

PRESERVING CALIFORNIA'S JAPANTOWNS SYMPOSIUM

SUMMARY REPORT



JUNE 9, 2006

MIYAKO HOTEL

SAN FRANCISCO'S JAPANTOWN

Funded by The California Civil Liberties Public Education Program

SYMPOSIUM OVERVIEW

The one-day symposium on June 9, 2006 brought together experts and practitioners of historic and cultural preservation to discuss the preservation of California's Japantowns, acknowledge the 2005 California Civil Liberties Public Education Program (CCLPEP) cultural and historic preservation projects, and honor the individuals and organizations that support and implement preservation efforts for past and present Japantown communities. It was a successful event that attracted over 140 participants from within the Japanese American community, as well as practitioners of historic and cultural preservation from across the state of California.

This symposium achieved its goals in bringing together the Nikkei and non-Nikkei communities to acknowledge and discuss the imminent importance of maintaining the cultural integrity of California's Japantowns while creating dialogue about how to carry preservation efforts into the future. Attendees learned about the unique history, opportunities and challenges of preserving our Japantown communities and how the latest in preservation tools and techniques can be applied to Japantowns. The discussions and outcomes of the symposium sessions help to shape the future directives and priorities for cultural and historic preservation efforts of California's Japantowns.



PRESERVING OUR COMMUNITIES

San Francisco's Japantown has survived for over 100 years, enduring the injustice of internment, the razing of redevelopment and gentrification during a booming real estate market. The resiliency of our community inspires us to forge forward and build for the future, while preserving what we have. The Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC) is committed to staying involved in issues affecting our neighborhood's future. We encourage responsible development that preserves the unique elements of our cultural identity. As a neighborhood center that serves many various constituencies, we will also collaborate on projects that meet the diverse needs of residents and workers in Japantown.

As the community around us continues to evolve, we will continue to be responsive to those changes and help shape the future viability of the greater Japantown neighborhood for the next 100 years. JCCCNC has continued to stay actively involved in the California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project (SB307 – Vasconcellos), which provides grants to Los Angeles, San Jose and San Francisco to promote the preservation of their Japantown neighborhoods.

This historic legislation recognizes the cultural significance of our ethnic enclaves to the diversity of the state, and will empower us to help sustain our community for future generations to enjoy. Voted into legislation in 2001, the project is currently working with local community organizations to define processes and criteria that will lead to local agencies applying for funds.

PRESERVING CALIFORNIA'S JAPANTOWNS SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM AGENDA

Symposium Chairperson

Paul Osaki

Executive Director, Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California

Symposium Moderator

Alan Nishio

*Chair, California Japantowns Preservation Committee,
California Japanese American Community Leadership Council*

- 9:00am Continental Breakfast
- 9:30am Opening Session: Opportunities and Challenges Facing the Three Japantowns (San Francisco, San Jose, and Los Angeles)
- 10:35am CCLPEP "Preserving California Japantowns" Projects
- 12:00pm Lunch Session: Preserving Ethnic and Cultural Communities
- Keynote speakers:*
- Dr. Anthea Hartig
Director, Western Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation
 - Mr. Shigeru Kojima
Researcher, Japanese Overseas Migration Museum in Yokohama, Japan
- 1:00pm Workshops – Session 1
- Documenting Our Communities: History, Culture, Stories & Sites
 - Developing a Strategic Plan Toward Preserving Our Communities
 - Community Development/Community Benefits Agreements
- 2:30pm Workshops – Session 2
The same sessions and speakers from Workshop Session 1 were repeated during Workshop Session 2, allowing for symposium attendees to attend multiple sessions and learn about a variety of preservation tools, techniques, and strategies.
- 4:00pm Closing and Next Steps
- Proposition 40 Projects – San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles
- 4:30pm Reception: Celebrating Our Japantowns

OPENING SESSION:

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TO THE THREE JAPANTOWNS

Speakers:

- Opening/Closing Remarks: Paul Osaki, Dean Misczynski (California Research Bureau), Alan Nishio
- San Francisco: Allen Okamoto, Sandy Mori
- San Jose: Joe Yasutake, Jerry Hiura
- Los Angeles: Chris Aihara, Bill Watanabe

Opening Remarks:

Paul Osaki, Executive Director, Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California, opened the session and outlined the goal of the symposium: to establish ways to save the three remaining Japantowns of San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles. Osaki encouraged attendees to “think outside of the box” to conceive strategies for preserving the cultural and economic integrity of Japantowns. Dean Misczynski, Director of the California Research Bureau of the California State Library, reflected upon the camp experience as a “vast real estate transaction, one of the largest and systemic use of urban renewal movement of people that the state of California has ever been involved in.”

San Francisco community representatives Sandy Mori (President, Board of Directors, Japantown Task Force) and Allen Okamoto (Cherry Blossom Festival?) provided an overview of the status of community preservation in San Francisco’s Japantown.

- The Kintetsu properties in San Francisco’s Japantown (which comprise 70-75% of the commercial space in the community) have been sold to 3D Investments, a Beverly Hills-based investment company.
- San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom and District 5 Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi offer their support to Japantown preservation. Mirkarimi has proposed to establish Japantown as a “Special Use District” Legislation.
- The future of Japantown is unknown, but a number of opportunities are on the horizon. The Hokubei Mainichi building (1749 Post Street), for example, was recently purchased by a Japanese company and will be converted into a six story J-Pop Center.



San Jose community representatives Jerry Hiura (President, Board of Directors, Japantown Community Congress of San Jose) and Joe Yasutake (President, Board of Directors, Japanese American Museum of San Jose) provided an overview of the status of community preservation in San Jose’s Japantown.

- San Jose’s Japantown is losing its small businesses, but the boom in the housing market has helped the community. The new housing is replacing the aging Japanese American community with other Asian groups, changing the demographics.
- The six acre Corporation Yard may undergo a change in use. It could be a wellness center or a theater for San Jose Taiko. Ideal use would be for cultural, historical, or the arts to bring the community together.

Los Angeles community representatives Bill Watanabe (Executive Director, Little Tokyo Service Center) and Chris Aihara (Chairperson, Little Tokyo Community Council’s Planning and Preservation Committee) provided an overview of the status of community preservation of Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo.

- Civic expansion is an ongoing challenge to local community-based organizations and businesses.
- How to welcome non-JAs into a historical community while maintaining the traditions of the Little Tokyo?
- Large corporations (like Starbucks) can afford to pay commercial rent increases, but higher rent impacts smaller businesses and changes the character of the community.
- The Little Tokyo Community Council is a creative way for the Redevelopment Agency to support the community. Need guidelines and design guidelines in place, need a community over line design for Little Tokyo and also need community group planning guidelines to develop recommendations for buildings and signage, landscape, and building design.

Closing remarks:

Alan Nishio (Chair, California Japantowns Preservation Committee, California Japanese American Community Leadership Council), remarked that each community is pro-active in taking up the issues by organizing the Japantown Task Force, the Japantown Community Congress of San Jose, and the Little Tokyo Community Council.

JAPANTOWN PRESERVATION PROJECTS



Birth of a Community

Naomi Funahashi (Project Coordinator) and Soji Kashiwagi (Grateful Crane Ensemble)

This comprehensive Japantowns project explores, educates and celebrates the birth and evolution of Japantowns in California through the development of a website featuring interactive virtual walking tours of the three remaining Japantowns, a musical theatrical journey about Japantowns, distribution of an acclaimed book on San Francisco's Japantown to California public libraries and San Francisco schools, and the convening of the Preserving California's Japantowns Symposium.

The San Jose Japantown Historic Context and Intensive Survey

Joe Yasutake, Leslie Masunaga, Kathy Sakamoto and Jerry Hiura

The Historic Survey Project, implemented by the San Jose Japantown Community Congress (JCCsf) in partnership with the City of San Jose, explores the history of San Jose's Japantown region, determines important historical phases and identifies and studies the significant structures associated with Japantown's history through an intensive survey.

The Matsui Project

Wayne Maeda and Timothy Fong

This project will develop a website in consult with the Robert Matsui family to arrange for his personal papers relating to Sacramento's Japantown and his Congressional records on Redress and Reparation for permanent deposit at the Japanese American Archival Collections of California State University Sacramento for processing and digitizing in accordance with archival and professional standards.

Bronzeville in LA's Japantown

Martha Nakagawa

This individual project seeks to document and educate the general public via a website on the existence of Bronzeville during World War II in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo.



J-Town/Bronzeville Suite

Dave Iwataki

The J-Town/Bronzeville Suite, composed by Dave Iwataki, is a 3-part suite that musically represents Little Tokyo and Bronzeville before, during and after the relocation years.



Japanese American Historical Mapping Project

Dale Ann Sato (Project Coordinator/Oral Historian), and website designers/producer Jonathan Lee (Special Brand)

This project explores the family migration and community history of the pre-World War II Japanese American farming communities in the Palos Verdes Peninsula area of Los Angeles County by documenting oral histories and personal interviews, accompanied by digitally mapped aerial photographs and satellite images, for placement on an educational website.

Japantowns of Placer County

David Unruhe (Project Director)

Research and documentation of the four Japanese American communities of Penryn, Auburn, Newcastle, and Loomis will culminate in the production of a book and website that illustrate the history of the four Placer County Japantowns.

Preserving California's Japantowns

Project Team: Donna Graves, Gail Dubrow and Jill Shiraki

This project will document over 40 Japantown communities that existed prior to World War II, broadening public awareness and encouraging the preservation of places and memories significant to historic Japanese American communities across California. Project research will be compiled in an illustrated report that will provide a powerful tool for local communities, and advocates for Japanese American heritage statewide, to plan for the protection of places where historic buildings and landscape still exist, and in locations where community fabric has been demolished, to ensure that the community's history remains a vital part of our collective memory.

LUNCH SESSION:

PRESERVING ETHNIC AND CULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Keynote Speakers:

- **Dr. Anthea Hartig**, Director, Western Region, National Trust for Historic Preservation
- **Mr. Shigeru Kojima**, Researcher, Japanese Overseas Migration Museum

Elaine Yamaguchi

Program Director

California Civil Liberties Public Education Program

Ms. Yamaguchi offered welcoming remarks to symposium participants on behalf of the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program.

Dr. Anthea Hartig

Director

Western Region, National Trust for Historic Preservation

Dr. Hartig directs the National Trust's western office, covering the region's eight states and Pacific territories.

Dr. Hartig began her keynote address with some key historical moments that underscore the necessity of community preservation work: Japan was the largest relief donor to San Francisco during the 1906 Earthquake; W. R. Hearst and his newspapers pushed for the "Yellow Peril" in 1915; and the 1913 Alien Land Law prohibited Asian immigrants from owning land or property. 28 blocks of Western Addition formed the SF J-Town of the 1970s, redevelopment period. Where does all this history leave us? The work is important for our region, and for our state. We risk the loss of memories, the plan for cultural history, and the risk of forgetting. Partnering is the key: networking with other like-minded organizations, groups, and even businesses (banks). Anyone with capital, environmental groups, educational groups—every group and individual has something to bring to the table.



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Shigeru Kojima

Researcher

Japanese Overseas Migration Museum



Mr. Kojima, a special guest from the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum, spoke of the Nikkei communities and Japanese immigration to countries like Brazil that shapes the ethnic identities of Nikkei communities around the world. At the Overseas Migration Museum in Yokohama, Japan (near Yokohama Bay), artifacts and exhibits tell the stories of these Nikkei communities. Also in the Yokohama area, memorial sites are dedicated to Japanese overseas migration to places like Brazil or the United States. Other museums are also located in the same area. Educational opportunities—for teachers, students, and other groups in Japan—are also provided by the museum. Highlights include information on overseas migration to other parts of the world, such as South America (Brazil, etc), and an impressive collection of 20,000 items. 1,500 of these items are featured in a permanent exhibit of

Nikkei in the United States. Through its extensive and influential work, JOMM plays a key role in preserving Nikkei heritage by educating the Japanese people about Nikkei history, community, and identity.

WORKSHOP 1:

DOCUMENTING OUR COMMUNITIES: HISTORY, CULTURE, STORIES, AND SITES

Speakers:

- **Gail Dubrow**, Co-Director, Preserving California's Japantowns
- **Donna Graves**, Co-Director, Preserving California's Japantowns
- **Jill Shiraki**, Project Manager, Preserving California's Japantowns
- **Ben Pease**, Cartographer, Pease Press

Discussion Points and Topics:

Resources for Community Preservation

Panelists identified resources that can be used to identify place(s) and neighborhood history:

- The Japanese American Directory 1941
Japanese American directories printed by the local Japanese newspapers to identify what businesses and families were in a particular area. These directories serve as a major starting point to look at what community life may have been like before the evacuation in 1942.
- National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form
- Photo archives
- Oral histories
Oral histories are an invaluable resource for stories that are triggered when a photo from a family album is shown or a map is presented to review. What starts as a personal story may evolve to a story about place and/or a building.
- Organizational archives (i.e., churches)
Identifying someone from a particular era and showing him/her a Sanborn map to "trigger" past memories and provide a historical story about a business that may have moved a number of times in the area. For rural histories, you may ask the person to sketch out the location of the farm house, the outhouse, the well, etc., as Sanborn maps were not created in communities where the fire risk was very low.
- City and County building records (track ownership of properties, who the various owners were/are)
- Maps
Ben Pease, of Pease Press, has developed Sanborn maps of various Japanese American communities (primarily San Francisco, Terminal Island, and Stockton) over the past six years. Changes in a neighborhood can be tracked by examining a series of maps and noting the addition and/or disappearance of numbered addresses over time. Census data often under-counted minorities and classifications changed over the decades. Finding multiple sources provides a more accurate record to confirm a detailed history of a site.

Comments, Remarks, and Suggestions by Participants:

- Need to get the oral and social stories to accompany the architectural history and provide context.
- There were eleven Japanese schools from Mountain View to Gilroy supported by numerous families. Japanese language schools were focal points of pre-war Japanese American communities, as well as churches and cultural organizations (kenjin kai). Unfortunately, a number of the language schools were destroyed after the attack on Pearl Harbor.
- A Japanese American Women's Writers group has published two books incorporating the individuals' perspectives and recollections. When Shizue Siegel conducted research for the book by the Kansha Project, *In Good Company*, she used the Internet to locate many Japanese Americans across the country that were identified as those who helped Japanese Americans during World War II.
- NJAHS annual fundraiser identified and honored the families and businesses in San Francisco Japantown and produced a DVD of the recognition and awards presentation.
- Ted Whipple, website developer for the Preserving California's Japantowns project, shared plan for the website to attract an audience and provide an expanded network of contributors.
- Japanese American cemeteries may also be another source of history to help "connect the dots" of community histories.



WORKSHOP 2:

DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN TOWARD PRESERVING OUR COMMUNITIES

Speakers:

- **Jeff Eichenfield**, Eichenfield and Associates
- **Courtney Damkroger**, San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board
- **Caitlin Harvey (Session 1) and Bill Sugaya (Session 2)**, Carey & Co.
- **Moderators: Bill Watanabe**, Little Tokyo Service Center (*Session 1*)
Sandy Mori, Kimochi, Inc. (*Session 2*)

Discussion Points and Topics:

Designing a Plan for Preserving Tangible and Intangible Components of a Community

Panelists identified three primary concerns that communities should address:

1. Do homework before starting a plan about community and history. Japantowns benefit from tenure, long duration, so conduct surveys and oral histories to document history, businesses, people, organizations, associations, clubs, events, ownership. Buildings not only elements but marker of history and ways to interpret history.
2. Understand land use landscape. General plan designations, zoning designations, mesh with your intent/objectives, role of redevelopment and economic development. Any other plans for shared area? Know city staff members working in community. Coordinate all planning efforts with city and planning commission staff.
3. Historic cultural resources and traditions should be used to inform any planning process. Often doesn't happen because of rush to complete planning. Presence of resources that differentiates community. That's what makes neighborhood distinct.



Historic Districts vs. Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs)

- Historic District: geographic space, physical elements present during certain time in history.
- TCP: How “place” is used in the traditional sense. Must have physical locale, but also a place where traditions continue to be practiced. “Living” historic district.
- Both historic districts and TCPs rely on this evaluation criteria. San Jose’s Japantown, for example, is considered to be a hybrid between a historic district and a TCP.

Identifying vs. Preserving Cultural Community Resources

Identification is the first step, but protection requires regulation and the degree of regulation varies. Few examples of designated TCPs exist in urban settings.

Historic districts must weigh the consequences of a historic district designation. Historically, communities have had great success for preservation with this designation. TCPs must determine the potential boundaries for the district, and the community must draft a set of standards for contributing elements of TCP.

Develop a plan for protecting cultural resources. Plan or set of guidelines adopted by city council to address significance and treatment of resources must be done. Describe incentives for preservation of more difficult resources—financial assistance for retaining businesses, or building housing businesses. Involve community and city partnerships. A plan is needed in writing and with official recognition, and if linked to an ordinance it can be an even more powerful and enduring tool.

Comments, Remarks, and Suggestions by Participants:

- Demographics are changing in San Francisco’s Japantown, and it is important to involve emerging groups in any community planning process. This change in demographics needs to be recognized, and outreach is a critical component of the planning process.
- Art and culture are integral to Japantowns and their preservation. Huntington Park serves as an example of how a community can work with local arts organizations and artists.
- What is causing decline of Japantown? Population, poor housing and parking, low immigration from Japan, safety and security are among the points that should be addressed to explore why the Japanese American population has declined in Japantown communities.

WORKSHOP 3:

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT / COMMUNITY BENEFIT AGREEMENTS

Speakers:

- **Radhika Fox**, PolicyLink
- **Rich Hillis**, San Francisco Mayor's Office of Economic Development
- **Marco Li Mandri**, New City America
- **Moderator: Diane Matsuda**, California Cultural and Historical Endowment

Discussion Points and Topics:

Developing a Community Benefit Agreement

A Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) is a formal enforceable contract tied to a development project that is happening in a community, where the developer receives some "perks" (i.e., public resources). In turn, the development provides benefits to the community such as tax incentives, upzoning of land that increases property values, living wage provisions, or more open space/cultural spaces for the community. If receiving a public subsidy, the agreement should include concrete benefits for the community. Both the developer and the community benefit from the effective nature of community support, as opposed to community opposition (time is money).



Ingredients for successful CBAs:

1. As resident groups, need to get in early before developer and city makes decisions. Must be an organized community with goals in mind. Los Angeles sets a powerful example by having diverse coalitions, and a diverse set of voices with the same vision.
2. Implementation matters: need to have ongoing community involvement, not just on paper but to establish tangible benefits.
3. The reality is that reaching a CBA is hard and requires quite a bit of planning, and commitment to the long haul.

Addressing Community Revitalization and Community Economic Development

Three keys to revitalization:

1. Vision
2. Leadership
3. Resources: redevelopment agency

Define the area, understand the history of area, and try to keep museums close to communities to maintain an educational experience. Don't be influenced by demographics, and try to attract more Japanese Americans to Japantown. It is important to understand and embrace the relationship between past and future. What images do you want to come to mind when someone mentions Japantown? You want the sidewalks to talk to you, you want people to see and understand the living monument to that immigrant history of community.

Comments, Remarks, and Suggestions by Participants:

- How can we reinvigorate Japantown to become a place where people come to do more than eat and leave? We need to establish partnerships with more Japanese businesses, or find ways to make Japantown an environment where cutting edge Japanese companies feel comfortable doing business.
- A community can have an ambitious revitalization plan, but if the agenda is not lined up with city, it will be a long struggle. When a neighborhood develops a plan, it needs to have economic drivers—large and small businesses—articulate their needs and goals. It has to go beyond just what the cultural needs of the community are; the economic needs are key.
- This session made me think about what I would like to see in San Francisco's Japantown. As an artist, I would like to see more art-related businesses and programming beyond special events and festivals. I would love to see a garden space similar to the tea garden in Golden Gate Park (rooftop garden?) incorporated into the plaza. Embrace the heritage and diversity of the community.

PROPOSITION 40 PROJECTS:

CURRENT EFFORTS TOWARD PRESERVING CALIFORNIA'S JAPANTOWNS

Speakers:

- **San Francisco's Japantown:** Gerald Takano, Karen Kai
- **San Jose's Japantown:** Joe Yasutake, Jerry Hiura
- **Little Tokyo (Los Angeles):** Takao Suzuki
- **Moderator:** Alan Nishio, California Cultural and Historical Endowment

Discussion Points and Topics:

San Francisco – Gerry Takano, Karen Kai

A Community based group is developing a historical walk of San Francisco J-Town. Gerry Takano shared the theme and use of proposed signage and placards that will highlight the social history and architectural buildings of the community. The historical walk will begin in 1906 and tell the story that led up to internment and urban renewal.



Signs and placards will educate about:

- How Japanese Americans dealt with being here, in Japantown, and the shaping of the community.
- Military, civil liberties, and federal court cases.
- How/why this area in San Francisco became J-Town.
- To recognize early pioneers in business, etc.
- To tell the story of how the 1906 earthquake was the major reason why Western Addition became the center for Japantown.

Historical content of the walk:

- Will not focus mainly on the internment period.
- Traditional groups and cultural development.
- Moving to the suburbs.
- The future.

San Jose – Joe Yasutake, Jerry Hiura (San Jose Japantown Community Congress)

Ikoji no Ba (Rest place) have been established at certain locations. Meditative areas, short distance from the traffic. Landmark structure has been placed at 5th and Jackson (the heart of SJ J-Town). It is a 35-foot structure of public artwork, and serves as a place marker for SJ J-Town. Descriptive markers have been placed at sites of historical interest at the corner of 5th and Jackson – funded by Prop. 40. Reflects the essence of Japantown and is in line of sight with City Hall. Many community meetings. Three Elements: Wall of Values (a timeline of SJ J-Town); Lantern; and Generational Stones. Historic markers -- about 30 markers, design not completed.



Los Angeles – Tak Suzuki

- Little Tokyo "Sparkle" and beautification and/or the mural projects. Completed in October 2005. 3 years of work with over 500 volunteers. Located across the street from the Japanese American National Museum. The mural theme: "Home is Little Tokyo."
- LA Landmark Project. The same landmark that is in San Jose and San Francisco J-Towns. To be completed by this year (Aug. 2006) Nisei Week.
- Little Tokyo Kiosks Project. 6 kiosks -- cultural and history of Little Tokyo as well as tourist/tourism information. Locations: 4 at JANM (confirmed) and still pending: JACCC, New Otani Hotel and Visitor's Center. Wireless network – go on-line at the different sites in Little Tokyo. Website will have same information that is in the kiosks.
- Little Tokyo Historical Marker Project. 14 bronze places – placed on buildings and/or sidewalks. Sites, people, events, businesses are historic significances to Little Tokyo. If site/building is no longer in exist, signage will be placed in the sidewalk.
- James Irvine Garden Restoration Project. 25 years old and in need of restoration. Located at JACCC.

Closing remarks: Alan Nishio / Paul Osaki

Thanks to all the staff and volunteers, and to the speakers and panelists. A lot of work needs to be done. Must form partnerships with various organizations, community groups, and individuals. Save our Japantowns.

CLOSING RECEPTION: CELEBRATING OUR JAPANTOWNS

Speaker:

- Ross Mirkarimi, District 5 Supervisor, City and County of San Francisco

The *Celebrating Our Japantowns* reception was an occasion to celebrate the past, present and future of California's Japantown communities through music, food and other festivities. Ross Mirkarimi, District 5 Supervisor, City and County of San Francisco, made a special appearance to offer his support of the cultural and historic preservation of San Francisco's Japantown.

Dr. Anthony Brown, an internationally acclaimed percussionist, composer and ethnomusicologist, performed a range of Japanese inspired jazz music with his fellow musicians Mark Izu,

A San Francisco native of Japanese and African/Native American descent, Dr. Brown brought his extensive experience as artistic director of the Asian American Jazz Orchestra, a federally-funded national educational touring project about the Japanese American internment experience, to this event.



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