

# JAPANTOWN CULTURAL DISTRICT

## REVISED DRAFT

### Cultural, History, Housing & Economic Sustainability Strategy

#### (CHHESS)

San Francisco, California

*Draft –NOVEMBER 11, 2020*

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## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**The Japantown Cultural District’s Cultural, History, Housing & Economic Sustainability Strategy (CHHESS)** presents a plan to stabilize San Francisco’s historic Japantown neighborhood in the face of multiple threats: a global pandemic, climate change, gentrification, displacement and loss of cultural identity. It envisions a Japantown that will thrive as *an ecologically- and culturally-regenerative, authentic, economically-vibrant neighborhood* that will serve as *the heart of Japanese and Japanese American (J/JA) communities* for generations to come. The CHHESS will actively support *the preservation, transmission, and co-creation of an evolving J/JA culture* that reflects and continuously revitalizes the local and global community.

### **ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK**

The organizing framework, or frame of reference for the recommendations of this report, consists of three basic concepts: Building on the Resilience of the Past; Sustaining the Present; and Regenerating into the Future. These concepts form the paradigm for a Regenerative Sustainable Resilient Japantown.

### **SEVEN KEY AREAS OF FOCUS**

1) Cultural Competency; 2) Land Use; 3) Cultural Heritage Conservation and Sustainability; 4) Arts and Culture; 5) Economic and Workforce Development; 6) Tenant Protections; and 7) Regenerative Sustainable Resilient Futures (this key area has been converted into the organizing framework).

### **OVERARCHING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS**

Two primary goals sought by this CHHESS: 1) Create a Regenerative Japantown, and 2) Secure Japantown’s future. The three strategies proposed below support these goals through strengthening Japantown physically, economically, and socially (the numerical order does not imply prioritization; tactics are instead listed by time frames: immediate, short-term, medium-term, and long-term).

- A. Preserve, Sustain and Develop Japantown’s Physical and Cultural Assets in support of the J/JA community.
  - 1. Develop and implement a Strategic Plan to address the Japan Center Malls (JCM) Covenant Agreement, the adjoining properties between Laguna and Fillmore streets and their futures; and negotiate benefits agreements with property owners.
  - 2. Work with property owners and community organizations to identify, secure and occupy underutilized space to meet community needs.
  - 3. Support improvements to the Peace Plaza.
  - 4. In 2020-22, engage in the Housing Element development process led by the Planning Department to ensure that Japantown’s housing needs are addressed in this City policy document.

5. Develop a Japantown Preservation and Development Vision Master Plan.
  6. Support improvements to Buchanan Mall (Osaka Way) in collaboration with Nihonmachi Parking Corporation (NPC) and Japantown Community Benefits District (JCBD).
  7. Utilize tools for preservation of historic buildings and structures.
  8. Establish a Community Development Corporation/Community Land Trust/Community Investment Fund or similar mechanism.
  9. Work with property owners and developers to develop culturally-competent affordable housing with preferences.
- B. Equip, protect and support small businesses, the arts & culture community and organizations in Japantown with resources and infrastructure.
1. Create a virtual and physical small business & artists assistance and media center.
  2. Develop virtual and physical intergenerational co-creative/co-working multi-use arts gathering spaces/gallery spaces with recurring micro-events programming.
  3. Build more cultural and environmental programming in arts programming, community organizations and businesses with focus on traditional Japanese eco-culture.
  4. Explore the creation of an intergenerational, permaculture, community, edible garden with programming.
  5. Establish a SF Japantown Arts Action Committee.
- C. Empower, advocate for and proactively promote Japantown with donors/investors, the City, Japanese and Japanese American entities and the public.
1. Increase fundraising and marketing capacity and partnerships to ensure long-term sustainability and support CHHESS strategies (co-create collaborative abundance).
  2. Explore an appropriate model for a San Francisco Japantown community council or consortium.
  3. Initiate inclusive intergenerational conversations about Japantown's history of displacement and its impact.
  4. Explore a visitor center to be located inside the Japan Center Malls (virtual & physical).
  5. Develop partnerships and collaborations with the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), the City, Japanese companies and Eco-Initiatives, and other Japantowns and Networks.
  6. Create an accessible digital archive that involves a collaboration of multiple Japantown organizations.

For each tactic, the CHHESS proposes implementation roles for the City and the Community which can be performed by existing agencies, programs and organizations, as well as new entities as suggested (see tables: "Immediate/Short-Term"; "Short-Term/Medium Term"; "Medium-Term"; and "Long Term").

Given the uncertainty of the duration of the pandemic and its impacts on Japantown, the precise timeframes for the implementation of the tactics are unspecified.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

The San Francisco Japantown Cultural District (JCD) is a community-wide program and formalized collaborative partnership between the Japantown community and the City and County of San Francisco (City). The Cultural District program was created by the City in 2018 to stabilize vulnerable communities in San Francisco facing displacement and gentrification, and to preserve, strengthen and promote cultural assets and diverse communities. Each cultural district is required to work with the City to produce a Cultural, History, Housing and Economic Sustainability Strategy (CHHESS) Report. The CHHESS Report is a three-year strategic plan for achieving the goals of the Cultural District program by addressing six Key Areas of Focus: Cultural Competency, Land Use, Cultural Heritage Conservation & Sustainability, Arts and Culture, Economic and Workforce Development, and Tenant Protections. The CHHESS Report will be approved by the Board of Supervisors (Board). The City's Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) will provide progress reports to the Board every three years on the strategies outlined in the CHHESS Report.

This CHHESS Report builds on the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHES), a vision planning document developed by the community in partnership with City agencies and adopted by the City in 2013. The JCHES inspired the creation of the new Citywide Cultural District program. The JCD CHHESS process which began in August 2019, has been led by the Japantown Task Force (JTF), which reached out to multiple constituencies, organizations and businesses to solicit input and engagement. The JCD/JTF staff led a series of eight focus groups and three town-hall meetings and conducted one-on-one interviews, collectively engaging over 500 participants, along with extensive research into previous documents and models from similar communities. In the process of developing the Final CHHESS Draft, a "Supplemental CHHESS" report of 150 pages was developed to capture the research and community input received. The Supplemental CHHESS laid the groundwork from which key points were extracted and distilled into the final version of the CHHESS.

Through the community engagement process amidst the Coronavirus crisis, a new focus area emerged, "Regenerative, Sustainable and Resilient Futures," which combines the historic resilience of the Japantown community and the sustainability of its environment and economy with traditional Japanese ecologically-oriented culture to foster the regeneration and evolution of Japantown into the future.

In early 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic spread to the U.S., and in March 2020, the City imposed shelter-in-place orders, which shuttered businesses in order to reduce the spread of the virus and save lives. The Japantown community, like all neighborhoods in San Francisco, has experienced severe economic impacts, threatening the very existence of its artists' community, small businesses

This CHHESS report represents a synthesis and analysis of community input expressing a broad range of viewpoints on the challenges and opportunities which Japantown is facing. It proposes strategies and tactics to address those challenges and embrace those opportunities, prioritizing immediate short-term

tactics to assist and stabilize the community's businesses, organizations and artists in the wake of the pandemic. It then proposes tactics which can carry Japantown forward beyond the pandemic.

### **III. VISION**

*San Francisco Japantown will thrive as an ecologically- and culturally-regenerative, authentic, economically-vibrant neighborhood which will serve as the heart of Japanese and Japanese American (J/JA) communities for generations to come. It will actively support the preservation, transmission, and co-creation of an evolving J/JA culture that reflects and continuously revitalizes the local and global community.*

### **IV. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

1. Create a new “Regenerative Japantown” where traditional Japanese/Japanese American (J/JA) culture converges with the innovation of new J/JA cultural expressions to empower Japantown to recover and heal from a history of displacement caused by social discrimination in government programs.
  - a. Build a strong, multi-generational, and interconnected Japantown across the diversity of the J/JA community, including the *Shin-Nikkei* (recent immigrant) and Mixed Heritage communities.
  - b. Share and embody the narrative, spirit and essential values of J/JA culture.
  - c. Re-envision the development of Japantown's physical environment to be ecologically sustainable and healthy.
2. Secure Japantown's future as the historical and cultural heart of Japanese and Japanese American (J/JA) Communities.
  - a. Ensure that Japantown remains a thriving commercial, retail, and arts district.
  - b. Prevent further displacement of Japantown's culturally-relevant businesses and organizations.
  - c. Preserve and expand housing for the J/JA community and protect its community-based institutions.
  - d. Work with the City to officially acknowledge the impacts of Redevelopment in Japantown, and champion equitable development and housing choice to reverse and repair its impacts on the J/JA community.

### **V. ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK: REGENERATIVE, SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT JAPANTOWN**

The organizing framework, or frame of reference for the recommendations of this report, consists of three basic concepts: Building on the Resilience of the Past, Sustaining the Present, and Regenerating

into the Future. These concepts inform the paradigm for a regenerative, sustainable, and resilient Japantown.

## **Building on the Resilience of the Past**

For over a century, Japantown has been an integral part of the cultural fabric of San Francisco, meeting adversity and hardship with fortitude, resilience, and the ability to build back from waves of forced removal and displacement.

In 1906, Japantown consolidated its enclaves from the South of Market and Chinatown areas and moved to the Western Addition, although there was a Japanese community presence in the South of Market until the 1930s.

In 1942, the entire West Coast JA population was forcibly removed to concentration camps by Executive Order 9066. Forced to abandon everything they had built, San Francisco's JA community returned to San Francisco in 1945, only to find their homes and businesses destroyed or occupied. What had been a thriving neighborhood that spanned 40 blocks, Japantown had been reduced to a core of roughly 15 square blocks. The returnees set to work on rebuilding their Japantown neighborhood into a modern and more diverse community than the one they had been forced to leave behind.

By 1948, the Western Addition, which included Japantown, was selected as one of the first large-scale "urban renewal" projects in the nation. The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency declared the Western Addition a "blighted" area, and targeted 28 blocks for Phase A-1 and the 70 blocks of Phase A-2 for mass clearance, eviction, and redevelopment, removing the majority of Japanese American and African American small businesses and residents from the neighborhood. Only a decade after rebuilding Japantown, from 1956 to 1979, properties were seized by eminent domain and entire blocks were razed to the ground. By 1965, the entire area of A-1 was cleared for a shopping center, residential buildings, and the Geary Expressway slicing through the Japanese American and African American communities. As in the past, the J/JA community responded to this crisis with determination and resolve.

Redevelopment served to unite *Nisei* (second generation Japanese Americans) property owners, residents and merchants with *Sansei* (the third generation) activists. Inspired by organizing tactics learned from the Civil Rights Movement, they worked with the African American community to mobilize efforts to protect their homes and businesses and resist the displacement of people of color out of the Western Addition. Galvanized by the student-led protests at S.F. State College and U.C. Berkeley, the resistance gave birth to community-based service organizations designed to meet the needs of the J/JA community from a culturally-specific perspective: access to senior services for the *Issei* (the first immigrants); political and legal collectives; activities, education and employment support for youth; affordable housing; cultural preservation; an art and media collective creating work by and for Japantown, many of which continue to this day.

With Redevelopment sunsetting in the early 2000s, Japantown sought to take control of its future. In 2001, the California State Legislature passed Senate Bill 307 that initiated the planning process to help

preserve San Francisco as one of the last three remaining Japantowns in California. Community-based planning efforts began with the Japantown Preservation, Planning & Development Taskforce and its concepts for a Japantown Community Plan. In 2008, Japantown was designated a “Preserve America Community” under a White House initiative, which encourages use of historic assets and resources for community revitalization, and protection and appreciation of such resources through education and heritage tourism programs. The City’s Japantown Better Neighborhood Plan (BNP) which compiled much needed data on Japantown between 2006-2009, was rejected by the community. Adopted in 2013, the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHES) built upon BNP’s research, and culminated in a robust community engagement process that created a ground-breaking strategy for community cultural preservation, land use, transportation, and economic sustainability. It was upheld as a model for the City’s Cultural Heritage District program.

## Sustaining the Present

As the regional hub and cultural heart of J/JA communities in Northern California, Japantown is defined by its physical footprint, its diverse community and its cultural reach. Its physical fabric expresses its layered and complex history. Although its commercial district is concentrated on Geary Boulevard, Post and Sutter streets between Laguna and Fillmore, its physical footprint roughly spans from Gough Street on the east, Steiner Street on the west, Pine Street to the north and Ellis Street to the south.

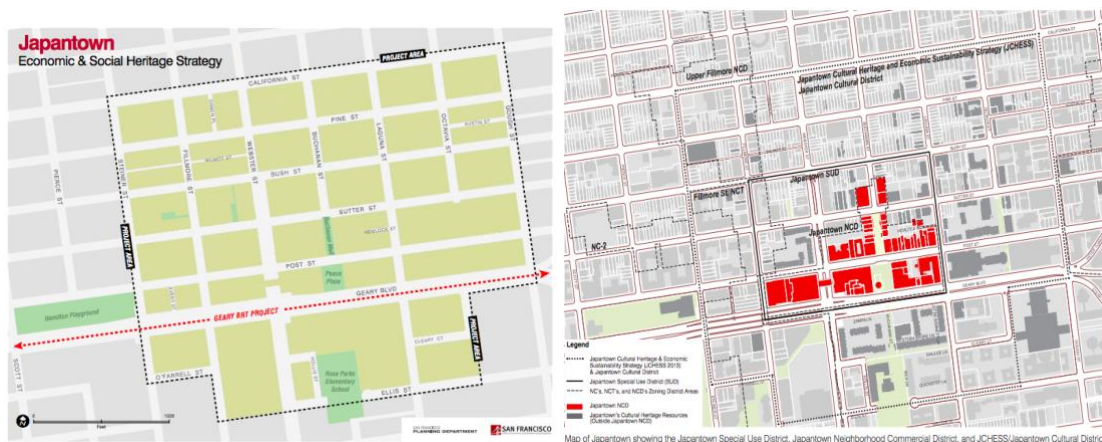


Figure 1 , Figure 2 Japantown Cultural District map and Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District map

Japantown’s cultural reach extends throughout Northern California. As one of only three remaining historic Japantowns in the United States, through its community-based organizations, arts and cultural groups, and unique cultural businesses, San Francisco Japantown is a nexus for J/JA activity for the broad diverse J/JA community dispersed throughout the Bay Area -- the *Nisei* and *Sansei*, the Japanese-speaking community (i.e., recent-immigrant *Shin-Nikkei*, international students), Mixed-Heritage Japanese, and the younger JA generations -- *Yonsei* and *Gosei*. Its seasonal celebrations and cultural festivals draw many to return to a cultural home-base, but over the years, those who live, work and play in Japantown have changed. Only a minority of J/JAs live and work in Japantown. Although the residential base has long been displaced, the merchants and organizations -- including historically-significant churches and temples -- continue to serve as cultural anchors. The community does not want to see Japantown’s physical and cultural identity further diminished or lost.



In 2020, however, an already endangered Japantown is facing yet another threat to its very existence, compounded by the severe consequences and adverse economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Japantown merchants have already lost much of their pre-pandemic income, and at least six businesses have permanently closed. Contact with Japan, including commerce and tourism, has been diminished by quarantine. Arts and cultural organizations have done their best to pivot to online programming but have lost revenue and momentum that can never be recouped. Individual artists who have struggled to survive and create in San Francisco's tech-boom economy of the recent past now find themselves with even fewer resources and opportunities. The need for social services has increased but the ability to meet that need is challenged. In response, Japantown's constituents are actively doing as much as they can to rally resources, be creative and support their community and each other.

## **Regenerating into the Future**

In an atmosphere of declining cultural diversity in San Francisco and multiple looming global crises, including pandemics and climate change, San Francisco is responding by empowering existing cultural districts, including Japantown, to participate in the transition toward a vibrant, diverse, resilient future.

The Japantown neighborhood and its composite economic, social, cultural and physical systems have been -- and continue to be -- destabilized, most recently by the Pandemic. The diagram below illustrates how systems, such as Japantown, can respond to disruption and destabilization through adaptation in order to bounce back to its previous state. For example, Japantown has adapted to the disruption of the Pandemic by employing multiple strategies, among them securing funds to assist small businesses and organizations and pivoting to online events and marketing.

However, only returning to its previous state will not sustain resilience for Japantown. It should also evolve and regenerate into a more resilient future state by reimagining and transforming existing systems and creating new mechanisms to assist and grow segments of the community. It can also proactively build resilience by increasing engagement with the broader J/JA community and expanding its reach to the regional and global communities, supporting succession planning for businesses and organizations, and expanding its residential base with more affordable housing and more community ownership of land.

In order to transform itself, Japantown should also address points of internal fragility within the community, among them: perceived resistance-to-change by some long-time community stakeholders (a traumatic response to the multiple losses and displacements of the past); limited engagement by the broader J/JA community; a lack of leadership opportunities for the next generation; decreased investment and involvement of Japanese companies in Japantown over the last 40 years -- all of which have led to a perception by various J/JAs and Shin-Nikkeis of Japantown as "stagnant."

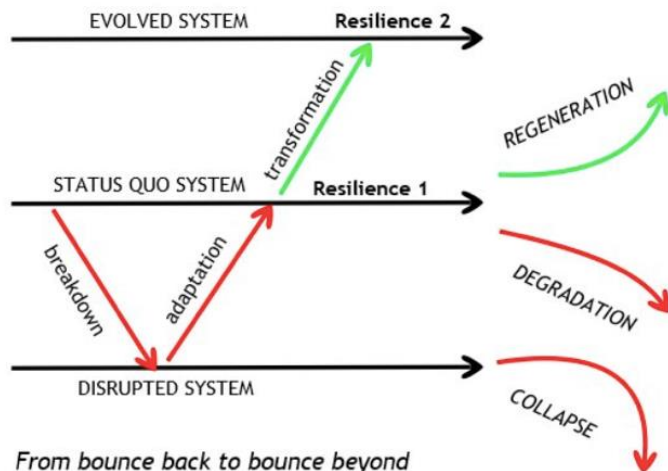


Figure 3. Regeneration - Resilience Diagram by Anthony Hodgson

Japantown is embedded in a set of broader physical, socio-economic, and political status-quo systems, which are extractive and exploitative by design, thereby making them more vulnerable and less resilient to future global crises. A byproduct of these systems is a scarcity mindset or reactive survival state which has been reinforced by Japantown’s past adversity and hardships. Japantown can also regenerate into a thriving future by refocusing from a reactive survival mentality, or scarcity mindset, to a growth or abundance mindset that is empowering, collaborative, creative and proactive. Instead of viewing Japantown as a zero-sum game in which there is a fixed population, footprint and economy, Japantown would view itself as a “Regenerative Japantown” with the potential to grow and increase its reach, resources and vitality. Per Re-Alliance, a coalition dedicated to regenerative development in response to disaster and displacement, “(T)he term ‘regenerative’ describes processes that restore, renew or revitalize their own sources of energy and materials, ensuring the capacity to sustain and nurture all life. Regenerative approaches use whole-systems thinking to build equitable resilience that responds to the needs of society while respecting the integrity of nature.” This mindset naturally ties into the values of traditional Japanese eco-culture, emphasizing humanity’s symbiotic relationship with nature and with each other, as well as collective abundance. Those values were embodied in ancient Japan, which was ecologically conscious, zero-waste, and self-sufficient. Its economy was based on principles of collective wealth and prosperity, interdependency, sufficiency without greed, reciprocity, mutual benefit and equity. Its architecture was based on sustainability and well-being; its use of natural materials and design harmonious with nature. Its arts reflected sustainability and resilience through art forms such as *kintsugi*, which sees value in broken ceramics and redeems them to new purpose, and *boro*, up-cycled fashion which recycles textiles and garments into clothing with even more beauty and value.

Japantown can reclaim and internalize these ancient Japanese eco-culture values, applying them to its physical environment, its economy and businesses, its social service providers, its arts and culture community, its demographics and diversity, and its infrastructure. This would entail incorporating more natural green elements and traditional Japanese design principles into its landscape and architecture. It can also support capacity building, sharing of skills, expertise, and virtual and physical infrastructure to grow its economy and businesses. It can conduct collective advocacy, promotion and marketing of

existing and new businesses, artists and community organizations, so that all could benefit from more visibility and a greater customer base. It can attract more engagement from the broader J/JA community through cultural and environmental programming around traditional Japanese eco-culture.

At the same time, a “Regenerative Japantown” would encourage innovation and transformative education in its cultural expressions. By cultivating innovation that “re-stories” (retells beyond conventional ways), reinterprets and recreates its culture and cultural values -- through the arts, cultural businesses, community events, community co-creation spaces, marketing and fundraising -- Japantown can sustain and evolve its culture in new and fresh ways, increase support and engagement, and provide a space where the diversity of the J/JA community can take part and thrive. For example, community co-creation spaces could bring together a diverse array of individuals and organizations to engage in problem-solving around its points of fragility, envision new futures for Japantown and create new cultural expressions.

By honoring traditional J/JA culture and innovating new J/JA cultural expressions, a new “Regenerative Japantown” can emerge, empowered to recover and heal from its history of displacement socially, physically and spiritually. By healing the trauma of its displacement and its expressions of fragmented behavior, the Japantown community can build broad trust, and true collaboration and communication, so that regenerative shared community leadership can emerge, and the diversity of constituencies and segments of the J/JA community can participate and engage in building a “Regenerative Japantown.”

## **VI. CITY DATA SNAPSHOT**

*Coming Soon!*

## **VII. KEY AREAS OF FOCUS**

Eight focus groups were facilitated to gain input on the seven Key Areas of Focus that inform the Japantown Cultural District’s goals, objectives, challenges, strategies and tactics.<sup>7</sup>

### **1. CULTURAL COMPETENCY**

Promoting culturally-competent and culturally-appropriate City services and policies that encourage the health and safety of the community, culture, or ethnic groups in Cultural Districts; promoting and strengthening collaboration between the City and communities to maximize cultural competency and pursue social equity within some of the City’s most vulnerable communities; and promoting cultural competency and education by diversifying our historic narrative on those who have been previously marginalized and misrepresented in dominant narratives.

### **2. LAND USE**

The creation of appropriate City regulations, tools, and programs such as zoning and land use controls to promote and protect businesses and industries that advance the culture and history of Cultural Districts, and to guide development of the built form and place-keeping in support of the Cultural District

community.

### **3. CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABILITY**

To preserve, maintain and develop unique cultural and historic assets including historic buildings, businesses, organizations, traditions, arts, events, and district aesthetics.

### **4. ARTS AND CULTURE**

To attract and support artists, creative entrepreneurs, cultural enterprises and people that embody and promote the unique cultural heritage of the District especially those who were displaced.

### **5. ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

To promote employment, tourism and economic opportunities that stabilize the District's economy and its residents.

### **6. TENANT PROTECTIONS**

To protect tenants (Business and residential) from displacement and promote affordable housing and homeownership.

### **7. REGENERATIVE, SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT FUTURES**

To support movements toward culturally-, environmentally-, economically- and socially-regenerative communities that will be culturally-, environmentally-, economically-, and socially-resilient to health, energy, resource, economic, and climate-related disasters, while promoting the holistic wellbeing of the Cultural Districts. This key area has been converted into the organizing framework.

## **VIII. OVERARCHING CHALLENGES**

This section describes the key challenges identified by various community members during focus groups, town halls, and interviews. By definition, the challenges relate to key focus areas discussed at those events. These challenges represent real and perceived issues which are impediments to realizing the vision and achieving the goals for Japantown. Although most of the discussions took place before the pandemic struck, some of the challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic. **Those challenges related to the pandemic are listed first.** Those that follow are longer-term challenges which are less related to the pandemic.

**1. Survival of Japantown businesses during and post-Coronavirus shutdown.** In response to the pandemic, the Japan Center Malls were closed to the public. While some of the Mall businesses remained open, many have closed. Restaurants are making a fraction of their pre-pandemic income; retail shops are generating little to no income.<sup>8</sup> Some businesses have secured federal assistance and City loans/grants, and Japantown organizations such as the Japantown Community Benefits District (JCBD), the Japantown Task Force (JTF), the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC), and the Japantown Foundation have also responded by raising funds to assist the

businesses. The JCCCNC and Japan Center Malls Staff have also responded by organizing outdoor events for restaurants to stage, such as Picnic in the Plaza on weekends, and Restaurants in the Plaza on weekdays. However, retail non-restaurant businesses which are considered non-essential are more severely impacted than restaurants due to lack of physical customer foot traffic. A JCBD survey of merchants indicated that many require more digital marketing assistance and visibility. Even as businesses are allowed to reopen, the volume of customers and visitors has declined sharply due to fear of contracting the virus. At least five businesses have already closed permanently, while many others are at risk. The survival of the businesses hangs in the balance.

The pandemic has exacerbated broader trends in Japantown businesses. In recent years, some long-time Nisei owners of Japantown businesses have retired, decreasing the number of authentic J/JA-owned businesses that reflect the J/JA community. Currently, Japantown lacks relationships with new Japanese companies, which may inhibit those companies opening stores in Japantown. As with commercial districts everywhere, retail businesses relying on in-store customers have been affected by e-commerce and online shopping. The survival and success of Japantown businesses directly affect the economic and social vitality of the neighborhood, as well as the cultural identity of the Japantown community.

**2. Business information and infrastructure support for Japantown small businesses, arts & cultural groups, and independent artists.** In order to earn a living-wage and sustain themselves, Japantown's small businesses, artists, and arts & cultural organizations need to be resourced. Business and organizational succession plans for existing businesses are essential; there is little to no incubation and support for next generation businesses. They require expertise to maneuver bureaucracy, prepare proposals, write grants, and obtain permits, particularly where culturally-sensitive and bilingual needs exist. They need access to information and assistance with resources such as legal services, funding opportunities, tenants-rights, loan applications, and permits. The challenge is to develop the knowledge and expertise to provide these essential skills, and to assist them to use available tools, such as developing a stronger online presence.

**3. Need for space and tools to connect, create and perform/exhibit by the Japantown arts & culture community.** The traditional and contemporary arts are fundamental to the cultural heritage of the Japanese and Japanese American (J/JA) community. The coronavirus pandemic has critically impacted artists and cultural groups' opportunities to produce, showcase and exchange art and culture in the community.<sup>9</sup> They must now rebuild their audience bases and rethink how they put on performances and exhibitions. Moreover, as evidenced during the coronavirus shelter-in-place protocols, virtual "space" for arts and cultural events for the Cherry Blossom Festival, Children's Day, and other activities are needed so that the arts can build and sustain community connections online.

As the cultural hub and focal point for J/JA communities in the City and Northern California, San Francisco's Japantown could be the natural nexus for J/JA arts and cultural organizations to confront these critical issues. However, even before the pandemic struck, few spaces were made available/affordable for artists, arts organizations and cultural groups to gather, organize, restore their

livelihoods and create. There are very few professional arts spaces, and no professional performance or public-facing gallery spaces in Japantown.<sup>10</sup>

#### **4. The Japan Center Malls covenant agreements, adjoining properties between Laguna and Fillmore streets, and their impact on Japantown's future.**

The commercial blocks between Laguna and Fillmore streets, along the north side of Geary Boulevard and the south side of Post Street, contain multiple properties held by various owners. These properties include: the Japan Center Malls (formerly the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center) -- Kintetsu Mall (Japan Center West); Miyako Mall (Japan Center East), owned by 3D Investments; and Kinokuniya Mall, owned by Kinokuniya Bookstores of America Co., Ltd. -- and the Hotel Kabuki, owned by Blackstone Group; the AMC Kabuki Theaters, owned by the Flanagan Family; Union Bank owned by Union Bank; and other smaller properties including those owned by the Mar Family Trust, Mr. Lee and Mr. Kim, as well as the City-owned Peace Plaza and Japan Center Garage.

In 2006, covenant agreements for the Japan Center West and East malls were executed between 3D Investment (3D) and Kintetsu Corporation (the seller) and the City of San Francisco (City). The covenants in the agreements require, among other provisions, that 3D retain ownership of the Mall for at least 15 years, maintain a Japan theme, and allow nonprofit organizations from the Japantown community to use common areas in the Mall. These covenants have helped to preserve the Japan Center East and West Malls as a culturally relevant, commercially thriving, community supportive part of Japantown. In 2021, the 15-year ownership retention period will sunset. 3D has indicated its desire to retain the property past 2021. Under the agreements, 3D Investments is obligated to honor the covenants for as long as it owns the property, but the enforcement of the covenants rests solely with the owner since the community is not a party to the agreements and the City as a third-party beneficiary to the agreements, has limited enforcement power.

A similar covenant agreement was executed for the Hotel site (now the Hotel Kabuki), however, no ownership retention period was included. No agreements with the owners of the other privately-owned properties exist. None of the agreements provide protections or benefits for tenants. During the pandemic, some (not all) property owners have provided rent deferrals. If 3D or any of the property owners were to sell, develop and/or change their property, their actions would affect Japantown businesses inside and outside the Malls, as well as property owners, cultural activities, and the character of the surrounding neighborhood far into the future. It is vitally important that the community ensure that the properties on these blocks remain as business and community hubs for the J/JA community and that their future development support and benefit Japantown.

#### **5. The erosion of Japantown's high-quality Japanese-oriented character/flavor or *miriyoku* <sup>11</sup>**

Some of the buildings and landscapes in Japantown developed during the 1960's have heavy exterior facades in the Brutalist style, with few openings to the outside, presenting an unwelcoming presence to pedestrians and visitors. Many focus-group respondents and interviewees have also stated that there is

too much concrete and not enough attractive green space. Some of the businesses and restaurants are perceived as non-authentic caricatures of Japan, and the declining percentage of J/JA residents and business owners contributes to the perception that Japantown does not cater to the local Japanese population. There is a sense of a lack of ownership and connection to the space for segments of the community, as it has become less of a space to live, work, and create culture. These factors contribute to a perception that Japantown's strong and authentic high-quality Japanese-oriented character, consistent with traditional and contemporary Japanese culture, has been eroded. Many of the young adults and local Japanese nationals who contributed their feedback indicated that this diminishes *ikiyoi* (vigor, spirit, liveliness, freshness) and reduces the neighborhood's appeal.<sup>12</sup>

#### **6. Need for a central collaborative platform for Japantown.**

The Japantown community has multiple constituencies and stakeholders, many of whom have long been engaged but who operated independently, without the true collaboration, communication, cohesion, trust and resource-sharing akin to villagers in a village. The coronavirus pandemic crisis and other critical issues have prompted community organizations to band together, organize action and speak out on behalf of Japantown. Groups including the Japantown Task Force, the Japantown Community Benefits District, the Japanese Cultural & Community Center of Northern California, the Japanese Community Youth Council, the Japantown Merchants Association, and individual community members have drawn on their own resources as well as their historic relationships to fight for Japantown. The pandemic has exposed the need for a central collaborative platform or entity where all community organizations and members can communicate and coordinate with each other on strategic visioning and planning, critical decision-making, and timely action to advocate for and build a thriving Japantown.

#### **7. Minimal engagement of and leadership opportunities for young adults in Japantown.<sup>14</sup>**

Young J/JA adults find little to engage them in Japantown. Unlike other San Francisco neighborhoods where young adults can both live and enjoy activities, the lack of affordable housing precludes many from being able to live there, while Japantown does not provide gathering/event spaces such as performance venues, clubs or galleries; programming of interest and outlets for nightlife are minimal. As far as participating as contributors to Japantown, they have identified limited mentorship and skills-building opportunities as well as opportunities for young adults to step into leadership roles. Their engagement and leadership are vital to the future of Japantown. Existing organizations such as the Japanese Community Youth Council (JCYC), Nakayoshi Young Professionals, the Nikkei Community Internship (NCI) Program, a statewide initiative, which allows college students to support the work of community organizations while increasing their understanding of contemporary issues affecting Japanese Americans, and Japantown for Justice should be supported and leveraged to address this issue.

#### **8. Lack of a unified marketing plan for Japantown businesses and cultural activities.**

Japantown must bring people back to the community. The community needs focused marketing and public relations planning to attract people to the neighborhood. The sheer number and scope of these activities makes this daunting. Also, while many organizations, businesses, and events are individually able to promote themselves, there are many that do not have the resources to do so. With the formation of the Greater Japantown Marketing Committee, which includes the Japantown Community

Benefits District (JCBD), there is an effort underway to create a unified marketing plan. Efforts by the JCBD and the Japan Center Malls Events group in active outreach to promote Japantown attractions are admirable and should be supported. Without a unified marketing plan which is implemented in a coordinated fashion with organizations and businesses within and beyond Japantown, the cultural vitality and economic customer base of the neighborhood will suffer.

#### **9. Limited community-controlled land and space for growth and development in Japantown.**

Japantown occupies a small physical footprint in San Francisco, which continues to shrink – the result of historic displacement, limited community property ownership and retention, and loss of J/JA-owned businesses. There is limited room and opportunity for new construction and property development. Without land it is difficult to address community needs. Although some of the smaller properties along Post and Sutter streets are owned by JA individuals, families and organizations, the major properties in Japantown – the Japan Center Malls and connected properties – are not owned by J/JA entities,

At the same time, some existing buildings and property in Japantown are historic and/or underutilized. The historic buildings are important symbols of Japantown’s past and cultural identity and should be preserved and renovated. If existing buildings and property are owned, managed and developed by individuals and entities who are not connected to or supportive of the Japanese American and Japanese-speaking community or culture, then the cultural identity of Japantown could be eroded. Securing Japantown’s land and physical space will be a long-term, ongoing challenge.

#### **10. Need for cohesive preservation and development plan for Japantown.**

The 2013 Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHESS) presented a comprehensive and groundbreaking vision for the economically vibrant preservation of an ethnic community’s authentic cultural character and legacy. To that end, the JCHESS provided an extensive compilation of Japantown’s tangible and intangible cultural assets, as well as an assessment of Japantown’s physical character, including its residential and commercial buildings, land uses, zoning and height limits. It also recommended various strategies around land use and design, such as historic preservation, use of the Japantown Special Use District to attract new businesses, a new Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District to enhance the pedestrian scale and retain the mix of uses in the shopping district, and Japantown Design Guidelines. Many of these strategies have been implemented since 2013.

The JCHESS identifies four individual buildings and one collection of buildings as Historic Landmarks designated by the City. It also shows that nine buildings are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as 75 buildings and structures as being historically significant to the community. The JCHESS laid a solid foundation for future planning of Japantown, based on the underlying premise that the community desires to retain Japantown’s small-scale neighborhood character, and opposes major changes to the zoning and building height limits as inconsistent with preserving that character and Japantown’s cultural legacy. This viewpoint was consistently expressed by the preponderance of the community throughout the 4-year JCHESS process, starting with the community’s objections to the major development proposals in the SF Planning Department’s Better



Neighborhoods Plan (2009). Thus, the JCHESS deliberately chose to leave the zoning and building height limits as they were, except for a targeted 5' height increase along Post Street to allow 15' ground floor retail. The JCHESS addressed the treatment of commercial uses in considerable detail through the then-proposed and subsequently adopted Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District, and addressed residential development by incorporating a community-requested Planning Department "Development Potential" study, which concluded that Japantown has considerable room for such development within its existing zoning.

However, the JCHESS did not provide an overall assessment of specifically projected needs for residential, commercial, institutional, open space, or community space. While the JCHESS analyzes the potential for new development based on existing zoning, it does not address how such development potential might be realized in order to meet currently-projected space needs, as proposed by the community. Building on the foundation of the JCHESS, a more specific preservation and development master plan is needed to further identify Japantown's buildings and structures to be preserved as cultural assets as well as those properties with development potential and/or improvement opportunities. With a neighborhood preservation and development master plan, Japantown can articulate a proactive vision for its future which can guide historic preservation efforts, and development plans by individual property owners and developers.

## **IX. OVERARCHING STRATEGIES & TACTICS**

The strategies and tactics listed below are not in order of priority; instead, they are listed by time frames: immediate, short-term, medium-term and long-term. The prioritization of strategies and tactics will occur in the next phase, upon further dialogue between the City and the community.

### **A. Preserve, Sustain and Develop Japantown's Physical and Cultural Assets in Support of the Japanese and Japanese American Community.**

**[Focus Areas addressed: Regenerative Sustainable and Resilient Futures, Land Use, Cultural Heritage, Economic and Workforce Development, Arts and Culture, Tenant Protection]**

In order to secure Japantown's future as an historical and cultural heart of the J/JA community, a thriving commercial retail and arts district, and home to residents and community-based institutions, Japantown's physical and cultural assets must be preserved. Its physical footprint cannot be further eroded.

Sustaining Japantown's physical and cultural assets requires culturally-sensitive stewardship by property owners, community organizations and businesses who maintain and renew such assets. Existing property, such as the Japan Center Malls, should be owned and managed by individuals and entities who are connected to or supportive of the J/JA community. In addition to relying on relationships with those entities, formal agreements with the community and City are needed. They should be improved and configured to support and grow the arts and culture community and Japantown businesses, as well as

meet community needs. Improvements to existing cultural landscapes such as the Peace Plaza and Buchanan Mall (Osaka Way) are imperative and urgently needed. Adaptive reuse and multiple flexible use of existing properties, as well as use of environmentally sustainable design including Japanese design principles in existing buildings and landscapes, will help to ensure Japantown's future resilience and cultural vitality.

In order for Japantown to remain a vital and dynamic neighborhood and cultural district, its physical and cultural assets should be developed in accordance with a community-directed vision and master plan for Japantown. Individual property development must be sensitive to the character and fabric of the existing neighborhood, while optimizing the capacity to provide the physical space needed by the community, such as affordable housing, arts and community spaces, and business and commercial activity. Within Japantown's limited footprint, densifying development of existing properties, and increasing a pedestrian-orientation should be considered creatively and prudently. Given Japantown's redevelopment history, however, property development should engage and be responsive to community input, as well as invest in community infrastructure and benefits for neighborhood businesses and community organizations. Ideally, property development should be undertaken or managed by culturally-competent community-based entities, who act as trustees on behalf of the Japanese American and Japanese community. Also, Japantown's location, with proximity and connections to public transit, provides opportunities for transit-oriented development, which will further enable its sustainable future.

### ***SHORT-TERM TACTICS***

#### **1. Develop and Implement a Strategic Plan to Address the Japan Center Malls (JCM) Covenant Agreements, the Adjoining Properties between Laguna and Fillmore streets, and the Future of the Properties, and Negotiate Benefits Agreements with JCM and Other Owners**

A Strategic Plan is needed to strengthen the Japan Center Malls (JCM) Covenant Agreements with 3D Investments, the owner of the Japan Center East and West Malls (JCM), develop new agreements with other owners of property between Laguna and Fillmore Streets, including the Kinokuniya Mall, and negotiate agreements with new owners. At minimum, the JCM and the Hotel Kabuki Covenant Agreements should be renegotiated to make the community a party to the agreements. The Strategic Plan and its implementation would provide a framework under different future scenarios (retention, development, demolition/new construction) to:

- Provide relief for existing tenants of not only the JCM, but other properties in those blocks (e.g. Kinokuniya) who have been impacted by the pandemic and may be impacted by future disasters;
- Guide tenant selection and occupancy plans for the existing JCM buildings and adjoining buildings that would prioritize existing tenants and local businesses, culturally-relevant businesses, and space for community use;
- Build in protections and mitigations, e.g., designated space, to prevent displacement of small businesses that serve as cultural anchors for Japantown, especially the Legacy Businesses and other long-term businesses not yet designated as legacy businesses;

- Provide long-term benefits to the community, such as control over ground-level retail, and long-term space to meet community needs, such as arts spaces, business facilities and affordable housing which cannot be met elsewhere;
- Ensure that future development, including vertical development of the properties is consistent with the Japantown Design Guidelines (2019) and its further development, and is sustainable and resilient in its design and configuration.

The creation of the Strategic Plan would involve broad consultation with the community, including a community needs assessment with dissemination of information about the covenants, which many members of the community do not know about. The Strategic Plan would also include mechanisms for enforcing and implementing the community’s requests. The Japantown Task Force has established a Japan Center Malls Technical Committee (JCMTTC) to advise on the development and implementation of the Strategic Plan, along with mechanisms for enforcement. Parallel discussions with the City should be conducted on agreements that would require the City to take action to enforce the provisions of the agreements with the JCM and other property owners, as well as on vehicles that will enable future development which benefits the community.

**2. Work with Property Owners and Community Organizations to Identify, Secure and Occupy Underutilized Space to Meet Community Needs**

In addition to the JCM buildings, multiple properties, including historic buildings which are important cultural assets, are underutilized and need renovation or reconfiguration. The properties should be assessed for their utilization and condition. Once community needs for space are identified and prioritized, the properties should be evaluated for their ability to meet those needs. If they can be readily occupied, then an occupancy and leasing strategy should be developed to secure the space for those community uses. If any adaptation or renovation of the space is needed for the community uses, then such adaptation or renovation should be designed, and plans developed and funded, companion to occupancy and leasing. Vacant spaces could also be activated by artists.

**3. Support Improvements to Peace Plaza**

The Peace Plaza is the most valuable and iconic public space in Japantown, serving as a central gathering place and used for both everyday activities and special events. Despite its significance as the heart of Japantown, its condition and design have suffered over time, making a renovation necessary. The Japantown Peace Plaza Vision Plan for renovation was completed with extensive community engagement and approved by the San Francisco Parks & Recreation Commission in 2019 for the 2020 Health Bond, which was approved by the Board of Supervisors. In November 2020, Proposition A: the S.F. Health and Recovery Bond, which included the Peace Plaza Renovation Project was approved by the voters. Moving forward, the community must work with the City to ensure timely implementation of the Peace Plaza improvements.

The Peace Plaza renovation would address many of the challenges that the community has expressed, including the lack of inviting, functional and flexible gathering spaces and the lack of healthy green spaces. The community wants to see more activities, open seating, greenery and kid-and-senior-friendly

design elements in the Peace Plaza. The Peace Pagoda, which is not owned by the City, is also in need of assessment and renovation.

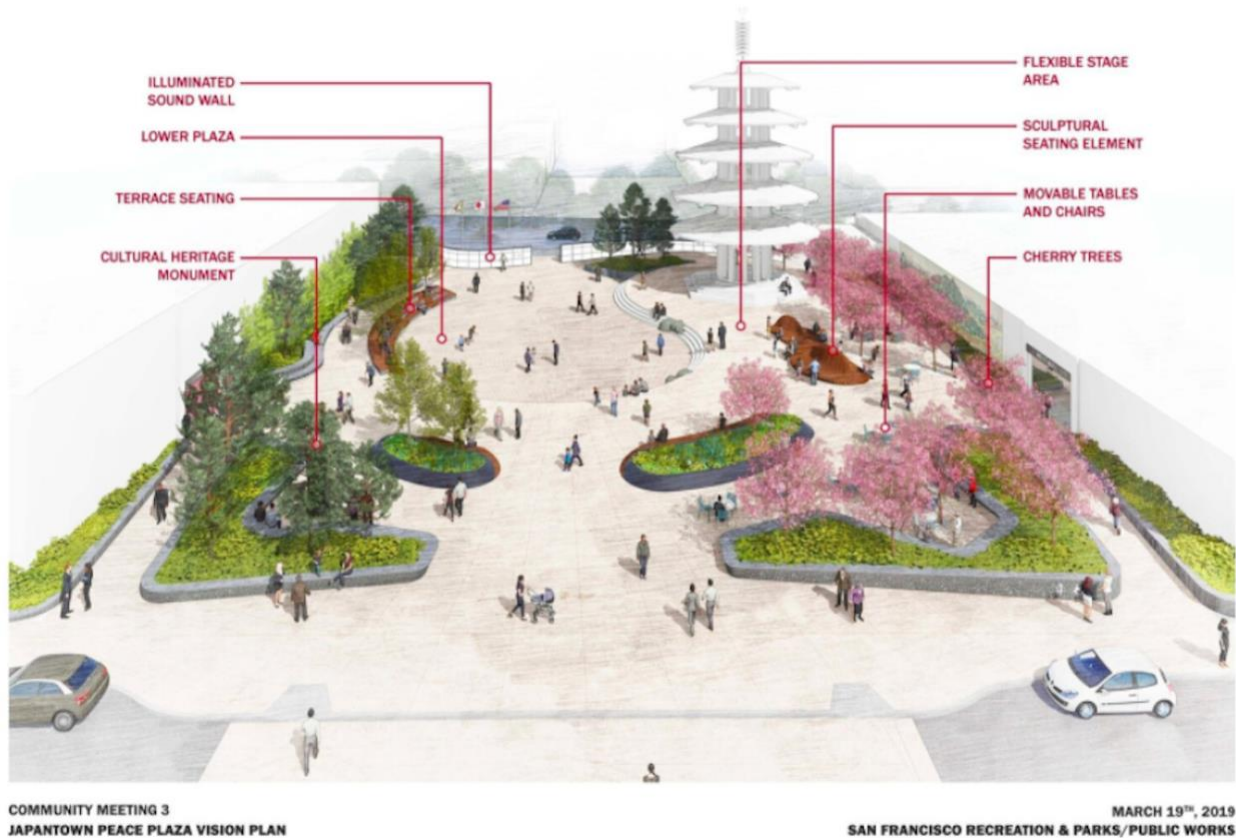


Figure 4: Peace Plaza Renovation Vision Plan

**4. Engage in the Housing Element development process during 2020-2022 led by the Planning Department to ensure Japantown's housing needs are addressed in this City policy document.**

The City Housing Element is a series of policies that shape the future of housing in San Francisco. These policies address the City's housing needs in terms of adequacy, affordability, racial and social equity, environmental justice, design, resiliency, and livability. The Housing Element is a significant component of San Francisco's General Plan, an integrated statement of objectives and policies. It is being updated for 2022 by the City, who is soliciting input from communities around San Francisco. The Housing Element is required to include policies that serve to provide equal housing opportunities for San Francisco residents; assist in the development of housing; improve and conserve existing housing stock; and preserve units at-risk of conversion from affordable to market rate. Japantown should engage in this process by proposing policies and implementation programs that preserve existing affordable housing and promote development of additional housing in Japantown. One of the key idea categories included in the Housing Element is to "Recognize the historic racial, ethnic, and social discrimination in government programs and champion equitable housing choice to reverse their consequences." This key

idea is particularly relevant to Japantown because the impacts of the displacement by the Redevelopment have not yet been remedied or reversed, especially in the area of housing.

### **SHORT TO MEDIUM-TERM TACTICS**

#### **5. Develop a Japantown Preservation & Development Vision Master Plan.**

Japantown is in need of a comprehensive “preservation and development vision master plan” to guide future physical growth and development. It would contain guidelines for the neighborhood’s economy, land use, housing, transportation, community facilities, public realm and streetscape, and should draw from community input and surveys of existing development, physical characteristics, and social and economic conditions. It should also draw from the extensive precedent documents and legislation which address land use, physical design and historic preservation, such as: the JCHESS (2013), Japantown Special Use District (2006), Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District (2017), and the Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines (2019).

A Japantown Vision Master Plan would:

- Identify specific historic properties for preservation and protection;
- Identify specific properties for development and or improvement;
- Identify transportation/circulation goals and priorities, and address pedestrian safety concerns;
- Explore the use of air rights for development to benefit Japantown, as a remedy to compensate Japantown for the loss of property and diminution of its physical footprint, due to past historic governmental actions;
- Include a phasing and implementation schedule and identify priorities for action;
- Act as a framework for regeneration, including guidelines for resilient and sustainable design and more green natural spaces, including Japanese seasonal trees such as maple and ginkgo, vertical gardens, and attract private sector investment;
- Further develop design guidelines to reinforce key CHHESS concepts and establish benchmarks for development over time;
- Define public, semi-private, and private spaces and public amenities;
- Identify pedestrian and streetscape improvements, including wayfinding signage;
- Determine the mix of uses and their physical relationship;
- Integrate strategies to strengthen resilience in future development, including addressing the impact of earthquakes, public health crises, and impacts of climate change including extreme weather (e.g., drought, heat wave, storm, fire) and their impacts such as blackouts, smoke, etc.

The Japantown Vision Master Plan should provide a blueprint for future stewardship of Japantown’s physical footprint, based on a community-driven vision for a sustainable, just, equitable and regenerative Japantown.

#### **6. Support Improvements to Buchanan Mall (Osaka Way) in Collaboration with Nihonmachi Parking Corporation (NPC) and Japantown Community Benefits District (JCBD)**

The Buchanan Mall is a valuable open space in Japantown, resembling a Japanese streetscape with shops opening to cobblestone streets and apartments above. It is also home to many historic businesses including two of Japantown’s oldest family-owned businesses – Benkyodo, established in

1906, and Soko Hardware, established in 1925. In 1976, world-renowned artist Ruth Asawa was commissioned to design the *Origami* sculpture fountains that join the cobblestone "river," both of which are part of the City's art collection overseen by the San Francisco Arts Commission. The Mall, which was completed in 1980, is in need of revitalization. The *Origami* Fountains have not been functioning for many years, street lighting is inadequate for evening hours, and the cobblestone pathways present ADA and safety issues. Recently the "Buchanan Mall Vision Plan" was developed. It details issues found in the Mall that hinder desired improvements and includes suggestions for the revitalization of the commercial area. The Mall is owned by the City, regulated by multiple City agencies, and maintained by the Nihonmachi Parking Corp. The Japantown Cultural District should support the Japantown Community Benefits District (JCBD) in its effort to develop and implement a strategy for the revitalization of the Buchanan Mall. Originally envisioned by Asawa to symbolize the growth and life of the Japanese community, a "facelift" would reinvigorate this open space so it can continue to serve as an organic, thriving part of Japantown's cultural landscape.



Figure 5: Buchanan Mall (Osaka Way)

## **7. Utilize Tools for Preservation of Historic Buildings and Structures**

As proposed in the JCHESS, Japantown should work with the City to encourage and help property owners to use available tools to preserve, maintain and rehabilitate historic buildings and structures. These include: designation in the San Francisco Planning Code of individual buildings and districts considered historically and architecturally significant or as contributors to historic districts; using the Mills Act for designated historic resources to provide property owners who rehabilitate historic buildings with property tax reductions; using the California Historic Building Code to save cost on rehabilitation; using the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Incentives for properties which are rehabilitated, and using historic preservation facade easements to preserve historic facades. Some of these tools would involve

designating certain buildings or entire blocks as National Historic Landmarks or National Register Historic Districts. Los Angeles' Little Tokyo, for example, is designated as a National Historic District.

#### **8. Establish a Community Development Corporation/ Community Land Trust/Community Investment Fund or a Similar Mechanism**

As proposed in the JCHESS, a Community Development Corporation (CDC) or Community Land Trust for Japantown would acquire and retain control of existing property for the benefit of Japantown, as well as assist in community development. Companion with a Japantown Master Plan, the CDC or Land Trust would identify and assess vulnerable spaces, and opportunities for development for the benefit of Japantown. It may also create social housing and space for businesses, organizations, institutions and cultural activities. It could also support economic development activities, working in partnership with JTF, JCBD and other entities, as well as provide technical support in conjunction with the Small Business/Artists Assistance Center. It could also support a community council or consortium in advocacy activities for Japantown, as well as work with JTF on a strategy for Japan Center Malls (as proposed above). It should also explore mechanisms to hold property in trust for the community in ways that are not discriminatory and would allow for "angel" investors to develop property for the benefit of Japantown.

Developing a CDC requires considerable expertise and dedicated staffing. Also, Community Land Trusts (CLT) are difficult to sustain since they require permanent governance, and the complicated management of multiple properties. Per a 2011 study commissioned by the Japantown Task Force and funded by The Ford Foundation, it was feasible to create a CLT focusing on commercial properties. Alternatively, a Community Investment Fund would create a network of investors to invest on a project by project basis, akin to the Little Tokyo Community Impact Fund.

#### **LONG-TERM TACTICS**

#### **9. Work with Property Owners, Developers and the City to Develop Culturally-Competent Affordable Housing with Preferences**

To sustain the vitality of the Japantown neighborhood, more affordable housing is needed. A survey of housing needs of J/JAs within and outside Japantown should be conducted in order to identify the priority groups who would benefit from more affordable rental housing. The survey should include, but not be limited to, groups such as:

- A. Descendants of those displaced during the Redevelopment era and received the "Certificate of Preferences (COP);"
- B. Families, seniors, younger generations and employees of community-based non-profits;
- C. Community-based Artists and Culture-Bearers.

Development of affordable housing can take place on underutilized sites or in mixed-use projects (new construction or renovation). Property owners and developers should work with Japantown organizations and the City to incorporate affordable housing in their projects. A Japantown new-housing development strategy should explore the possibility of setting a percentage of new housing for targeted affordable rental units that is higher than levels required by City policy.

In new affordable rental housing, there should be a mechanism that assigns preferences to lease those

units to other members of the community. This will ensure that such affordable housing will be available to community members who would like to live in Japantown, cannot afford market-rate rents there but do not qualify for low-income subsidized housing.

## **B. Equip, Protect and Support Small Businesses, the Arts and Culture Community, and Organizations in Japantown with Resources and Infrastructure.**

**[Focus Areas Addressed: Cultural Competency, Land Use, Cultural Heritage, Arts and Culture, Economic and Workforce Development, Tenant Protections]**

A thriving and vibrant Japantown-based arts and culture community and businesses are integral to the identity of the Japantown cultural district as the heart of the Japanese American community. In order to remain vital and resilient, the arts and culture community and businesses need resources and infrastructure. Providing them with physical space that is flexible, multi-purpose, affordable, high-quality and embedded throughout Japantown will enable them to connect and work with each other, as well as share their work and build/strengthen relationships within the community, and with the public at large. Providing them with online media resources will enable them to build/strengthen relationships with other arts and culture groups and businesses outside of Japantown, as well as bring greater visibility and expand their reach to Japanese American, Japanese and non-Japanese American audiences alike.

Protecting the arts and culture community and businesses from financial and physical threats (i.e. bankruptcy and displacement) requires proactive measures. Equipping them with expertise and tools alone is insufficient. Existing organizations, such as the Japantown Community Benefits District, Japantown Task Force or the Japantown Merchants Association, and potential new groups need to advocate for tenant protections, grants/loan assistance, endowments, benefits agreements, and possibly legislative relief to protect them from these threats. Zoning and land use regulations can also be used to protect them from displacement by other uses which do not complement the existing neighborhood character. Ultimately, property ownership accords the arts and culture community and businesses control over their destinies and enables them to build equity to transfer to their successors.

Japantown businesses can grow their customer base and reach by offering authentic experiences that connect to the deep culture of Japan, especially in the areas of health and eco-culture. This involves highlighting local craftsmanship and next generation entrepreneurship, as well as enhancing relationships with businesses that have connections to Japan. Trendy “hot spots” and businesses reflective of Japanese and Japanese American traditional and contemporary culture, as well as restaurants and food shops that offer vegetarian and healthy food would be more attractive to the Bay Area community.

These strategies also apply to supporting the arts and culture community. The formation of an Arts Action Committee would strengthen connections both within Japantown’s arts and culture community and with the greater Bay Area, as well as mobilize and engage the broader community around specific



actions and messaging in support of the arts and culture community. It may also involve leveraging relationships with other cultural groups and businesses in the San Francisco Bay Area to promote events and support the Japantown arts and culture community, and cultural businesses. Given the popularity of Japanese culture in both the Bay Area and the U.S., cultivating relationships with popular Japanese American artists, performers, writers, businesses and organizations outside the Bay Area and inviting their support and participation in Japantown events may also increase Japantown's visibility and reach.

### ***IMMEDIATE AND SHORT-TERM TACTICS***

#### **1. Create a Virtual *and* Physical Small Business & Artists Assistance and Media Center**

The Small Business & Artists Assistance and Media Center is needed to assist existing small businesses and artists by directing them to resources such as financing, legal services, infrastructure support, permitting and marketing. It would also assist in establishing and increasing an online presence and visibility, provide marketing assistance, as well as graphic design, fundraising and grant-writing. It would start out as an online assistance and resource center for these groups and scale up capacity as it develops. This center can also include a unified Japantown online-shopping platform to increase an online presence and gain more visibility. It could also feature a media channel to highlight and cross-promote artists. The virtual Center could use available no-code and low-code software development tools that are easy for non-professionals to use and which are customized to J/JA community values. It could also use Virtual Reality tools to engage corporate sponsors and young creative artists to participate in designing Japantown content with businesses and artists.

Assistance with succession planning (e.g., strategies, resources, outreach to interested/aspiring participants) for small businesses and artists could be provided through the assistance and media center as well as supporting older generations of merchants and community leaders to mentor and prepare younger generations to take on leadership. Engagement in the OEWD's Shared Equity in Economic Development (SEED) initiative could also be helpful in succession planning. Additionally, an incubator and capacity building program for culturally-relevant startups and local entrepreneurs should be developed, providing mentorship, skill development, seed grants and fundraising training for new community enterprises.

#### **2. Develop Virtual *and* Physical Intergenerational Co-Creative/Co-working/Collaboration Multi-Use Arts Gathering Spaces/Gallery Space with Recurring Micro-Events Programming**

A Virtual *and* Physical Japantown Co-Creative Hub would provide an intergenerational, multi-use, co-working arts space, that is a versatile space serving the arts and culture community, as well as the broader community. Its various uses could include:

- Intergenerational gathering space/ "hangout" space -- an opportunity for synergy between established artists, emerging artists, and artists in multiple media
- A Makerspace; studio/workshop space/ co-creating space
- Collaborative co-working space & entrepreneur coaching space
- Gallery/exhibition space/art installations
- Performance arts/events & rehearsal space
- Artist Media Channel
- Micro-events programming, including a space for pop-up vendors

- A Japantown museum and Japanese arts and crafts museum
- A Japanese “cultural school” for the transmission of the form, practices and *seishin* (mind, essence and spirit) of Japanese art and culture through education and activities
- Artist residency program/ artist incubator lab

The Japantown Co-Creative Hub will provide opportunities for the Japantown community to experience and celebrate authentic culture, while also empowering artists and culture bearers. This project will begin as an online platform which will serve as a hub for the arts and culture community. It would provide information for artists and organizations; stream arts & culture education, performances, events, and workshops, and cultivate a network for the J/JA arts community in Japantown and the Bay Area.

As shelter-in-place restrictions are lifted, the online platform could manifest into a network of physical spaces until a suitable permanent space is identified and acquired. These physical spaces could include vacant storefronts, as City policy allows, or underutilized community spaces in Japantown. In the wake of the pandemic, vacancies have increased. Integrating authentic cultural experiences in traditional retail spaces is an emergent model, and a viable potential strategy to uplift the community while also strengthening the future of local business. Spaces that have the highest immediate potential are the Japan Center Malls Visitor Center and *Kinmon Gakuen*.

The Japantown Co-Creative Hub could partner with existing arts and culture organizations to mentor and nurture young creatives and emerging leaders, and transmit traditional art forms, building on and expanding existing programs in Japantown. It would be a space where skills and resources are shared between generations, unique capacities are uplifted, and creative-problem solving for Japantown and beyond emerges. This space could also house an Arts Action Committee, as described below.

### ***MEDIUM-TERM TACTICS***

#### **3. Build More Cultural and Environmental Programming into Arts, Community Organizations and Businesses with Focus on Japanese Traditional Eco-Culture.**

Existing arts and cultural organizations in Japantown engage in cultural and environmental programming. The transmission of the J/JA eco-culture can be strengthened through programming that revives and explores Japanese Eco-Culture. Artists and culture organizations can help to transmit the wisdom of the traditional Japanese culture, while bridging the ancient culture with innovation. This helps to keep the arts and culture community rooted yet fresh and new and helps strengthen community connections as well as connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods. Examples of such programming include: Japanese *boro*-upcycled sustainable fashion; workshops on *bengala* and *aizome* ecological-fabric dying practices, traditional paper-making, and workshops on Japanese fermented and preserved foods such as *miso*, *katsuo-bushi*, *hoshi-gaki*, *shoyu*, and *natto*, healthy and natural products regularly included in current best-practices in nutrition. Programming around Eastern holistic health and wellness could also be incorporated.

#### **4. Explore the creation of an Intergenerational Community Permaculture Edible Garden with Programming**

Community members seek to connect to authentic and traditional aspects of Japanese culture through Japantown. This is especially true for younger community members attracted to ancestral/indigenous aspects of Japanese culture as evidenced in food, music, and the arts, embracing values and “purpose-based spaces” and Earth-based cultural connections.<sup>16</sup> One example would be a community permaculture edible-garden or farm, where connections to traditional Japanese food and food practices such as fermentation and pickling can occur. Japanese American history is tied to agriculture and young adults could be empowered by connecting to that history. A connection to the “Nihonmachi farm” could also promote deeper levels of investment in the community and the physical space of Japantown as a whole. The garden can serve as an educational center for children, a source of fresh local produce for the community; a place for intergenerational community engagement; open space for disaster management; a resource for recreation, leisure, health and wellbeing; and a space for transformative education on Japanese culture, as well as exploration and exchange of traditional knowledge. It could also aid in community-sustenance, and a potential CSA (community supported agriculture) program, which could generate an economy based on exchange of produce. Culinary artists could also be involved to create Japanese organic and regenerative food experiences. Potential sites for the garden should be identified and evaluated, and collaboration with organizations with some degree of existing gardens, such as Kokoro, Nihonmachi Little Friends, and Rosa Parks Elementary School, on the opposite side of Geary Boulevard, should be explored.

#### **5. Establish an SF Japantown Arts Action Committee.**

The SF Japantown Arts Action Committee would be a collective/think tank of community-based artists in partnership and close communication with Japantown organizations on common issues and evolving challenges which art can respond to. Art, broadly defined, can serve as a powerful communication tool to engage, unite and activate the diverse members of the broader community around a united vision and messaging. It can also be used to explore new perspectives and engage in transformative conversations for creative problem solving. The Arts Action Committee can serve as a vehicle for the use of arts to articulate the community’s story, reach other audiences, gain visibility and develop partnerships to accomplish the creative solutions which the community devises.

The Arts Action Committee also creates a voice for artists, creatives, and culture-bearers. It could work with the Japantown Community Council (see below) and other organizations in Japantown to remain connected with and in dialogue with the broader Japantown community. Sustainable Little Tokyo’s Arts Action Committee, and +LAB, a project of Little Tokyo Service Center in Los Angeles, could serve as a model for an Arts Action Committee, through its community planning, organizing and development that centers on the arts and creative processes to empower their community.

### **C. Empower, Proactively Promote and Advocate for Japantown – its Past, Present and Future – with the City, Donors/Investors, Japanese and Japanese American Entities, and the Public.**

**[Focus Areas Addressed: Regenerative Sustainable and Resilient Futures, Land Use, Cultural Heritage, Arts and Culture, Economic and Workforce Development, Tenant Protections]**

In order to achieve the goals of the Japantown Cultural District, it is critical that there be advocacy for specific actions that would benefit the community as a whole, as well as benefit individual entities within Japantown. This involves collaboration and partnership between organizations and institutions within Japantown in order to achieve common goals such as preservation and development of physical and cultural assets, or assistance and support of arts and culture organizations and businesses in Japantown. Audiences for advocacy would range from City leaders and agencies, to donors and investors, Japanese and Japanese American entities, and the broader public.

Given the burden of day-to-day operations that existing organizations and institutions face, advocacy for broader community goals must be shared. A central collaborative entity can provide a forum and platform for individuals and organizations in Japantown to identify common goals, and devise and implement strategic plans and actions to advocate for and realize those goals. Such an entity can invite other voices to the collective conversation about determining the future of Japantown. It can also strengthen relationships and alliances between existing groups and individuals by effective mobilization around unified action, providing a mechanism for long-time community leaders to transmit their experience and knowledge of the work to others, potentially identifying emerging young leaders willing to assume responsibility for the community and its future.

In addition to unified advocacy, proactive and sophisticated promotion of Japantown and its unique cultural heritage is essential to achieving the vision of Japantown as a culturally-regenerative, authentic and economically-vibrant neighborhood. The very act of devising a coordinated promotion program requires collective thinking and action. Promotion of Japantown with donors and investors, Japanese and Japanese American entities, as well as the general public can take myriad forms. It can involve outreach for groups and businesses, as well as marketing Japantown businesses, artists and events in a coordinated and focused way. Such promotion requires dedicated resources and support, which incorporate community-generated content and messaging that is tailored to multiple audiences. Coordinated collective promotion activities are more effective than isolated individual actions in effecting broader community goals.

Companion to advocacy and promotion is fundraising, which is necessary for the survival of Japantown Cultural District and Japantown as a whole. In order to ensure long-term sustainability of Japantown, robust fundraising capacity-building is needed for the Cultural District and Japantown organizations. As content for coordinated promotion or marketing is developed, the Cultural District and other organizations and businesses in Japantown would expand their networks and revenue streams, share the collective values and stories of Japantown, develop partnerships on innovative projects, cultivate social entrepreneurship, explore community impact investments and shift to a mode of developing collaborative abundance.

***IMMEDIATE AND SHORT-TERM TACTICS***

### **1. Increase Fundraising and Marketing Capacity, and Partnerships to Ensure Long-term Sustainability and to Support CHHESS Strategies (Co-Create Collaborative Abundance)**

In order to address the impacts of the pandemic, it is imperative that the efforts of the Japantown Community Benefits District (JCBD) and the Japantown Community Foundation to raise funds, solicit contributions and obtain grants and loans for businesses, organizations and artists be expanded and strengthened. In addition, the efforts of the JCBD to assist merchants with online marketing should be advanced, in order to enable them to reach global viewers and expand their customer base.

Once those entities are stabilized and protected, a unified marketing plan should be developed in conjunction with existing and new community organizations and businesses based on existing marketing efforts, such as the Japantown Community Benefits District. Anchored in a web presence that is linked to multiple organizations within Japantown, it would create a virtual Japantown connected to historic Japantowns in Los Angeles and San Jose. Inclusion of social media marketing, with contemporary Japanese content, such as *anime*, *manga*, or J-Pop, would promote Japantown to younger audiences. At the same time, the marketing plan could have content that is tailored to the multiple sectors in the community (i.e. artists, businesses, cultural organizations, community nonprofits), with common messaging around the culture and history of Japantown.

Robust fundraising capacity-building is needed. For the Japantown Cultural District to be sustainable, it needs to develop a business plan and increase its revenue streams beyond its City government grants, through an expanded web presence, and more targeted grant writing and partnerships with both for-profit and nonprofit funding sources. In the past, Japantown organizations have relied on government agencies and existing Japanese and Japanese American donors and supporters. They should be provided with information and links to companies, foundations and sponsors/investors who may not currently be linked to Japantown, that would be interested in supporting community entities and initiatives. There could be a central online fundraising resource where businesses and organizations could share funder information with each other. The online platforms and websites referenced above should include fundraising components which link the Japantown community to entities or individuals who access those platforms and websites.

The Japantown Cultural District and other Japantown organizations should look past conventional forms of fundraising for ways to network with other Asian American, racial equity, arts, housing, and cultural preservation entities on building creative solutions to common problems. In addition to solution building, this networking could lead to greater access to philanthropy.

The Cultural District, artists, creatives, community-based organizations and individual experts can also collaborate to build greater community abundance and sustainability by fostering social entrepreneurship and creating new funding vehicles, such as revolving funds for artists and innovative pilot projects or community impact funds that leverage returns from property and business investments to benefit the community at large.

Similarly, expanding active participation, representation, and ownership by Japantown organizations/ community stakeholders in the planning processes for existing community events such as the annual Cherry Blossom Festival would strengthen and empower the community to better embrace mutually

beneficial opportunities for resource-sharing, and increased visibility and marketing. Such festivals could also leverage its reach through online marketing and streaming.

Beyond monetary funding, the Cultural District and other Japantown organizations should undertake joint outreach to organizations, companies and individuals outside of Japantown, share their collective stories, and gain access to skills, resources and assistance needed to implement Japantown initiatives.

## **2. Explore an Appropriate Model for a Japantown Community Council or Consortium**

A Japantown community council or consortium should be explored as an entity to serve as a central collaborative representative coalition and forum where religious, cultural, and community service organizations; businesses, residents, property owners, the Japanese Consulate, and other vested stakeholders could share information, strategize and mobilize around common mutual goals. It could perform an important advocacy role for the community. The objectives of this entity would be to enable a broad array of stakeholders and constituencies in Japantown to advise and participate in issues affecting them, as well as to create cohesion and coordination in building consensus, resource-sharing, and planning for Japantown. It is important that the entity be as inclusive as possible, to accommodate multiple voices and viewpoints.

A Japantown community council could:

- Respond to crises such as the coronavirus pandemic with action plans developed in advance;
- Work closely with an Arts Action Committee to strengthen relationships, build solidarity, and create networks of reciprocity beyond neighborhood borders;
- Support discussions and negotiations with the property owners of the Japan Center Malls on new or stronger agreements, and consultations with other property owners and organizations on occupancy/renovation strategies for existing underutilized spaces and buildings;
- Develop a pipeline for leadership development and mentorships for young adults, as well as promotion of young adult leadership in existing and new organizations;
- Conduct surveys to gain a better understanding of how Japantown is perceived from inside and outside the community;
- Develop “Cultural Competency” material that articulates the unique narrative of Japantown to help developers, the City, and collaborative partners work with Japantown.

A community council or consortium would differ from the Japantown Task Force (JTF) as it is currently constituted, in that it would be more representative of different stakeholders in the community and allow for direct and timely input from those stakeholders. Different models for such a council or consortium, including those with and without decision-making authority, should be studied before a particular model is selected. These include the Little Tokyo Community Council, the Japantown Community Congress of San Jose, and Mo’ Magic, a community consortium in the San Francisco African American community. The community council could be created as an advisory group to JTF, or it could be initially an arm of JTF, and spin off as an independent entity. Alternatively, it could be established as a separate entity from the start, in which JTF is a participant.

**3. Initiate inclusive intergenerational conversations about Japantown's history of displacement and its impacts on the community as part of the broader communities of color in America.**

It is critical for the Japantown community to continue efforts of coming to terms with its history in order to shift its energy from survival to growth. The trauma of repeated displacement creates an additional, internalized emotional burden that can impede a community's self-determination. Generational trauma, if confronted, can be healed. Events like Day of Remembrance and community-sponsored access to the work of experts in this field (e.g., psychologists Satsuki Ina and Donna Nagata) are vital to the healing process from the trauma of incarceration during World War II.<sup>17</sup> The trauma of displacement by Redevelopment should also be addressed. In the tradition of oral history, inclusive and intentional intergenerational conversations about Japantown's history of displacement will allow Japanese American elders to share their personal and family histories with younger Japanese Americans and Japantown community members. This would include the history of community-building and J/JA contributions made in coalition with other communities, from commerce (e.g., developing the San Francisco Flower Mart) to non-profit (e.g., saving the Buchanan Street YMCA for the Western Addition). Such sharing is also necessary to create a bond with newer community members, *Shin-Nikkei*, and others who are not informed about the community's history and experiences -- both painful and triumphant -- in a society where race prejudice has touched the lives of all people of color, and shaped Japanese American culture and perspectives as distinct from Japanese culture. These conversations can lead to collectively exploring remedies to the impacts of racial prejudice and displacement, as well as help to build regenerative shared community leadership and cohesion.

**4. Explore a Visitor Center (Virtual & Physical) to be located inside the Japan Center Malls**

A S.F. Japantown Visitor Center has been under consideration for many years. The purpose of the Visitor Center is to provide a central location to orient and inform community members and visitors about Japantown and its history, shops, programs, events, community spaces according to their interests and needs, as well as Japan and travel in Japan. By also providing information about other J/JA cultural sites in San Francisco, such as the Japanese Tea Garden and the Theatre of Yugen, it would truly serve as a hub for access to the J/JA community of San Francisco.

The Visitor Center would offer virtual wayfinding and serve as a physical location for the Artist/Small Business Assistance Center that would house the programming of the Intergenerational Co-Creative Gathering Space. Paid staff and/or volunteers would staff the visitor center and assist visitors. The JCCNC has developed a mobile app that directs users to a virtual History Walk of Japantown, with images from its physical panels. This mobile app could be augmented with information about businesses, restaurants and organizations in Japantown, to help visitors navigate the community. This website should be closely linked to the Artist/ Small Business Assistance Center, and the Intergenerational Co-Creative Gathering Space, and could be accessed on the self-navigation monitor at the Visitor Center as well as through the mobile phone. It could also serve as a satellite site and information portal for the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Northern California (JCCNC) and Japan Information and Culture Center (JICC), an organization of the Japanese Consulate, which could enhance relationships and increase collaboration with these organizations.

## **MEDIUM-TERM TACTICS**

### **5. Develop Partnerships and Collaborations with the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), the City, Japanese Companies and Eco-Initiatives, and Other Japantowns and Networks.**

Partnerships between Japantown and Japanese organizations such as the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Northern California (JCCNC), and Japan Society should be enhanced in order to realize Japantown’s potential as an international cultural and next-generation eco-technological hub, a beacon of innovation and exchange. Such a partnership should entail JETRO, JCCNC, and the Japanese Consulate acting as a conduit between Japantown and Japanese businesses by facilitating relationships, and marketing Japantown as a viable option for both a physical location and virtual hub for investment and involvement. As Japanese businesses have dramatically increased in the Bay Area in the past decade, the potential for collaboration and mutual advancement is vast.<sup>18</sup> Relationships could be built with Japanese Eco/Technological initiatives and companies, potentially hosting international trade shows to feature their products. For example, Fujisawa Sustainable Smart Town and Kashiwa-no-Ha Smart City, can provide Japantown with new tools and ways of thinking about its regenerative future.

Partnerships on grassroots levels between Japantown and Japan, neighboring communities and Cultural Districts, and other Japantowns across the state should also be enhanced. The Osaka-San Francisco Sister City relationship should be revived on a grassroots level if not on a political level. The Japanese English Teaching (JET) program is also a potential partner. Statewide Japantown collaborations could entail virtual festivals and events of all Japantowns, arts collaborations, State-level policy advocacy, and virtual knowledge and best-practice sharing, which will mutually strengthen visibility and resilience for all. Similar to statewide Japantown collaborations, enhanced partnerships and collaboration with the Fillmore community as well as the other S.F. Cultural Districts -- sharing best-practices and resources and coordinating joint City-level policy advocacy would be mutually beneficial.

Partnerships with multiple City agencies should also be enhanced in order to realize a Resilient City and a Regenerative Japantown. The Planning Department’s Sustainable City & Neighborhoods Initiative and Eco-Districts program, Office of Resilience and Recovery, Regenerative City Assessment & Grid Design for San Francisco, as well as its Shop & Dine 49 “Driving Shared Prosperity Through Shopping Local” initiative and “SF Biz Connect” can promote resilience-planning, as well as stronger business-to-business relationships and visibility of Japantown businesses.

Chart I-1: Changes in the number of Japan-based companies operating in the Bay Area

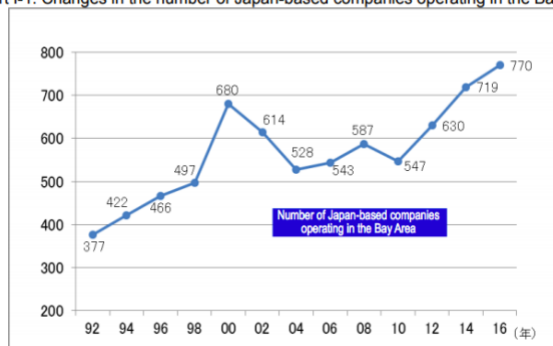




Figure 6: Changes in the number of Japan-based companies operating in the Bay Area; Source: JETRO

**LONG-TERM TACTICS:**

**6. Create an Accessible Digital Archive from Existing Physical and Digital Archives Held by Multiple Community Organizations Through Collaborative Efforts.**

Japantown has several historical archives, among them: the Japanese American National Library/Center for Japanese American Studies, the Japanese American Archives at the JCCCNC, and the National Japanese American Historical Society Gallery and Archives, and the archive of the *Nichi Bei Weekly*. The Western Addition branch of the San Francisco Public Library also houses Japanese collections. These archives hold valuable information not only for the Japantown community but for scholars and historians. As independent collections they are difficult to access and maintain. Efforts are underway by some of the organizations to stabilize and digitize their physical archives. Other organizations need assistance in digitizing their archives. Once all organizations have completed digitizing their archives, a coordinated effort among these organizations to provide searchable, but controlled, access to those archives to the public, possibly linked to each other, would increase their accessibility and empower the community with their data and stories. This could also be instrumental in creating intergenerational dialogues, with the potential to be exhibited as a virtual museum to share the story of Japantown. Partnerships with the Internet Archives SF, Denso Digital Archives, and tech companies should also be developed. Currently, succession planning, as well as staff support and appropriate funding, would need to be enhanced in order to realize a joint digital archive to ensure that these resources are not endangered or lost.

**X. IMPLEMENTATION ROLES - CITY AND COMMUNITY**

**STRATEGY A - IMPLEMENTATION ROLES:**

Preserve, Sustain and Develop Japantown’s Physical and Cultural Assets in support of the Japanese and Japanese American Community.

<b>STRATEGY A:</b>	<b>CITY ROLE</b>	<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>FUNDING</b>	<b>PARTNERS</b>
<b>Tactic 1: Develop and Implement a Strategic Plan to Address the Japan Center Malls (JCM) Covenant Agreements and the Future of the Malls, and Negotiate Benefits Agreements with JCM Owners</b>	-Partnership of Planning Department -Assist in Strengthening the Covenants -Enhance Zoning Tools -OEWD, Planning Departments Assist in community ownership	-JCM Ad Hoc Committee develop strategies and educational content  Potential Stakeholders: Japan Center Mall Owners, JTF, JCCCNC etc.	- OEWD (plan development) -SF City Attorney (negotiations) - Foundations (plan implementation)	Consultants
<b>Tactic 2: Work with Property Owners and Community Organizations to Identify, Secure and Occupy Underutilized Space to Meet Community Needs</b>	-SF Planning assist in identifying coding issues -SF Economic Recovery Task Force	-Conduct Community Needs, and Space Assessments to identify potential sites for use  Potential Stakeholders: All community entities, Japan Center Malls, Churches, Nichi Bei Kai, JCCCNC, Kinmon Gakuen, Small business owners, JTF, JCBD etc.	- Foundations - City grants - Banks (Community Reinvestment Act?)	Consultants
<b>Tactic 3: Support Improvements to Peace Plaza</b>	-Partnership: SF Parks -Educate and Advocate for Prop A	- Educate, Market and Advocate for Prop A  Potential Stakeholders: All Community members, JTF Spearhead	City bond funding	Consultants

<b>Tactic 4: Engage in Planning Dept. Housing Element</b>	-Identify Planning Tools for Housing in Japantown -Assist in championing equitable housing choices to reverse the consequences of redevelopment. -Assist in research of COP	-Research the COP as a pathway to champion equitable housing choices to reverse the consequences of redevelopment.  Potential Stakeholders: JTF	NA	Consultants
<b>Tactic 5: Japantown Preservation &amp; Development Vision Master Plan</b>	-Planning Department to provide expertise and assist in process	-Initiate the process of the Japantown Preservation & Development Vision Master Plan  Potential Stakeholders: JTF	- Foundations - Angel Investors	Nihonmachi Corporation
<b>Tactic 6: Support Improvements to Buchanan Mall</b>	-Advocate for upgrades -Funding for upgrades -SF Parks and Rec -DPW	-Develop a Strategic Plan and Advocate for upgrades  Potential Stakeholders: NPC, JCBD, JTF	- Nihonmachi Parking Corporation - Foundations	Consultants
<b>Tactic 7: Preservation of Historic Buildings and Structures</b>	-Assist in actualizing preservation tools for specific sites -Assist in a national landmark	-Identify which buildings would benefit from preservation  Potential Stakeholders: JTF	- State Historic Preservation agencies - Federal agencies - National Trust for Historic Preservation	- Other CDCs/CLTs
<b>Tactic 8: Establish a CDC/CLT/CIF or a Similar Mechanism</b>	-Funding and expertise to assist in the establishment of a CDC/CLT or CIF.	-Identify which mechanism of a CDC/CLT/CIF is the best fit, and fundraise to establishment  Potential Stakeholders: JTF, JARF, JCCCNC	- City - Foundations	- Other CDCs/CLTs

## STRATEGY B - IMPLEMENTATION ROLES

Equip, Protect and Support Small Businesses, the Arts and Culture Community, and Organizations in Japantown with Resources and Infrastructure.

STRATEGY B:	CITY ROLE	COMMUNITY	FUNDING	PARTNERS
<b>Tactic 1: Create a <u>Virtual</u> and <u>Physical</u> Small Business &amp; Artists Assistance and Media Center</b>	-Funding from OEWD -Funding for Business Consultant Staff -SF Office of Small Business -Dedicated Assistance from SBA	-Develop an online platform which directs artists and small businesses to resources and assistance  Potential Stakeholders: JTF, JCD, JCBD, JCM, Japantown Merchants Association	-OEWD -California SBA	-API Legal Outreach
<b>Tactic 2: Develop <u>Virtual</u> &amp; <u>Physical</u> Intergenerational Co-Creative/Co-working/ Multi-Use Arts Gathering Spaces/Gallery Space with Recurring Micro-Events Programming</b>	-City assist in acquiring space/ venue and upgrading to meet needs -SFAC for sustainable arts programming	-Identify and Assess Space that will meet the multiple uses, and community needs  Potential Stakeholders: JCCCNC, JCYC, JCM, Arts Orgs	Tech companies, Arts Foundations	Tech companies, Arts Foundations
<b>Tactic 3: Build More Cultural and Environmental Programming into Arts, Community Organizations and Businesses with Focus on Japanese Traditional Eco-Culture</b>	-SF Environment to assist and collaborate -SF Parks and Rec -SF Planning	-Various arts and Cultural organizations given a platform -Collaborate micro-events (JCM, The Center etc)  Stakeholders: Community, Artists, JCCCNC, NJAHS etc.	Foundations	Japanese Companies
<b>Tactic 4: Create an Intergenerational Community Permaculture Edible Garden w/ Programming</b>	-Partnership with SF Parks and Rec -SF parks Alliance -Partnership with SF Environment -Partnership with SF Economic Recovery Task Force -Partnership with Public Works	-Identify a location, and organizations to be involved in maintenance  Potential Stakeholders: Kinmon Gakuen, JCCCNC, JCYC, Nihonmachi Terrace, Japanese Tea Garden, Community Volunteers	- SF Economic Recovery Task Force - SF Environment -Public Works	-Consultants

<b>Tactic 5: Establish an SF Japantown Arts Action Committee</b>	-SFAC fund creation of Arts Action Committee	-Invite and organize the infrastructure and artists to be involved. -Potential Stakeholders: JTF, JCCNC, Nichi Bei Kai, Community Artists, Theatre of Yugen etc.	-SFAC -NEA -Foundations -California Arts Council	-SFAC -NEA -Foundations -California Arts Council -CAAMFest -APICC -SOMarts
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## STRATEGY C - IMPLEMENTATION ROLES

Empower, Proactively Promote and Advocate for Japantown – its Past, Present and Future – with the City, Donors/Investors, Japanese and Japanese American Entities, and the Public.

STRATEGY C:	CITY ROLE	COMMUNITY	FUNDING	PARTNERS
<b>Tactic 1: Increase Fundraising and Marketing Capacity, and Partnerships to Ensure Long-term Sustainability and to Support CHHESS Strategies</b>	-Identify which Departments could partner efforts with Japantown CHHESS Tactics	-Hire Fundraiser Staff with the capabilities of grant searching, writing, and partnership development.  -Potential Stakeholders: JTF, Japantown Foundation	Foundations	Consultants
<b>Tactic 2: Explore an Appropriate Model for a Japantown Community Council or Consortium</b>	-City funding for the development of a community council or consortium	-Identify appropriate model for a community council/ consortium and engage community stakeholders  -Potential Stakeholders: All community stakeholders including, Churches, JCYC, JCCNC, NLF, Nichi Bei Kai, JCBD, Jtown Merchants Association, J4J, Nakayoshi, JTF, Japantown Foundation etc.	Foundations	Consultants
<b>Tactic 3: Initiate inclusive intergenerational conversations about Japantown’s history of displacement and its impacts on the community.</b>	-MOHCD & City Agencies explore leverage of Certificates of Preference -City officially recognize the damage of the Redevelopment -City advocate for culturally competent affordable housing to reverse impacts of Redevelopment	-Develop Japantown cultural competency sheet -Develop programming on this topic -Explore COP as a pathway to reversal of displacement -Develop educational materials and programming on Redevelopment -Engage younger generations  -Potential Stakeholders: JCYC, NJAHS, JTF, Japan Society, Japantown for Justice, Nakayoshi	Foundations	Consultants
<b>Tactic 4: Explore a Visitor Center to be located inside the Japan Center Malls (Virtual&amp; Physical)</b>	-City Facilitate greater assistance from SF Travel,  -Funding for a staff of visitor center	-Explore feasibility plans -Develop online platform/ virtual Japantown navigation  -Potential Stakeholders: Japan Center Malls, NJAHS, JTF, Japanese Tea Garden	-SF Travel -3D -City	-SF Travel, JETRO, JCCNC, SFMTA 3D Investments
<b>Tactic 5: Develop Partnerships and Collaborations with (JETRO), the City, Japanese Companies and Eco-Initiatives, Other Japantowns and Networks.</b>	-MOHCD Connect and facilitate continuous dialogue and collaboration between City Departments and Japantown  -MOHCD fund & facilitate joint cultural district projects  -Departments include, Planning, SFAC, SF Environment, SFMTA etc.	-Develop and maintain partnerships With: JETRO, Japan Society, Japanese Consulate, Japanese companies  -Build collaborative partnerships with other Cultural Districts -Enhance Relationships with neighboring communities (Fillmore)  -Enhance grassroot connections to Japan through Osaka Sister City, and JET Program -Join global Regenerative networks  -Potential Stakeholders: JTF	- JETRO, JCCNC, JICC - State agencies - Foundations -Japanese national government	- JETRO, JCCNC, JICC - City of San Francisco -Japanese Consulate & National Government -SF Cultural Districts -Global Eco Villages Network

		City, JETRO, JCCNC, JS, JET, Consulate		
<b>Tactic 6: Create an accessible digital archive from existing physical and digital archives held by multiple community organizations through collaborative efforts.</b>	-Funding for a joint staff position to integrate, develop, and maintain the digital archives -Funding for a staff position to assist in maintenance and curation of the physical archives for accessibility	-Integration, maintenance and collective curation of the archives -Develop and promote an accessible community joint digital archive -Find foundations to help sponsor -Potential stakeholders: NJAHS, <i>Nichi Bei Weekly</i> , History Room at JCCNC, JA National Library	-Foundations -SF Public Library -SF Arts Commission -Tech companies	-Engage the Internet Archive SF  -Partner/ Engage Denso Digital Archive  -Partner with tech companies

## X. SCENARIOS AND TIMELINES

This section describes the preferred scenario and timeline for implementing the Japantown Cultural District strategies and tactics in the next six years. Priorities are laid out and near-term achievable actions are noted.

### Scenario: Lead with Arts & Culture Community and Businesses Support

<u>Immediate/Short-Term</u>	<u>Short-Term to Medium-Term</u>	<u>Medium-Term</u>	<u>Long-Term</u>
Virtual and Physical Small Business/Artists Assistance/Media Center	Japantown Preservation & Development Vision Master Plan	More Cultural & Environmental Programming on Japanese Eco-Culture	Develop Culturally-Competent Affordable Housing
Virtual and Physical Co-Creative Multi-Use Arts Gathering Spaces/Gallery Space	Improvements to Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way	Create Community Garden	
Increase Fundraising and Marketing Capacity	Utilize Tools for Preservation of Historic Buildings	Establish Arts Action Committee	
Explore Japanese community council/consortium	Establish Community Development Corporation/Land Trust/Investment Fund	Develop Partnerships with JETRO, City, Japanese companies, other Japantowns/ Networks	
Intergenerational Conversations about Japantown's Displacement			
Explore Virtual and Physical Visitor Center in Japan Center Malls			
Strategic for Japan Center Malls			
Identify/Secure Underutilized Space for Community Needs			
Peace Plaza Improvements			
Engage in Housing Element Development Process with City			

## **X. CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS**

San Francisco Japantown (Japantown) Cultural District, and the CHHESS report is a major opportunity for J/JA communities to shape Japantown's future. Through extensive community input and research, the CHHESS strategies and tactics have been developed through a truly grassroots process. Japantown has survived much adversity in its 114-year history in San Francisco, and the lessons of its past are foundational to this work. San Francisco's Japantown has a rich history and lasting legacy of resilience in the face of adversity handed down by past generations who endured displacement from the Incarceration to Redevelopment and ongoing threats from gentrification. Japantown has a long history of activism, commitment, and achievement, and is a homebase for organizations, businesses and dedicated community members who have been dedicated to working on these challenges. As one of only three remaining historic Japantowns in the United States, preserving, protecting, regenerating, and promoting its cultural assets are crucial so that it remains as the regional hub and vital cultural heart for the Japanese/Japanese American communities in Northern California for generations to come.

The CHHESS was developed amidst the global coronavirus pandemic, and its completion speaks volumes about the community's ability to turn crisis into an opportunity for transformation. Through this formalized collaborative partnership with the City of San Francisco's Cultural Districts Initiative to stabilize its unique cultural assets from disappearing, the Japantown community expects not only to survive these crises, but also become truly resilient and thrive into the future.

The CHHESS initiative is an iterative process between the Japantown community and the City of San Francisco. The Initial Final CHHESS Draft was reviewed by the Japantown community at large during the Summer of 2020; community input and feedback has then been incorporated into the current Revised Final CHHESS Draft. The Japantown Task Force Board of Directors has approved the Revised Final CHHESS Draft to enter its next phase of development to be submitted to the MOHCD (Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development) for further review and feedback. MOHCD will engage other City departments in a collaborative review process around the CHHESS strategies and tactics. The City will also be adding the "City Data Snapshot" section on Japantown into the report. After the process of dialogue between the City Departments and the community, a fourth, and final Japantown Town Hall, and further outreach to community organizations will be conducted for further CHHESS revisions in response to City feedback. The Final draft of the CHHESS will be considered for approval by the Japantown Task Force Board of Directors, prior to its submission to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for consideration and adoption. Advocacy for adoption of the Final CHHESS by the Board of Supervisors will require engagement by the community at-large and is a valuable opportunity for Japantown's voice to be heard. Upon approval by the Board of Supervisors, the Japantown Cultural District staff will work with the community to prioritize tactics and their implementation by existing community entities and the formation of new community entities, working with the City.

Realizing the Japantown Cultural District vision and goals through the implementation of its strategies and tactics will depend on the engagement and determination of the broader community, in continuous

collaboration with the City. Both the Final CHHESS and the Supplemental CHHESS, a living document, will serve as a roadmap to guide the implementation of the strategies and tactics over the next few years. After three years of the Cultural Districts program, both the community and the City will reflect on what has been accomplished and identify the next steps necessary to achieve Japantown's goals. Building on the Cultural District program, by setting priorities and directions for Japantown's future the CHHESS living roadmap will enable Japantown to thrive.

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*Rosalyn Tonai*

## XII. APPENDICES

### A. ENDNOTES

1. RDA Fact Book, 1986 RDA Tentative Plan for A-2 Sept. 1964 and Sept. 1964 RDA Report Nikkei Heritage, Redevelopment & Urban Japantowns. Vol. XII, No. 4/ Vol. XIII, No. 1 Fall 2000/Winter 2001. Shizue Seigel. ed. p.6-9. 20-23
1. SF Planning et al., *JCHESS* (San Francisco: 2013), 30.
2. JCBD Survey – Restaurants are making 10-30% of their pre-pandemic income, while retail merchants of the Japan Center Malls have an income close to zero. Five businesses have already permanently closed.
3. The JCBD has been in close collaboration with the Japan Center Malls Staff to provide informational resources to merchants through daily and/or weekly email updates, as well as one-on-one support to merchants. There have been multiple community-generated grants to provide relief to affected merchants. The Japantown Task Force has also contributed funds to the Japantown Neighborhood Mini Grant to monetarily support merchants to get through this crisis. The JCBD has also reached its fundraising goal of \$500k to give to merchants in its *Heart of J-town Grant*. The Japantown Community Foundation has also accomplished a similar matching grant. The JCCNC (Center) is now hosting the “Picnic in the Plaza” on the weekends in order to bring people back to Japantown and customers to restaurants. Japan Center Malls Staff has recently started “Restaurants in the Plaza” on weekdays.
4. See Focus Group Summary Appendices Section H. f) and H. d)
5. Re-Alliance, <https://www.re-alliance.org/regenerative>
6. Anthony Hodgson & H3Uni, <https://www.h3uni.org/online-core-course/>
7. Six Key Areas mandated by the City to be addressed in the CHHESS report. Definitions were provided by the MOHCD. The 7th Key Area “Regenerative, Sustainable, Futures” was developed in order to address crises such as the Coronavirus pandemic, and was developed through community input.
8. Restaurants in Japantown are making approximately 10-30% of their pre-pandemic income, while retail shops in the malls which have been closed are making close to no revenue at all. (JCBD)
9. The coronavirus pandemic has critically impacted artists and cultural groups’ opportunities to produce, showcase and exchange art and culture in the community. - Mark Izu, First Voice et al.
10. “ There are very few professional arts spaces, and no professional performance or gallery spaces in Japantown.”- See Focus Group Summary Appendices Section H. a)
11. “The erosion of Japantown’s high-quality Japanese-oriented character/ flavor or *miriyoku*”  
- See Focus Group Summary Appendices Section H. f)
12. “too much concrete and not enough attractive green space”  
- See Focus Group Summary Appendices Section H. b) d) e) f)
13. Unfortunately, those constituencies and stakeholders operate independently and lack true collaboration, communication, cohesion, trust and resource sharing..  
- See Focus Group Summary Appendices Section H. c) e) f)
14. Minimal engagement of and leadership opportunities for young adults in Japantown.  
- See Focus Group Summary Appendices Section H. a) c) d) e) f)
15. SF Planning et al., *JCHESS* (San Francisco: 2013), 35.
16. “This is especially true for younger community members attracted to ancestral/indigenous aspects of Japanese culture as evidenced in food, music, and the arts, embracing values and “purpose-based spaces” and Earth-based cultural connections.”  
- See Focus Group Summary Appendices Section H. d) e) f)
17. “Events like Day of Remembrance and community-sponsored access to the work of experts in this field like psychologists Satsuki Ina and Donna Nagata are vital to the healing process from the trauma of displacement of incarceration during World War II.” <https://www.sgvtribune.com/2017/01/13/victims-of-incarceration-the-life-altering-impact-of-wwii-japanese-american-camps/>



## B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

For over a century, Japantown San Francisco has been an integral asset to the cultural fabric of San Francisco. In 1895, Japanese immigrants established *Hokka Nichibei Kai*, also known as JAANC (Japanese American Association of Northern California), to better relations between America and Japan. Japantown continues to serve as a regional hub and the cultural heart of Japanese and Japanese American (J/JA) communities in Northern California. Japantown continues to be the home for community-based organizations, arts and cultural groups, and unique, culturally distinct businesses. It hosts many seasonal celebrations and festivals that celebrate J/JA culture, amidst San Francisco's proud multi-cultural heritage.

Throughout its history, Japantown has endured three major waves of unintended and intentional forced removal and displacement. As one of the three remaining historic Japantowns in the US, San Francisco's Japantown was forced to move from the South of Market to its current location in the Western Addition following the 1906 Earthquake. Displacement occurred at the outbreak of World War II in 1942, when "All Persons of Japanese Ancestry"-- over 112,000 JAs, 65% of whom were U.S. citizens -- on the West Coast were forcibly removed from their homes, their neighborhoods, and their communities and incarcerated in desolate concentration camps for the duration of the war. Before WWII, Japantown was a thriving neighborhood which spanned 40 blocks; after the forced removal and dispossession of property, Japantown was reduced to a core of roughly 15 square blocks, and it is even smaller today.

In 1948, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRDA) was developed. Much of Japantown was selected as one of the first large-scale "Urban Renewal" projects in the nation. Redevelopment forced out the Japanese American community and stripped their properties between 1959 and 1979. Historic buildings, apartments, homes, businesses, and sites of cultural and historic importance were destroyed through the use of eminent domain. Over 1,500 residents were affected; 2,600 homes and over 60 businesses, many of them Japanese American family owned establishments, were displaced and ultimately replaced with the Japan Center Malls (formerly the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center) and the eight-lane Geary Expressway which sliced through the neighborhood. Those displaced received a "Certificates of Preference" which, to a limited extent, granted their return. To date, only 4% of these "Certificates of Preference" have been used.

The Free Speech and Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s gave rise to the creation of ethnic studies programs at San Francisco State University and UC Berkeley, as well as the Anti-War Movement, and the beginning of the Asian American movement in the late 1960s led to new forms of activism and community development in Japantown that promoted social justice and the ethnic identity of Japanese Americans. In 1969, *Sansei* (third-generation Japanese Americans) created the Japanese Community Youth Council (JCYC) to respond to the needs of *Nikkei* children and youth. The first community-based organization, JCYC was housed in an SFRA-owned building at 1808A Sutter Street, which was rented by the group for one dollar a year. Many other newly established JA organizations also rented the old, Victorian buildings owned by the SFRA. In 1971, Kimochi, Inc. was formed to address the needs of the elderly *Issei*, who were not being served by mainstream service organizations due to cultural and language barriers. Subsequently, other Japantown-based, non-profit organizations grew, such as Nihonmachi Little Friends, *Nobiru-kai* (to support Japanese newcomers) the Japanese Community and Cultural Center of Northern California (JCCCNC), the Japanese American National Library, the Japantown Arts and Media Workshop, Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach (formerly Nihonmachi Legal Outreach), and the National Japanese American Historical Society. All of these organizations were created as alternative, ethnically-based organizations to serve the needs of the Japantown residents and the Japanese American community to fill the service void existing in mainstream institutions.

With redevelopment in full swing, the Committee Against Nihonmachi Evictions (CANE) emerged in 1973 to address the needs of residents and small businesses. A grassroots tenants activist group, CANE “squatted” in a SFRDA-owned property at 1858 Sutter Street, which later became the site for the Japanese American Community & Cultural Center of Northern California. One of CANE’s first actions was to support the Japanese American Religious Federation’s housing project for affordable housing in Japantown. Sansei mobilized against the evictions of Issei and Nisei who had rebuilt lives shattered by WWII incarceration. Through protests, editorials, and education, CANE was able to make itself heard and joined in other neighborhood struggles, such as the fight to save the International Hotel in Manilatown. CANE and other community organizations drew explicit parallels between destructive government actions during WWII and those of urban renewal. One CANE placard proclaimed “Evacuation in 1942: Eviction in 1974.”

San Francisco Nikkei (persons of Japanese descent) were among the first to publicly call for redress for those unjustly incarcerated during WWII, a cause that captured the imaginations and energies of Nikkei across the nation. At the Japanese American Citizens League' (JACL) national headquarters in Japantown, leading figures Edison Uno, Dr. Clifford I Uyeda and John Tateishi led the National Redress Campaign. In the Bay Area, calls for reparations were made at the inaugural “Day of Remembrance” event in 1979 at Tanforan Shopping Center, when over one thousand people gathered to remember the signing of Executive Order 9066. Two years later, in 1981, San Francisco was among the cities where hearings by the US Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians enabled Japanese Americans to finally, publicly testify to the injustice, loss, and endurance of their WWII legacy. Local activists organized letter-writing campaigns that deluged the White House and Congress with calls for redress. As San Franciscans engaged in the broader redress movement, local Nikkei were also involved with the important effort to overturn the wartime convictions of three Nikkei -- Fred Korematsu, Gordon Hirabayashi and Min Yasui -- who had refused incarceration.

Sansei activism and professional expertise led to another important victory for the community a decade later when local Nikkei fought the sale of Japantown YWCA. The Central “Y” had held title to the property since it was opened because the Alien Land Law barred *Soko Bukai*, the Issei group responsible for its formation, from owning property. When the San Francisco-Marin-San Mateo YWCA announced plans to sell the building, community members recognized that the historic building and Nihonmachi Little Friends, which provided childcare at the Y, were vulnerable. Long-time Nisei activists joined with a number of Sanseis to fight for the community’s claim to the building. The successful battle for the Japantown YWCA galvanized members of the broader Nikkei community to the ongoing vulnerability of Japantown. While Japantown was under recognizable threat, a new generation had emerged with social and cultural capital to fight for the future of Nihonmachi.

An important source of energy for these efforts came from the community-based organizations founded by Sansei students and community activists who staked their long-term claim to Nihonmachi. In 1976, the Japanese Community Youth Council purchased a building at 2012 Pine Street from the San Francisco United Methodist Mission. Subsequently, other community-based organizations purchased land in Japantown and built their own facilities including Kimochi, Inc., and the National Japanese American Citizens League headquarter office in the 70's. Today, Kimochi, Inc. owns a second building, formerly the Nichi Bei Bussan Department Store, on the Buchanan Mall.

By 1960, about half of the core of Japantown had been razed. In 1966, SFRDA allowed the community to hire their own architects and planners to reshape the area between Post and Bush Streets, four blocks of the larger 43-block projects. Although not dedicated until 1986, the Japanese Community and Cultural Center of Northern California was also born from the redevelopment period. The 1963 Van Bourg/Nakamura and Okamoto plan called for a community center at the northwest corner of Buchanan

and Sutter streets, “complementary to the existing Young Women’s Christian Association facility.” The authors went on to state that, “it is important that the architecture represented by this building be equal to the best anywhere in the City. As a symbol of common interest and community effort, it represents more than simply the sum total of its functions.”

In 1974, the Nihonmachi Community Development Corporation secured the property at 1840 Sutter Street for the new organization, which had been incorporated the previous year. The first phase of the organization’s Japanese-style building was completed in 1986 and housed a variety of arts and community nonprofits, as well as the JCCCNC’s own programs. The JCCCNC’s design, by Nisei architect Wayne Osaki, features overt references to traditional Japanese architecture, as do several other buildings developed by and for the Nikkei community in recent decades. The Japanese American Association (Hokka Nichi Bei Kai) building on Sutter Street, as well as Konko-kyo Church and Sokoji Soto Zen Temple share with JCCCNC a visual vocabulary of half-timbered walls, peaked roofs with overhanging rafters, and gilded ornamentation in contrast to the more severe “Japanese modernism” of the commercial buildings such as the Japan Center or the Miyako Inn at Sutter and Buchanan. However, the A-2 phase of Redevelopment also destroyed 11,000 units of low-cost housing and replaced only 7,132 units of affordable housing. [from Japantown Better Neighborhoods Plan]

In 2020, an already endangered Japantown is facing new threats, due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The residential base of Japantown has long been displaced and eroded, and the unique cultural merchants and organizations serve as the cultural anchors of Japantown; however, they too face a serious threat to their very existence. In an atmosphere of declining cultural diversity, gentrification, affordable housing shortages, and multiple looming global crises, including climate change, there must be a coordinated effort to empower San Francisco’s unique cultural districts, to be a part of a vibrant, diverse, resilient City.

The history of Japantown is one of resilience and regeneration. It is the story of *gaman*, a Japanese term that can be roughly translated as “perseverance and patience,” but more accurately means enduring the seemingly unbearable with patience and dignity. It is a cultural value that helped the *Issei* -- first generation Japanese immigrants -- build a Japanese American community for their families that thrives today and will strive to do so into the future.

Within the broader context of San Francisco and the Bay Area, Japantown is a unique cultural enclave in a Eurocentric society within a majority minority region. In order for Japantown to realize its vision of an ecologically and culturally regenerative neighborhood, the Japanese and Japanese American community must heal from its history of displacement and emerge from its survival mentality. It must reclaim its unique cultural identity that is grounded in the ancient wisdom of Japanese traditions and reverence for nature and self-sufficiency.

The Japantown Cultural District is in a unique position to lead the J/JA community at a grass roots level, given its concentration of unique physical and cultural assets and organizations. The community does not want to see Japantown’s physical and cultural identity diminished or lost. Consistent with its values, it envisions a Japantown that would grow and regenerate as a place of its deeply rooted living culture. Through the strategies contained in this CHHESS report and their implementation in the Cultural District, the narrative and the spirit of J/JA culture in Japantown will endure and evolve, as an important segment of San Francisco’s multicultural society.

## C. HISTORICAL TIMELINE

- 1906** **Japantown moves to the Western Addition**, consolidating its enclaves from South of Market and Chinatown (though there was a Japanese community presence in the South of Market until the 1930s)
- 1942** President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, which forcibly removed and incarcerated over 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast, including some 5,280 Japanese Americans in San Francisco alone
- 1945** August -- U.S. drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Japan surrenders.  
September 4<sup>th</sup> -- General DeWitt issues Proclamation No. 24 revoking the exclusion orders and military restrictions against persons of Japanese ancestry  
Japanese Americans return to the West Coast
- 1948** The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency is created; much of Japantown is selected as one of the first large-scale urban renewal projects in the U.S.  
U.S. Supreme Court invalidated the California Alien Land Law, which denied gifts of land by immigrant Japanese to citizen children  
President Harry Truman signed the "Evacuation Claims Act" which paid less than 10 cents on the dollar for lost property only.
- 1951** U.S. Japan Peace Treaty signed at the Presidio of San Francisco
- 1952** June 11<sup>th</sup> – the McCarran Walter Immigration and Naturalization Act passed, upholding the national origin quota system established by the Immigration Act of 1924; it ended Asian exclusion from immigration and introduced a system of preferences based on skillsets and family reunification
- 1956** **Redevelopment Phase A-2** begins wholesale removal of residents and businesses by mass eviction, under eminent domain
- 1961** The San Francisco Chronicle reports on discussions between S.F. Mayor George Christopher, and members of the Japanese government about installing a pagoda at the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center
- 1962** Kintetsu Enterprises Company of America becomes involved with Japan Center project.

- 1963** Design of the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza was completed in April. Envisioned by renowned Nisei architect Minoru Yamasaki. Professor Yoshiro Taniguchi, Osaka University, designs the modern-style conical shaped Peace Pagoda, inspired by the Heian era, that symbolizes “peace.”
- 1966** A-2 Phase of Redevelopment begins
- 1967** The first Cherry Blossom Festival is organized
- 1968** The Peace Pagoda is dedicated and the *kurin* is ritually blessed in a public ceremony. The Grand Parade is held with Mayor Joseph Alioto as Grand Marshall. Third World students strike at San Francisco State College (now University) The Ethnic Studies Program is established at SFSC, chaired by James Hirabayashi, PhD., one of the founders of the Center for Japanese American Studies; the Asian American Studies movement is launched.
- 1970** Japanese Community Youth Council is the first non-profit community-based organization established in Japantown  
The National Council of the JACL adopts a resolution to see redress and reparations for the unconstitutional incarceration of Japanese Americans from 1942-45.
- 1974** The first Nihonmachi Street Fair is organized by the community, a two-day event celebrating the Bay Area’s Asian and Pacific Islander American communities
- 1976-80** Buchanan Mall is constructed between Post and Sutter Streets. Designed by African American/Japanese American architect Rai Okamoto; *Nisei* artist Ruth Asawa designs the Origami Fountains and the benches that commemorate Japanese American history installed on the block designated as “Osaka Way.”
- 1978** JACL National Council passes a resolution to seek \$25,000 for each individual interned; the National Redress Campaign is launched.
- 1979** First Day of Remembrance is held to commemorate the resilience of the Japanese Americans who were incarcerated by the signing of Executive Order 9066 in 1942.

- 1980** Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) is established to investigate the causes and impacts of EO 9066; National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (NCRR) is established.
- 1985** The Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in June urging the SFRA to preserve the Plaza as a permanent open space.
- 1987** S.F. Recreation and Park Commission votes to undertake eminent domain proceedings against the owner of Japan Center Peace Plaza  
 “A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the US Constitution” opens at the Smithsonian Institution with S.F.’s National Japanese American Historical Society as principal consultant for its collections.
- 1988** Civil Liberties Act – the redress bill is passed. Government issues a formal apology and eventual reparations to 60,000 surviving Japanese Americans wronged by E.O 9066.
- 1989** Nihonmachi Community persuades SF Recreation and Park Department to buy the Plaza as permanent open space.
- 1990** SF School Board unanimously adopts Day of Remembrance.  
 Ongoing problems with water leaking from the Plaza into the garage below leads to the permanent drainage of the reflecting pools and the removal of all landscaping.
- 1995** The San Francisco Board of Supervisors adopts Resolution No. 43-95: “Approving a Transfer of \$600,000 to the City and County of San Francisco to be Used for Rehabilitation of the Peace Plaza Western Addition A-1.”
- 1996** Soko Bukai (an organization of Japanese Christian Churches whose members formed the original Japanese YWCA) files a lawsuit with the S.F. YWCA to stop the sale of the Julia Morgan-designed building for refusing to honor the trust established to serve the interests of the Japanese community in San Francisco.
- 2000** Japantown Planning, Preservation and Development Task Force forms and produces “Community Needs Assessment and Recommendations” and “Concepts for the Japantown Community Plan”  
 Peace Plaza renovation begins, includes construction of new wall along Geary Boulevard.

- 2001** California State Legislature passed Senate Bill 307 that initiated the planning process to help preserve the last remaining Japantowns in California; Japanese Americans rally in support of communities under attack after 9/11, at Japantown Peace Plaza.
- 2002** After years of community activism, Soko Bukai settles the lawsuit against the UWCA which enables Nihonmachi Little Friends (NLF) to purchase the property for Japantown’s child development center.
- 2005** The San Francisco Japantown Landmark Dedication Ceremony is held which unveils the state of California sponsored landmark and marks San Francisco Japantown as a historical community.
- 2006** The 100th anniversary of Japantown in the Western Addition is celebrated with monthly events that provide an opportunity to celebrate the history, struggles, challenges and triumphs of the Japanese Americans in San Francisco and educate the general public about Japanese culture and heritage. **Preserving California Japantown Symposium**, the first historic gathering about the preservation of the three remaining Japantowns in America, is held. The 75th Anniversary of *Obon* is held on Post Street.
- 2006** Japanese Center and hotels are sold by Kintetsu International to 3D Investments, a family-owned company. based in Beverly Hills, CA.
- 2007** The Japantown History Walk, a permanent self-guided walking tour, which features the historical and culturally-significant events in Japantown’s 100 year history, is dedicated. The 50th Anniversary of the San Francisco-Osaka Sister City relationship is held. San Francisco Board of Supervisors approves a resolution to designate Osaka Way as an honorary street name.
- 2008** Japantown is designated as “Preserve America Community” under a White House initiative. This program recognizes and designates communities, including neighborhoods in large cities that protect and celebrate their heritage, use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization, and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs.
- 2010** The Sesquicentennial of the Japanese Embassy to the United States marks the 150th anniversary of the first Japanese diplomatic mission to the United States, the *Karin Maru*.
- 2011** The Great East Japan Earthquake and disaster occurred on March 10th. The Japanese American community responds by raising over \$4 million for relief, recovery and rebuilding.

*Kinmon Gakuen* (Golden Gate Institute), the first Japanese/Japanese American language school established in the United States celebrates its 100th anniversary.

60th Anniversary of Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Northern California

**2013** The Japanese Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHESS) was released in February, the first document in San Francisco to focus specifically on how to preserve and promote a neighborhood’s cultural heritage.

Resolutions in support of the JCHESS were unanimously adopted in October by the Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors.

**2015** Sundance sells Kabuki Theater to Carmike. The Geary Bus Rapid Transit draft Environmental Impact Report and Statement released.

**2016** Japantown establishes a Neighborhood Commercial District. Zoning Ordinance passes ensuring future protections for the community.

The 110 th anniversary of Japantown in the Western Addition is celebrated.

**2017** The Historic Preservation Commission recommends the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza Landmark Designation on June 21st.

Japantown Community Benefit District (CBD) is established on July 25th to provide environmental and economic enhancements to business property owners through tax assessments.

**2018** Japantown celebrates 50th anniversary of Peace Plaza and Pagoda

Process for Establishment of Cultural Districts passes. Japantown is recognized as a cultural district.

**2018 - 2019** San Francisco City and County recognize Japanese American family-owned businesses and nonprofits over 30-years-old as Legacy Businesses

**2019** Japantown’s Design guidelines begun in 2011 are completed, accepted and included in San Francisco’s Urban Design Guidelines.

**2019 – present** CCHES is guided by a two-year long community-wide outreach process.



## D. KEY FOCUS AREAS

This section addresses the seven Key Areas of Focus for the Japantown Cultural District. It discusses the Japantown-specific issues and problems raised by the community in each area of focus.

### 1. CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Cultural Competency is defined as the promotion of culturally-competent and culturally-appropriate City services and policies that encourage the health and safety of the community, culture, or ethnic groups in Cultural Districts; the promotion and strengthening of collaboration between the City and communities to maximize the understanding of cultural values and beliefs and pursue social equity within some of the City's most vulnerable communities; and the promotion of cross-cultural understanding and education by diversifying our historic narrative with the cultures of those who have been previously marginalized and misrepresented in dominant narratives.

Despite the popularity of Japanese cuisine and products, within San Francisco's diverse cosmology of cultures the richness and complexity of Japanese and Japanese American (J/JA) culture is neither fully appreciated nor deeply understood by the general population. As the J/JA population has dispersed and the Japantown neighborhood has shrunk, it is imperative that the J/JA community retain and cultivate Cultural Competency, so that its cultural identity is not lost. Opportunity for more exposure and education on J/JA culture is key. Cultural Competency is a way of thinking, feeling and being, or a cultural compass that guides individuals and a cultural group. J/JA Cultural Competency must guide and infuse the Japantown Cultural District work so that J/JA culture can be preserved and strengthened, even as it evolves and regenerates over time.

Unique Japanese cultural values include *Gaman* or Perseverance; *Jihi* or Compassion, *Wagou* or Harmony, *Seishin* or Spirit/Mind/Essence, *Isshoni* or Together, and *Chie* or Wisdom. These values have guided the J/JA community throughout its history in San Francisco, despite the trauma of its displacement by incarceration and urban renewal. Traditional Japanese art forms from *odori* (dance) to *Hogaku* (traditional Japanese music) that are underexposed and undervalued should be elevated and celebrated, as well as Japanese American writers like Janice Mirikitani and Hiroshi Kashiwagi whose unique JA perspective has enriched San Francisco's literary reputation.

Cultural Competency ensures that community infrastructure – building design, social services, public safety, public spaces – is designed and operated with a sensitivity to the diverse population that makes up Japantown and the broader J/JA community, and that City services respect Japantown's unique cultural identity and history.

### 2. REGENERATIVE, SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT FUTURES

Regenerative Sustainable Resilient Futures is generally defined as the support of movement toward culturally-, environmentally-, economically- and socially-regenerative communities that will be culturally-, environmentally-, economically-, and socially-resilient to health, energy, resource, economic, and climate-related disasters, while promoting the holistic wellbeing of the Cultural Districts.

When applied specifically to Japantown, this focus area must be viewed against Japantown's history of resilience and sustainability through crises and displacement -- rebuilding its physical and social infrastructure despite tremendous loss. Yet, even with the strength of its core community leaders and organizations, many J/JAs see Japantown as vulnerable and fragile, threatened yet again by economic downturn, gentrification and appropriation. Longtime community members rightfully sense a need to preserve and protect Japantown, for so much cultural and physical property has already been forcibly seized and changed. However, many in the broader J/JA community feel that their identity is not represented in Japantown as it currently exists, and have difficulty finding a way to connect. The Japanese-speaking/recent-immigrant community, mixed-ethnicity Japanese, and younger generations of the broader J/JA community dispersed throughout the Bay Area are a potential source of interest and energy. Young people especially -- children, teenagers, young adults, and young families -- are the future of Japantown. Their current lack of engagement is itself a point of fragility. Strategies that can harness the diversity and creativity of the broader community, increasing interconnectivity and cooperation, will build more sustainability and resilience for Japantown.

This fragility has been aggravated by the pandemic and the impacts on businesses and community organizations of shelter-in-place orders and public fear of the spread of the Coronavirus. In response, Japantown's constituents are actively doing as much as they can to rally resources, be creative and support their community and each other.

Sustaining the physical and cultural identity of Japantown also requires the continuity of its businesses and organizations, many of whom are struggling to develop succession plans. Without succession planning, an integral part of Japantown's uniqueness may be lost forever. Transmission of skills and knowledge is also a critical need. The J/JA community has already lost businesses based on traditional skills like making *kamaboko* (fishcake) and *sembei*, and cultivating tropical fish. Only one *manju-ya* remains. Holders of traditional skills have had difficulty finding apprentices. If there is a divide between generations of stakeholders, it must be bridged by mutual trust, respect and commitment. As the next generation demonstrates its commitment to Japantown's future, businesses and organizations must evolve to include and reflect their diversity and vision. This requires an openness to new ideas and leadership that the newer generations bring, as well as nurturing and incubating them with the wisdom and intelligence that reside within the culture. At the same time, Japantown needs to re-story and rebrand itself as Regenerative Japantown which highlights Japanese eco-culture in which tradition and innovation intersect. A thriving and stable Regenerative Japantown will cultivate an environment in which the J/JA culture is reimagined and reinterpreted, while preserving and promoting Japantown's diverse and unique cultural heritage.

A paradigm shift to a "Regenerative Japantown" eco-culture, goes beyond the sustainability of traditional J/JA culture, by reclaiming and reconnecting in deeper ways to the Japanese values and practices of living in harmony with the natural world and with each other: sufficiency without greed, mutual benefit and equity, sustainability and longevity. When extended to an entire community and its multiple social, economic, political and cultural systems, Regenerative practice can build capacity to heal and cultivate greater interconnectivity, reciprocity and resilience.

There are a number of challenges and impediments to a “Regenerative Japantown” culture. Emphasis on nature, i.e. *Midori* (or green), is important to Japanese culture; Japantown as it exists has too much concrete and too little natural space. The ecosystem of Japantown was torn up by a Redevelopment process that lasted 20 years.

Being dependent on visitors to drive the economy is dangerous in times of crises. One elder of the community said, “I used to be able to walk to get everything that I needed within Japantown.” In order to be resilient, Japantown’s local economy must meet the essential needs of its community and residents, rather than simply cater to visitors and tourists. The lack of affordable housing for the community, and as well as limited land ownership, presents additional obstacles to community self-determination by prohibiting an active residential base. Further, Japantown has become greatly dependent on City funding and struggles to develop independent sustainable revenue streams. Limited opportunities for workforce development discourage participation by those just entering the jobs market.

A regenerative, sustainable and resilient future for Japantown requires that its community and culture provide opportunities for engagement by its multiple constituencies, and new leadership and innovation, while remaining rooted in its traditional foundation. It must also secure property ownership and funding by and for the J/JA community, so that the neighborhood has control over its destiny and its economy can serve the needs of the local and broader J/JA community.

### **3. LAND USE**

Land Use in the Japantown Cultural District involves preserving, redesigning and expanding Japantown’s unique physical and social infrastructure. The Cultural District must ensure that existing and new structures, buildings, and spaces reflect and enrich the culture, history, and needs of Japantown.

Since the sunset of Redevelopment in the early 2000’s, Japantown has been engaged in a number of community planning processes around land use and other important issues. Various land use planning studies and reports were produced by the community and/or the City, which led to zoning regulations to control land use, density, open space, and other planning parameters for privately owned property in Japantown. These reports and regulations are foundational to future land use planning efforts in Japantown. They include: Better Neighborhoods Plan (2009), JCHESS (2013), Japantown Special Use District (2006), Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District (2017), and the Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines (2019). Other ongoing City projects in and adjacent to Japantown have involved community participation, including the Geary Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and implementation of the Better Streets Plan.

The key land use issues facing Japantown include the following:

- a) The impacts of Redevelopment have not been remedied. Due to dispossession, the community owns very little land, therefore has very little control in determining the direction of its own future development. (No land, no community control or self-determination)
- b) Japantown lacks a clear and cohesive development vision, which makes it vulnerable to speculative development.

- c) Some of the existing buildings and outdoor spaces which were built in the 1960's and 1970's have concrete windowless facades which some J/JAs view as unfriendly and unattractive, and not environmentally sustainable, with few connections to nature. Opportunities for buildings and outdoor spaces to support a stronger pedestrian experience, connection, health and reduced carbon should be leveraged.
- d) Changing zoning and permitting requirements to alleviate the impacts of the pandemic should be exploited, especially opportunities to combine uses, repurpose vacant storefronts, activate streets and open space, etc. to advance Japantown's vision.
- e) Japantown lacks social and organizing spaces for young adults, as well as multigenerational social gathering spaces in Japantown.
- f) The Japan Center Malls Covenant Agreements should be reviewed, as the 15-year ownership retention period ends in 2021 and the future of the covenants and the property is uncertain, and unique small businesses that serve as cultural anchors are vulnerable to closure.
- g) Japantown lacks below-market rate housing for J/ JA community members, especially for families, artists, and younger generations.
- h) Japantown lacks new Japanese businesses and incentives to attract them.

#### 4. CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABILITY

Cultural Heritage Conservation will preserve the cultural and historic resources of Japantown with a goal to promote cultural connections to Japantown and to make Japantown an environment that will nurture expressions of culture and history for the community.

Japantown's cultural heritage was diminished when Japanese and Japanese Americans facing incarceration during World War II were forced to sell or abandon their land, residences, and businesses. Family heirlooms and treasured items -- photo albums, *kimono*, scrolls, *ningyo* dolls and Japanese books were left behind, rendered useless or burnt. Many destroyed anything "Japanese" for fear of being associated with "the enemy," and culture, heritage, and family histories were lost.

In 1965, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency initiated its urban renewal program for the Western Addition. This eroded the physical framework for the cultural heritage of the community. Single-family homes and Victorian-style multi-unit residences were torn down to widen Geary Street into an eight-lane boulevard and to make room for new construction. Office buildings, small businesses storefronts, grocery stores, retail stores, and restaurants were relocated to other parts of San Francisco and removed from both the community customer base they served and the support of neighboring merchants and businesses. Many did not survive the move.

The term "cultural heritage" encompasses several aspects; among them: **tangible** cultural heritage (such as paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts); **immovable** cultural heritage (such as monuments, archaeological sites, historic buildings); **intangible** cultural heritage (such as oral traditions, performing arts, rituals); and **natural** cultural heritage (natural sites with cultural aspects such as cultural landscapes).

Even with the loss of items during World War II, Japantown has three repositories of cultural resources - the Japanese American National Library/Center for Japanese American Studies, the Japanese American

Archives at the JCCNC, and the National Japanese American Historic Society Gallery and Archives. In addition, the Western Addition branch of the San Francisco Public Library houses Japanese collections.

The Japantown Cultural District program is committed to safeguarding the historical, social, and cultural assets of our community to strengthen understanding and appreciation of the significant place the Japanese community holds in the history and culture of San Francisco. The key issues around Cultural Heritage facing Japantown include:

- a) Japantown should be a place where arts groups, cultural organizations, and artists can get support to secure resources, funding, and space.
- b) The Japan Center Malls covenant agreements must be reviewed and strengthened to ensure that the Center retains a Japanese theme in both physical design and types of businesses. The future of the Japan Center buildings will have major implications for cultural heritage in Japantown.
- c) Japantown's historic buildings and landscapes such as the Buchanan Mall (Osaka Way), Peace Plaza, and Kinmon Gakuen should be protected and preserved as historic cultural landmarks and rehabilitated to extend their lifecycle. More natural physical elements are needed, such as a community garden, rooftop gardens and open spaces.
- d) Japantown's Legacy businesses and other culturally-relevant businesses must be preserved and protected.
- e) Japantown's connections to other culturally important sites and cultural institutions in San Francisco and the Bay Area need to be strengthened
- f) Collaborations between property / business owners and the community should be developed to mutually enhance the space through arts and cultural activities and experiences.

## 5. ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and Culture in Japantown should grow, develop, and sustain Japanese American and Japanese artists and creative activities - traditional, contemporary, and experimental - that express the beliefs, customs, and soul of the Japanese and Japanese American community. The Japanese American arts and culture community involves a rich array of arts and artists that flows across all creative spectra including visual arts, martial arts, performing arts, acting, theater, writing, poetry, and all forms of music both traditional and contemporary. San Francisco has been home to Japanese American pioneers in all genres of the arts:

- Janice Mirikitani, who founded the Third World Press, is the second Poet Laureate of San Francisco. City Lights, the iconic North Beach bookstore, was managed and curated for many years by Shig Murao.
- Sachiko Nakamura founded the Asian American Dance Collective here. *Ito Yosakoi* was founded in January 2017 to promote *yosakoi* dance as a cultural art and support the Japanese American community.
- Brenda Wong Aoki is the first nationally-recognized Asian American storyteller in the country. Eric and Mark Hayashi helped found the pioneer Asian American Theater Company. Yuriko Doi founded the Theatre of Yugen, which has been presenting classic *Kyogen* in English as well as original plays and adaptations of classical plays, infused by *Noh* and *Kyogen* over 40 years.

- George Yoshida was a pioneer swing musician, and Gerald Oshita was a Sansei pioneer in the avant garde jazz scene. Mark Izu is in the Grove Dictionary of Music as a founder of the new genre, Asian American Jazz. In 1981, the Asian American Jazz Festival, the first of its kind, was founded in the City.
- The San Francisco Taiko Dojo founded by Seiichi Tanaka brought Japanese taiko drumming to America and has taught over 10,000 students in its 50 years of existence.
- Japantown Art and Media Workshop (JAM/JTAM) was a collective of artists in multiple media -- printmaking, photography, poetry, literature and graphic arts -- whose work reflected the changes in both the community and the world around them, documenting critical events and promoting the community through graphic design. Nihonmachi Streetfair, founded in 1973, began as a four-booth event built on the strength of the youth in Japantown, and has continued for the past 46 years to become an annual celebration of the City's diverse Asian Pacific American communities.

At the same time, while traditional Japanese arts like *buyo*, *shakuhachi*, *koto*, *ikebana* and calligraphy have been part of Japantown's history, they lack visibility. The arts and culture community is dispersed and lacks synergy, their connections and ties to Japantown tenuous.

The key Arts and Culture issues in Japantown to be addressed include:

- a) Japantown lacks space where artists can gather, share, create, and perform.
- b) Arts and Culture activities can activate underutilized community spaces.
- c) Artists struggle to earn a wage to support themselves, especially with COVID-19.
- d) The next generation of artists needs to be nurtured.
- e) Artists need a platform and a cultural home where we engage with and uplift each other's work.
- f) Artists need to create new work *to sustain* a living culture."
- g) The arts and culture community need unified advocacy, promotion, and marketing.
- h) Artists of color, including J/JA artists, and arts groups are underserved with needed resources, services and training.
- i) Artists need mechanisms for communication, connection and support; consider a collective or committee with *funding* and dedicated Arts and Culture program staff.
- j) Artists and arts and culture groups need to collaborate with each other and other existing groups, such as the Japantown Community Benefits District.
- k) Artists should develop partnerships with Japanese companies and connections to Japan.

## 6. ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Economic and Workforce Development reinforces the historic importance of economic opportunity as a force for stability, opportunity, and resiliency for the Japantown community. Its goal is to promote and develop economic opportunity and employment to make Nihonmachi a destination that nurtures culturally relevant businesses and nurtures legacy businesses.

Japantown's restaurants, gift shops, and specialty stores attract San Franciscans and residents of the greater Bay Area. Moreover, they make Japantown an important cog in the tourist industry of San Francisco. Japantown is also the home to community service organizations, that are businesses and employers. Additionally, they draw people from around the city to Japantown and add to the customer

base. Building on that foundation, Japantown's economy must evolve and cultivate next generation and social entrepreneurship through incubation of new businesses and new community leadership.

The key Economic & Workforce Development issues facing Japantown include:

- a) Japantown needs a comprehensive marketing plan for a Regenerative Japantown.
- b) Japantown's business community needs to develop a unified voice.
- c) Japantown's businesses need skill-building resources and technical assistance.
- d) The long-term viability of Legacy Businesses needs to be determined.
- e) New, culturally relevant businesses, which promote traditional and contemporary Japanese culture are needed in Japantown, such as authentic Japanese health food shops and restaurants, outdoor food halls and markets, trendy hot spots, and experiences such as Ryokan-like lodging.
- f) There needs to be a greater focus on unique experiences that keep people in Japantown.
- g) The Japan Center Malls covenant agreements must be reviewed, strengthened and enforced to protect existing businesses in the Malls.

## **7. TENANT PROTECTIONS**

Tenant Protections focuses on securing Japantown's future as an affordable home to residents, organizations that serve the community, and businesses that reflect the needs and interests of the community. It is about making Japantown a thriving, diverse, and vibrant livable neighborhood.

The key Tenant Protection issues facing Japantown include:

- a) The Japantown community has limited property available on which to develop new rental units and housing.
- b) Residential and commercial tenants have a common need for information and resources.
- c) There is a need for tenants, residents, and property owners to address the issues of Japantown with a unified voice.
- d) The future of the Japan Center Malls is a critical area of concern for small business tenants; any redevelopment to the malls has the potential to cause massive displacement of small businesses, through construction disruption and subsequently, higher leases, if not managed correctly.
- e) For there to be tenants, there needs to be people. Displacement of the Japantown community continues to be a community challenge that needs to be addressed.
- f) The closure of the Japan Center Malls, and diminished revenues make it difficult for business tenants to pay rent and survive.

## E. CHALLENGES ADDRESSED BY TACTICS

### STRATEGY A: Preserve, Sustain and Develop Japantowns' Physical and Cultural Assets in support of the Japanese and Japanese American Community.

#### CHALLENGES

	Survival of Japantown businesses during and post-COVID-19 shutdown	Need for space and tools to connect, create and perform/exhibit by the Japantown arts & culture community	Business information and infrastructure support for Japantown small businesses, arts & cultural groups, and independent artists	The erosion of Japantowns' high-quality Japanese-oriented character/flavor or <i>miyoku</i>	The Japan Center Malls covenant agreements and their impact on Japantowns' future	Need for a central collaborative platform for Japantown	Minimal engagement & leadership of young adults in Japantown	Lack of a unified marketing plan for Japantown businesses and cultural activities	Limited community-controlled land and space for growth and development in Japantown	Need for cohesive preservation and development vision for Japantown
Tactic 1: Strategic Plan For JCM	√	√		√	√				√	√
Tactic 2: Underutilized spaces for community needs	√	√		√			√		√	
Tactic 3: Support Improvements to Peace Plaza	√			√					√	√
Tactic 4: Engage in Planning Dept. Housing Element		√		√	√		√		√	√
Tactic 5: Japantown Preservation/Development Vision Master Plan	√	√		√	√				√	√
Tactic 6: Support Improvements to Buchanan Mall	√			√						√
Tactic 7: Preservation of Historic Buildings and Structures		√							√	√
Tactic 8: Establish a CDC/CLT/CIF or a Similar Mechanism		√	√	√	√				√	√
Tactic 9: Develop Culturally Competent Affordable Housing		√		√	√		√		√	√



**STRATEGY B: Equip, Protect and Support Small Businesses, the Arts and Culture Community, and Organizations in Japantown with Resources and Infrastructure.**

**CHALLENGES**

	Survival of Japantown businesses during and post-COVID-19 shutdown	Need for space and tools to connect, create and perform/exhibit by the Japantown arts & culture community	Business information and infrastructure support for Japantown small businesses, arts & cultural groups, and independent artists	The erosion of Japantowns' high-quality Japanese-oriented character/flavor or <i>miriyoku</i>	The Japan Center Malls covenant agreements and their impact on Japantowns' future	Need for a central collaborative platform for Japantown	Minimal engagement & leadership of young adults in Japantown	Lack of a unified marketing plan for Japantown businesses and cultural activities	Limited community-controlled land and space for growth and development in Japantown	Need for cohesive preservation and development vision for Japantown
Tactic 1: Create a <u>Virtual</u> and <u>Physical</u> Small Business & Artists Assistance and Media Center	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		
Tactic 2: Develop <u>Virtual</u> & <u>Physical</u> Intergenerational Co-Creative/Co-working/Multi-Use Arts Gathering Spaces/Gallery Space with Recurring Micro-Events Programming	√	√	√	√		√	√			√
Tactic 3: Build More Cultural and Environmental Programming into Arts, Community Organizations and Businesses with Focus on Japanese Traditional Eco-Culture				√			√			
Tactic 4: Create an Intergenerational Community Permaculture Edible Garden w/ Programming				√			√			
Tactic 5: Establish an SF Japantown Arts Action Committee	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		

**STRATEGY C: Empower, Advocate for and Proactively Promote Japantown – its Past, Present and Future – with the City, Donors/Investors, Japanese and Japanese American Entities, and the Public.**

**CHALLENGES**

	Survival of Japantown businesses during and post-COVID-19 shutdown	Need for space and tools to connect, create and perform/exhibit by the Japantown arts & culture community	Business information and infrastructure support for Japantown small businesses, arts & cultural groups, and independent artists	The erosion of Japantowns' high-quality Japanese-oriented character/flavor or <i>miriyoku</i>	The Japan Center Malls covenant agreements and their impact on Japantowns' future	Need for a central collaborative platform for Japantown	Minimal engagement & leadership of young adults in Japantown	Lack of a unified marketing plan for Japantown businesses and cultural activities	Limited community-controlled land and space for growth and development in Japantown	Need for cohesive preservation and development vision for Japantown
Tactic 1: Increase Fundraising and Marketing Capacity, and Partnerships to Ensure Long-term Sustainability and to Support CHHESS Strategies	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		√
Tactic 2: Explore an Appropriate Model for a Japantown Community Council or Consortium	√				√	√	√	√		√
Tactic 3: Initiate inclusive intergenerational conversations about Japantown's history of displacement and its impacts on the community.				√		√	√		√	√
Tactic 4: Explore a Visitor Center to be located inside the Japan Center Malls (Virtual & Physical)	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		
Tactic 5: Develop Partnerships and Collaborations with (JETRO), the City, Japanese Companies and Eco-Initiatives, Other Japantowns and Networks.	√			√			√			

**F. CAPABILITIES REQUIRED**

This section describes the capabilities required to implement the proposed short and medium-term tactics in the next three to five years and produce the preferred or preferable outcomes. The capabilities are organized into community-building capabilities and technical capabilities. Community-building capabilities involve processes that lead to empowerment and self-determination, which are needed across and within the multiple segments and constituencies within the Japantown community. Technical capabilities are skills and expertise needed in the community to execute the tactics in pursuit of its strategies. These may not be needed by all constituencies or segments of the community, depending on the tactics to be implemented. Some capabilities already exist in the community; others need to be acquired or procured.

### Community-Building Capabilities

1. Deeper and broader personal and organizational networking and dialogue
2. Matching/leveraging individual skills and interests with opportunities to engage and act
3. Change management and conflict resolution
4. Enhanced coordination, communication and information sharing
5. Shared collaborative leadership (vs. centralized competitive leadership)
6. Recruitment and development of younger leaders
7. Relationship building with institutional and government leaders and foundations/donors

### Technical Capabilities

8. Resource sharing
9. Coaching for individuals and organizations
10. Strategic and business planning expertise
11. Needs-assessment and survey expertise
12. Historical research, curation and content management expertise
13. Web development and management expertise
14. Grant writing and procurement expertise
15. Volunteer management
16. Financial management and investment expertise
17. Real estate development and planning expertise
18. Marketing expertise and support
19. Legal expertise
20. Permitting and licensing expertise
21. Graphic design, desktop publishing and video/photography production skills
22. Fundraising skills
23. Project management skills
24. Facilities management and space optimization expertise
25. Architectural design expertise, especially in sustainable design
26. Landscape design expertise, especially in Japanese landscape design

## **G. INDICATORS OF SUCCESS**

This section describes the key indicators of success in implementing the strategies and tactics needed to achieve the overarching goals of the Japantown Cultural District. There are multiple possible scenarios for implementing the strategies and tactics, which produce different outcomes. Outcomes will differ based on the amount of support and partnerships involved in the tactic. This section describes indicators of success that measure aspirational outcomes, as opposed to probable outcomes.

First, indicators of success that describe success in implementing the strategies and tactics needed to achieve the overarching goals will be listed below. After that, key indicators of success will be defined for each of the tactics.

## **Overarching Indicators of Success:**

1. Breadth and Depth of Community Engagement and Confidence  
Measurements: constituencies involved, quantity/quality of participation, level of inclusion and respect for multiple community voices, level of connection with and optimism for Japantown
2. Completion of Community-Supported Agreements with the JCM Owners and the City
3. Capacity-Building of Existing Community Organizations, Businesses, Arts and Culture Community, Institutions  
Measurements: Skills-/expertise-building, networking, enabling infrastructure support
4. Involvement of and Shared Authority with Younger Generation Working Together with Elder Community Stakeholders  
Measurements: quantity/quality of involvement by younger people (under 40 years old), succession plans for elder community leaders
5. Completion of physical improvements and development of properties and cultural landscape of Japantown, consistent with an overall vision for Japantown's physical presence
6. Greater occupancy of underutilized spaces in Japantown with uses that meet high priority community needs
7. Greater visibility and reach to those unfamiliar with Japantown within and beyond Japantown's physical boundaries  
Measurements: Number of visitors and customers in Japantown (virtual and physical), funding from and investment by new donors/investors, more media placements of Japantown and its events
8. Financial security of small businesses, arts and culture groups, and community institutions in Japantown
9. Creation of mechanism(s) for ensuring that the long-term stewardship of both public and private property in Japantown supports and strengthens the Japanese and Japanese American community in San Francisco and its legacy  
Example: Community Development Corporation, Community Land Trust or Community Investment Fund
10. Stronger relationships with and support from property owners, City and donors/investors for the Japantown Community and Cultural District

## **Indicators of Success for Each Tactic**

### **A. Preserve, Sustain and Develop Japantown's Physical and Cultural Assets in support of the Japanese American and Japanese Community.**

#### ***SHORT-TERM TACTICS***

1. **Develop and Implement a Strategic Plan to Address the Japan Center Malls (JCM) Covenant Agreements and the Future of the Malls, and Negotiate Benefits Agreements with JCM Owners**
  - a) A strategic plan is developed for the Japan Center Malls;
  - b) Information about the Covenant Agreements is disseminated widely through the community;

- c) A Community Needs Assessment is conducted through various methods including a survey/assessment of the community's vision and needs in fiscal year (FY) 2020-2021. May be accomplished by JCMTC in collaboration with community council;
  - d) A stronger covenant agreement is developed with property owners of Japan Center Malls.
- 2. Work with Property Owners and Community Organizations to Identify, Secure and Occupy Underutilized Space to Meet Community Needs**
    - a) An assessment of spaces for potential use is conducted and made accessible by 2021;
    - b) Partnerships are developed with property owners and space is activated by community in 2022.
  - 3. Support Improvements to Peace Plaza**
    - a) The Peace Plaza renovation project is approved by San Francisco voters in FY 2020-2021;
    - b) The Peace Plaza renovation project construction begins.
  - 4. Engage in the Housing Element development process during 2020-2022 led by the Planning Department to ensure Japantown's housing needs are addressed in this City policy document.**
    - a) Conduct survey of housing needs across constituencies and segments of Japantown;
    - b) Work with property owners to identify strategies for meeting housing needs in existing housing and future new housing;
    - c) Housing Element reflects housing needs for Japantown and strategies for meeting them.

***SHORT-TERM TO MEDIUM-TERM TACTICS***

- 5. Develop a Japantown Preservation and Development Vision Master Plan**
  - a) Support and partnerships for a Japantown Vision Master Plan is developed in FY 2020-2021
  - b) A Japantown Vision Master Plan is developed
  - c) Sustainable, green spaces are actively increased in Japantown
- 6. Support Improvements to Buchanan Mall (Osaka Way) in Collaboration with the Nihonmachi Parking Corporation (NPC) and the Japantown Community Benefits District (JCBD)**
  - a) A Strategic plan is developed for Buchanan Mall;
  - b) JCBD is successful in securing funding and approval from the City for Buchanan Mall; improvements as described in Strategic plan.
- 7. Utilize Tools for Preservation of Historic Buildings and Structures**
  - a) Confirm inventory of historic buildings and structures per 2013 JCHES; confirm with property owners their consent to and support of preservation efforts;
  - b) Retain consultant to prepare documentation needed for historic preservation programs;
  - c) Submit documentation to agencies/entities for historic designation/preservation;
  - d) Work with property owners to apply for funds for conservation and renovation projects.
- 8. Establish a Community Development Corporation/ Community Land Trust/Community**

### **Investment Fund or a Similar Mechanism**

- a) Research for a CDC/CLT/Community Impact Fund are continued in FY 2020-2021;
- b) Presentations and advice from other CDC/CLT/CIFs are obtained in FY 2020-2021;
- c) A plan for a CDC/CLT/CIF is developed and funded;
- d) A mechanism for communications between property owners selling, and the community to have the right of first refusal will be developed;
- e) A CDC/CLT/CIF is developed and begins its operations.

### **LONG-TERM TACTICS**

#### **9. Work with Property Owners, Developers and the City to Develop Culturally-Competent Affordable Housing with Preferences**

- a) Mechanisms are created and negotiated to secure in new affordable housing, preferences for descendants of COP Holders, employees of community-based nonprofit organizations, community-based artists, and multiple generations of the community;
- b) Assuming new housing is a mix of market-rate and affordable housing, required amounts of affordable housing by unit type and affordability levels are identified and negotiated with developers;
- c) A CDC/CLT/CIF is involved in the development and ownership/management of new affordable housing;
- d) Develop a mechanism where existing affordable units are transferred to younger members of the community.

#### **B. Equip, Protect and Support the Arts and Culture Community and Businesses in Japantown with Resources and Infrastructure.**

### **IMMEDIATE AND SHORT-TERM TACTICS**

#### **1. Create a Virtual *and* Physical Small Business & Artists Assistance and Media Center**

- a) A stronger online presence, one-stop shop is developed through a well curated website platform that connects all community organizations and businesses, resources, as well as an integrated shopping platform, and media outlet for small businesses and artists in FY 2020-2021;
- b) Increased traffic and visibility to the Japantown Cultural District website;
- c) Partnerships are developed with JETRO, JCCNC, and the Japanese Consulates' JICC;
- d) Partnerships are developed with Business Coaches in FY 2020-2021.

#### **2. Develop Virtual *and* Physical Intergenerational Co-Creative/Co-working/Collaboration Multi-Use Arts Gathering Spaces/Gallery Space with Recurring Micro-Events Programming**

- a) A stronger online presence, one-stop shop is developed through a well curated website platform that connects all community organizations and artists;
- b) Develop 5 new micro-events in Japantown in 2020;
- c) Identify and create availability for a gallery and performance space ;
- d) Engage and promote multiple artists of the community;
- e) Develop a revolving fund for artists.

### ***MEDIUM-TERM TACTICS***

#### **3. Build More Cultural and Environmental Programming into Arts, Community Organizations and Businesses with Focus on Japanese Traditional Eco-Culture.**

- a) Funding for Cultural and Environmental Programming is secured;
- b) Curators and Content managers are identified for Cultural Japanese Eco-Culture Programming;
- c) Arts, Community Organizations and Businesses who are sponsoring Japanese Eco-culture programs and events are identified;
- d) Program presenters and practitioners are secured for an annual calendar of programs and events;
- e) Publicity for the programs and events is developed and distributed;
- f) Broad J/JA and Japantown community support and participation in the programs and events are generated.

#### **4. Explore an Intergenerational Community Permaculture Edible Garden with Programming**

- a) A site for the Garden is identified and secured;
- b) A plan for the creation of the garden is developed;
- c) Funding and volunteers for creation and maintenance of the garden is secured;
- d) The Garden and its physical infrastructure are constructed;
- e) Programming for the Garden's activities and interpretation is developed;
- f) Publicity for the Garden is developed and spread;
- f) Intergenerational participation in the Garden is generated.

#### **5. Establish an SF Japantown Arts Action Committee**

- a) In conjunction with the Intergenerational Co-Creative Multi-Use Arts Gathering Spaces (see above), the online website is used to create a directory of artists, creatives and culture-bearers;
- b) A small group of artists is formed to explore the creation of an Arts Action Committee;
- c) A pilot of the Arts Action Committee is conducted on specific initiatives;
- d) A nonprofit fiscal sponsor for the Arts Action Committee is secured;
- e) The Arts Action Committee is launched, if the pilot is successful.

#### **C. Empower, Advocate for and Proactively Promote Japantown – its Past, Present and Future – with the City, Donors/Investors, Japanese and Japanese American Entities and the Public.**

### ***IMMEDIATE AND SHORT-TERM TACTICS***

#### **1. Increase Fundraising and Marketing Capacity and Partnerships to Ensure Long-Term Sustainability and to Support CHHESS Strategies**

- a) Fundraising capacity in the Japantown Cultural District and existing Japantown organizations is deepened and expanded;
- b) A unified Japantown marketing plan is developed with existing and new community organizations and businesses;

- c) Unified Japantown social media accounts are enhanced and actively promoting artists, organizations, and businesses
- d) The Japantown Cultural District has developed a business plan and increased its revenue streams;
- e) Relationships to companies, foundations and sponsors/investors who may not currently be linked to Japantown are developed;
- f) Central online fundraising resource for businesses and organizations is developed;
- g) Networks with other entities on common problem solving are developed, leading to greater access to philanthropy;
- h) More social entrepreneurship and new funding vehicles are formed.

**2. Explore the Appropriate Model for a San Francisco Japantown community council or consortium**

- a) The objectives of a Japantown community council or consortium are established;
- b) Various models for a community council or consortium are studied and a preferred model is selected;
- c) A Japantown community council or consortium is formed;
- d) The SFJCC begins to hold regular meetings;
- e) The SFJCC develops and circulates “Cultural Competency” material.

**3. Initiate inclusive intergenerational conversations about Japantown’s history of displacement and its impacts on the community, as part of the broader communities of color in America**

- a) A plan for the intergenerational conversations on displacement is developed;
- b) Facilitators and discussion group participants are identified;
- c) A series of iterative conversations are held, including feedback loops and follow-up;
- d) New community leadership emerges.

**4. Explore a Visitor Center to be located inside the Japan Center Malls (Virtual & Physical)**

- a) The Visitor Center serves functions for the “Intergenerational co-creative space” and “Small Business, Artist Assistance Media Center;”
- b) Partnerships with JICC, JCCNC and JETRO are developed and promoted through the Visitor Center;
- c) A staff or volunteer mechanism is developed for the Visitor Center;
- d) Content of the monitor is linked to the Online platform;
- e) Number of people who are informed about Japantown events, organizations and spaces has doubled;
- f) Feedback that visitors are more engaged in Japantown activities.

***MEDIUM-TERM TACTICS (2023 – 2026)***

**5. Develop Partnerships and Collaborations with the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), the City, Japanese Companies and Eco-Initiatives, and Other Japantowns and Networks.**

- a) Partnerships with JICC, JCCNC, and JETRO are strengthened;



- c) Partnerships with the City through the Planning Department, Office of Resilience and Recovery, Regenerative City Assessment and Grid Design are developed;
- d) Partnerships with the Shop & Dine Initiative and “SF Biz Connect” are developed;
- e) Relationships with Japanese Eco-Initiatives are explored and developed, if desired;
- f) Statewide Japantown collaborations are developed and strengthened;
- g) Relationships and collaborations with other cultural districts and neighboring communities are strengthened and increased.

## H. FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

### a) **ARTS AND CULTURE (Attendees: 35)**

KEY WORDS: Communications, Assistance, Platform, Activate Spaces (underutilized spaces and empty storefronts) micro-events, Tradition & Innovation (Ancient Fresh), Re-storying, creative resistance

**Narrative:** Currently Artists in Japantown are dispersed, need more synergy, and spaces where they can connect, create, collaborate, and exhibit in Japantown. Japantown could be better activated through the arts, and micro-events/ outward facing public programs, which brings a mutual benefit to shop owners, property owners, the community at large and the livelihood in Japantown day and night, especially in empty, yet high visibility locations. They also need more support in gaining exposure, funding, marketing, media-coverage, and centralized platforms for co-creation. Next generations artists need mentorship in all of the above as well as grant-writing, and access to versatile professional spaces that accommodate a range of audience sizes. Artist in residence, Pop-up shows, “Adopt an Artist,” Japantown “Open Studios,” “artist collectives,” “culture schools,” “media buzz,” and revolving funds were also desired. Artists have also emphasized the Spirit of Japanese culture and the necessity for intergenerational exchange, and bridging tradition and innovation through the creation of new arts, culture, and traditions to keep the culture alive. Ecological aspects of Japanese culture to be expressed in arts is a great example. Next generations artists must be empowered. Japantown also needs to connect to other parts of the City.

#### **Community Needs/ Challenges:**

- J-town Arts community needs more synergy
- Japanese Cultural and Arts groups are dispersed in Bay Area- not many live here
- Living in Japantown organically creates community- opportunities for interaction
- Nothing to consistently bring artists to J-town anymore
- Need to be able to fund artists
- Artists need space to rehearse and perform (They need a platform) but don’t know how to access spaces in Japantown
- Japantown is becoming Koreatown
- Japantown needs more energy/ life/ micro-events
- Japantown needs more music, life, happy hours, and nightlife
- Transmission of Wisdom through intergenerational art spaces
- Evolution of culture through the creation of new arts

### **Proposed Solutions/ Opportunities:**

- Increase Communications, Assistance, Platform, Space, Activate underutilized spaces and -empty storefronts (empty spaces are sad)
- Arts Based Micro-Events Planning
- Artists Assistance Center could help get funding
- Activate underutilized spaces through Co-Creative/ Co-working Space which are multi-use (need a Usage Directory)
- Bring artists and organizations under one tent- right now everyone is doing their own little thing
- Create Inter-disciplinary arts, a consistent rhythm of Arts events
- Ask Artists what they need in a space- would they come back to J-town?
- Create Partnerships with storefronts
- Bridge Businesses with Artist Experiences
- Activate Nightlife for young Adults
- Affordable housing for Community-based Artists
- Create a platform for visibility for artists -media coverage and publicity (People Don't know what's going on in Japantown!)
- Fundraising through getting publicity – MORE EXPOSURE!
- Develop Partnerships with Japanese Companies and increase connection to Japan through Japanese Consul's Info Center and the JCCNC
- Protect Arts Spaces
- Get account at Internet Archive for arts and culture to be carried forward into the future
- Create a Centralized location and calendar where all arts information goes
- Centralized resource for artists (Fiscal sponsor help etc.)
- A Vehicle for communication-where opportunities can be posted and listed
- Next generation of artists needs mentorship, grant-writing help, space for performance
- A Cultural Strategists/Arts Curator needed (under assistance center)
- Art Action Committee and/ or Collective to make it easy for artists to connect with each other and share resources
- Adopt an Artist – A fund to donate money to artists (form Japanese companies) (funding)
- Need a versatile space for gallery and performances
- So many amazing craft artists- popup shops and art shows in empty store fronts?
- Mend Disconnect between Artists and Property owners- Artists make a space attractive!

### **b) CULTURAL HERITAGE SUSTAINABILITY: (Attendees 30)**

**Narrative:** To preserve and sustain J/JA Culture, empowering and developing shared spaces for artists is essential. Historical tours could be expanded to use tools such as apps, and virtual tours to increase engagement. Preservation tools should be used for historical sites. Tourists need to be oriented better to the history and places to visit in Japantown; a visitor center and wayfinding signage would be helpful. Japantown needs more green spaces, to create a more welcoming atmosphere. More nightlife, performances and arts-based events such as open mics would create a vibrant culture in Japantown. Japantowns' "So-called borders" have changed over time; Japantown has many connections beyond those borders that should be enhanced; a majority of the community resides outside of Japantown.

Partnerships with spaces like the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park, and the Asian Art Museum should be enhanced.

**Community Needs/ Challenges:**

- “Japantown doesn’t feel like Japantown anymore”
- “Culturally relevant retail businesses [are] declining”
- The next generation needs to be activated
- A stronger connection to Japan should be developed
- “What is the future of the Japan Center Malls?”

**Proposed Solutions/ Opportunities:**

- The concept of “kumi-ai” (Unity)
- Leverage technology to transmit culture
- Arts and Cultural events to activate the space

**c) LAND USE: (Participants: 35)**

**Narrative:** Land Use shapes and impacts all aspects of Japantown ranging from community and social dynamics, arts and culture, small businesses, housing, transportation, community spaces, and impacts generations of the Japantown community. The history of multiple waves of displacement, dispossession of land, the diminishment of its physical footprint, and never ceasing development pressures continue to present challenges to preserving the Japantowns’ cultural character and sustaining an authentic, thriving, vibrant culture. Small businesses are an integral cultural anchor for Japantown, however, they are struggling and need assistance. Existing businesses must be supported and opportunities for young culturally relevant entrepreneurs must be developed as well. Any future development needs to be reflective of community needs and approached carefully. Future Covenants with Developers need to have more teeth and the community as a party. Currently, there is not enough welcoming community gathering spaces with “stay-ability.” Arts spaces, green spaces, and gardens have been emphasized. Community members have expressed the sentiment that there needs to be a way to bring the community, families, younger generations back, and that the majority of the community is not able to live, work, and create in Japantown. Innovative approaches such as smaller units with shared spaces could be more affordable. The need of a representative organization, and a united vision and voice and plan to avoid the fragmentation of the past has been emphasized, especially in a climate of increased development pressures. The community has expressed the need for more property ownership, and for land to be returned to the community; the importance of CDCs, CLTs in order to save Japantown has been emphasized multiple times.

**Community Needs/ Challenges:**

- There is a retail apocalypse
- Necessity to get everyone at the table, divisiveness is an issue
- Not enough affordable housing for community and families to move back x4
- Japanese Corporations aren’t investing in Japantown enough (JETRO, Consulate used to be here)

- generational gaps
- A Sterility that didn't exist before the Redevelopment
- The Future of Japan Center Malls and the 3D Covenants
- The people aren't here; young people of the community find it difficult to stay in SF
- Lack of Community living in Japantown contributes to a vibrant culture

**Proposed Solutions/ Opportunities:**

- Businesses need support for online presence, and navigating permits, and gaining
- People shop for experiences, the market for culture is huge
- Japantown lacks co-hangout spaces,
- Japantown needs a Master Plan
- Arts and Culture is essential for a vibrant community
- A community garden x3 and family friendly spaces
- Co-working x3, performance and makerspaces
- Need a representative body with energy and a united vision and voice
- Japantown needs to own property CDCx4
- Live Work Create Spaces

**d) YOUNG ADULTS: (30 attendees)**

**Narrative:** The Young Adults focus group discussed all 7 key areas including arts, land use, economic development, tenant protections, regenerative futures, cultural competency and cultural heritage sustainability. Young adults have care for and see vast potential for the future of Japantown; more spaces to allow for such synergy to be embraced will be necessary. There are both internal and external challenges which must be addressed to realize these optimistic visions. Currently, there is limited creative, recreational and social organizing spaces for young adults. Also, there is some pushback to new ideas, and not enough empowerment and mentorship pipelines to leadership that allow for young people to contribute their skillsets in unique ways. Compounded by these barriers, living in San Francisco, and even more, Japantown is extremely unaffordable. An overwhelming majority of participants had responded yes, that they would live in Japantown if it was an option. Many commute long distances to get to Japantown; If generations of the community were able to live in Japantown, it would be more organic, vibrant, and sustainable. A huge part of a community is sharing space; there would be more follow through on ideas, more connection, more power. Seeking redemption for the past wrongs of historical discrimination and displacement was voiced. Young Adults echoed the sentiment brought up in the land use focus group that, the community needs a clear vision and a united voice about how they re-imagine their space, and what they will not allow in future developments. Collaborating with other cultural districts and building solidarity and reciprocity was valued as well. Housing that creates a sense of community is desired. Collective property ownership by the Japantown community the community would be integral in sustaining the cultural character of the neighborhood and shaping the future in alignment with the community's needs. The need for more green space and biophilic design was expressed. Young Adults, among other members of the community have expressed

the desire to explore ancestral traditions in connection to Earth through gardens and food practices. They seek intergenerational exchanges and a way to authentically connect to the space.

Great solutions and opportunities to address some of the points of fragility expressed above regarding minimal empowerment outlets shared are-- co-creating and co-working spaces which cultivate community, skill-sharing, (P2P) Mentor to mentor connections, incubation of cultural entrepreneurship, evolution of arts and culture, creative solution-building, and a platform for exchange and exposure could empower not only young adults but the entire community. Collaborative approaches should also be developed to partner artists to activate empty storefronts, and underutilized spaces. Artists in residences are encouraged.

### **Community Needs/ Challenges:**

- Young generation involvement must expand beyond “What they want us to do”
- Young people want to learn the tricks of the trade and develop something bigger
- Those in power need more openness to new ideas; resistance to change
- Need more mentorship pipelines to leadership,
- Young people’s thoughts aren’t taken seriously, too much pushback, leading to burnout
- Young people are tokenized
- J-town Organizational memberships shrinking
- Young people need to be given more ownership, on more boards etc.
- Japantown needs to better advertise its needs, seek help, and access skillsets
- Internships and jobs do not pay enough
- Unaffordability makes living in San Francisco difficult for young people
- The community should not just whisper in inner circles about the JCM Covenants- need to educate and mobilize the community – Need an open process for strategies
- Community needs a CLEAR vision of how they re-imagine space, and what they won’t allow
- Community needs a united voice – which creates clarity for City decision-makers
- Need to think beyond the borders of the district – to create collaborations
- A lot of Japanese businesses are no longer in Japantown
- Too much concrete, need more green
- Young people are concerned for Japantown but have no outlets
- Missing recreational spaces that makes community thrive (Before- Japantown had nightclubs, pool halls, bowling alley, social spaces, art galleries, exhibits, safe at night) ex) Kanzaki Lounge
- Marketing of Japantown is Stale; Japantown needs to embrace more diverse narratives

### **Proposed Solutions/ Opportunities:**

- Need more Arts and Culture Community, instead of creating in silos; Need platforms for recognition, and dedicated arts spaces- Merge traditional & contemporary; Artists move the culture forward
- Co-working space- community and Econ development – support cultural startups
- Need more incubation and mentorship for entrepreneurship,
- Need more empowering, collaborative spaces where next-gen voices matter- more P2P (mentor to mentor connections)

- Artists in residence, studio space, space to exchange ideas
- Subsidized housing for artist- live – work-create spaces
- Artists need to get paid
- Need more micro-events, and experiences rather than just shopping
- Use vacant spaces in Japan Center Malls (Community needs assessment of available spaces)
- Leverage networks and partnerships: Art and Commerce could be more connected. Partnerships with storefronts etc.
- Desire to explore ancestral aspects of Japanese culture, and values-based spaces
- Community garden- explore ancestral food practices ex) pickling
- farmers markets and craft fairs- great way to socialize and build connections
- Desire to more authentically connect to the space of Japantown
- Desire for more intergenerational exchange through arts, culture, and garden
- Highlight unique Japantown History
- Cultivate more connections with Japanese businesses- have job faire
- Japantown needs to own property- Collective ownership/community ownership-can support legacy businesses and help them better settle their roots etc.
- City should purchase/ acquire sites to give back to community
- spaces in Japantown can be repurposed, redesigned, design charrettes, for spaces that draw people in
- Playground, rooftop gardens, space to have a picnic
- Want housing that creates a community – and creates a context for those residents
- Education around the 3D Covenants should be more widespread
- Incorporate biophilic designs
- Celebrate and develop programming around Japanese-Eco Culture
- Increased resource-sharing

**e) REGENERATIVE, SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT FUTURES: (35+35 participants )**

**(2 Sessions: Statewide Japantown; SF Japantown)**

**Narrative:** The Coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated already existing fragilities in Japantown. Prior to the pandemic, small businesses were struggling due to rising rents and the “Amazon effect,” and the community had already been realizing the increasing necessity to establish more communication, resource-sharing, and collaboration. We may not be returning to “normal,” and this situation is not just a blip, crises will continue to increase. For Japantown to become resilient and regenerative, it will need more than surface level fixes, it will require a transformative re-making into a more evolved version of itself in order to thrive into the future.

**Listed below are innovative lessons or best practices all 4 Japantowns have adapted to in order to survive the pandemic:**

1. Already existing coalitions have been helpful -Collaboration and close communication.  
Ability to activate networks quickly, align efforts, and avoid duplication.
2. Community Feeding Community-Supporting merchants by feeding residents (regenerative economy)
3. Communicating and Listing ways to support businesses even if they’re closed
4. Museum-Staff have gotten creative and innovative, continue to serve through digital programs;  
shifting programming

### **Points to take away/ enhance:**

1. Increasing collaboration and connectivity and communication
2. Activities are becoming virtual, -Forced to Accelerate Online (Need tech savvy folks to help)
3. Should continue to have virtual streaming of live events even in the future
4. Organizations highlighting each other (Signal Boosting)
5. Meal Subsidization (Resource sharing in the community)
6. Higher utilization of outdoor spaces
7. Weekly Zoom meetings with constituents
8. Distance is no longer a barrier for participation (Ability to reach wider/infinite audiences)
9. Peer 2 Peer Knowledge-Sharing platforms
10. Communities who own their property or have a sympathetic owner vs outside non-community-concerned owners (Necessity of Community Impact Fund or Land Trust)
11. Empower younger generations to take lead in transition
12. More resilience = Diverse ages, voices, experiences working together

### **Future Plans for Statewide Japantowns:**

1. Promote Japantowns' as assets to the City+ neighborhood (Actions neighbors take to support? )
2. Get more people on board to realize the value of Japantowns to their ecosystems
3. Need to Quantify the Economic Impact of COVID to Japantown
4. How to transition participation leadership to younger generations?  
(Boards with younger more diverse members – more nimble and responsive)  
How to bring in younger and more diverse experiences?  
How to galvanize the next generation to help work on this long- term challenge?

### **Next Step for Statewide:**

1. Interconnectivity of all Japantowns through virtual knowledge-sharing and interesting digital collaborations.
2. California Japantown virtual Arts collaboration (Virtual Festival that takes people to all 4 Jtowns)  
-Honoring our history of resiliency at this crisis point, statewide, would be interesting  
(Have an event around what took for Japantowns to thrive after 4 years of internment?)
3. State Level Policy Advocacy

### **SF JAPANTOWN FOCUS GROUP ON REGENERATIVE, SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT FUTURES:**

- Farms and urban edible gardens - many people are gardening now because of COVID
- Ecological and Sustainable Spaces- Importance of well-planned public space
- Regenerative Resilience in the Built Environment:
  - meet net-zero / carbon neutral / regenerative benchmarks (all petals of the Living Building Challenge); this includes infrastructure
  - more biophilic interventions: nature /outdoors-in / open space
  - prioritize flexibility -- modularity
  - Refillable Water bottle stations
  - Green Spaces that provide food
- Challenge- Need to gather entire neighborhood for a plan

(Need more coordination of efforts between organizations)

- Many people want to support Japantown but don't know how to plug in
  - The neighbors are not getting all of the information.
  - There are people that want to contribute their expertise to help Japantown
  - Inclusion of Young people is paramount. -succession planning with younger generations
  - the small businesses are struggling, and there is an impending recession
- If we lose a Japanese merchant, we might not be able to fill that void....
- Need to increase online Capacity of Merchants, they are not tech savvy and they sell one of a kind items

### **Needs & Current Situation :**

- Need Coalitions and platforms for increased collaboration, connectivity, and communication
- Need to focus on positive solutions by sharing best practices and success stories
- Need Signal Boosting – highlighting each other / cross-promotion
- Need Resource-Sharing in the community
- Need tech savvy folks to assist transition to online platforms
- Need Peer 2 Peer Knowledge Sharing platforms
- Creative activation and utilization of outdoors spaces
- Empower younger generations to take lead in transition
- (DIVERSE AGES, VOICES, EXPERIENCES) = More resilience
- Need Creative Resistance & Storytelling to highlight the value of Japantowns to our ecosystems (reimagining ways to healing our communities. listening to one and another)

### **f) SHIN-NIKKEI (JAPANESE SPEAKING): 11 interviewees**

**Narrative:** The Shin-Nikkei (Japanese Speaking) community has expressed their hopes for realizing the vast potential that Japantown has to become an even more vibrant, expansive, fascinating, lively space which transmits the spirit and essential values embedded in Japanese culture, such as health, quality, and eco-sustainability. Challenges such as the diminishment of community-reflective spaces, minimal green spaces, retirement of longtime J/JA-owned businesses, minimal ownership by the next generation has contributed to a sense of staleness and decline.

A “kakushin” or evolution through addressing these challenges and engaging in deeply transformative re-building, beyond surface level fixes could re-invigorate Japantown. This could entail well-curated spaces, incubation of next generation entrepreneurship, and a focus on authentic cultural experiences through the intersection of tradition and cultural innovation; transmitting the spirit but allowing new expressions. Bridging fragmentation, the cultivation of more collaboration, strengthening connection to Japan, and the leadership of the next generation has been emphasized.

### **Community Needs/ Challenges:**

- Japantown has shrunk, community spaces reduced (Used to used Kabuki, J-town Bowl gone)
- Need succession planning for long-term historical businesses- closed doors Ex) Uoki Market
- Need regeneration of J/JA-owned businesses
- Need relationships to Japanese companies
- Japantown does not authentically reflect local Japanese population, feels catered to tourists



- Japantown lost its “Miryoku” or appeal; many go to Nijiya and leave
- Needs more “Ikiyoi” Liveliness and vigor
- Feels “Sabireteru” in decline, somber, lonely, stuck in time, not fresh
- Parking is a challenge, less incentive to visit Japantown
- The space doesn’t feel welcoming, need green space, less concrete
- Not enough spaces for community use
- Some marketing feels stale, like from 20 years ago
- Too much fragmentation, need more collaboration and resource-sharing (like a village)
- Need more “Root Power” to be resilient in times of crisis.
- There is a gap between Shin-Nikkei and JAs – need more bridging and exchange

**Proposed Solutions/ Opportunities:**

- Needs “*Kakushin*” Cultural Innovation and Evolution
- Need more than just surface level fixes, want to see a deeply transformative re-making /rebuilding of Japantown for a brighter future with the active involvement and empowerment of the younger generations.
- More micro-events, art activations, and nightlife and “*Izakaya*” bars
- More leadership for the younger generations
- Focus more on the depth and profound aspects of Japanese culture
- Highlight regenerative sustainability aspects of Japanese eco-culture, e.g., *miso*-making, and pickling
- Would like to see more vegetarian and healthy Japanese foods
- farmers market and community garden
- More focus on highlighting the quality of Japan
- A “*Ryokan*” Air-bnb that highlights Japanese values of minimalism and connection to nature
- Need to highlight local craftsmanship and next generation entrepreneurship, enhancing relationships and inviting businesses that have connections to Japan, and centering the space around authentic experiences beyond just shopping ex) workshops.
- Create more trendy “hotspots” engage a whole new customer base will create a livelier atmosphere

**g) ECONOMIC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOCUS GROUP: 8 interviewees**

- Continuously rising rents and decreased foot traffic present challenges to merchants
- The sunseting of the 15-year retentionship in the Covenants with 3D on the Japan Center Malls in 2021 is a point of serious concern
- Business owners are in need of assistance and resources in areas of permits, legal advice, marketing, loans and grants
- Language barriers present a challenge for merchants
- Tenants’ rights advocacy is needed to resolve conflicts with property owners
- The Japantown needs to reflect the diversity of the J/JA community, including the Shin-Nikkei community and the younger generations (nightlife should be enhanced)
- Japantowns’ marketing needs to be reflective of the diversity of the J/JA community
- The younger generation needs to be more supported and engaged

- Japantown needs to be better highlighted in information provided to tourists
- Exhibitions, showcase performances, and experiences should occur in underutilized spaces
- Japantown should enhance its connection to other J/JA organizations and spaces in the City to create a mutual benefit
- Legacy businesses, and businesses that own their property must be supported
- The Japantown Merchants Association needs support, JCBD is taking on a heavier load
- If there are changes to the Malls, negotiations for community spaces should be made
- Grant writers could benefit both community artists and small businesses
- Need to increase online presence for merchants