



**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE
AD HOC JAPAN CENTER MALLS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2022

5:30 PM – VIA ZOOM MEETING

(ZOOM INVITATION IN THE EMAIL AND AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS AGENDA)

Committee Members: Chair Lori Yamauchi, Richard Jue, Sandy Mori, Glynis Nakahara, Joyce Oishi, Beau Simon

Board Members: Emily Nichols

Staff Members: Emily Murase, Brandon Quan

Others: Tomo Hirai, Derek Tahara, both of Nichi Bei Weekly, Joyce Nakamura

1. Call to Order

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

2. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was adopted by acclamation.

3. Approval of February 14, 2022 minutes*

Glynis Nakahara moved, Sandy Mori seconded a motion to approve the February 14, 2022 minutes. Approved unanimously.

4. Report from Meeting with Robert Sakai, Diane Matsuda, Paul Osaki from Covenants Committee Mechanisms for Communication

On February 24, Lori met with Robert Sakai, President of the Nihonmachi Parking Corporation and Japantown Community Benefits District Board Member, Diane Matsuda, an attorney with Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach and President of the Historic Preservation Commission, and Paul Osaki, Executive Director of the Japanese Cultural & Community Center of Northern California.

The meeting focused on the various committees working on issues related to the Japan Center Mall. Robert and Diane are co-chairing the reconstituted Covenants Committee, which was previously chaired by Paul. The Covenants Committee includes representatives from Japantown Task Force, including Sandy Mori, Glynis Nakahara, Rosalyn Tonai (also Executive Director of National Japanese American Historical Society), Steve Nakajo (previous Executive Director, JTF) and Emily Murase (current Executive Director, JTF). It is focused on the Japan Center East and West Malls owned by 3D Investments. In September 2021, Lori had reported to the Ad-Hoc Committee of

her conversation with Paul Osaki about the Covenants Committee and its relationship to the Ad-Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee, but since then, the Covenants Committee was reconstituted.

Robert, Diane, and Paul explained that there is a small subgroup that will be meeting with Joseph Daneshgar of 3D Investments to discuss 3D's future development plans of the Japan Center East and West Malls. The small subgroup includes Sandy Mori, Steve Nakajo, Allan Okamoto, Richard Hashimoto and Paul Osaki. In addition, the larger Covenants Committee is focused on the provisions that govern the 3D holdings in the Japan Center Malls through the Covenants Agreement executed in 2006.

They requested that the Ad-Hoc Technical Committee on the Japan Center Malls focus on properties outside the 3D Investments holdings in order to avoid confusing 3D with multiple points of view from different Japantown organizations. Lori asked JTF members of the Covenants Committee - Sandy, Glynis, Rosalyn and Emily - to provide regular reports to the Technical Committee. Sandy explained that the Covenants Committee is composed primarily of Executive Directors of Japantown-serving organizations. She added that 3D Investments is required to abide by the Covenants as long as the company owns the properties.

Lori advised that she was told by Paul that the Covenants Committee is using the 2009 Japantown Better Neighborhoods Plan development assumptions and parameters for the East and West Malls as reference for their discussions with 3D. Those development assumptions evaluated different scenarios with a range of building heights. Glynis suggested that the 2009 development assumptions may be outdated and not relevant.

Lori stated that properties and their owners in the blocks bounded by Laguna, Fillmore and Post streets and Geary Boulevard, which include the Japan Center Malls, include:

1. East & West Malls owned by 3D Investments
2. Hotel Kabuki owned by Blackstone
3. Union Bank/US Bank own part of the East Mall
4. Medical Building owned by the Lee Family
5. Partial building owned by Dr. Blasko (1600-1630 Geary Boulevard)
6. Kinokuniya building owned by Kinokuniya Bookstores
7. Paina restaurant space owned by Oliver Mar
8. Movie theater owned by Pat Flanagan
9. Parking garage owned by SFMTA
10. Peace Plaza owned by the Recreation & Parks Department.

Discussion focused on the scope of this committee's work. There was a strong sentiment that dealing with the Japan Center Mall should be a coordinated effort, rather than divided into silos. Reasons for coordinating efforts, rather than siloing efforts include: 3D's property is physically integrated with the other property, Technical Committee is looking comprehensively at all of the property on the blocks so it needs to understand how the 3D property development will fit with the other properties and the Covenants Committee needs to understand how the adjoining properties will reflect 3D's property, both committees need to be moving in the same direction. In any case, communication between the two committees is essential. Lori reminded everyone that this committee operates in the public sphere, the public is able to attend the meeting, and meeting minutes are publicly available. It may be the case that developers do not want to discuss their plans, particularly in the early stages, in public fora.

Kinokuniya meeting. Sandy and Emily reported on a meeting last Friday with Hirotsu Kano, General Manager of Sales and Director of Kinokuniya Publications Service (Export Department) of Kinokuniya Books, arranged by Former Executive Director Steve Nakajo. Kano-san reiterated his company's commitment to staying in San Francisco Japantown, but gave no indication as Kinokuniya's future plans for their building in Japantown. Sandy stated that Kano-san accepted an invitation to attend a future meeting of this committee.

Kirsten Fletcher is the property manager for the Kinokuniya building who deals with property management issues. Kirsten attended a previous Ad-Hoc Committee meeting. Kano-san stated that broad community issues should be directed to his attention. He asked for materials that would be helpful in recruiting tenants. Beau stated that it would be helpful to know who is managing tenant recruitment for Kinokuniya. Brandon Quan confirmed that tenant selection is handled in New York, not locally. Emily stated that she will be traveling to New York at the end of May and will try to set up meetings with Kano-san and other Kinokuniya executives.

4. Refocusing Working Assumptions document on non-3D property

Lori explained that a working assumption is that Union Bank will retain its property. She is not aware of plans for the medical offices. Property owner Dr. Blasko has passed away and her son is looking into selling it. The property, formerly a podiatry office, is located at 1600-1630 Geary Blvd, near the corner of Webster and Geary. Joyce Oishi provided a [link to the exterior of the property](#).

Lori stated that she will be reaching out to property owners Oliver Mar (the Paina restaurant space), and Pat Flanagan (the movie theaters).

Emily reported that she and Susie Kagami met with Candice Nakagawa of Union Bank, upon the recommendation of Daniel Byron of 3D Investments, earlier today to explore the possibility of a partnership for the KOHO Co-Creative Hub.

5. Announcements

Joyce Oishi offered to do a brief presentation on the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Lori will work with Joyce on scheduling the presentation.

6. General Public Comments - None.

7. Adjournment - Lori adjourned the meeting at 6:32 pm.

*indicates an action item