Japantown
Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy
“Japantown will continue to thrive as a culturally rich, unique, and vibrant neighborhood and serve as the heart of the Japanese and Japanese American communities.”
Key Goals: To Secure Japantown’s Future As...

- The historical and cultural heart of the Japanese and Japanese American community
- A thriving commercial and retail district
- A home to residents and community-based organizations
- A physically attractive and vibrant community
Context for CHESS

• SF will grow substantially in near future

• Japantown is prime real estate and vulnerable to change.

• Redevelopment of 1960’s was a mistake.

• Major change to malls requires closing the garage which will result in elimination of cultural businesses.

• We don’t have a recognized document of what we want for Japantown or laws to guide its land use or preservation.
How Did We Get Here?

- Ongoing: identified risk to the neighborhood’s culture
- 1999: Concept Plan
- 2007-2009: Japantown Better Neighborhood Plan (BNP)
- 2010-2012: Community-led outreach and revision
- 2013: JCHESS Draft
**JCHESS v. BNP**

- Same goals and objectives.

- BNP assumed significant development. JCHESS focuses on incremental development within existing building heights.

- BNP was development driven. JCHESS emphasizes cultural heritage and economic sustainability.
**JCHESS v. BNP**

- BNP was not comprehensively vetted with community. JCHESS will have been thoroughly vetted with the community.

- BNP was dependent on City implementation. JCHESS is more dependent on the community to implement.
What the JCHESS is – and isn’t

- **IS**: A collaboration between the Japantown community and City agencies (Planning and Office of Economic and Workforce Development)

- **ISN’T**: A comprehensive neighborhood plan like the BNP, but instead is more focused on cultural heritage
What the JCHESS is – and isn’t

- **IS**: A strategy document for implementing neighborhood improvements and attracting funding.

- **ISN’T**: An implementation action itself.

- **IS**: The first document of its kind in San Francisco.
**Identifies Important Cultural Resources in Japantown**

- Based on community input and review of historic documents.
- 306 total resources – and counting – including:
  - 67 buildings and structures
  - 123 businesses
  - 79 cultural activities and events
  - 37 organizations and institutions
- Purpose is to help inform and prioritize recommendations.
Identifies “Areas of Concern”

- Based on community input.
- Includes overview of the neighborhood’s existing conditions.
- Includes concerns related to:
  - The use of private and public property.
  - The well-being of buildings, businesses, organizations/institutions, and community activities and events.
Identifies Recommendations

- Based on community input, analysis by cultural heritage and economic development experts, and city staff.

- Includes existing strategies that can be applied and new ones that would need to be developed.

- Responsibility shared between the community and City government.

- Collectively, are able to address all the “areas of concern.”

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Key Community-Driven Recommendations

- Create a Community Development Corporation – economic development, advocacy, technical support.
- Create a Community Land Trust – community stewardship of land.
- Create a Community Benefits District – maintenance, safety, and streetscape improvements.
Key City-Driven Recommendations

- Implement Invest in Neighborhoods – financial assistance, marketing, organizational support.
- Implement the Better Streets Plan – more attractive neighborhood, and better signage.
- Adopt a Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District and Japantown-specific design guidelines.
Review and Outreach Timeline

- Feb 26, 2013 – Kickoff Community Meeting at JCCCNPC
- March through April
  - Outreach to organizations and stakeholder groups
  - Gather comments to JCHESS Draft
- May – Finalize the JCHESS
- June – Seek JCHESS endorsement by the Planning Commission and the Historic Preservation Commission.
Thank You!

Stay Involved and Share Your Thoughts

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