



JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE

日本町の経済発展・計画・保存

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING & PRESERVATION OF JAPANTOWN

NOTES FROM THE LAND USE/TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE

1765 SUTTER STREET

MONDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2018

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Glynis Nakahara, Judy Hamaguchi, Benh Nakajo

STAFF PRESENT:

Steve Nakajo

OTHERS PRESENT:

Karen Kai, Jeremy Chan, Liz Brissan, Chris Buck, Daniel Mackowski, Linda Walsh

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

GEARY BRT (BUS RAPID TRANSIT)

Cherry Trees

Liz Brissan from MTA discussed the revision of the proposed tree additions and removals in this part of the corridor. The previous suggestion of London Planes and Fern Pines will be replaced with Cherry Blossom trees, as per Karen Kai's suggestion and report.

Chris Buck - Public Works / Urban Friends of the Forest discussed the current state of trees in Japantown. As trees are being removed, they are replacing them with "flowering cherries." He affirmed the importance of cherry trees with respect to community identity.

A cold/mild winter a few years ago resulted in the cherry trees not blooming until summer (and barely at that). Currently Japantown has Kwanzan trees, which are usually resistant to colder temperatures (ex. in DC). Buck suggested the subheritella cherry species (winter-flowering cherry), which is a bit more resistant to changing temperatures. He also commented that the warmer climate here (compared to the western part of SF) benefits the cherry trees.

Karen expressed her concern that subheritellas have a "weeping" form that can be damaged by car doors. The decision will be finalized around January or February 10th. We have until then to determine which species of cherry tree to plant (it can be a mix)

Buck discussed that it can take 3-5 years to assess a tree's health and determine its future viability (kind of like "beta testing.")

Daniel Mackowski confirmed that the trees will be planted all at once. Chris Buck said that there generally isn't a volunteer planting day for projects like this. Karen said that this should be fine.

Contractors are responsible for an initial maintenance period of the tree for 3 years. Prop E from 2016 resulted in city maintenance of all trees in the city.

Geary BRT Construction

Construction has begun. Several bus stop changes started on October 6. Ambassadors passed out materials 3 days before and 3 days after the changes at these bus stops. The key Japantown stop change is the Fillmore rapid stop being moved to between Fillmore and Webster.

Steiner Street bridge will be demolished, perhaps during Memorial Day weekend or another weekend. It would require a complete closure of the road. The Buchanan crossing and Webster crossing will be implemented during the “yellow” phase ranging from 2019-2020.

Construction will not occur during peak hours or at night. Alice expressed her concern about rodent control with respect to construction. The current contract language currently focuses on on-corridor, but will consider off-corridor considerations such as St. Francisco's Square and Nihonmachi Terrace.

Alice also expressed concern for seniors with respect to accessibility. Daniel Mackowski said he will confirm the contract language with regards to temporary paving.

DECORATIVE CROSSWALKS

Grace Horikiri told Karen Kai that this is on hold for the CBD until the Peace Plaza discussion is more stabilized. Glynis discussed potential funding sources like SF Beautiful. She will reach out to Grace for further follow-up.

CANNABIS LEGISLATION

It was clarified that Japantown's NCD restrictions do not ban cannabis dispensaries because there is no longer such a thing as “medical cannabis dispensaries.” The new legislation resulted in a new definition of cannabis retail.

The committee discussed whether we are satisfied with the current protocol or if we want to pursue additional considerations.

Karen suggested adding cannabis retail/update medical cannabis to the NCD under a “conditional use” provision. This would put it in line with alcohol and tobacco, which are also under conditional use. Going along with that analogy, bars might be viewed favorably with respect to economic development, whereas cannabis dispensaries may not be.

311 does exist as a remedy to call with respect to complaints. However, further regulations/guidelines would set the social tone in the neighborhood.

Judy will discuss with Vas from the Fillmore Merchants Association, as well as contacts in Chinatown to see how they address cannabis. Chinatown organized and got the Board of Supervisors to ban cannabis in their neighborhood.

SUD ZONING FOR MEZZANINES

Glynis asked Maya Small from planning regarding Ichipub. Uses for mezzanines defer to first floor designations, unless it exceeds height limits, in which case, it is then considered as the

second level with its collorary uses. Glynis will ask ABC if it has its own special definition of mezzanine. Currently it seems that our NCD does not need to be clarified.

PEACE PLAZA MEETING

Thursday, October 25, 2018 6pm-8pm at the JCCCNC.

There will be a presentation and explanation of some design proposals, followed by smaller individual focus groups. In response to the feedback that the last community meeting lacked interaction, this upcoming community meeting will include more small group interaction.

Glynis said that the second community meeting is critical with respect to the decision making timeline. It's much harder to backpedal later.

Karen suggested to invite RHAA to the Land Use meeting. This could result in specific discussion and critical feedback that would not be articulated within the larger meeting. Judy said that the Peace Plaza committee is the place for focused discussion. The next committee meeting is Tuesday, October 23, 5pm in the JACL. Steve is hoping that there's some insight prior to the community meeting.

Karen suggested having a joint Peace Plaza and Land Use meeting, because the Peace Plaza meeting only allows the public to speak for 2 minutes each. Steve Nakajo says that it's up to the chair's discretion, and that the chair can allow discussion longer than 2 minutes.

At the last charette, they had overlays and elevations. Due to the changing nature of the designs, it was asked to be confidential.

Steve said the bond is not set, so it's possible that this project will lose funding. Karen asked about assessment of the Peace Pagoda because this is the best fiscal time to do that. Steve said it's not part of the bond.

NEW BUSINESS:

NEIGHBORHOOD CPMC MEETING

There will be a joint Cathedral Hill / Japantown meeting about the impact of the new CPMC hospital re: traffic congestion, security, and other concerns. The hospital is not planning on providing parking for staff.

It will be (hopefully) on the 15th, as it was later found out after the meeting that the JTF Board Meeting has been rescheduled to Wednesday, November 14th. Karen noted that the API Conference is the November 10-12 meeting.

MONTHLY MEETING DATE + NOTETAKING

Jeremy discussed that notetaking constrains the ability of the notetaker to actively participate in the meeting. The notes are also important not just for the public, but also for the committee to keep track of all issues discussed. He mentioned how even during this meeting, we spent time refreshing topics like the CPMC and cannabis regulation.

Glynis suggested a rotational model of note taking. Jeremy suggested a rotational model of

facilitating, where committee members would take turns facilitating under the guidance of the chair(s). Alice expressed her interest in facilitating, and will facilitate the November meeting.

Meeting Dates - it was second Monday because of Clint. Before it was the second Tuesday. It was decided to keep it as the second Monday for now.

Glynis is currently looking for a co-chair.

The next LUT meeting will be scheduled for Monday, November 5th, because the 12th is Veteran's Day. Glynis will confirm. It was suggested to have the rescheduled meeting before the CPMC meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Benh said he attended for the cherry tree discussion and was satisfied with it.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Saturday 10/20 is a busy day

Aki Matsuri - Saturday 10/20 - 12pm-5pm in the Peace Plaza.

SF JACL - Health Fair

Buchanan YMCA Sentimental Journey - Saturday 10/20 - Evening

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

The next meeting will be at 6:00 p.m., November 8, 2018 at the JACL HQ.