



JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE
AD HOC JAPAN CENTER MALLS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

MINUTES

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2022

5:30 PM – via Zoom Meeting

Committee Members Present: Lori Yamauchi (Chair), Daryl Higashi, Roy Ikeda, Sandy Mori, Glynis Nakahara, Joyce Oishi, Beau Simon

JTF Board Members Present: Jeremy Chan

Others Present: Judy Hamaguchi, Tomo Hirai, Emily Nichols

Staff Present: Dr. Emily Murase, Brandon Quan

I. Call to Order. Chair Lori Yamauchi called the meeting to order at 5:33 pm.

II. Approval of January 10, 2022 minutes*

Beau Simon moved, Roy Ikeda seconded to approve the minutes of January 10. The motion was adopted unanimously.

III. Discussion of Working Assumptions Regarding Future Development of the Japan Center Malls Blocks (as informed by the JCHESS & BNP), Process to Vet Working Assumptions, Approach to Conversation with Developers about Development of the Malls Blocks

Lori stated that she sent around a presentation for the committee's review. Her intent is to start a dialogue about working assumptions for future development of the Malls blocks. She stated that the committee's charge is not limited to reviewing the East and West Malls, but all of the buildings, encompassing Fillmore on the east, Laguna on the west, Post on the north, and Geary on the south.

A. Presentation & Discussion

- 1. [Slide 2] Community Goals for Development of Japan Center Malls Blocks
a. Roy Ikeda reminded the committee that affordable housing preferences for specific ethnic groups are generally not permitted, but preferences can be a goal.
b. Glynis Nakahara would like to add an exploration of integrating community spaces as a complement to retail anchor; and when referring to affordable housing, she believes the Planning Dept Housing Element includes policies that could help, since it is centered on equity and recognizes displacement
c. Daryl Higashi pointed out a new City policy that gives preferences to residents within 1/4 mile radius in new housing that has been applied in the Mission District
d. Sandy Mori stated that the City is obligated to honor Certificates of Preference
2. [Slide 3] Community Goals for Development of Japan Center Malls Blocks

- a. Glynis would like to add an aspiration that all new construction be “net zero,” generating as much energy as consumed. She also suggested a goal that the Peace Plaza be more accessible from all sides.
3. [Slide 4] Working Assumptions re: Future Development of Malls Blocks
 - a. Beau Simon stated that he was not aware that the Kabuki Hotel was under review. He explained that Blackstone, the current owner, has invested tens of millions of dollars. Lori responded that the slide will be revised to reflect that the Kabuki Hotel will not be included in the review.
 - b. Sandy also expressed concern that the review be limited and not include U.S. Bank which has purchased Union Bank. U.S. Bank has stated its commitment to the Japanese American community.
 - c. Glynis commented that the assumption should not be that all buildings will be replaced, but instead leave room for renovation.
 - d. Roy also expressed the need to be cautious about the use of the term “replacement.”
 - e. Joyce Oishi echoed the sentiment of previous speakers. She suggested that a structural analysis be required before there is any commitment to replacement.
 - f. Daryl Higashi asked that the first point be reworded so that the focus is on preservation and renovation. Also, on the last point, he stated that there are two garages and asked if the garages would be rebuilt on the same footprint. Garages must be rebuilt to structural standards that can support taller
 - g. Emily asked that Lori label the presentation slides “DRAFT - FOR DISCUSSION ONLY” to avoid any misunderstandings.
 - h. Glynis stated that in laying out aspirations, the committee should look to future-proofing buildings on the Malls blocks and include the idea of connecting the Malls blocks underground to MUNI.
 - i. Roy suggested that all of the owners negotiate some kind of design/construction coordination agreement.
4. [Slide 5]: Working Assumptions re: Future Development of Malls Blocks (continued)
 - a. Daryl stated that the final negotiations for future development will be between the City/Planning Department and the developer/owner, not between the community and the City. He recognizes that the point is to insist that the community be informed and engaged in the early stages and throughout the process..
 - b. Joyce wondered if there is a need to prescribe now where housing should be located in a new structure. Lori said that she could make the language more general.
 - c. Glynis would like to see shadow prevention measures for Osaka Way.
5. [Slide 6]: Working Assumptions re: Future Development of Malls Blocks (continued)
No comments.
6. [Slide 7]: Working Assumptions re: Future Development of Malls Blocks (continued)
No comments.
7. [Slide 8]: Process for Vetting Working Assignments

Lori proposed a process whereby she would update the goals and working assumptions, ask the committee to adopt them, then present to various stakeholders.

Lori will add Blackstone, SFMTA to the list of property owners

- a. Daryl suggested that, in addition to the Planning Department and the Office of Workforce & Economic Development, there are a multitude of City departments that will need to be consulted, such as the Recreation & Parks Department and Department of the Environment. He noted that there are also state agencies who might be involved..
 - b. Glynis expressed concern that State laws have increased pressure to build housing, which may diminish opportunity for community input. She would like to be explicit about community input in development on the Malls blocks.
 - c. Roy suggested adding Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation and Bridge Housing. He thought that an assumption that a single entity will be leading all negotiations might be overly ambitious. It is likely that there will be more than one negotiating team.
 - d. Joyce suggested making explicit a step that involves the redrafting of the working assumptions as this is an interactive process.
8. [Slide 9]: Approach to Conversations with Developers
- a. Daryl stated that it is one thing to have a discussion among well-informed participants, but there is a need to recognize that not everyone understands the advisory role of this committee. We need to be mindful of the advisory role and be careful about the appearance of playing favorites early on. When folks talk about partnerships, multiple partners lead to complexities that can result in difficult situations. He urged respect for the property owners.
 - b. Roy reinforced the point that developers make agreements with the owners, not with this committee or the Task Force which do not have authority. He stated this is a huge project involving public space, retail, and many factors. Developers are likely to see this as separate projects. One developer may create the housing, another developer works on something else.
 - c. Sandy stated that we need to clearly state that this is DRAFT - FOR DISCUSSION ONLY. She reminded the committee that the JTF needs to be cautious about our role which does not have legal teeth.
 - d. Joyce said that she recognizes the limitations of the committee, but at the same time, she sees this as an opportunity to engage developers.

IV. Report from Call with Robert Sakai, co-chair of Covenants Committee subcommittee

Lori stated that she had a brief call with Robert Sakai to discuss the subcommittee which is being co-chaired by Robert Sakai and Diane Matsuda. Lori asked that minutes from this committee be shared with the Covenants Committee.

V. Announcements - None.

VI. General Public Comments - None

VII. Adjournment

Lori adjourned the meeting at 6:32 pm.