

Land Use & Transportation Committee Meeting
October 8, 2020, 6:00 pm on Zoom

Committee Members present: Glynis Nakahara, Kenta Takamori, Tomo Hirai, Paul Werner, Alice Kawahatsu, Karen Kai.

Other participants: Annie Scott Rogers, Judy Hamaguchi, Nina Bazan Sakamoto, Derek Tahara, Grace Horikiri, Sandy Mori.

Motion to amend agenda to allow Nina to go first, motion by Alice, seconded by Tomo, all Committee members voted to approve the motion.

Cultural District Update

Nina: CHHESS approved unanimously to move forward to the City. Conditional that some input would be incorporated from a week after the Board meeting. We have already heard back from Julia, and there is a meeting tomorrow with next steps on the CHHESS. The Japantown CHHESS is being used as a model for other Cultural Districts. We have moved into the second year of implementation. Nina will continue as Program Manager. Will hire a Marketing Associate in charge of developing a Cultural District/JCBD website platform to create visibility for merchants and artists and provide a central hub for Japantown, and a Project Associate who will assist implementation and increase visibility of merchants and artists through video, photo. The Project Associate job posting is on Indeed. Already have 47 applicants. Nina is also working on a transformative grant program. Seeding Reciprocity: Arts Commission and Native and Indigeneous Peoples Arts Organization that has trained cultural district leaders. Called on leaders for training in grant writing. Nina attended training for five Saturdays since August. Now Nina is reciprocating by training others, received ten applications but need for the applicants to be SF residents so we selected the six who are SF residents. The program covers artist bio, proposal, budget, all aspects of grant writing, to help the individual artists to have a competitive application for the Arts Commission, for individual awards up to \$20,000. The application will be due in December.

Housing Element Update

Sandy: attended meeting, it is a three year process which started June 2020. Hoping to find volunteers to be a part of this process.

Glynis: there is a focus on racial equity. Would like to make sure our community's viewpoint is represented with the City.

Alice: the senior tower was originally developed for the benefit of Japanese Americans, but today the composition of residents is largely not-JA. New JA applications for resident spots are placed on a long waiting list. Despite meeting all relevant criteria, there are members of the Japantown community who have been unable to get in. Is this an item that might be addressed in this process?

Glynis: it is important to submit input in the survey during this process.

Retaining Culturally Relevant Businesses During the Pandemic

Glynis: is there anything this committee should be addressing regarding this?

Paul: isn't this more a CBD topic?

Glynis: what can be done to ensure when spaces become vacant, that new tenants are culturally relevant?

Grace: it has been a challenge to get any advance insight on the nature of potential tenants being considered in the malls.

Paul: takeaway from past experience is difficult to implement preferences. Could potentially provide support mechanisms, or active recruiting.

Grace: other merchant associations are much stronger than ours. Businesses come to the CBD because our merchants association can't provide sufficient support.

Nina: Japanese businesses have increased presence but not in JTown, in places like Mission. Need to connect with Japanese Chamber of Commerce, JETRO. Also important to bring in next generation businesses and entrepreneurs.

Karen: you have to have spaces that merchants want to go into, and can afford to go into. You would have to be a little bit crazy to move into the mall right now, with its pricing, additional charges -- it is not that hospitable. The malls are not negotiating with existing tenants. 3D is ready to throw merchants out. There will be a loss of community people, small businesses, and family businesses. I am hesitant to invite young new merchants because you can't in good conscience bring them to Japantown. If the landlord doesn't want to, we can't force them. The proportion of merchants who own property is very small.

Judy: several years ago I was attempting to rent a space in the mall. I learned that it is not easy to get in there with the high rent, and the cost of renovation. The paperwork for the contract was 2 inches thick. The mall owners have their own network for finding new tenants.

Kenta: one idea could be to bring some fresh sunlight to the wording in the covenants which relate specifically to the type of merchants that support the preservation of Japantown's cultural identity.

Sandy: there is a committee that relates to the covenants led by Paul Osaki that should deal with this. There are several people here who are participants in that discussion.

Judy: despite rents being high and it being economically challenging to stay in the malls, 3D has abided by the covenants as they relate to the type of merchants.

Grace: I have been surprised by how there are now quite a few businesses operated by people from Japan.

Tom: has anyone heard about the Korean community center association?

Updates

MTA and Pedestrian Safety

Glynis: There is a "Task Force For Mark" led by Jim Anderson. Mitigation efforts have been identified. Alice may have more details.

Alice: the second walkthrough we did, with Stefani's assistant and Supervisor Preston. Also had SF Walk a NPO, Brandon from JCBD, and reps from senior homes. Three different areas, one was where Mark was killed. They looked at the timing of the lights, speed of traffic. There is a plan to talk more about it. SF Walk is looking for volunteers to do speed checks.

Glynis: Preston asked why the road diet could not be implemented immediately on Geary to slow down the traffic.

Alice: Dan from MTA said it would take 4-6 months for a lane to be closed. They are working on the traffic lights right away at Geary and Gough.

1619 Laguna St Variance

Glynis: no decision yet from zoning administrator. At hearing, the letter was acknowledged but the comment made was unintelligible.

Sutter St loading zone and road diet

Glynis: This was approved. Road diet will be implemented after there is confirmation that the loading zones are working.

Congestion Pricing Meeting

Glynis: Lauren sent out another reminder to the list serve.

Buchanan Hotel

Glynis: Buchanan extended housing until beyond Oct 30, but declined to say anything more than that.

Tom: no new rooms are being added to the City's hotel stock from here.

Glynis: is there a possibility of a sale of the Buchanan?

Peace Plaza Renovation Bond Measure Update

Glynis: Some discussion about outsourcing some of the contract, but would be addressed later. Concern about public works staff being able to do a good job. Public works would have right of first refusal.

General Public Comment

Karen: Landmarking of 1830 Sutter for SF is going ahead. Initialization resolution on Oct 21 to Hist Preserv Comm, Nov 18 recommendation committee, then to BOS, landmarking completion by early 2021. First national landmarking listed that is connected to the community, and recognizes the role of Issei women.

Also there is an upcoming event Nihonmachi Little Friends, will be having its annual sushi social, 45th anniv, virtual program, can order from WeBe Sushi.

Glynis: safety improvements on Sutter St, Rich had talked about the bus lines. Rich said the CPMC had a contract with the parking garage for a lot of spaces, but they are now pulling out. This is a huge blow to revenue. SFMTA is looking to increase parking rates. There is another nearby garage, so relocating to another garage on Webster and Clay. Vacating Nov 30, will reduce parking by 340 spaces, a \$1 mil loss to the parking corporation.

Alice: I hope the City does not move a homeless camp into the garage. They are already using the top of 4th and Mission garage for homeless camp.

Glynis: long-term parking costs \$205 / month.