COMMUNITY MEETING NOTES
JUNE 27, 2011
GROUP 1 OF 2: PUBLIC REALM
TOPIC LEADERS: ROSE HILLSON / DIANE ONIZUKA

INPUT FROM JAPANTOWN JUNE 27, 2011 COMMUNITY MEETING
PUBLIC REALM – OPEN SPACE / LANDSCAPE VISION

WEBSTER STREET LINEAR PARK (WLSP)

1. Agree with recommendation against WSLP – agree with analysis in handout
2. Open space – small park should be considered off Webster St. (parking lot) not behind Post Street
3. Will MTA allow a landscaped area along Geary Blvd next to the Center's high wall? Would be nice to have a "linear" park along Geary that also leads to new more enhanced opening into the Center.
4. WSLP is now dog poop area – may need to acknowledge this
5. Youth focus groups in 2008 (earlier phase of BNP) recommended park and play areas in Jtown. WSLP was the only solution in Draft BNP. I am concerned if WSLP is eliminated there is no recommendation to address the need. Please develop recommendation for park and kids play areas in Jtown.
6. Agree idea should be dropped / instead, plant at least one group of trees on median to <u>look like</u> a small grove/ just for visual effect/ but without interfering with use for food booths

DESIGNER

1. Process of selection of designers/planners: City should undertake a negotiated bid process with community-advised committee to bring in most knowledgeable experts in the area – ex: Japanese landscape designer, experienced open space, park designers who are familiar with this area
2. If there is no money for a landscape study or sample renderings, try asking local grad students. I was approached by a UC-Davis planning student who was interested but it ended up not working for her thesis, but I'm sure there are others if the organizing committee did some outreach. A visual will help people.

MAINTENANCE

1. Who will maintain all landscapes? Do we have the budget for living landscape?

ENERGY

1. Please consider the long term energy cost of a “fountain.” Perhaps it can be “solar energy” operated?

FOUNTAINS & WATER FEATURES

1. #43/#53 (numbers to photos): Fountains – Why don’t public fountains work in Jtown? There are public outdoor fountains all over the City that work, but ours don’t. Why? (Perhaps Mr. Hamamoto can help us understand this.)
2. Have design & enviro competition for water conserving / celebrating fountains / water features
3. I think there should be more inclusion of Japanese garden / nature elements like ponds / waterfalls in the general Japantown area. The nature element has to directly engage pedestrian traffic, not be limited to more background aesthetic. Perhaps ponds, boulders on Post or Sutter Streets?
4. Fountain needs to be reworked so that they don’t leak into the garage.

LANDSCAPE

1. Get rid of or use less concrete, more grass so they can add fountains & foliage.
2. More green, less hardscape
3. Cherry trees should be the main trees in Jtown. Japanese black pine should be used as accent plants, kept relatively small – 3 feet, +/-. Other backup plants could include camellias, wisteria, maples.
4. More consideration for “seasonal” landscaping.
5. Cherry blossom trees need to be separated to allow for growth
6. Have “Rosa Parks” green space garden be joint school community project. Unlock gates to playground – at last daylight hours – on map but not read.
7. Plants & planted areas need to be <u>maintained</u> – some of the planters on the Peace Plaza aren’t well maintained – e.g. the pine tree in the planter looks sad.
8. The cherry trees on Peace Plaza are too crowded.
9. The ficus trees on Sutter between Buchanan & Laguna make the block very dark.
10. I’d prefer to see the Akebono-type cherry trees for aesthetic and cultural reasons.
11. Japanese landscape design can also include <u>modern</u> Japanese landscapes. A great example is Tokyo Midtown; it’s a great public open space, is a walkable attraction & encourages people to visit the nearby shops & mail next door.
12. Encourage Japanese landscape (unreadable) elements in residential complexes and commercial buildings outside Japan Center
13. Tsuboniwa (Japanese style pocket garden) / small scale Japanese gardens in both public and private spaces / a core set can be created & maintained by voluntary gardeners’ ** association / offer classes to teach design techniques & annual contest to promote private examples / tsuboniwa can be promoted as an art form / ** example: 1) Japanese garden in Little Tokyo Japanese Cultural Center, 2) West L.A. Stoner Playground Japanese Garden
14. Should not be restricted only to Japanese foliage because of multi-cultural history of Japantown
15. Intelligent, creative combination of these cultures, together with indigenous plants

16. Continue to support the “Sakura 150” project in planting 150 cherry blossom trees in Jtown. It will be an attraction for tourists & City residents when they bloom in the Spring.
17. More greenery in Plaza that reflects authentic Japanese landscaping species. Also on other streets. Same with small pockets of dirt around Geary stairwell – drought tolerant smaller Japanese plants with waterfall.
18. Landscape on top of garage
19. Rooftop parks and plantings on top of existing mall buildings
20. Multi-year season plants & trees
21. Japanese garden in Mall
22. Flowers nice to have – wisteria, Japanese maple, cherry blossom, Japanese tokusa, gold (?) gingko
23. Rooftop garden broad/2nd floor & walkways like Embarcadero Center
24. #71: Geary BRT landscape terraced garden along street between West & East buildings. South wall should reflect castle wall of moat with couple of walks going from Geary St. to Peace Plaza
25. #38: Flora & fauna should be looked at by a group of horticulturalists to select plants & trees that fit Buchanan Mall & Peace Plaza
26. Soften hardscape, too much grey from streets

PEACE PLAZA

1. Pagoda stage on Peace Plaza – Performance stage needs to have accommodations for sound amplification & staging & lighting & backstage windscreen preparation for performers
2. Peace Plaza needs to be redesigned – it’s not very useful to focus on details (e.g. #44 – Peace Flame) when a total redesign is needed
3. Restore Peace Plaza loggia between the two Japan Center buildings
4. #64, #66 – This Plaza needs to be redesigned to not only look more attractive, but it needs to serve more than one use. Cherry blossom trees should be inserted in a square, the tower should serve a purpose because all it does not is look ugly. The City could design the open space to harvest rain water, using a permeable surface. It would be a great place to sit down and eat lunch.
3. Peace Plaza: Trees in ground, not pots (feels temporary & also is out of scale)
4. Peace Plaza: Turn it back on Geary, needs to be reconsidered, don’t know how.
5. Japantown priority should be Peace Plaza: redesign if funds are available to make more user-friendly while maintaining large public events
6. Refilling stream in Peace Plaza (stream starts at one end, flows through small part of Plaza, ends in drain and pumps water back to beginning of stream) and surround creek with plants
7. Peace Plaza needs another redesign & practical upgrade – should be designed by a reputable landscape designer / planner like Royston Hamamoto to incorporate all the design elements of Japanese heritage into a more pragmatic functional design. Lanterns in the Plaza should allow for ease of movement & traffic flow

8. Peace Plaza: Recommend rebuild (sic) with an art space / community space to act as buffer between public space and condo development. Also a playground next to Peace Plaza on the other side.
   Kabuki Hotel | Art space | Peace Plaza | Playground | Condo
9. Peace Plaza: Needs redesign – develop people places – develop cherry trees as dominant canopy and use Japanese black pine as accent plants, kept to about 3 ft. height together with other Japanese plants. Cherry trees in all street plantings and other open spaces.
10. Better maintenance on Peace Plaza, Buchanan Mall, Post & Geary
11. Geary Blvd between Webster & Laguna @ Peace Plaza: Recommend landscaped low maintenance Japanese garden low maintenance with a zigzag walkway up to Peace Plaza with waterfall.
12. Recommend BRT stop opposite the Peace Plaza and this stop be properly landscaped as an introduction to Jtown for transit riders. It will have a very important economic impact in a positive manner. Lighting should be consistent throughout Jtown, same design throughout the pedestrian areas.
13. Eternal Flame should be more prominent with the history of the SF – Osaka Sister City relationship much like the renaming of Osaka Way from Buchanan Street
14. Let the Eternal Flame be publicly visible
15. Soften hardscape on Plaza & Japantown
16. Peace Plaza grounds repaved with materials that show rocks. (unreadable) loose – as hard to walk but looks like gravel. Lighting should be studied & present lights taken out. Lamps with circle seats
17. #2: Should be removed. Some Japanese lanterns place in certain area of Plaza.
18. #44: Peace Flame should be moved to be more visible area and water or pool is a must

PEACE PAGODA

1. The Peace Pagoda needs to have a structural evaluation – its repair should be a high priority

ARCHITECTURAL

1. #49: That arch could really stand to be redone. Either a traditional torii or something less full of Brutalist concrete.
2. I like the idea of constructing another Torii gate to Japantown that's more inviting and more visible to the traffic flowing down Geary Blvd across Webster
3. Make entry to Plaza from Geary Blvd more inviting, terraced garden, open store fronts
4. Red Japanese gates at strategic entries (like Chinatown)
5. Bridges similar to Embarcadero Center
6. Another bridge across Geary from Peace Plaza to YMCA

BUILDING DESIGN

1. Paint roofs white for better cooling insulation aesthetics
2. Need increase in lighting under bridge/walkway on Webster. Dark & no artwork. Promote commercial activity? or use as shade?
3. Better (unreadable) (unreadable) than WSLP
4. Developer pays for park improvement

ORNAMENTATION & ART

1. No one knows where Jtown is…even when you're there. Needs to be connected with consistent pavement, signage, lighting, plants & trees
2. Ornamental lamps – Maybe make them look like red paper lanterns of the type that often hang in front of restaurants?
3. Murals / banners all around with kanji, katakana, hiragana
4. All light fixtures should follow a design theme, including street lights for the redesigned Geary Ave.
5. Combine public art w/ Eternal Flame
6. Japanese fan ("sensu") sculpture on median of Webster Street should be featured:
    A. Better lighting
    B. Landscaping of median to enhance sculpture
    C. Perhaps move sculpture closer to Post rather than under bridge
7. Maintain view from Sutter Street torii gate to Tower. It's lovely.
8. Would like to see more art work which could double as play structure for kids and maybe seating? promote public usage? Maybe easy to maintain grass could be included in courtyard.
9. Webster Street – areas should have sculptures among the trees:
    A. Between Post & Sutter sculptures
    B. Sutter & Bush a more garden area
    C. Geary & Post – rock garden under Webster Bridge

WALL

1. Remove wall on Geary, have terraced gardens & play spaces
2. Open up, improve entry to Jtown from Geary (by Pagoda). Right now, Jtown is walled off from Geary
3. Have an easier access to and from south side to north side & vice versa of Geary. Include the south side of Geary as a historical area of Japantown – i.e. Rosa Parks (Rafael Weil) School and the YMCA.
4. #63, Remove that wall and widen the stairs to make Japantown more inviting when seen from Geary Street
5. #63: If we can't get rid of that wall, could we maybe hang some of the plants in Picture #18 over it? It would look nicer with plants or even just ivy instead of just a solid rock wall.
6. Open up Japantown to outside

PEDESTRIAN

1. Close Post to through traffic in order to create pedestrian links across Buchanan Mall & along Post. Parking for business would be replaced by eliminating CPMC lease.
2. Assemble REIT blocks public space
3. Geary should be pedestrian friendly – not a freeway, have underground Muni trains on Geary

CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

1. In open space between Sutter & Post (Hinode Towers)
2. On Peace Plaza, south side toddler jungle gym similar to the one at City Hall Plaza

MALLS

1. #51: Buchanan Mall should be maintained & enhanced. Planters removed with smaller ones & Japanese stone lanterns (kasuga) be placed here and there
2. Maintain, repair fountains, retain but make cobblestones safer
3. Outdoor eating – it's barren
4. Buchanan Mall needs to be renovated to look newer, more attractive and modern without losing the Japanese theme. It is the gateway or introduction into Japantown. The stores and restaurants should also try for renovation to make it more attractive.
5. Buchanan Mall cobblestones & paving is hazardous and not ADA compliant – it should be fixed with the design (of the "river") maintained.
6. There is a lot of real estate on top of the Malls on Post Street. The roofs would be great for installing solar panels, rooftop gardens, green roofs or rainwater harvesting. With this, the merchants of the Mall could cut CAM expenses and boost business and the overall sustainability of Japantown
7. Miyako Mall: Recommend ability for community to purchase some space next to Peace Plaza

SIGNAGE

1. Uniform signage
2. Include north & south sides of Geary
3. Improve signage on California pointing to Japantown
4. Flag banners along Geary to mark Japantown

HISTORY

1. Publicize the Japantown History Walk more
2. Recognize historic significance of nooks, crannies and conduits connecting Jtown to other neighborhoods such as Cottage Row.