



# JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE

日本町の経済発展・計画・保存

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION OF JAPANTOWN

## Japantown Task Force Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, July 21, 2021  
6:00 pm – VIA zoom Meeting

**Attendees:** Sandy Mori, Kenta Takamori, Benh Nakajo, Rosalyn Tonai, Alice Kawahatsu, Beau Simon, Daryl Higashi, David Takashima, Gary Barbaree, Glynis Nakahara, Jeremy Chan, Lori Yamauchi, Lucy Fisher, Mark Moriguchi, Richard Hashimoto and Steven Santa Maria

**Absent (excused):** Scott Hamaguchi, Richard Jue, Jon Osaki

**Staff:** Steve Nakajo, Lauren Nosaka, Brandon Quan, Susie Kagami, Nina Bazan-Sakamoto, Max Nihei

**Guests:** Elena Nielsen, Emily Murase, Emily Nichols, Grace Horikiri, Melissa Bailey Nihei, Michiko Yamada, Satoe Haile, Tatsuki Tomita, Karen Kai

### I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by President Sandy Mori. A quorum was acknowledged.

### Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Richard Hashimoto and seconded by Lucy Fisher to accept the agenda.

The motion passed unanimously.

### II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the JTF Board meeting of June 16, 2021. (Attachment A)

The minutes were amended to include:

- Under the Update from the Executive Director, Steve Nakajo, the meeting with Benkyodo was held with Ricky Okamura.

It was moved by Lucy Fisher and seconded by Mark Moriguchi to approve the June 16, 2021 minutes.

The motion passed with 15 in favor and 1 abstention. No public comments.

### III. Update from the Executive Director, Steve Nakajo (Attachment B)

Steve Nakajo provided more information from his Executive Director's Report. The CHHESS report will be open for the public to review and give input on Aug. 23. The meeting will either be in-person or virtual. JTF received a \$25,000 add back from the API Council for the Visitor Center Kiosk. Steve and Sandy met with Kate Sofis, the new director of the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development (MOEWD). She is very open and supportive of Japantown. Board member mentioned that Ms. Sofis is former ED of SF MADE and is very supportive of non profits and funding and is very interested in Japantown.

Emily Nichols gave an update on the Providence Homeless Program at the Buchanan Hotel. There are 131 keys, 110-115 residents in the hotel. As soon as one leaves, another one comes to fill that space. The city will leave at the end of the year and then the hotel will begin a renovation. The renovation will take 4-6 months and they plan to reopen around the end of the year.

Board member L.F. felt the NEXT Generation info was well done and is happy to see that some of it's members are coming to the JTF meetings and being encouraged to also attend the committee meetings as well.

### Update from the Japantown Cultural District, Susie Kagami (Attachment C&D)

No public comments.

**Update from Executive Director of Japantown Community Benefit District (Property Owners in Japantown), Grace Horikiri (Attachment E)**

JCBD assisted 3-4 businesses on the COVID-19 Small Business Relief grant.

No public comments.

**IV. Committee Reports**

- A. Land Use/Transportation Committee (Co-chairs Glynis Nakahara/Kenta Takamori)
1. Update on the Yi Fang application for Conditional Use application in the Japan Center Mall  
Kenta Takamori reported Yi Fang Fruit Tea is trying to open a shop in the West Mall. They were required to apply for a Conditional Use Change. Yi Fang was given approval to communicate and listen the concerns of the community. Thomas Liang and Zoe Fan gave a presentation at the JTF Land Use and Transportation Committee on July 8, 2021. The main points of the presentation are Japanese designs in the shop, customize their signage in Japanese, recycling plan, and will include their history in Japanese. They have been encouraged to join the Japantown Merchants Association (JMA).  
Board member SSM asked if this was going to be done in good faith only or can this agreement be put in writing by the company and signed?
  2. Report on Committee discussion about the recent information sharing failures among various parties on the Land Use/Transportation issues:  
The committee and board didn't receive advance notice for Yi Fang's Conditional Use application. Since this issue occurred, JTF staff has set up a protocol system and is notifying the committee of any upcoming notices. Yi Fang did not contact JMA. The previous owner of the shop notified JMA on the change of ownership. Grace Horikiri mentioned that the Small Business Coordinator is working with JCBD, JTF, and JMA to create a simple check list for new businesses in Japantown. The Small Business Coordinator is a collaboration between JCBD and JTF. It was also mentioned that Mayor Breed is working on streamlining the permitting process for small businesses. Suggestions that communication between JMA, JCBD, 3D, and JTF should all be notified in a timely manner so that a coordinated effort can be made by all involved. Board Member R.H. mentioned that there is a statement of confidentiality that prevents 3D to say who the new tenants might be. In the past, he has offered to help with the permitting process.
  3. Report on Community Planning working group  
Lori Yamauchi reported that the working group met in early July and discussed the Preservation and Vision Master Plan, the purpose and needs of the Master Plan, and why community members would want to participate in this development. They also discussed the plan would include the boundaries of the JCHESS. They will invite other organizations to join the group. This is a subcommittee of the Land Use/Transportation Committee, not a separate Ad Hoc Committee.
  4. Last Minute Announcements  
Jon Osaki reached out the committee and let them know that there is 5 million in state surplus allocated for improvements for the Osaka Way, formerly Buchanan Mall. JTF might approach the community engagement process for this opportunity. There are a number of groups who will be part of the planning including Department of Public Works, SF Arts Commission, Nihonmachi Parking Corporation, JCBD, JTF, the Asawa Family, mall property owners, and others. Outreach efforts are needed to engage these groups. Phil Ting was instrumental in securing this funding. More information to follow.

**Public Comments:**

- The JCBD worked on the vision plan for the Buchanan Mall and will share the information with the LUT committee.

B. Cultural Heritage Sustainability Committee (Co-chairs David Takashima/Lucy Fisher)

1. Update on Committee activities

Lucy Fisher reported that in the last 3 months, the committee has had presentations from 3 historical archival collections in Japantown, took a tour of the Hokka Nichi Bei Kai and its tea room, and the Colma Japanese Cemetary with the Jikeikai.

2. The CHSC Committee recommends to the JTF Board to approve the concept of a Prefectural Antenna Shop as a demonstration project of the Japantown Task Force. Kenta Takamori gave a presentation on his Japantenna shop proposal to the board (Attachment F), and introduced his associates, Emily Murase and Tatsuki Tomita. Insurance, employees and lease agreement would be handled by the nonprofit who adopts this proposal. A shop location has not been found yet. The goal is to have the demonstration project up and running in November 2021. The revenue would not come from the sale of products. The prefectural governments would pay for the promotional fees and possibly the sale of products would also be provided by the prefecture. The Japantenna shop would be considered another project under JTF, similar to the Visitor Center Kiosk or Co-creative Hub.

Kenta reassured the board that this project would adhere to the JTF By-laws.

The motion was moved by Lucy Fisher and seconded by Glynis to adopt the Japanatenna shop as a demonstration project of the Japantown Task Force.

The vote passed with 13 in favor, 1 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

Public Comments:

- A member of the public commented that they interested in this project and informed Kenta to go for it.
- JCBD commented that the project reminds them of the SafeCity Camera Program.

C. Peace Plaza Committee

(Co-Chairs Jon Osaki/ Rich Hashimoto)

1. Committee Updates

The committee is in status quo waiting for Marien Coss from the Rec & Park Department on the design. JTF staff is improving the Peace Plaza website and working with Max Loubet to film the Peace Plaza Project. The committee plans to have a community wide meeting at the end of summer.

No public comments.

D. Finance Committee

(Chair Mark Moriguchi)

1. The Finance Committee recommends to the JTF Board to approve the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 MOHCD (Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development) Budget

Mark Moriguchi reported the FY2021-2022 MOHCD Budget (Attachment G) and clarified the staff salaries and fringe benefits. Positions are hired on a year-to-year basis depending on funding.

It was motioned, 2<sup>nd</sup> and passed with 15 in favor and 1 abstention.

No public comments.

E. Nominations Committee

(Chair Benh Nakajo)

1. Board Matrix Update: Each board member is asked to fill out the Matrix sent to them via email.

Benh Nakajo welcomed Steven Santa Maria as the new board member. He gave an update on the Board Matrix and asked board members to fill out the board matrix with areas of expertise. The committee is recruiting new board members. There are currently 19 board members. The committee is actively searching for additional board members.

**F. Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee**

(Chair Lori Yamauchi)

**1. Committee Updates**

Lori Yamauchi reported that at the last meeting, presentations by Grace Horikiri, Kristen Fletcher, and Greg Vilorio were given. Santino DeRose from Maven Properties was unable to attend. Greg and Kristen gave updates on tenant statuses and marketing activities in the Japan Center Malls. Kristen Fletcher mentioned that she is not involved with leases. The offices in Japan and the Kinokuniya company handles the leases. The Japan Center Malls have a 20% vacancy rate. The businesses outside the malls have a 6% vacancy rate. The Kinokuniya side of the malls have a 16% vacancy rate. NJAHS has loaned their exhibit banners to the malls and are showcasing them in the vacant store windows.

**VI. Update from the President/Executive Committee**

Sandy Mori reported the By-laws Committee plans to bring a revised draft of the bylaws to be discussed at the next board meeting in August. The Board will vote on it in September.

**VII. General Public Comment**

Members of the public may address the Board for up to two minutes with respect to each item on the agenda, and may speak for up to two minutes regarding matters not on the agenda during general public comment.

No public comments.

**VIII. Announcements.**

-JCCCNC will be having a virtual documentary screening and panel discussion on "Being Japanese" on Saturday, July 31, 1pm. via zoom. \$8 for members, \$10 for the general public.

**IX. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54pm.

NEXT BOARD MEETING: Wednesday, August 18, 2021 via zoom meeting.