



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Historic Landmarks Commission

SUBJECT: SAN JOSE JAPANTOWN HISTORIC
CONTEXT AND INTENSIVE SURVEY,
PHASE II

DATE: April 14, 2008

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3
SNI AREA: Not Applicable

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the *San Jose Japantown Historic Context and Intensive Survey, Phase II* as recommended by the Historic Landmarks Commission (4-0-0).

OUTCOME

Council acceptance of the *San Jose Japantown (SJJ) Historic Context and Intensive Survey Survey, Phase II* would acknowledge the work completed on the SJJ historic context and survey project to date, providing the basis for further research, listing, designation and preservation of historic resources and neighborhood character in San Jose's Japantown neighborhood.

BACKGROUND

In October 2006 historic resource consultants, Carey & Co. Inc. Architecture, completed Phase II of the Japantown historic context and survey project: the *San Jose Japantown Historic Context Statement and Intensive Survey, Phase II*. The survey area is bounded by North First Street on the west, Taylor Street on the north, North Tenth Street on the east and Empire Street on the south. Following completion of the intensive survey and the Historic Landmarks Commission recommendation for acceptance in late 2006, planning staff continued community outreach efforts in 2007 and into 2008 prior to taking the intensive survey forward to Council for acceptance.

In Phase I, the consultants documented 67 buildings within the survey area in a reconnaissance survey. This work resulted in the completion of an initial context statement and Primary Records describing physical features, which supported preliminary findings of potential historic property identification. As with Phase I of the project, interest in conducting Phase II came in large part from members of the Japantown community who were active in the statewide California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project. This pilot project resulted in 2001 State legislation (SB 307) to help preserve and promote the state's three remaining Japantowns in San Francisco, San Jose and Los

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Angeles. In Spring 2005, the Japantown Community Congress received \$40,000.00 in funding from a California Civil Liberties Public Education Program Grant, and the City of San Jose received \$5,000.00 in funding from a National Trust for Historic Preservation Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation Grant and \$5,000.00 in funding from a State Office of Historic Preservation Certified Local Government Grant for Phase II of the Japantown historic context and survey project.

Through the California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project, San Jose's Japantown incorporated the nonprofit Japantown Community Congress (JCC). Members of the Congress together with representatives of the San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission, Japantown Business Association, together with San Jose Redevelopment Agency and PBCE staff, formed a survey committee to oversee the project. The survey committee prepared the request for proposals, reviewed all of the submittals, interviewed the finalists, selected the consultant team, prepared the scope of work and worked with Carey & Co. throughout the project. The survey committee met on a monthly basis to track the project's progress. Members of the survey committee also participated in numerous community meetings and events on behalf of the project. In addition, planning staff provided a monthly status update on the project to the Historic Landmarks Commission at their regular monthly meetings.

Attached please find a copy of the *Japantown Historic Context & Intensive Level Survey, Phase II* Project Report, and Appendix D: District Record. The entire Survey, including the refined Historic Context Statement, Project Maps, Intensive Survey Matrix, individual property California Parks and Recreation forms, and Oral History Interviews, is not attached due to the volume of those sections. The entire Survey Report is available on the Planning Division web page at:
<http://www.sanjoseca.gov/planning/Historic/>

This survey report is the second of what could be a project of several phases. Phase I of the project focused on the identification of potential historic resources in the Japantown neighborhood and resulted in the drafting of an initial historic context statement as well as the documentation of the physical characteristics of a number of properties in the area. It also proposed the idea of considering a historic district and possibly a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) within the neighborhood. The City Council accepted the Phase I Survey on January 25, 2005. Phase II entailed the property research required to determine the presence of individually significant resources and the preliminary boundaries of a potential historic district and TCP. With City Council and community support, additional work will be required to list the properties on the City of San Jose Historic Resources Inventory and consider preparation of the applicable nomination procedures for historic district and TCP designation.

The consultant team presented the Phase II Survey Report for the Historic Landmarks Commission review and discussion at their Wednesday November 1, 2006 meeting. Leslie Masunaga, co-chair of the JCC Historic District Committee, thanked the City for the work on the project, noting that Japantown is old and precious to the community, that the project has identified Historic Resources and cultural history in the area, and that the committee hopes to move forward with the recommendations in the report. The Historic Landmarks Commission voted (4-0-0) to accept the Japantown Historic Context & Intensive Level Survey and its findings at their December 6, 2006 meeting. Vice Chair Colombe commented that it was a pleasure to see Phase II of the project, and that hopefully it will result in the long term preservation of this community. Chair Janke concurred, noting that this is a valuable area in the City, and that historic resource identification through survey work is appropriate. Following completion of the intensive survey and the Historic Landmarks

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Commission recommendation for acceptance, planning staff continued community outreach efforts prior to taking the intensive survey forward to Council for acceptance.

ANALYSIS

Historic contexts are the patterns and trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning (and significance) within history or prehistory is made clear (National Register Bulletin 15). In the case of the Japantown historic context and survey project, the historic context is a record of the area from the perspective of the built environment and how that environment helps to interpret the history of Japanese Americans in San Jose and the United States.

The intensive survey was undertaken using the documentation and findings of the Phase I reconnaissance survey as a foundation. In Phase II, the completion of additional California Department of Parks and Recreation Historic Resource Primary Record (DPR 523A) and Building, Structure, Object Record (DPR 523B) forms comprised the major portion of the intensive survey work.

The Recommendations section of the report represents the consultant's suggestions for next steps. Based on the research for the historic context and intensive survey, it is Carey & Co.'s professional opinion that San Jose's Japantown neighborhood contains numerous resources that are significant for the role they played in the city's Japanese American history, for their connection to historically important people, and/or for their architectural distinction. These resources, numbering 86 in all, are documented on DPR 523A and DPR 523B forms (Appendix E), and as such would qualify for listing on the City of San Jose Historic Resources Inventory. As a group they may qualify for listing as a City of San Jose historic district, a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) historic district and/or a Traditional Cultural Property. The National Historic Landmark program is the country's highest level of recognition for historic sites and is reserved for the nation's most significant cultural and historic resources. A TCP is a more recently developed category of significance for a place that is important due to the role the place plays in the cultural practices or beliefs of a living community. There must be a connection between the place and the culture, and TCPs reflect a range of place types from religious sites to urban or rural communities. Additionally, the intensive survey identified several individually significant historic properties found to be eligible for official designation as San Jose City Landmarks and/or individual listing on the National Register.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

It is important to note that the recommendations are based on the findings of the context and intensive level survey, but that in order to pursue any of the designation recommendations, a phase III historic district nomination project would be required. With City Council and community support, refined research and documentation for individual resources and potential refinement of the historic context will be required to prepare historic district and TCP nomination forms. This third phase is dependent upon securing adequate grant funding similar to that required for Phase II, and would also involve substantial public outreach. Planning staff is exploring opportunities for grant support with the encouragement of the Council and participation of the community.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The City Council could opt to decline to accept the historic context and intensive level survey, together with the professional findings that individual and contributing historic properties exist within the Japantown area, in which case further research and analysis may be required in order to determine the significance of properties within the survey area.

Alternative: Do not accept the SJJ Historic Context and Intensive Survey, Phase II

Pros: Planning historic preservation staff time and resources could be allocated to other historic preservation work plan items.

Cons: Planning historic preservation staff has already invested significant time and resources in Phase I and Phase II of the SJJ historic context and survey project, which would not be fully realized. Properties identified in Phase II would not be listed in the Inventory, and would be vulnerable to development pressure potentially resulting in demolition.

Reason for not recommending: The San Jose 2020 General Plan Urban Conservation/Preservation Major Strategy and Historic, Archaeological and Cultural Resources Policies, as well as the City's Certified Local Government agreement with the State Office of Historic Preservation, support historic resource survey, listing and designation efforts.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

- Criteria 1:** Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater. **(Required: Website Posting)**
- Criteria 2:** Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City. **(Required: E-mail and Website Posting)**
- Criteria 3:** Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a Community group that requires special outreach. **(Required: E-mail, Website Posting, Community Meetings, Notice in appropriate newspapers)**

Although this item does not meet any of the above criteria, the project included a significant public outreach component. A survey committee was formed to oversee the project and the Historic Landmarks Commission received monthly status updates on the project at the regular monthly meetings. In addition, the Planning Division posted the hearing notice and report on its website and the following public meetings and participation took place:

1. April 8, 2006: Project update presentation to the Japantown Community Congress
2. May 13, 2006: Traditional Cultural Property workshop
3. June 9, 2006: Preserving California's Japantowns Symposium
4. October 28, 2006: California Council for the Promotion of History Conference
5. November 1, 2006: City of San Jose Landmarks Commission meeting

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6. December 6, 2006: City of San Jose Landmarks Commission hearing
7. June 12, 2007: Community Meeting re: Survey Report Acceptance
8. April 8, 2008: Community Meeting re: Survey Report Acceptance

Following the Historic Landmarks Commission recommendation and prior to taking the Survey Report forward to City Council for acceptance, Planning Staff held two community meetings at the Northside Community Center in June of 2007 and April of 2008. Meeting notices were posted on the Planning website and mailed to property owners within the proposed boundaries of the Survey area.

At the June 2007 community meeting, approximately twenty-five community members and representatives from the Japantown Community Congress, Preservation Action Council San Jose, the Japantown Business Association and the Historic Landmark Commission attended. Questions were raised regarding the intensive property research as well as the permitting process applicable to listed commercial versus residential historic properties. In addition, community members requested additional community outreach prior to City Council acceptance of the Survey Report.

Prior to the April 2008 meeting Planning Staff walked through the Japantown area speaking with business owners and posting community meeting notices in businesses. Approximately six community members, representatives from the Japantown Community Congress, Preservation Action Council San Jose, the Japantown Business Association and the Historic Landmark Commission attended. Questions were raised and planning staff responded regarding the permitting process for properties listed on the Historic Resources Inventory as Structures of Merit or as Contributing Structures to a Historic District. One community member expressed concerns regarding discretionary design review of historic properties. One community member expressed an interest in efforts to maintain the survey as a living document as further research is conducted.

A complete copy of the survey has been sent to the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program, the California Office of Historic Preservation and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in fulfillment of the grant obligations. Copies of the report have also been provided to the California Room at the San Jose Public Library, History San Jose and the Japanese American Resource Center/Museum.

COORDINATION

This project was coordinated with the Office of the City Attorney.

FISCAL/POLICY ALIGNMENT

This project is consistent with the San Jose 2020 General Plan Urban Conservation / Preservation Major Strategy and Historic, Archaeological and Cultural Resources Policies.

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COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

\$100,000.00 in historic resource consultant fees in Phase I and II of the SJJ historic context and survey project were funded by historic preservation grants and the City's Settlement Fund for the loss of historic buildings. Costs for Phase III of the project would be anticipated to be similar and similarly funded. Planning staff in existing budgeted positions would work on future phases of the project, without additional impact to the General Fund.

BUDGET REFERENCE

Not applicable.

CEQA

CEQA: Exempt, PP05-004.

for 
JOSEPH HORWEDEL, SECRETARY
Historic Landmarks Commission

For questions please contact Sally Zarnowitz, Historic Preservation Officer at 408-535-7834.

cc: