



III. JAPANTOWN FESTIVALS AND JAPAN CENTER'S SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

The following summarizes findings regarding the direct impacts of the Japan Center and the Cherry Blossom Festival and the Nihonmachi Street Fair ("festivals") on the commercial, cultural and social vitality of Japantown. The report presents highlights of a survey conducted in Japantown during the spring and summer of 2001. A summary of the survey results and cross-tabulations of the responses are provided in Exhibit B.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF JAPAN CENTER AND FESTIVAL PATRONS

The Japan Center is the primary draw of Japantown, attracting a diversity of patrons. Periodic festivals within the greater Japantown reinvigorate the area with cultural activities that attract a broader base of support and activity. Together, the Japan Center and festivals host a diverse constituency with a solid and loyal base of supporters.

- Of those surveyed at all three venues, 20.5 percent resided within a one-mile radius of Japantown, 26.4 percent lived in western San Francisco (Richmond District/Sunset/West of Twin Peaks), 11.4 percent lived in the rest of San Francisco and 37.3 percent were visitors from outside the City. These geographic distributions are consistent with the AMC Kabuki patron responses.
- The Japan Centers and festivals attract visitors in a wide range of age groups with the strongest representation in the age range of 31 to 50 years:

13 –18	11.4%
19-30	23.2%
31 –50	32.7%
51-64	16.8%
65 and over	15.0%

- The primary respondents to the Japan Center and festival surveys were of Asian origin, representing 68 percent of survey respondents. Japanese or Japanese-Americans represented 40% of the respondents. The ethnic breakdown of the Japan Center respondents follows:¹

¹ Percentages do not add to 100 due to respondents checking more than one ethnicity.



Asian Origin	68%
Japanese	15%
Japanese-American	25%
Korean	3%
Korean-American	4%
Chinese	8%
Chinese-American	11%
Southeast Asian	1%
Filipino	5%
Other Asian/Asian-	
American/Pacific Islander	4%
African-American/Black	3%
Hispanic/Latino	4%
White/Caucasian	28%
Other	2%

- Approximately 69 percent of the sample visit Japantown at least once a month. Monthly attendance was more common for those who lived within a one-mile radius of Japantown (96 percent) or in the Richmond/Sunset/ West of Twin Peaks areas (90 percent) than for those in the rest of the City (60 percent) or outside the City (45 percent). Frequent attendance (once per month or more often) also was more common among respondents surveyed in the Japan Center (83 percent) compared to the festival surveys (54%), those who describe themselves as Japanese or Japanese-American (83 percent), and those without children in their households (75 percent).

KEY FINDINGS

Japan Center's strongest core of patrons is local residents seeking Japanese and other Asian/Pacific Island products, services, restaurants and bars.

- Compared to the festival respondents, a higher percentage of Japan Center respondents were Japanese or Japanese-American (54 percent), more often over the age of 50 (44 percent), and less likely to have children in their households (20 percent). In addition, 52 percent of these survey participants lived either within one mile of Japantown (30 percent) or in the Richmond District (22 percent).
- When rating six attributes for "bringing you to Japantown", the largest proportions of Japan Center and festival survey respondents identified Japanese and other Asian/Pacific Islander products, services, restaurants and bars as very important. The following table summarizes the proportions of respondents that indicated each attribute was "very important".



Very Important

Japanese and other Asian/Pacific Islander products and services	60%
Japanese and other Asian/Pacific Islander restaurants and bars	54%
Easy access (close to your home, bus lines, affordable parking)	50%
Classical Japanese and modern Asian-American art and cultural activities (festival, performances, demonstrations, children's activities, etc.)	47%
Gathering or meeting place for friends and/or family	36%
Movies	17%

The Cherry Blossom Festival and Nihonmachi Fair serve important roles in attracting a different population of patrons to Japantown and expanding the Japan Center's potential secondary market.

- Most likely due to the special children's performances and activity villages, a greater proportion of festival respondents had children in their households (41 percent) relative to the Japan Center respondents (20 percent). More ongoing children's activities at the Japan Center would greatly increase patronage by families.
- The festivals are important resources for youth and young adults. Approximately 54 percent of festival respondents were between the age 13 and 30, compared to 17 percent of Japan Center respondents.
- The Cherry Blossom Festival attracts tourists and regional visitors more than the other venues, as indicated by the demographic composition. For example, 48 percent of the Cherry Blossom respondents are non-San Francisco residents, compared to 34 percent of Nihonmachi Street Fair and Japan Center respondents. In addition, 39 percent of Cherry Blossom respondents identified as White/Caucasian, compared to 18 percent of Nihonmachi Street Fair respondents and 27 percent of Japan Center respondents.
- Approximately 65 percent of the respondents in the Cherry Blossom Festival survey said they attend the festival either every year or most years, while 48 percent of the Nihonmachi Fair respondents attend the fair every year or most years. Approximately two-thirds of Japan Center survey respondents attend the Cherry Blossom Festival and Nihonmachi Street Fair every year or most years.



- Approximately 89 percent of the Cherry Blossom Festival respondents and 76 percent of the Nihonmachi Street Fair respondents stated they go to Japantown at times other than for the festivals or other special events.

Increasing the number and duration of Japantown festivals and Asian American/Pacific Islander arts and culture would significantly contribute to the area's economic revitalization.

- The Japan Center survey respondents indicated that the following factors were “very important” to attracting them to Japantown: Japanese and other Asian/Pacific Islander products and services (73%), classical Japanese and modern Asian-American art and cultural activities (51%) and Japanese and other Asian/Pacific Islander restaurants and bars (60%).
- A significant increase in visitors to Japantown would result from the scheduling of ongoing festival-type activities, such as live performances, demonstrations, fine arts and crafts kiosks and inter-active exhibits that reflect Asian-American, Asian or Japanese culture. For example, whereas 54 percent of the respondents currently visit Japantown at least once a month, approximately 70 percent of survey respondents stated they would visit Japantown as frequently with the addition of ongoing festival type activities.
- When asked to indicate which of seven “types of entertainment, cultural, recreational and social activities” would bring them to Japantown more often, 61 percent selected Asian-American/Pacific Islander Arts and Culture (festivals, live performances, film, etc.) received the greatest response. The following table summarizes the proportions of respondents selecting each item.

Asian American/Pacific Islander Arts and Culture	61%
Asian or Japanese Department Store	48%
Live music	42%
Bowling alley	30%
Entertainment retail (like Metreon, but without movies)	25%
Recreation and sports (gyms, rock climbing, skating etc.)	21%
Children's activities	13%

- More than half (51%) of festival patrons also participate in other cultural attractions and organizations while in Japantown for the festivals, increasing the synergies among existing Japantown cultural organizations and festivals.



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Better variety of Japanese retail stores and restaurants was more important to those who live within a mile of Japantown or in the Richmond/Sunset/West of Twin Peaks areas (61 percent), and those who go to Japantown at least once a month (56 percent).

More classical and historical Japanese or Asian activities was more important to those interviewed at the Cherry Blossom Festival (54 percent).

Better variety of retail stores and restaurants and businesses that remain open later were more important to those who go to Japantown at least once a month (42 percent, each).

Increased security and safety was more important to those who live within a mile of Japantown or in the Richmond/Sunset/West of Twin Peaks areas (50 percent), those of Asian background (42 percent), and respondents in the Japan Center survey (41 percent).

Easier access to the Japan Center, its restaurants and other businesses was more important to those who live within a mile of Japantown or in the Richmond/Sunset/West of Twin Peaks areas (40 percent) and those of Asian background (39 percent).

Improved urban design, such as better lighting, landscaping, street furniture, etc. was more important to those in the Japan Center survey (38 percent) and to those who go to Japantown at least once a month (36 percent).

More activities for children were more important to those who go to Japantown at least once a month (28 percent).

SUMMARY

The continuing use of the Japan Center as a commercial center for Japanese and Pan-Asian goods and services, in addition to ongoing cultural festivals and fairs, serve as the cornerstones for Japantown's preservation and long-term viability. The survey data revealed the significant potential impact resulting from increasing the depth, breadth and promotion of culturally themed activities, goods and services in Japantown. Specific economic development strategies are provided in Chapter IV.