

**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE  
PEACE PLAZA COMMITTEE  
5:00 - 6:00 pm, TUESDAY, May 3rd, 2022  
MINUTES**

**Committee Members:** Jon Osaki, Co-Chair; Richard Hashimoto, Co-Chair; Glynis Nakahara; Sandy Mori; Alice Kawahatsu

Board Members: Benh Nakajo

**JTF Staff:** Dr. Emily Murase, Max Nihei (also JCBD), Brandon Quan

**City Staff:** Marien Coss, Beverly Ng, Recreation & Parks Department; Danielle Chan, Jennifer Cooper, Department of Public Works

**RHAA Consultants:** Michael DeGregario, Masahiro Inoue, Doug Nelson

**Others:** Ayae Yoshimoto, Japanese Consulate; Jordan; Nancy N., St. Francis Cooperative; Sheridan Tatsuno; Tomo Hirai, Derek Tahara, Nichi Bei Weekly.

### **I. Call to Order**

Co-Chair Jon Osaki called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm. Co-Chair Richard Hashimoto welcomed Ayae Yoshimoto, who was recently appointed to serve as the Advisor for Community Affairs at the San Francisco Japanese Consulate, replacing Taisuke Suzuki.

### **II. Review of structural analysis and weight limitations**

Marien Coss of the Recreation and Parks Department presented slides to update the committee. She explained the structural analysis of the original Peace Plaza Vision Plan, as initially conceptualized, surfaced the following design constraints.

1. The original design would most definitely trigger a seismic upgrade, a very expensive and time intensive process that will greatly impact the functionality of the garage.
2. Cannot change specific utilities (e.g., air vents connected to the garage)
3. The original water feature proves too heavy.
4. Potted trees vs. combined understory is a challenge.
5. Intentional symbolism: universal Asian vs. authentic Japanese.

Mas Inoue, the community design consultant, added that changes to the California Building Code have also limited options in terms of the greening and plant features.

### **III. New cost projections**

Jon explained that the updated cost estimate is \$33M, from the original estimate of \$25M. There is a budget shortfall based on the most recent cost analyses. Beverly Ng of the Recreation and Parks Department stated that, to address the \$8M budget

shortfall, the Department has committed \$2M out of the Department's contingency budget. The Department has applied to the federal Community Projects Grant for \$3-4M. At the state level, Assemblymember Ting received funding requests for the Peace Plaza from Supervisor Dean Preston, Mayor London Breed, and the Department. Marien explained that the cost increase can be attributed to the impact of COVID. For another project, the contractor pulled out due to cost increases. She stated that \$16M covers the bare minimum design, additional features would cost \$7M which doesn't include any of the "soft costs." The current plan is to continue drawing up plans through the end of the year, issue a bid for the work next year. The bid process takes 6 months to complete before construction. Then the project will be submitted for Commission approval and certification which can take another 6 months. Marien expects construction to commence in 2024. She will be updating the website with a monthly blog.

2024 - going out to bid in mid 2023. Updated website with these dates. Monthly blog.

#### **IV. Update on design**

Mas walked the committee through design concerns related to the original Vision Plan. A bird's eye view reveals a Confucian yin and yang design which is not authentically Japanese. The planters along Post Street appear to be randomly placed, not cohesive to a particular design. The planters and outdoor furniture are too heavy.

Marien explained a proposed plan that addresses these concerns. Planters are removed and replaced with green ground cover. She confirmed that the proposed plan follows the 5 goals established in the Vision Plan.

- 1) Make Post Street visually open and inviting
- 2) Provide a large permanent stage, seating for 200-300 people
- 3) Make the Peace Plaza inviting and playful
- 4) Create an inviting visual expression
- 5) Incorporate cultural elements.

Discussion focused on the stage area. Sandy Mori asked whether a permanent stage is planned. Marien responded that a formal stage is not currently envisioned. According to Jennifer Cooper, additional open space was designed to save festival organizers from needing to rent and assemble a stage for events. Jon explained that a lot of time was dedicated to designing for performance space. Alice Kawahatsu and Benh Nakajo expressed concern about sight lines given the location of trees in front of the Peace Plaza. Mas walked committee members through an image of the Plaza with older, larger trees creating a canopy. Glynis requested due consideration to installing cherry trees since many visitors expect to see these. Nancy N, a neighbor, expressed in the chat her concern about maintenance, growth, root invasion of trees that will eventually damage flooring, and the gathering of nuisance birds who will feed and poop in the area. Rich Hashimoto asked about communication with SFMTA regarding impacts on the number of garage spaces. He suggested ways in which garage pillars could reinforce the new plan.

Mas explained various designs that refer to traditional Japanese patterns, including “kasumi”/fog. Discussion focused on the greenery and planters, and the need for sufficient planting soil. Marien stated that there is a concrete beam that spans the Plaza. The current plan is to work around the beam with greenery.

Next steps:

1. Design: Marien to confirm weights of current design with the engineers and figure out what weight can be added back.
2. Funding
3. Approvals
  - a. SF Planning - resubmit plaza and pagoda design
  - b. Arts Commission Civic Design Review (target for July 18 meeting)
4. Target meetings
  - a. Civic Design Review presentation meeting, July 18
  - b. Historic Preservation Commission update, July
  - c. Town Hall, Aug/Fall

Committee members discussed the location of the stage. Marien explained that there will be elevated amphitheater-style seating along the east side of the Plaza. Further discussion focused on the upturned beam constraint and the constraint posed by vents to the garage.

Jon and Marien will continue discussing the right time for the community town hall.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday May 24th, 2022, 5:00PM**