

Japantown Task Force
Cultural Heritage & Sustainability Committee

January 4, 2021 (on-line via Zoom)

Committee members present: Lucy Fisher (co-chair), David Takashima (co-chair), Benh Nakajo, Rosalyn Tonai, Jeremy Chan

Board Members present: Lori Yamauchi, Alice Kawahatsu

Staff present: Steve Nakajo, Nina Bazan-Sakamoto, Natasha Weiss

Public: Karen Kai, Derek Tahata

I. Call to order at 6:08PM. Quorum was established.

II. Approval of December 7, 2020 Minutes

Moved by Jeremy Chan and seconded by Benh Nakajo: approved unanimously with an edit to correct spelling of Lori Yamauchi's name.

III. New Business

Approval to recommend to the JTF board for Lori Yamauchi to join the CHS Committee.

Moved by Jeremy Chan and seconded by Benh Nakajo; the motion was passed unanimously. Lori posted her resume in the Zoom chat area.

IV. Unfinished Business- Feedback from Committee Members on CHHESS Tactics

Staff reports:

Steve Nakajo:

- JTF Cultural District's one-time funding starts February, 2021 through September 30, 2021.
- Four project areas selected and discussed with City Departments: Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD), Office of Economic & Workforce Development (MOEWD) and Planning Department.

Short term priorities:

- 1) Virtual co-creative Hub – staffed by a marketing associate and Natasha
- 2) Virtual Business Assistance Center – MOHCD and MOEWD approved parttime position to collaborate with JCBD for direct relief plan for merchants.

Longer term projects:

- 3) Community Development/Investment/Land Trust. Administrative staff and a new Community Investment position will work with LU committee on this project.
- 4) Master Plan - administrative staff (Brandon Quan) will coordinate work with LU and CHSC to start an "ambitious" 3- year planning process in 2021.

Steve will hire a website consultant and a feasibility consultant to forecast funding for JTF due to cuts in OEWD. The SF Bar Association awarded a pro-bono attorney Abahki Suramcam, to assist with human resource issues.

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto:

Announced the first of monthly artist “meet ups” on Jan. 22, 6PM for the Co-creative hub. Purposes are to determine needs and functions of artists and creation of a Cultural District logo. Four artists have submitted proposals to the SF Arts Commission for a grant award.

- Rosalyn asked about the collaboration between JCBD and CHHESS tactic of small business assistance. Steve: this was suggested in a meeting with City departments.
- David asked about the mayor’s announcement of \$500 million to support small businesses and non-profits. Steve said JFT may not be eligible, that our fiscal agent is JCYC. Steve will follow up; award is only \$5,000.
- Steve is looking towards investing in a Master Plan and other sources of funding for the coming years.

Nina asked committee members for feedback on the tactics in the CHHESS planning grid and level of involvement in relation to the tactics.

- Lucy sent this grid to committee members and asked if they reviewed the grid and given their feedback.

Rosalyn asked to what level of engagement do you want to see of committee members and members in the community.

Lori screen-shared the grid; the City asked Nina to reorganize the CHHESS strategies by focus area; the following tactics are related to Cultural Heritage:

Strategy A: Cultural Preservation, Sustainability and Development

Tactic #3: Peace Plaza improvements, tactic 6: Buchanan Mall improvements, tactic 7: Preservation of historic buildings & structures.

Strategy B: Equip, protect and support small business, arts and culture

Tactic #3: build more programming into arts, community organizations and businesses with focus on traditional Japanese eco-culture.

Strategy C: Empower, promote and advocate with the City, public and other investors

Tactic #6 Create digital archive of cultural resources

Lori said this might help organize your thinking when reviewing each tactic. Additionally, she reviewed tactics that were related to this committee’s area of interest.

Lucy: It is important that staff inform the Committee on the development of these areas. Asked for feedback from this Committee on what they thought of the proposed Tactics/Strategies thus far. Jeremy asked a clarification for our roles and responsibilities related to these tactics.

Lucy: starts w/ analysis, knowledge of pre-conditions to determine where we are and where we want to go.

Steve remarked this is a wide menu, so staff want to know the priorities of committee members and extent of their participation. We are trying to learn what you want to focus on and level of involvement, what is tangible and realistic.

What's important is that these 4 project areas were negotiated over the past several months with the City and approved for one-time funds from MOEWD and MOC DH. Two of them are short range, "doables", and the other two are long range. The other concern is that the short-range tactics must be implemented and stand on their own when funding ends on September 30, 2021. Good news is that the Artist Co-creative Hub will be staffed by core staff. Because of deep funding cuts to MOEWD, JTF is projecting a potential \$75,000 deficit for the next year and perhaps in coming years. The CHSC & L/U/T committees, staff and JTF Board must be aware that there will be a need to find other sources of funding or to secure baseline funding for staff in the coming year. This is a wide menu to keep long term objectives in play for future carry-over funding. It takes time to gather information and develop, especially in this pandemic. Committee has to figure out their role, and things need to be coordinated.

Rosalyn wanted to confirm the difficulty of community organizing during an escalating pandemic, to complete the deliverables and find funding for next year. The Peace Plaza renovation will be a draw to JTown but disruptive in the short-run. Steve responded there are models that can be implemented, like tactics 1 and 2. Steve emphasized in MOEWD and MOC DH meetings the need to include artists and culture and historical sectors, and not just small businesses to sustain Japantown. We will be realistic and work with everyone in the virtual setting.

Sandy noted that every neighborhood community which has been severely impacted during the pandemic has asked for funds from the City. For example, Chinatown has asked for help for restaurants. As for Japantown, we've been able to communicate with every member in City Hall and departments. Therefore, staff would like to hear that the four priorities are supported so staff can proceed.

Rosalyn: agreed to the project areas and appreciated the support for the arts, culture and historical sectors in Japantown.

Alice: With a small committee, outreach is important, especially to the EDs and festival committee members to get the broadest reach.

Lucy asked the committee for a consensus endorsement for the four CHHESS priority areas. Co-chair David emphasized what Steve presented will be

priorities including responses to the Departments' negotiation. We will work with others to get it done, such as with JCBD.

Jeremy: Agreed that the short term and long term are priorities. Short term projects address current struggles and leveraging the festivals will be important for the Cultural District creation. The co-creative hub is a way to showcase the community artists, as well as tactic #3, eco- culture.

Benh: All points are important; support of businesses is a critical point to address. We should ask the City for help, line up our needs and ask for money. He emphasized concentration on small businesses and artists' assistance plan and media center.

Jeremy: have the needs of the small businesses been direct cash or service expansion? Steve has been meeting weekly with JCBD; arrived at agreement that collaborating with JCBD is best approach.

The Committee agreed to endorse the four CHHESS priority areas.

Nina: Emphasized that the tactics are not limited to the four, but they are priorities. She still wants feedback on type of roles the committee could/should play in the implementation of the four tactics. She is open to more discussion on roles and responsibilities of committee members.

No public comments or announcements

7:46PM. Meeting adjourned
Next meeting is February 1st via Zoom.