



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 / RING CENTRAL MEETING THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Glynis Nakahra*, Jeremy Chan*, Kenta Takamori*, Sandy Mori*, Ros Tonai*

STAFF PRESENT:

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto

OTHERS PRESENT:

Linda Walsh, Tomo Hirai, Paul Wermer, Annie Scott Rogers

* Japantown Task Force Board Member

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

STAFF/COMMITTEE UPDATES:

JAPAN CENTER MALLS

Rich said he is on the Certificate of Preference Committee, which is an initiative of the City. Rich Hashimoto and Judy Hamaguchi are two people who received certificate of preference. At the time, they were disqualified because they purchased home.

Karen requested that there be a larger report back on this committee at the next meeting, which Rich agreed to.

Sandy also reported on the Ad Hoc Technical Committee. They are looking into the possibility of Kintetsu assigning their contract rights to a J-Town organization. Karen discussed that the City was supposed to play an enforcement role in the contract.

CULTURAL DISTRICT / CHHESS UPDATE

Nina reported that they are hiring for a Small Business Coach (to be supervised by Grace) and a Strategic Partnerships Coordinator who will be helping with development and fundraising.

They had an Artists Meetup in January and will be hosting another one in February.

Nina reported on the housing element (see below)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

CONGESTION PRICING

Glynis will suggest Friday March 26 and Wednesday March 31 for a meeting.

HOUSING ELEMENT

Cultural District + Glynis have been working to schedule a listening session in late February or mid-March. Cathedral Hill will be joining us

There will be a more curated focus group after the draft is released.

We will suggest March 10 and March 12 at 6pm.

SF CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Glynis asked the committee for input.

Paul said the individual actions are good, but that it doesn't necessarily acknowledge how systems interact and integrate with each other. The actions right now are silo'd and independent

They asked us for feedback on format. Glynis said some people may know nothing, while others may have already read it cover to cover. An overview with break out groups might be helpful

Paul suggested that new housing, transportation, renovations of existing buildings, and the impact of these on the neighborhood ecosystem may be the largest topics affecting Japantown and other diasporic communities.

One question is whether building housing near transit supports low income communities, or if it increases gentrification.

Karen asked if the Climate Action Plan is taking into consideration post-Covid work paradigms. For example, Salesforce has announced indefinite remote work.

Paul said they are planning to release it in the "Spring," so we should clarify when they will stop accepting public input.

Jeremy said the overview/breakout room format seems fine. Having specific discussion topics like transportation and housing may help jog people's brains.

SFMTA GEARY MEDIAN TREE REMOVAL

There was a protest, so they will be holding a hearing. SFMTA said it would be great to have Japantown community speak at the meeting. The Executive Committee sent a letter in support of the tree removal, since the letters were due today.

Linda clarified that SFMTA said that individuals can still send letters by Monday. Members of the co-op board have sent individual letters.

CCA: COMMON GROUND COLLAB

On Monday, we held a meet and greet with the students and stakeholder. On Saturday 2/13, Jeremy and Karen will be leading two site visit tour groups for CCA.

The next stakeholder meeting will be on February 25. Glynis will invite other community representatives including nonprofit leaders, board members, CBD, merchants, etc. This meeting will be open to the public.

COMMITTEE GOALS

Kenta discussed committee goals - see https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qUIDC-QCxyIzDLMXCso468uQPLY2j1dzSy_D8Mx6z5U/edit?ts=6025e0fc

Monitoring the City's Decision-Making Processes

Paul noted that Agendas come out 72 hours in advance, and are difficult to monitor for important issues.

It was suggested to create a LUT email or google group to subscribe to these email updates. Kenta expressed concern at spamming all the members.

Karen suggested that perhaps this should be coordinated through the Task Force. Bob Hamaguchi was on listservs / got notices from different planning departments, and informed the appropriate individuals / committees of these issues.

Kenta also suggested that committee people take ownership over certain issues / departments, to help promote committee accountability.

Ros suggested being proactive, which may require an in with the staff. By the time it gets on the agenda, it may be too late. Having relationships with people in the City is critical.

Lori volunteered to co-monitor the Planning Department's calendars with someone else. She also noted that the Cultural District staff has been developing relationships with MOHCD staff, MOEWD staff, and planning staff.

Ros noted that due to the lack of a direct staff liaison on LUT, the committee doesn't have these direct connections with city staff.

Kenta said that he preferred to focus on what we have control over. Also, it's okay to have multiple relationship with a single entity.

Lori noted that there could be a deeper debrief by Nina of her meetings with city staff, so we have a more real-time understanding.

Gathering and Storing Data

Kenta outlined the different topics that we are looking to gather data for.

- Property ownership

- cultural inventory
- Nichi Bei Maps
- How J-Town is used / visited
 - demographics
 - age
 - income
 - reasons
- JA demographics in the city
- Traffic / Transportation Data
- Commercial Activity Data to understand the health of J-Town Businesses

Cultural Inventory - there's a desire to update these lists. Cultural Heritage is working on it.

Commercial Activity Data: Tomo said it's difficult to ask merchants this. Looking at open/closed storefronts, and the types of businesses that are open / closed, may be helpful. In that way, it's connected to neighborhood inventory. Karen noted that this data will change rapidly as places plan to close; she also noted that tenants coming in are getting special deals. Even businesses that may appear to do well might still be struggling - for example, because owners are doing the cooking because they can't hire staff.

Kenta said looking at openings / closures over time could be helpful.

Judy noted that Bob made a list of businesses and cultural orgs, and we should be reviewing that list. Judy also noted that several business in Japantown are not Japanese or Japanese American owned, and that may change how we reach out to merchants. Tomo commented that Grace / JCBD is communicating with merchants in Korean.

Karen suggested that the JCBD may be collecting this info already and could be contracted.

Glynis commented that transportation data is critical, and the lack of data hurts us when new transportation developments come up.

Ros suggested to set objectives for why we're gathering this data. Any non-confidential data that APILO could provide might also be helpful.

Lori said she's pretty sure Grace and Greg Vioria already have this data and that we should ask them for it. Karen said that updating the directory seems to fit with the Japantown Cultural District's goals. Nina clarified that Brandon is working on updating the JCHESS list of organizations, arts/cultural groups, and businesses.

For other committee goals:

Glynis noted that we are supposed to continue outreach about the design guidelines (it got stalled because of Covid-19).

Lori thought that the LUT's engagement in the Japantown Master Plan objective should be a critical goal. Kenta clarified that the doc items were process things that would inform our more specific goals.

NEW BUSINESS:

None

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Linda said she went to the SF Walk meeting on the Vision Zero coalition. There is an opportunity for JTF to sign on to a letter. She will send more via email.

Jeremy said that the commercial eviction moratorium will expire at the end of March,

Glynis said that Alice is working with SF Safe to schedule a traffic safety training.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

The next meeting will be at 6:00 p.m., March 11, 2021 online at Ring Central.