. They are trying to refer Glynis to someone who can discuss customized bikes / bike racks. There may be a hearing in December.

Kenta commented that they are doing hearings for a bike station on California and Scott and Post and Steiner, somewhat near Japantown. It seems that they are continuing to roll out bike share stations, and that Japantown is no longer the “wall.”

CULTURAL DISTRICT GRANT / PLANNING INITIATIVES

A subset of the LUT committee met on October 28 to examine the JCHESS/CHHESS matrix. The notes from that meeting were forwarded to Nina.

Ros wanted to confirm that her comments made following the Cultural Heritage meeting were reflected in the planning teams.

Bob submitted to Glynis and Kenta revised description for the Land Use category. Kenta commented that the description is longer compared to the other descriptions. Jeremy clarified to the CHD staff that LUT wanted to revise the description to more accurately reflect what LUT and JTF does with respect to Land Use. Most notably, the current description focuses on the city's actions, rather than Japantown's actions, and it also excludes major topics like transportation.

Kenta commented on the phrase “liveable community” which would imply a community of residents. He said that at some point Japantown should reflect on the neighborhood as a broader gathering space.

Nina said that during the Town Hall meeting, the facilitators will facilitate a discussion about “what do they see as [topic], what are some of the challenges and opportunities”

Nina clarified that the city's definitions will be used, but that the group will be encouraged to come

up with their own definition. The revised titles will still be used.

Jeremy suggested adding Transportation to the title. Kenta said, to play devil's advocate, that the discussion could be treated as expansive, and that it might take too much time to discuss the definition and title. Karen said the definitions of "who and what we are" are important to understand when starting a project.

Glynis commented that the definition is an evolving thing, so LUT can revisit it as it evolves. Kenta echoed that we should be flexible about it. Wes said the Town Hall meeting is a good opportunity to put the best definition forward and then get feedback.

Kenta said that the definition should not limit our discussion.

Nina shared the Town Hall Agenda

- Deanna from OEWD, Mayor, maybe Vallie Brown will speak
- Facilitators will speak about each topic
- break out groups (28 minutes)
 - people will pick the topic they're most interested in
- each group will report back (3 minutes)
- Little Tokyo folks will present for 10 minutes about how they approached this topic
- Q&A
- Updates on how to stay involved
 - announce feedback Google form + focus groups
 - youth, seniors, arts and culture,
- 20 minutes to circulate the room, view butcher paper, and use sticky notes to add comments

Karen asked when the Japantown Design Guidelines meeting will be announced. 100 people have RSVP'd on Eventbrite, and 50-60 have RSVP'd on Facebook.

Glynis said that she and Nina would touch base and figure out when is the best time to put the Design Guidelines announcement.

NEW BUSINESS:

SB330 / ACCELERATED DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Legislature has passed SB 330, the Housing Crisis Act of 2019, to streamline housing development, but one consequence is that local subjective design guidelines cannot be implemented by counties and cities after January 1, 2020.

Because Design Guidelines are part of the JCHESS, LUT wants to make sure design guidelines get passed.

The LUT committee began planning the Design Guidelines in 2011, but it was put on hold while the City revised their city-wide design guidelines.

LUT has been working with the Planning Committee, including Maia Small, Shelley, Trent, and Jeff.

LUT learned about SB330 while attending a community meeting for Calle 24's design guidelines. Trent has been working on Calle 24's design guidelines, and they're just finishing up.

Daryl Higashi commented on SB 330's preamble. The bill is in response to communities that have acted to delay and prevent affordable housing. He highlighted the section that renders infeasible "a housing development project for very low, low, or moderate income housing." He emphasized that it does not talk about housing that does not meet those definitions, so market rate housing is not impacted.

He said the entire legislation only applies with respect to those types of housing. Design standards would only be affected if they affect low income housing.

Daryl argued that the legislation would only affect city guidelines and not guidelines that the community adopts. Glynis clarified that these design guidelines would be adopted by the Planning Commission, therefore making it an action of the city. Daryl said that any policy has to be accompanied by an environmental impact study. He warned that the legal force of the City adopting it before 2020 could be at risk because planning commission hearings and environmental impact studies take time. He said it was regretful that the City did not inform the community in advance, and that they should have given advance warning.

Bob and Karen both commented that Daryl's interpretation of the legislation is incorrect. The City's attorneys are advising that SB 330 will affect all design guidelines, and not just the ones that affect housing. Bob has said that there is no indication that this requires an environmental impact report. Karen said that Calle 24 did not undergo that as a result of this process.

Glynis clarified that she submitted a process/calendar to the Planning Commission staff to review. The Staff suggested 2 meetings, and are outreaching to the commission to prep them for this agenda item. Karen clarified that Calle 24 is also accelerating their process, because they were originally looking to get them approved by Spring 2020.

Sandy said she did not understand the connection between affordable housing and the design guidelines. Bob clarified that the legislation includes a clause that bans design guidelines in any area where housing is allowed. Sandy urged the importance of discussing property owners.

Daryl said he did not understand why other communities are not concerned about guidelines. Karen highlighted that other communities are concerned - i.e. the Mission's Calle 24.

Glynis said that the committee has drafted dates for two community meetings and made a short list for property owners and others to contact. Karen clarified that it was raised through the JCHESS process, although it was not on the radar recently.

Karen spoke about people misunderstanding design guidelines. For example, the city has many design guidelines that are far more restrictive than Japantown Design Guidelines, which are about harmony. Sandy said that timeline is incredibly restrictive and difficult. Bob said the alternative is to have no design guidelines at all.

Glynis said that if we can't get this through a community vetting process, then the planning

commission is going to have to come up with objective design guidelines, which are unprecedented.

Daryl asked if the design guidelines affect density. Glynis and Karen said it does not affect density or zoning. Daryl also suggested that legislators could amend the bill to push the deadline. He said that legislators like Phil Ting and David Chiu are reasonable people.

Daryl expressed his concern that other communities may complain if they don't get design guidelines. Karen said that if Calle 24 / Japantown's Design Guidelines are good, they can serve as a model for other communities. Jeremy also emphasized that the Japantown Design Guidelines were used as a model for the City's Design Guidelines.

Bob said that SB 330 was initially supposed to be retroactive to January 2018, nullifying design guidelines that were already made. At the last minute, the bill was amended to not be retroactive, which is why we have this window of opportunity at all.

Daryl suggested that someone from the Planning Commission staff come to present to the board.

Kenta urged that Glynis be allowed to proceed with the meeting and that there will be time later for questions. Glynis said that she knows it's not ideal, but we should move forward with it until there's a reason not to. She acknowledged that the Design Guidelines will never be ideal given the time frame. But the design guidelines are a tool, and she would rather have a tool, than nothing. She foresees a larger battle between state control and local control.

Daryl commented that JTF should be mindful of community backlash, and to emphasize why the timeline is accelerated.

Jeremy moved for JTF to support the LUT committee to move forward with an accelerated effort to establish Japantown Design Guidelines by December 31, 2019. Karen seconded.

The motion passed.

Glynis noted that our design guidelines will not be as detailed as Calle 24. Partially due to time, and also partially due to the diversity of the respective neighborhoods. Bob said that it's fortunate that Planning has been supporting us.

Glynis noted the vulnerability of Japantown being near Geary.

For the community meetings are tentatively scheduled for Thursday 11/21 and Tuesday 12/3 (although Monday 12/2 is also now available because Cultural Heritage cancelled their meeting).

At the next board meeting, the board will discuss whether there's enough attendance for a special meeting. The special meeting would have to take place before Wednesday 12/11 11:59pm (the packets go out to the commissioners in the morning on Thursday 12/12).

On Thursday 11/21, the draft "Frankenstein" design guidelines will be presented. Planning Commission has also established a place on their website for people to view and comment on the design guidelines. Daryl suggested that someone from the planning commission should present at this meeting to give the design guidelines more weight.

On 12/2 + 12/3, the near final design guidelines will be approved.

Jeremy discussed his one pager language. Kenta suggested simplifying the language. Glynis said it was important to translate as well. The meeting will be announced at the CBD meeting tomorrow as well as the Town Hall meeting on Thursday.

For social media, LUT will give the information to JTF staff to post.

BART ON GEARY

Glynis commented on an article shared by Sandy about a proposal to extend BART down Geary.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Karen said that Nihonmachi Little Friends has been approved as a historic preservation site. Glynis said that state/national recognition is really important, and hopes to see more in Japantown.

The meeting adjourned at xxx p.m.

The next meeting will be at 6:00 p.m., December 12, 2019 at Union Bank Community Room.