

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum has been prepared at the request of the San Francisco Planning Department to assist in the creation of a Japantown Social Heritage Program. Specifically, Page & Turnbull has been asked to complete the following tasks:

- Establish a methodology for identifying properties, organizations and other social or cultural resources that appear to be good candidates for recordation on Social Heritage Inventory Record forms. A major component of this task is reviewing the Social Heritage Database created by the Japantown Cultural Heritage Subcommittee (Japantown Subcommittee).
- Create an updated Social Heritage Database that recognizes these significant cultural resources.
- Complete up to 130 Social Heritage Inventory Record forms in consultation with the Japantown Subcommittee.

The overall purpose of these efforts is to create an inventory that recognizes tangible and intangible cultural resources that are significantly associated with the Japantown community. This inventory shall serve as a basis for identifying and implementing tools which help maintain and promote these resources.

Defining Social Heritage

The term ‘social heritage’ encompasses a wide range of traditional or inherited practices. This study proposes a definition based on language similar to that used by the National Park Service to define traditional cultural properties.² Here, the term social heritage is understood to mean: 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.

SOCIAL HERITAGE DATABASE

The Social Heritage Database prepared by the Japantown Subcommittee forms the basis for much of this work. Based on community input, the Database lists various properties, organizations and other cultural elements that have been identified for their associations with the Japantown community. The Social Heritage Database is divided into seven categories:

- Celebrations and Festivals
- Folklore, Stories, Language and Literature
- Traditional and Evolving Crafts, Performing Arts
- Cultural Properties, Buildings, Structures, Archives

² Patricia L. Parker and Thomas F. King, *National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*, 1990; Revised 1992,1998 , <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb38/> accessed 22 August 2012.

- Businesses (Food, Retail, etc.)
- Institutions (Churches, Non-Profit Organizations, Schools, Club)
- Sports, Games, Health & Fitness

For each heading, a list is provided detailing properties, organizations, and programs that are associated with that category. This information includes the name, address, block/lot and source for the information. The database also addresses the significance of each property within four categories identified by the Japantown Subcommittee. The categories are: cultural, educational, historical, and social.

In total, the database prepared by the Japantown Subcommittee identifies 279 resources. Of these, the group with the fewest resources is the Folklore, Stories, Language, and Literature category (13 resources), while the largest group by far is the Business category (122 resources).

SOCIAL HERITAGE INVENTORY RECORD FORMS

The San Francisco Planning Department recently created a new Social Heritage Inventory Record form. The form is designed to capture basic information about social and cultural heritage resources, including the address, the type of use, a photograph, description, source(s) for the information, and recommended treatment. On August 22, 2012, Page & Turnbull met with representatives from the Planning Department to discuss refinements to the form so that it could more easily capture the types of resources present in the Japantown area. These refinements are reflected in the categories discussed below:

Types of Resources

The form seeks to identify resources according to two categories: tangible and intangible. These are defined as follows:

Tangible Resources:

- Site (the location of a significant event or activity)
- Building (a work that provides shelter for human activity, such as a home, store or church)
- Structure (a work that is primarily functional in nature, such as a roadway, bridge, or tunnel)
- Object (a work that is primarily artistic in nature, such as a sculpture or fountain)

Intangible Resources include:

- Organization/Institution (a group or foundation organized for a particular purpose, such as a benevolent society, social club, merchant association or religious organization.)
- Business (a place where goods are bought or sold)
- Cultural Event (a festival, parade, dance, concert or similar public gathering)
- Traditional Art/Craft/Practice (a pursuit that is rooted in traditional culture and most typically artistic in nature)

Type of Use

This section of the form is designed to capture information about the use of tangible properties (e.g., residential, commercial, etc.). This information will be filled out by the San Francisco Planning Department.

Active/Inactive

This section of the form is designed to identify whether a resource is still in use, or whether it is primarily commemorative in nature. For example, a building that once served as the headquarters for a significant cultural organization—but which is no longer used by the organization (or the community)—would be inactive. Nearly all of the resources identified by the Japantown Subcommittee are currently active.

Description

This section of the form is used to describe why the resource is significant to the Japantown community. Ideally, it will include information about how, when and why the resource originated, the function it serves (or served), and any notable events or persons connected with the resource. Sources used to provide this information—including reports, oral histories and other types of documentation—should be identified in the Sources section at the bottom of the form.

Cultural/Social Affiliation

This section of the form is designed to capture information about the resource’s cultural affiliation. Currently, the Japantown Social Heritage Program is focused on recognizing Japanese-American resources. However, development of the neighborhood also reflects African-American, Filipino-American and Jewish-American influences, as well as the influences of other Asian cultures. The recordation of resources associated with these groups may be the focus of future efforts (see Additional Consultation and Research below).

Social Heritage Criteria

The form identifies Social Heritage Criteria which roughly follow the significance criteria used by the National Register of Historic Places. The Criteria are grouped into four categories:

Criterion A: Resources that are associated with historic events that have made a significant contribution to the social or cultural heritage of the area.

Criterion B: Resources that are, or are associated with, persons, organizations, institutions or businesses significant to the social or cultural heritage of the area.

Criterion C: Resources that are valued by a cultural group for their design, aesthetic or ceremonial qualities such as:

- 1) Embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or style of architecture that represents the social or cultural heritage of the area.
- 2) Representation of the work of a master architect, landscape architect, gardener, artist or craftsman significant to the social or cultural heritage of the area.
- 3) Association with the traditional arts, crafts, or practices significant to the social or cultural heritage of the area.

- 4) Association with public ceremonies, festivals and other cultural gatherings significant to the social or cultural heritage of the area.

Criterion D: Archaeological resources that have the potential to yield information important to the social or cultural heritage of the area.

Period of Significance

The Social Heritage Inventory Record form designed for Japantown includes several periods of significance relating to the development of Japantown. A period of significance represents the time frame when a resource originated and/or gained its cultural significance. These periods include the following:

1. Early Japanese History in San Francisco

- a) Japanese Settlement in San Francisco (1880s-1905)
- b) Japanese Settlement in the Western Addition (1906-1920)
- c) Japantown Comes of Age (1921-1941)
- d) Japanese WWII Internment (1942-1944)

2. Japanese Resettlement and Renewal in San Francisco

- a) Nikkei Return to Japantown (1945-1954)
- b) Redevelopment in the Western Addition (1955-1990)

3. Continuing Japanese Legacy in San Francisco

- A) Contemporary Japantown (1991-present)

METHODOLOGY FOR REVIEWING THE DATABASE

The primary purpose of the Social Heritage Database review is to identify those resources which appear most suitable for recordation on Social Heritage Inventory Record forms. As a first step, the criteria for selection proposed by Page & Turnbull seeks to prioritize the following:

- Physical properties or objects that are documented as having a significant and longstanding association with the Japantown community.
- Organizations or programs that are documented as having a significant and longstanding association with the Japantown community.
- Festivals/events/traditional practices that are documented as having a significant and longstanding association with the Japanese community.
- Resources identified as meeting all four categories of significance established by the Japantown Subcommittee. In most cases, these resources also meet one of the first three criteria for selection proposed by Page & Turnbull.

Establishing a Time Frame

For the purposes of this report, the definition of “longstanding” is not static, but typically refers to a period of at least twenty-five years (1987 or earlier). This is closely aligned with the existing time frame identified in the Social Heritage Inventory Record form for Japanese

resettlement and renewal in San Francisco, which spans from 1945 to 1990. In certain instances, however, there may be social or cultural heritage resources which were established less than 25 years ago, but which appear to contribute to the theme of “Contemporary Japantown (1991-present)” identified on the Social Heritage Inventory Record form. The selection of such resources for recordation involves some measure of discretion, but Page & Turnbull believes that weight should be given to institutional resources such as archival and library collections, as well as to festivals and arts programming which demonstrates clear orientation to Japanese or Japanese American culture.

By contrast, the National Park Service generally recommends that resources be at least fifty years old to be considered historic. Because the history of Japantown is significantly associated with well-documented redevelopment efforts that stretched into the 1980s, a fifty-year threshold appears too restrictive. Instead, Page & Turnbull recommends the more inclusive guidance provided by the California Register of Historical Resources, which states that properties less than 50 years old can be considered for listing as long as “it can be demonstrated that sufficient time has passed to understand its historical importance.” Here, “historical importance” can also be interpreted as “historical and/or cultural significance.”

Establishing Significance

To help determine which social heritage resources show a significant and longstanding association with the Japantown community, Page & Turnbull reviewed several prior historic studies of the Japantown area. This was necessary in order to demonstrate at least some level of prior documentation, as well as provide source reference material for the “Sources” section of the Social Heritage Inventory Record forms. The studies that were reviewed include the following:

- *Images of America – San Francisco’s Japantown*, prepared by the Japantown Task Force (2005)
- *Japantown Better Neighborhoods Plan Traditional Cultural Property Evaluation*, prepared by Page & Turnbull (2008)
- *Japantown Cultural Preservation Strategy Report*, prepared by Page & Turnbull (2008)
- *Japantown Better Neighborhoods Plan Historic Resource Survey Report*, prepared by Page & Turnbull (2009)
- *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, prepared by Donna Graves and Page & Turnbull (Revised 2011)
- Japantown Better Neighborhoods Plan. Memo regarding DPR 523 B & D Form Recommendations, prepared by Page & Turnbull (2008)

Another basis for helping to identify resources with a significant and longstanding association with the Japantown community is to include resources marked as “historic” in the significance categories established by the Japantown Subcommittee. Resources meeting all four of the significance criteria also benefit from an assumption that they are likely to be culturally significant.

UPDATING THE SOCIAL HERITAGE DATABASE

The Social Heritage Database created by the Japantown Subcommittee will be updated to reflect any prior documentation (as described above), as well as to more closely align with the Social Heritage Inventory Record Form. This includes adding new columns for the following:

- Subcommittee Category: This column notes which of the seven categories (e.g., Businesses, Celebrations, Folklore) each resource was assigned by the Japantown Subcommittee. This preserves the information assigned by the Japantown Subcommittee, while also allowing the database to also be sorted according to the heritage criteria used on the Social Heritage Inventory forms.
- Documentation: This column notes which social heritage resources appear in one or more of the historic studies described above. This column includes the abbreviated name of the report, and all page numbers where that property appears within the report. For example, a property discussed on pages 38 and 51 of the *Japantown Historic Context Statement* would be notated as JHCS-38,51.
- Notes: This column allows for brief notations regarding items such as when a building was constructed (if stated in one of the reports), how and when it was used by the Japantown community, or if the property was associated with a particularly significant event. For example, the Notes section for the Rosa Parks School at 1501 O’Farrell Street mentions that the building was a site where Japanese residents were registered prior to internment.
- Social Heritage Criteria: This column will align with the Social Heritage Criteria categories identified on the Social Heritage Inventory Record Forms (A, B, C, D). If applicable, more than one criterion may be selected.
- Period of Significance: This column will align with the Periods of Significance identified on the Social Heritage Inventory Record Forms (1, 2, 3). If applicable, more than one theme may be selected.
- Complete Heritage Inventory Record Form: Based on the “significant and longstanding” criteria discussed above, this column will show which resources appear most suitable for recordation using the Social Heritage forms. These resources will be designated with an “X” in the column.
- Prior Historic Evaluation: Some properties in the Japantown area have already been the subject of historic surveys and may have been found eligible for local, state or national historic registers. These properties are noted with their recommended California Historical Resources Information System Codes. Others have been recommended for further study using California Parks and Recreation DPR 523 B forms. These are noted as “B-form recommend.”

Consolidating Resources in the Social Heritage Database

In several instances, the Japantown Subcommittee’s Social Heritage Database contains multiple entries that are all related to a single organization. For example, Kinokuniya Bookstores of America is listed individually, as is Kinokuniya Anime Bookstore and the Kinokuniya Stationary & Gift. In this case, all of the individual resources will be grouped

under “Kinokuniya Bookstore Businesses.” Where appropriate, similar consolidations will be used.

Adding Other Resources to the Social Heritage Database

The review of prior historic studies for Japantown may reveal some resources which appear to have significant and longstanding associations with the Japantown community, but which were not previously identified in the Social Heritage Database. These social heritage resources will be added to the Database with the source of the information noted in the documentation column. These new listings will also be highlighted yellow in the Database.

Future Updates to the Social Heritage Database

The Social Heritage Database is designed to be a living document. Over time, new resources may emerge that are culturally significant to the community. Likewise, some resources may, over time, close or cease to be culturally significant. Therefore, it is recommended that the database be periodically reviewed and updated with additions and/or deletions. These reviews should be done in cooperation between the Japantown community and the San Francisco Planning Department. No formal time frame for these reviews has been established, but a reasonable period would be every five to ten years.

CLARIFICATIONS

In numerous places the Japantown Social Heritage Database identifies individual buildings that are associated with one or more cultural organizations. Based on preliminary research, Page & Turnbull believes that, where appropriate, both the building and the organization(s) may be suitable for individual recordation on Social Heritage Inventory Record forms.

Conversely, organizations, businesses and other social heritage resources that have significant association with the Japantown community may have only occupied a given address for a few years. In these instances, Page & Turnbull recommends that only the organization and not the building be documented with a Social Heritage Inventory Record form.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Using the methodology and guidance outlined above, Page & Turnbull preliminarily finds that 104 resources appear suitable for recordation on Social Heritage Inventory Record forms. These include the following, grouped by Social Heritage Criteria:

- 21 resources met Social Heritage Criterion A.
 - 3 of these resources met only with Criterion A.
 - 18 of these resources met Criterion A and at least one other Criterion.
- 75 resources met Social Heritage Criterion B.
 - 54 of these resources met Social Heritage Criterion B only.
 - 21 of these resources met Criterion B and at least one other Criterion.
- 38 resources met Social Heritage Criterion C

- 16 of these resources met Social Heritage Criterion C only.
- 22 of these resources met Criterion C and at least one other Criterion.

- 0 resources met Social Heritage Criterion D

These preliminary findings have likely captured a substantial portion of the resources most significant to the Japantown community. However, Page & Turnbull believes that there are likely other additional resources that are appropriate for recordation on Social Heritage Inventory Record forms. Thus, some additional consultation and research appears necessary (see below).

ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION & RESEARCH

Formal documentation is lacking for numerous resources, making it difficult to establish when these resources originated and/or their significance to the community. It likewise hampers efforts to relate these resources to the appropriate theme and time frame on the Social Heritage Inventory Record form. In order to ensure that all significant resources are included, further research and consultation appears necessary. This consultation should also help determine whether some resources, such as various Boy Scout troops, should be consolidated for recordation. Currently, resources where the period of significance is unclear are highlighted in blue in the Social Heritage Database

By far, the largest number of resources identified in the Social Heritage Database are businesses. Some of these have clear, longstanding ties to the Japantown community. However, many others appear to be of more recent origin, making it difficult to establish their relative significance to the community. Thus, further research and consultation with the Japantown Subcommittee is needed to help identify which of these businesses clearly have significant and longstanding association with the Japantown community. Similar consultation also appears necessary for some arts and recreational resources, which likewise appear recent in origin or lack formal documentation. These include clarifying:

- When was the business/organization founded?
- What is the primary focus of the business/organization?
- Does the business/organization significantly contribute to the ongoing cultural legacy of Japantown? How so?

Finally, the Social Heritage Database provided by the Japantown Subcommittee includes only Japanese-related resources, but does not include resources of other ethnic or social groups in Japantown. The Social Heritage Inventory Record Form's themes provide a means for the social heritage of African-American, Filipino-American, and other residents to be represented. Further research appears warranted in order to broaden the scope of the Social Heritage Database.