



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. 711

HEARING DATE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2013

*Project Name:* Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHES)

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*Recommendation:* Approval

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### RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE "JAPANTOWN CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY (JCHES)".

WHEREAS, For over 100 years, Japantown has been the cultural heart of San Francisco's and the region's Japanese American and Japanese communities; and

WHEREAS, Japantown has endured multiple challenges to its survival over this last century, including entrenched societal and political racism; the denial of citizenship to the Issei (first generation immigrant) generation, which denied them a political voice; the 1913 and later Alien Land Laws, which prevented the Issei from owning most property; the World War II Internment, which forcibly removed and incarcerated 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry in desolate concentration camps for the duration of the war; and the Redevelopment of the Western Addition in the 1950s-1970s, which devastated the residential and commercial bases of the Japantown and Fillmore communities; and

WHEREAS, There are only three Japantowns left in the United States (Los Angeles, San Jose and San Francisco); and

WHEREAS, California Senate Bill 307 was passed in 2001, which recognized the significance of the state's three remaining Japantowns and created the California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project that provided grants to promote the preservation of Japantown neighborhoods. The San Francisco Japantown community has also been recognized by the federal Preserve America Program as a place that embodies a unique cultural heritage that deserves preservation; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco's Japantown contains hundreds of culturally significant buildings, businesses, and organizations and it hosts many cultural events and activities that are important to the region's Japanese American and Japanese community. The community has developed memorials to its cultural history, including the Three Japantowns Monument, and created the Japantown History Walk to perpetuate and share its history and culture; and

WHEREAS, Japantown is a central and desirable location in San Francisco that will continue to face substantial economic development pressure to change and grow; and

WHEREAS, On December 7, 2011, the Historic Preservation Commission directed Planning Department staff to pursue local landmark designations representing social and cultural significance per National Register evaluation Criteria A (Events) and B (Persons) during its review and approval of the Landmark Designation Work Program for Fiscal Year 2011-2012, and the JCHESS aligns with this goal by encouraging local landmarking of eligible heritage resources in Japantown; and

WHEREAS, On December 19, 2012, the Historic Preservation Commission passed Resolution No. 0698 endorsing further exploration of programs to document, designate, and incentivize social and cultural heritage. This resolution recognized that any social and cultural heritage program requires strong support, development, and continued involvement by the community stakeholders that value and define the resources; it recognized that historical integrity and economic viability are issues that need to be further examined in the context of social and cultural heritage resources; it recognized that social and cultural heritage resources are often a series of networks of people and that they overlap to varying degrees and that, therefore, careful documentation and understanding of the evolution of community and how each group has contributed to the fabric is essential to the establishment of a social heritage program; and, it acknowledged that social and cultural heritage is a vast and important issue confronting the City's communities and recommended that any future social and cultural heritage program should be an educational effort and discussion across the entire City family; and

WHEREAS, The Japantown neighborhood has been the subject of various planning efforts over the past fourteen years. In 1999, the Japantown Planning Preservation and Development Task Force created the "Concepts for the Japantown Community Plan". This Plan was never adopted by the City. In 2006, the City enacted a Japantown Special Use District to help "maintain the cultural and historic integrity and neighborhood of Japantown". From 2007-2009 the San Francisco Planning Department drafted a Better Neighborhoods Plan ("BNP") for Japantown with community input, but the BNP was not adopted by the City due to community concerns related to lack of focus on supporting culturally significant businesses and resources as well as to the potential for adverse effects of new development in the area, including the potential disruption, displacement and elimination of important community-based businesses, organizations and activities; and

WHEREAS, From 2009-2013 the community facilitated a that focused on ascertaining and articulating the community's vision of its future and its preferred cultural and economic strategies for achieving that vision; and

WHEREAS, This process involved dozens of community and stakeholder meetings over this four-year period, during which the community identified the need to protect and support Japantown's cultural heritage as the neighborhood's top priority; and

WHEREAS, The Japantown community, Planning Department staff, and the City's historic preservation consultants worked together to develop a new methodology for analyzing and recording both the tangible and intangible elements of cultural heritage, which can serve as a precedent for other communities within and outside of San Francisco. This work resulted in an inventory of over 300

important cultural resources, including buildings, businesses, organizations and institutions, and cultural activities and events; and

WHEREAS, The Japantown community, Planning Department staff, staff of the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, and the City's economic consultants created a compendium of economic and other tools to help support cultural resources, which was the first time such a toolkit had been created in San Francisco or anywhere else in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Japantown Cultural Resource and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHESS) is the result of the process of identifying the community's concerns, the types of cultural resources in the area, and the potential tools to address the concerns and to support these resources; and

WHEREAS, The vision of the JCHESS is that Japantown will thrive as a culturally rich, authentic, and economically vibrant neighborhood, which will serve as the cultural heart of the Japanese and Japanese American communities for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, The goals of the JCHESS are to 1) secure Japantown's future as the historical and cultural heart of Japanese and Japanese American Community of the Bay Area, 2) secure Japantown's future as a thriving commercial and retail district, 3) secure Japantown's future as a home to residents and community-based institutions, and 4) secure Japantown's future as a physically attractive and vibrant environment; and

WHEREAS, To provide context, the JCHESS captures the existing conditions in Japantown, as relates to its land, buildings, organizations and institutions, businesses, culture, and public realm; and

WHEREAS, The JCHESS lists twenty-three "Areas of Concern" identified by the community as issues that have or could prevent the fulfillment of the vision of the JCHESS; and

WHEREAS, To fulfill the goals, and address the Areas of Concern, the JCHESS includes nineteen Recommendations, which are designed to encourage economic development and re-investment in the buildings, businesses, organizations and institutions of Japantown; and

WHEREAS, Some of these Recommendations include the ongoing implementation of existing programs, while others are newly proposed and may require further review, such as environmental review, by the Department prior to implementation; and

WHEREAS, Some of the strategies would be implemented primarily by the City, and others primarily by the community; and

WHEREAS, The Recommendations fulfill the goals of the JCHESS and address the community's identified Areas of Concern; and

WHEREAS, The JCHESS itself was vetted in over 30 community and stakeholder meetings in the Spring of 2013 and public hearings at the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Commission in July of 2013; and

WHEREAS, The JCHESS has the written support of 22 community groups, including multiple property owners, businesses and business associations, and community-based organizations; and

WHEREAS, The Planning Department has determined that the JCHESS is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), per CEQA Guidelines 15060(c), and is thus not subject to environmental review; and

WHEREAS, The Historic Preservation Commission has heard and considered the testimony presented to it at the public hearing and has further considered written materials and oral testimony presented on behalf of Department staff, the Japantown Organizing Committee, and other interested parties; and

WHEREAS, All pertinent documents may be found in the files of the Department, as the custodian of records, at 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission endorses as City policy to support Japantown as a culturally and economically vibrant community; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission endorses the Vision, Goals, and Objectives of the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHESS) as City policy; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission endorses the Recommendations of the JCHESS; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission endorses the cultural heritage evaluation methodology developed by the community, Department staff, and the City's historic preservation consultants as a fair and rational means of analyzing and recording both the tangible and intangible elements of cultural heritage. In so doing, the Commission also adopts the definition of cultural heritage developed for the JCHESS as "those elements, both tangible and intangible, that help define the beliefs, customs and practices of a particular community. These elements are rooted in the community's history and/or are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community." In so doing, the Commission also promotes the use of the Japantown Social Heritage Resource Inventory by the community as a cultural heritage management tool; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission understands that the Japantown Social Heritage Resource Inventory is a living document requiring ongoing curation by its stakeholders and recommends that the Japantown community identify a responsible party to serve as custodians of the inventory; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission directs Planning Department staff to include the completion of inventory forms for the approximately 100 cultural heritage resources recommended by the City's historic preservation consultant for documentation; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission directs Planning Department staff to work with the community in future cultural heritage resource management efforts,

including adding resources to the Japantown Social Heritage Resource Inventory, pursuing recognition for Japantown resources in SF Heritage's "Legacy Bars & Restaurants" program, or pursuing listing on local, state or national historic resource registers; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission directs Planning Department staff to add the Japanese YWCA at 1830 Sutter Street, the Kinmon Gakuen Building at 2031 Bush Street, and Peace Plaza to its work program to explore the potential for designating the site as a Cultural Landscape in Article 10 of the Planning Code, and to work with the Recreation and Parks Department on this designation in association with improvements to Peace Plaza as envisioned in the JCHESS; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission directs Planning Department staff to conduct a community clinic on the available historic preservation tools listed in the JCHESS in Fiscal Year 2013-14; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission directs Planning Department staff to disseminate the JCHESS to organizations within the San Jose and Los Angeles Japantowns, to the State Historic Preservation Office, to the Asian & Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation organization, and any other groups that may benefit from or wish to participate in the work of the JCHESS; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission supports the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) in using the Invest in Neighborhoods initiative as the framework to deploy services and resources to Japantown; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission recommends that SFTravel help implement the JCHESS through the creation of a Cultural Heritage Program that would include Japantown; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Historic Preservation Commission recommends that the community implement those aspects of the JCHESS which are in their purview.

I hereby certify that the Historic Preservation Commission ADOPTED the foregoing Resolution on September 18, 2013.

Jonas P. Ionin  
Acting Commission Secretary

AYES: Hasz, Hyland, Johnck, Matsuda, Pearlman, Wolfram,

NAYS:

ABSENT: Johns

ADOPTED: September 18, 2013