COMMUNITY MEETING NOTES
JUNE 1, 2011
GROUP 3 OF 3: JAPAN CENTER
TOPIC LEADERS: HIROSHI FUKUDA / BOB HAMAGUCHI

Japan Center Major Changes Proposal

Group 3 – Japan Center

Recorded by Wendy Sterndale and Lindy Marzo
Typed by Wendy Sterndale

Topic Leaders: Hiroshi Fukuda spoke to each group. Bob Hamaguchi spoke as well to the first set of people.
ASTD COP team: Facilitator: Pi Wen Looi. Recorder 1: Wendy Sterndale. Recorder 2: Lindy Marzo

Group themes: Hiroshi Fukuda guided participants to respond to the following suggestions in the proposal:

- Demolish Japan Center or not?
- What shops do you go to?
- Input on Festivals and Shops in the area

He also mentioned these suggestions, which were his secondary priority for input:

- Impact of construction
- City participation
- How to preserve the mall

Note about the table: Read the columns, not the rows. Each person's comments went into the first available table cell. Each row is not indicative of any one person's thoughts.

Demolish Japan Center or not (To the following, Not to Demolish is In Recommendations, To Renovate is In Recommendations, and those that propose a Destroy or Rebuild is in Need of Response.)

- Before deciding whether to demolish, do seismic study of structures in the area IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- No demolition, remodel IN
- Do not demolish IN
- Need demolition. I think J Town needs a major renovation to respond to social needs: become a sustainable site and become an attractive place NEED A RESPONSE TO THIS OPINION

- No demolition.
- DESTROY the Center. Rebuild with mixed-zone (commercial / residential) of about six floors. NEED A RESPONSE TO THIS OPINION
- You have to phrase the question better. No demolition means no change. It means no new development. The businesses are suffering. TO RENOVATE - IN RECOMMENDATONS
- Is it seismically safe?
- The Center should not be demolished.
- Not to demolish.
- Don't demolish Japan Center demo will impact the businesses presently located there.
- Do *not* demolish Center
- Develop new mall, not commercial. NEED A RESPONSE TO THIS OPINION
- Do not demolish.
- Don't demolish
- Do not demolish
- Don't demolish – make a phased development. What types of tenants and residents are you attracting?
- I oppose demolishment of the center. NEED RESPONSE
- Japan Center should be kept basically as is, but opened up if possible to both Post & Geary streets. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Agree not to demolish. Perhaps renovate.
- Renovate the Center. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Do not demolish, renovate.

What shops do you go to?

- Honestly, I do not come to Japan Town Center often, except to the beauty salon to get a haircut.
- *Shops*: Benkyodo; Super Mira, Uoki.
  Restaurants: Toraya, Takara, Mifune
  Festivals: I attend all of them. Cherry Blossom, Nihonmachi Street Fair, Children's Day
- People like J Town Center because:
  Open space
  Parking is available affordable
  Cultural attractions
  Retail gathering space
  Clean
  Safe
  Negatives
  Open up to Geary IN RECOMMENDATIONS
  Pedestrian / transit friendly IN RECOMMENDATIONS

No modern amenities RENOVATE - IN RECOMMENDATIONS
No housing to create and attract a younger community. LAND USE

- Go to restaurants, book stores such as Sanp, Takara, Izumiya, Uoki, Mira
- Japan Center is the tourist destination especially for anime, manga and Japanese fashion fans. It would be terrible to lose it. I live here and I am in the mall at least once a day. IN DRAFT
- Sain Saine – I got a massage there weekly for a health condition. They are a perfect addition, especially for people staying at the leaoue (sp?)
- Daiso and Ichibankan – Love these discount stores.
- Kinokuniya
- Restaurants (on the bridge, Benihana, Sophie's)
- Anime stores (Japan Toys)
- The Daiso does great here.
- I go to the following: Bookstore, Restaurants, Picture Place (forgot name) funny photos.
- Shops that I like: Ichiban Kan, Daiso, bakery, bookstore, Nijiya, Izumiya, Kinokuniya stationery, photo stores, Nijiya, Kinokuniya bookstore.
- Shops I go to: Teapot shop, Mifune, Kibuki Theatre.
- Restaurants bookstore, bars, movie theatre. I attend the festivals.
- I go to the Kinokuniya bookstore, the various Japanese restaurants in the mall and the crepe shop. The older generations frequently visit stationery stores.

Input on area festivals and shops

- Add shops that sell authentic Japanese goods IN DRAFT
- Add special shops with Japanese food, books, music, wares, tofu, manju, sake center IN DRAFT
- Add festivals. They are a good reason to visit. IN DRAFT
- Create ways for visitors to participate in cultural activities so they leave with something more than a trinket IN DRAFT
- The Center is mess. It is either too commercial or too Japanese. ???
- Main halls are too lifeless. RENOVATE – IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- More children's activities and playgrounds for children. PUBLIC REALM??
- Add an information office or center of Japan Town. RENOVATION – IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Maintain outdoor plaza for community festivals and other activities and performances PUBLIC REALM – ENHANCE PEACE PLAZA IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Would like to retain the Japanese bookstore. IN DRAFT
- J Town mall is the only "mall" outside Stonestown. It is absolutely necessary. IN DRAFT
- Should be as youth friendly as possible since youth like malls. IN DRAFT
- Keep the ethnic quality of J Town. IN DRAFT

- I would love to see an art gallery in Japan Center for local Japanese-American artists or even visiting Japanese, Japanese-American or Hapa artists. IN DRAFT
- A place to purchase local art that is Japanese inspired or by Japanese artists. (example: Tomoko Maruyama) IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Add more film festivals, music festivals in the mall, and outdoor theatre. IN DRAFT – A COUPLE TIMES A MONTH NOW ISN'T ENOUGH???
- Would like to see an Asian-American theater festival. TWICE A YEAR ALREADY?
- Three or four festivals a year. They could coincide with Japanese traditional celebrations so they keep with the flavor of the area and they help the local businesses and economy.IN DRAFT
- Important to attract shops that sell authentic Japanese goods and merchandise. IN DRAFT
- Restaurants need a lot of improvement. SF is a food town. Japantown has too little places to eat, especially attractive looking places for younger people. Izakaya, Yaki-tori, Yaki-niku, ramon, sushi. Most of the best restaurants (Japanese) are *not* in Japantown. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Bowling alley IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Add an arcade in the Japan Center, a gathering place for youth with active games like Dance Dance Revolution. IN RECOMMENDATIONS – COMING SOON.
- Get Uniglo clothing store and other Japanese stores to Japan Center. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Need more varied types of activities within the mall. IN DRAFT
- Add craft and cooking demo-type stores. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Recommend that Japan Center function as a space/place for small non-chain merchants with *authentic* connection to Jtown's cultural character. IN DRAFT
- More Japanese cultural festivals. IN DRAFT
- More stores which introduce the latest Japanese food, culture, etc. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Adding any festivals is great as long as there's notice to the neighbors and additional trash pick-up. IN DRAFT
- More activities and festivals would be a good thing. IN DRAFT
- There are many redundant shops. IN DRAFT
- Should expand events. IN DRAFT
- Add lighting of central courtyard. PUBLIC REALM
- There needs to be more festivals. IN DRAFT
- Higher quality merchants generally, plus expanded uses like performing arts, galleries, and places to go for youth. IN RECOMMENDATIONS.
- Japantown should have more festivals like we used to have Fall Festival. People can enjoy different cultural experiences right now. Spring we have

CBF, Samoan (?) Bon Festival and Star Festival (Ianabata). So think about what we can offer the public. IN DRAFT

- More various shops that offer Japanese and Japanese American goods and services. IN DRAFT
- Cherry blossom festival. WHAT ABOUT IT?
- More Japanese cultural festivals. IN DRAFT

Impact of construction

- Demolition would displace many businesses for too long and be disruptive. IN DRAFT
- Will the Center be attractive with the type of amenities to make J Town thrive for new visitors and locals? ????
- Staged or phased demolition means the opportunity to make the open space better and a garage that doesn't leak, is seismically safe, and commercial space functional for new business tenants, to attract a major tenant, to bring in community benefit. NEEDS RESPONSE
- I think the current Japan Center may be coming to the end of its "reign." To continue to be a cultural hub of Japanese/Japanese-American culture and a retail/gathering space for the next 30-50 years changes to the physical aspects of Japan Center need to be made or at least looked at. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Demolition may open the door to new construction that is not compatible with J Town. It should be remodeled to add more activity / varied shopping stalls and types of businesses. More activity. RENOVATE – IN RECOMMENDATIONS.
- Could gradual renovation (done in phases) of the building be accomplished? RENOVATE – IN RECOMMENDATIONS.
- I heard remodeling existing J. Center to be more "open" and inviting, i.e. less closed and shut in, is limited by fact that shop fronts are inside and back areas used for storage are the outside walls. Can this be reversed? Or, can storage areas be put on the roof? RENOVATE – IN RECOMMENDATONS.
- This is a long-range project. What steps can be taken now to improve Japantown experience? E.g. clean up the mall, bring more activity into the plazas. NEEDS RESPONSE
- It's hard for small businesses to survive a big change. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Is a "phased" demolition feasible? In other words, keep part of the mall, open part of the mall, open when the other part is demolished and new construction is built. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Add parking availability, especially for increase in new housing units. NEEDS RESPONSE
- I agree that the massive development of Japan Center as proposed would destroy JTown's "village" character, and would not preserve its cultural integrity. IN RECOMMENDATIONS

- If you demolish, what happens to the current businesses? Go out of business? Will not be able to find reasonable accommodation. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Demolish is too disruptive. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Would like to explore options beyond condo that is economically feasible for the project. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Make sure businesses have a place to stay open at the same time or they will disappear forever. IN DRAFT

City participation

- Seek funding and grants at city, state and federal level for heritage and cultural preservation, open space and greening IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Bring the Consulate back to Japantown. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Have SFUSD locate a Japanese bilingual program in Japan Center. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Mayor of Japantown who can improve Japantown. IMPLEMENTING ORG - IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Need more woods, trees. We need many trees for each season. PUBLIC REALM
- Add more lights. PUBLIC REALM
- Add more trash bins. PUBLIC REALM
- They should also seek to integrate Fillmore St and that community. IN DRAFT
- More light. PUBLIC REALM
- Japan Center is owned by a company in L.A. This "landlord" has not been active or participating in JapanTown process. So how can discussion go forward on this project without them? IN RECOMMENDATIONS

How to preserve the mall

- Add shops directory inside the mall IN DRAFT
- There are many existing openings onto Post and Geary streets that can be more pedestrian-friendly. Because the openings are existing, major structural elements of the building are not impacted. IN RECOMMENDATIONS.
- Japantown draws many Japanese natives for shopping. Perhaps a little more emphasis by additional services catering to the Japanese natives. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Need something for young adults to do and hang out. IN DRAFT
- Get tourists to the mall. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- As part of feasibility studies, investigate which elements of Yamasaki's original design could be added back in redevelopment. The original sponsor did not fund his original and much more beautiful design. Call Fumio Suda, 510-898-1208, www.fumioaia.com IN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Find a way to get more active participation of Japantown merchant association. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Do not commercialize. Keep with the character. IN DRAFT
- Add physical space for indoor sports, such as ping pong, badminton, etc. IN DRAFT
- Outdoor artist (music) and indoor regularly be there. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Connect both major buildings across Peace Plaza again. It is a hodge podge now. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Small but many activities. ????
- Open up on Geary. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Collaborate with another street. ????
- Japan Center is a mall of 1970 Japan. RENOVATE – IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- It is important for visitors to learn Japanese lifestyle. RENOVATE – IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Feel something of new Japan. RENOVATE – IN RECOMMENDATIONS – NEW PEOPLE?
- We can buy many things on the Internet. In my opinion, we prepare many small events in Japan Center. ???
- Japan Center needs to be better marketed. It's a well-kept secret. Even San Franciso natives don't know about or haven't been to Japan Town. IMPLEMENTATION ORG – IN DRAFT
- There is a perception of limited parking. IN DRAFT
- Needs to be more of a family destination and experience. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- More monuments letting people know what's in the center. RENOVATE - IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Connecting all the buildings of Japantown – attract foot traffic. BUILT FORM
- Japantown seems to be lacking in attractions for teens and younger adults. The old Japantown Bowl was a "hang out" spot. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- The Center needs a new "hip" place for younger adults. IN RECOMMENDATIONS
- Offer cultural activities. IN RECOMMENDATIONS.
- Attract young adults with food trucks, nightlife. NEEDS A RESPONSE