



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING & PRESERVATION OF JAPANTOWN

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

1765 SUTTER STREET

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2020

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Glynis Nakahara, Jeremy Chan, Alice Kawahatsu, Kenta Takamori, Lucy Fisher, Sandy Mori

STAFF PRESENT:

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto, Natasha Tamate-Weiss

OTHERS PRESENT:

Tomo Hirai, Kimia Haddadan, Malena Leon Farrera, Derek Tahara, Shelley Caltagirone, Karen Kai, Linda Walsh, Paul Wermer

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS:

SF HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE

Presentation by Kimia Haddadan (Senior Housing Policy Planner) and Malena Leon Farrera
malena.leon-farrera@sfgov.org

SF housing plan that contains policies for shaping the future of housing. It contains an implementation component as well.

People of color have been disproportionately affected by covid

This was a direct response to the BLM movement and recognizing that the SF Housing Department has contributed to systemic racism against the Black community (re: redevelopment and its negative impact on Black and Japanese American populations).

Racial and social equity was recently added

Values

- racial and social equity
- minimum displacement
- housing choice for all, in all neighborhoods
- resilience to climate and health crises

Changes from state law

- significant increase to RHNA (Regional Housing Needs Assessment)
- affirmatively furthering fair housing law
- site inventory
- increased fines for failure to comply

Timeline:

Right now they are in the first phase - outreach with the community. They will publish the first draft by end of 2020 or January 2021. There will be additional rounds of public outreach, with the intention of adopting it in 2022 (?)

Q&A / Discussion:

Goal is to have a listening session ASAP with the JA community about needs and how to address them. They are aware that the Certificate of Preferences are a commonly discussed concern. A focus group discussion is also possible.

Kenta asked if the discussion will be centered around these categories/values. If they resonate, then yes. But if there are other topics / better ways to represent the concerns, then the discussion doesn't have to be attached to this structure.

Alice commented that many Japanese Americans have had to leave Japantown and move to the East Bay, etc. and is interested in how to increase the number of JA families who live in the neighborhood.

The Housing Element is a state requirement, but it is utilized a lot by the City.

Karen commented on the importance of keeping the character and ambience of the community as well. For example, she expressed concern at the idea of plopping a large number of housing units into the neighborhood. The Housing Element team is looking into utilizing the Cultural District as a resource.

Nina added that JAs have had trouble finding affordable housing in Japantown. She asked about exploring affirmative action / neighborhood preference in Japantown, and how the Fair Housing Law is not creating equity for Japantown. Paul Wermer commented on the current neighborhood preference law for existing residents and displaced tenants, and the concern of people families that used to live in District 5 but were displaced, and may or may not still have their Certificates of Preference (and therefore do not have access to these preference programs). Kimia acknowledged these as tension points, and Paul expressed his concern that the community has heard "flowery words" before without exact promises.

Glynis said the next step is to hold the listening session. End of 2020 holiday season may be tough, so early 2021 is fine.

Malena confirmed she will email the slides after. She also will list the Japanese American redevelopment in the slide.

The short survey is closed, but the long one can still be responded to. They have already started pulling the data from the first phase. Malena can run a report by the end of November to update the data.

SF PLANNING DEPARTMENT - COMMUNITY EQUITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Shelley asked for some candidates for a Community Equity Advisory Council. It will advise staff on program priorities, promote relationships with communities of color, etc. It will consist of 8-12 community leaders. The expected time may be 4-6 hours per month. About 2 hours per meeting, and 2-4 hours reviewing documents or consulting with other organizations. The actual scope of

work will be refined by the council.

Jeremy asked if this was by nomination only, or if they are putting it on the website. So far, it seems by nomination only. Jeremy said it might look good

Glynis said that many planning topics, including the Housing Element, are relevant to Japantown, and that Land Use specifically deals with planning.

Kenta suggested some folks: Jeremy, Nina, Tomo, Elena, Karen

Tomo asked if it is okay to serve on the council even if you are not an SF resident. We can look at the application and see.

Nina suggested that Japantown for Justice may be a good option.

Karen indicated her interest. Jeremy and Nina also indicated their interest, although they're concerned about their time commitment.

Sandy said there is no limit. Kenta noted that it might be helpful for them to put a filter.

Jeremy asked the co-chairs about their interest. Kenta said that he looks up to his suggested folks and that he learns from them.

Paul commented that the fact that this ask went to JTF indicates that they take JTF's opinion / recommendation seriously.

COMMERCIAL EVICTION MORATORIUM

Thank you to everyone who supported the measure.

At Mondays' meeting, the tiers of small / medium / large businesses to get 12/18/24 months to pay back rent was approved.

There is pushback / legal questions of allowing small businesses (10 employees or less) to terminate their lease by paying X months of rent. It will be discussed during next monday's Land Use and Transportation meeting, and perhaps voted on at next Tuesday's board of supervisors meeting.

Karen asked if we will continue to follow this issue and provide recommendations.

Paul noted that it would be helpful for the community to chime in on this amendment. Glynis noted that due to the compressed timeline, it is impossible to vet. Paul asked if there are any major things that should be cause of concern.

JEremy expressed two viewpoints. Santino (who is in charge of the curating tenants in the mall) expressed his concern about what vacancies in a mall communicates. Small businesses like Ryan Kimura's Pika Pika see no possible light at the end of the tunnel - they have no possible way to pay back this rent even with 24 months to pay it back, and this is a compromise that gives a way out.

Glynis expressed her concern that Kinokuniya may just walk up and leave due to the negative press, and asked how JTF may help facilitate communication between landlords and tenants.

Sandy noted that the purpose of this legislation according to Supervisor Peskin, is to bring landlords to the table to help negotiate. Sandy said this may be difficult with a Japanese corporation like Kinokuniya, There is discussion of a lawsuit.

There will be further discussion of this general topic at the JTF board meeting. Sandy noted that board members were encouraged to research the issue and give their input at the respective public meetings.

Karen noted that this is an ongoing issue that will extend beyond next Tuesday's legislation. Things are happening and will continue to happen fast, so we as a committee need to be informed and on top of the issue.

Karen and Jeremy volunteered to stay on top of this issue. Jeremy is connected with Japantown for Justice and APILO, who have both been working on and leading this issue.

Tomo is reporting on this issue.

PROP H

Prop H passed, but Glynis hasn't had a chance to comprehend it.

The legislation only applies to street facing properties, which leaves the Japan Center Malls out of it. Jeremy noted that there are many categorizations in the legislation that don't make sense, and that that was a primary criticism of the legislation

Glynis noted that Santino expressed his support for parts of Prop H.

Paul noted that it removes many opportunities for review. It accelerates the ability to get small business permits for new businesses. He noted that the City has a tendency to propose legislation that "tells itself to do something" but then they don't follow it.

Glynis also discussed an earlier legislation by Supervisor Ronin that may have similar impact.

Paul suggested asking the Zoning department about the Malls with respect to street scape / street facing. Because there are pedestrian pathways all through the Malls, it may allow the legislation to apply to the malls.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

CHHESS UPDATE

Nina reported on the CHHESS.

The internal / external facing idea has been dropped. They just moved the strategies back into the key areas instead.

The City requested only the strategies, but JCD staff pushed back and asked them to review the organizing framework as well such that they would develop cultural competency and understand the lens of the community. The City department now has the report and they are awaiting feedback.

JCD staff has met with JCCCNC and will be meeting more with them and with other community organizations as well.

She is drafting a skeleton project plan that will be further fleshed out as they continue to consult with community organizations.

The new project associate, Natasha Tamate-Weiss, has been working on a JCD newsletter to serve as a broad newsletter for Japantown.

They are moving forward with small business / artist assistance and have been working with Greg Vioria. Natasha and Nina have been working on a content curation plan.

The Seeding Reciprocity grant training sessions have concluded, and Nina is now doing 1:1 consulting sessions with the artists.

Glynis asked about how prioritizing what to fund is going to be vetted with the community. Nina acknowledged the challenge of developing a project plan when they haven't been able to fully meet with city partners. They are putting a soft pause on hiring for now until they can determine how they will proceed. When meeting with community leaders, they will ask them about prioritization.

Jeremy asked when the next town hall will be, and suggested that prioritization could be a topic (i.e. presenting a short survey and asking people to give their ranking). Nina originally saw the town hall as the final step to get community buy-in before going to the board of supervisors, but they haven't even been able to discuss with city officials yet. She wants certain procedural steps to occur before the next town hall.

Tomo asked how the JCD newsletter will be distributed. She expressed concerns about digital and language accessibility. Nina said the current plan is for email, but will consider a print newsletter.

Glynis discussed how the committee may be a resource for the CHHESS process.

SFMTA / NEIGHBORHOOD PEDESTRIAN SAFETY LEGISLATION

Alice reported on legislation discussed at the LUT meeting.

(1) slowing down speeds.

Preston discussed the Geary/Gough corridor where the fatality happened during his support of the legislation, and signed on as a sponsor.

The legislation includes a "senior zone" that would affect streets in areas where seniors are.

(2) adjusting stoplights to reduce speed

Both will be voted on at the next Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday.

Supervisor Yee was very concerned about passing this legislation before he steps down in two months.

Alice wanted to give public comment and put herself in the queue, but was not able to do so.

At Octavia/Post they are going to add more signs that say "Senior Crossing" but no stoplight. The Sequoias said that's not enough, and are campaigning for a full stoplight. Alice said that if you're speeding up the hill, you won't see people crossing until it's too late. Paul suggested it would be easier to get a stop sign vs. a stoplight, but the Sequoia residents are pushing for a stoplight. A stop sign may be much faster, because the cost of implementing a stoplight can be prohibitive.

For now, SFMTA wants to add more signage and study it for 3 months before going to the next stage, which may be a stop sign.

Paul said that SFPD traffic enforcement should also be paired with this. They are planning on scheduling a meeting with the captain, who has expressed his interest.

Glynis asked if we should invite the campaign to discuss it at the next LUT meeting. We will.

Linda noted they added a wider curb cut at Laguna, but that it needs to be cleaned - she will follow up with them.

1619 LAGUNA STREET VARIANCE

No update on this.

SFMTA CONGESTION PRICING

No update on this. Glynis asked for volunteers to keep track of this issue.

Paul noted that there was a committee meeting happening for this tonight, and said it was important for J-Town to be involved in the conversation.

Jeremy discussed that SFMTA's goal is to curb intra city travel, since most people in the northeastern part come from within San Francisco.

Paul expressed his concern that the boundary will have on Japantown traffic.

Paul suggested communicating with Colin Dental-Post and asking them for an update on how they're responding to Japantown concerns. He noted how long it took them to listen to the community about not taking down Webster.

Glynis will reach out to have a community listening session in 2021.

BUCHANAN HOTEL UPDATE

Sandy reported that there are now 108 people in the hotel. They are in the process of transitioning people out of the hotel into permanent supportive housing, but there are limited places to transition them too. The hotel program will probably continue into 2021. Kimpton Buchanan has said that they do not plan on selling the hotel to the City.

PEACE PLAZA RENOVATION BOND MEASURE UPDATE

Sandy thanked everyone for helping to pass Prop A with 71% (2/3 was required).

Michale Degregorio, who worked with JTF in the concept design, focus groups, etc. has been assigned to continue to work with Japantown and engage the community as we move forward with renovation. They will pay for a consulting architect, and we gave them positive feedback about RHAA. Phil Ginsburg is open to RHAA continuing to be the consultant.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Glynis noted a couple of things that came out after the agenda was issued:

Planning Department

Shelley Caltagione emailed about the Planning Department working with cultural districts. They will notify cultural districts whenever a project comes before them from that neighborhood. There will be a meeting on 12/2.

She asked if our district is interested in greater involvement with development review in your district.

Glynis suggested our committee should provide feedback. Jeremy suggested having the committee draft some responses to these questions for Nina to communicate. Glynis suggested to Paul to draft some answers, and will forward the letter to Paul. JTF staff (Nina, Lauren, Brandon, Steve, Natasha) will be at the meeting

This time of notification would occur at the very start of the process. Glynis says this is a win win for everybody, including developers.

Retail Apocalypse

City College of the Arts reached out again and are interested in diving again into the retail apocalypse / covid-19 apocalypse and partnering with Japantown. They're building off of the work that was done in the previous studio project.

Glynis thinks that the cultural district staff and the LUT committee would both benefit from learning more about new ways of land use and governance.

Tomo, Jeremy, and Nina expressed their interest in engaging with the project. Glynis will continue to work with them.

The previous project publication has been drafted, and may go live soon. Glynis urged the committee to suspend their disbelief and be open to new ideas when analyzing these student projects.

Historic Preservation

Karen announced that the Historic Preservation will be voting on recommending 1830 Sutter for Article 10 City Landmarking on November 18. After that it will go to the board of supervisors. Karen will send further info on how to send a message of support.

Glynis reported that the JTF Executive Committee has / will send a letter of support. Karen suggested sending the letter to the committee to use as a template.

Meeting Length

Kenta and Glynis are soliciting feedback on how to make the committee meetings briefer.

Should we get more people? Break out / focus on different things.

Jeremy suggested having written updates in advance of the meeting. Alice agreed, suggesting that sending out documents in advance would be helpful since it's hard to read things on the screen during the meeting. This was seconded by Jeremy and Tomo.

Jeremy and Alice both said that although the meetings are long, they are full of good information and is a reflection of the committee keeping an eye on different issues. Glynis noted that perhaps the Cultural Heritage committee may be able to take the lead on certain topics.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

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