



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, FEBRUARY 11, 2019

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT: ALICE KAWAHATSU, GLYNIS NAKAHARA, SANDY MORI, KENTA TAKAMORI

STAFF PRESENT: STEVE NAKAJO

OTHERS PRESENT: JEREMY CHAN, STEVE NAKAJIMA, SHEFFIELD HALE, KAREN KAI, BOB RUSKY

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

FORD GOBIKES

Kenta reported on meetings that he and Glynis attended - 1/30 with Adrian Leung of SFMTA 2/8 with Alex Garcia of Lyft (the new GoBike owner).

Meeting purpose was to ask follow up questions and to get more background/facts around the parameters for making GoBike decisions.

The implementation of GoBike is based on a resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors 11-0 (they obtained a copy of that resolution). The rollout is based on a complex set of agreements, some with jus San Francisco, and some with a consortium of cities including SF, Berkeley, and Emeryville. SF is committed to open 320 GoBike stations; they currently have 150. They are placing new GoBike stations in close proximity to existing GoBike stations (i.e. start at one point - SF Financial District, and expand out from there), and so their rollout map is currently approaching Japantown.

The survey results were used to eliminate the GoBike stations with the greatest opposition. The three spots that they are currently looking at include (1) near the Buchanan Mall, and (2) west side of Octavia at Bush, and (3)

GoBike has acknowledged that the committee did not support any bikes on Post Street. The survey also reflected the opposition to these stops.

Karen commented that the bikes should not be along the Mary Ellen Pleasant Park, but across the street is fine.

Right now they are looking at one bike rack in Japantown. They do not have a concrete plan to add additional stops at this time. If the one station that is installed has great success, then Japantown can consider implementing more stops.

Kenta suggested re: beta process, that the committee should decide whether it should support bike share at all, before discussing exact locations.

Glynis commented that she is open to working with GoBike to find a suitable location, and does not want an outright ban. Japantown's Supervisor has supported multimodal transportation in this district. Tom Maguire of SFMTA has conveyed his commitment to working with communities regarding this. With a pilot project, there will be data, and we can better understand who uses it and what the impacts are.

Alice asked if the residents on these streets have been asked. Kenta said that the primary response has been from the survey, but the data is not granulated for privacy purposes.

Karen criticized the Buchanan stop, next to Hotel Buchannan. She also said the sidewalk option should be reconsidered since the (Laguna sidewalk) was measured and has the requisite 12 feet. Glynis reported that Hotel Kabuki preferred Geary as opposed to Laguna since there would be displacement of metered parking.

Going back to the process question: Kenta emphasized that we should decide first whether we support having a station at all, before debating specific stops.

Sandy commented the difficulty in balancing the policy issues with maintaining Japantown as a cultural destination point for Japanese American folks across the Bay Area. She doesn't want us to be viewed as obstructionists with respect to city policy. She stressed the importance of our board's mission vs. cooperating with the city.

Confirm the number of bikes.

Glynis said the parking garage is under capacity means that "something is not jiving." The parking corporation needs to promote easier access, cheaper than the week, etc.

Karen said the garage has a bad name because of elevator problems, construction, environmental problems, and other aspects. Merchants get complaints when customers don't get parking.

Steve Nakajima outlined his opposition to GoBikes.

1. We have more than adequate transportation alternatives (MUNI)
 - a. The newest trend right now is stationless bikes, not station bikes such as jump bikes.
 - b. 12 scooter companies in pilot projects. 2500 scooters will be installed
 - c. Rideshare - taxi, lyft, uber, flywheel
 - d. Personal cars
 - e. Parking spots
 - f. Japantown does not have a transportation strategy
2. Japantown aesthetic / streetscape will be impaired
 - a. Japantown does not have an aesthetic / streetscape design guide
 - b. not pleasing and difficult to maintain (example leaves and trash)
 - c. Jump Bikes are not any better, but at least they're not permanent
 - d. Peace Plaza will enhance the aesthetic
3. Inappropriate and disrespectful government business practice
 - a. Misuse of survey data
 - b. The "neutral" option was misrepresented

- c. Did not allow community to opt out of bike installation
- d. Bernal Heights and Hayes Valley and District 2 (Cow Hollow) face the same issue
 - i. District 2 supervisor halted the process, but this may have changed
 - ii. Bernal Heights wants the bikes out of there
- e. The city is making money on this
- 4. Politically weak communities get the installation
 - a. Communities of color, communities that are weak, little influence
 - b. Why not Chinatown, Fisherman's Wharf, etc.? (note: Chinatown has a bike rack installed near Portsmouth square)
- 5. Vision/trend change
 - a. Stationless bike are the new trend - we need to confirm whether that is true or not
 - i. Jump Red bikes
 - b. SFMTA leadership change in August
 - i. the current one is about no cars
 - ii. there could be leadership change, vision change, stationless bikes

Recommendation is to wait so the committee can collect more data

- we have the GoBikes by the Safeway
- support for stationless bikes

Risks

- losing ridership
- City Hall

Karen supported the criticism of the process.

Sandy suggested that LUT should create a Transportation Strategy for Japantown.

Alice supported the protection of Japantown and expressed her concern for safety. She also said she doesn't feel like we're being pressured.

Sheffield suggested asking for historical data from the parking garage.

Kenta said it's inconclusive, and so we should table the discussion to pursue it further. Report back to GoBike that we need more time.

Jeremy talked about how transportation and access to Japantown is seen as the number one issue for involvement in the community, especially for young people. Steve and Sandy expressed skepticism at this statement.

Jeremy also said that rideshare should not be encouraged as a sustainable alternative. Jeremy said that transportation access to Japantown should be seriously considered, and suggested incorporating Tomo's research about the benefits of GoBike.

ZIPCAR ALTERNATIVE SITES

The Land Use committee, as voted on during the last meeting, will make recommendation to the board for the Zipcar stop to be moved to south of Post, east of Laguna.

Alice will give Nihonmachi Terrace a heads up.

GEARY BRT KICK OFF

There is an alternative rain room inside the West Mall, where “Auto Freak” is.

Glynis, Karen, etc. have been cut to 3.5 minutes for 4 people.

J-Town provided all of the performance acts, worked with the city over time on the project, etc.

Karen expressed her criticism that community folks are being pushed out of the program.

Sandy and Alice expressed the benefits of having politicians spotlighting Japantown; Glynis mentioned that there will be full press coverage.

PEACE PLAZA / PAGODA LANDMARKING AND IMPROVEMENTS

Sandy reported that on March 19th JCCCNC - they will present a final design reiteration.

The CEQA (environmental impact assessment) is going through the planning department, so we need to keep an eye on that. The bond will not be until 2020, and there is no guarantee we will be on the bond. 4-5 projects are up for consideration, and more may enter the playing field.

Glynis expressed her concern that by the time the bond is passed, there will be new/different people leading to criticism of the design/process.

Sandy says that Steve Nakajima is to be the Peace Plaza Renovation point person to avoid us getting into the abyss.

Jeremy asked if the design process can happen after the bond is passed. Sandy clarified that the design concept has to be submitted prior to bond, especially in order to get a cost estimate.

Jeremy asked if the Peace Plaza committee has seen the final design - just concepts, not the final.

NEIGHBORHOOD CPMC MEETING

Alice reported on this meeting. The director is a nurse, so it's been designed with the intention of being patient/nurse friendly. Seniors at the Sequoias expressed concern about traffic flow / safety. They have parking lots for patients, designated drop off alleyways, but no parking for workers.

Alice suggested someone should give a presentation; invite folks in JTF and JCBD, because there was little Japantown representation. Sandy said the purpose of the Sequoia meeting was for that, and that JTF invited but they rarely attend.

Glynis suggested asking them to forward information, so we can forward it to our listserves. She agreed that if J-Town was to have its own meeting, people won't show up.

Glynis said Paul said CPMC will monitor transportation, etc. and see how staff are arriving to see if the TDM is working.

Jeremy commented that Alice's comment speaks to a larger point with respect to JTF's communication - ex. different listserves, etc. Including how to communicate effectively, especially re: Japanese speaking community members.

Sandy reported that JCBD is assembling a large communication meeting including representatives of JTF. A date has not been set yet for that meeting.

BUCHANAN / SUTTER BUS BENCH

Glynis will check in with the residents of the building (Mr. Miura of Super Mira, etc.) to confirm if their feelings are the same about the bus bench.

GEARY BRT TREES

They have not set the trees yet.

NEW BUSINESS:

CHANGE OF USE / CONDITIONAL USE POLICY

Should there be an overarching policy regarding future change of use /conditional use. If so, what is that? We should discuss this further (not now, but as a subcommittee).

Sandy commented that the committee should be aware of capacity. Glynis said she isn't sure if it's possible, but can theorize a set of generic questions. Ex. Does it enhance the cultural value of the neighborhood, is it within our boundaries?

Karen asked about the notifications. Glynis said she requested a change in notice to Steve Nakajo, and he will monitor the receipt of notices more carefully. Glynis and Kenta signed up for automatic email hearing notices. But this does not include change of use notices.

MONTHLY MEETING DATE

Instead of second Monday, another day that's more feasible.
Recommendation for Thursdays.

BUDDHIST CHURCH OF AMERICA - BCA BUILDING

BCA will be voting on a proposal to move forward to sell / long term lease to community minded organizations, including BCSF. They will also be considering several other options. They don't seem interested anymore in selling the building quickly. They might be looking to sell another property instead.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Reception for Vallie Brown - Thursday March 14 at Paina, 5:30pm - 7:30pm
Vallie Brown is up for reelection. The purpose is to welcome her and raise money.
She is running against Dean Preston, who ran against London Breed earlier.

The meeting adjourned a 7:41 p.m.