

## **BACKGROUND**

This document was developed based on the work of the Japantown Corporation Yard Community Focus Group and outlines a first draft of the Japantown Corporation Yard Community Amenities Priorities. It also presents a recommended approach to refining and finalizing this draft in collaboration with the community. The end product will be a final community amenities priorities list and description that will be included in a memorandum for City Council/Redevelopment Agency Board consideration. These priorities will serve to guide the work of the community, City, and Agency both directly and indirectly related to the Corporation Yard redevelopment, and will focus the efforts of neighborhood leaders and the resources of the City and Redevelopment Agency on a clear, balanced, and mutually agreed set of priorities.

The last several years of community engagement with Japantown related to the Corporation Yard has included a rich community conversation around priorities.

- ❑ In 2001, the California Legislature passed Senate Bill 307 (Vasconcellos), creating a planning framework for the preservation of California's three remaining historic Japantowns.
- ❑ In 2002 the Japantown Community Congress of San José developed seven guiding principles that stressed the importance of the development of the Corporation Yard, and the involvement of the community in that development.
- ❑ In 2003, the City Council and Redevelopment Agency applied for State grants and designated the Japantown Community Congress (JCCsj) for consultation on Japantown preservation as specified by SB 307.
- ❑ In 2004 at the direction of Mayor and Council a plan was developed that for the relocation of the existing uses to the Central Service Yard (CSY) on Senter Road. This allowed for the redevelopment of the site as a central part of Japantown.
- ❑ In 2005 the community was deeply involved in crafting a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and the subsequent selection of the Olson Company, BH Development, and First Community Housing as Corporation Yard developers. In parallel, the City awarded a \$28.8 million construction contract to relocate City operations to the CSY, based on receiving at least \$14.2 million from sale of the Corporation Yard.
- ❑ In March 2006, the City and Redevelopment Agency, with the JCCsj convened a Community Focus Group to define community amenity priorities.

## GOALS OF THE COMMUNITY AMENITIES

The work of the Community Focus Group and the priorities outlined in this document are built on the foundation of goals articulated in the RFQ approved by the City Council:

**“The Overall Objective:** The City and Agency seeks a financially viable development that will create a lively, walkable and interesting place with: community gathering spaces, homes for seniors and young families, active retail, and cultural and artistic activities. The design and function of the Site will honor the rich heritage and history of the Site and the community and connect the past and future of Japantown.

**Principal Objectives:** The principal objectives in no particular order are:

**Create a “Great Good Place” in the heart of Japantown:** The Site should create distinctive, informal gathering places. These “Great Good Places,” are venues for people to be, to hang out, and to experience Japantown and each other. Successful public “third spaces” are an essential component of any development on the Site.

**Honor seniors:** The Japantown community sees its seniors as living treasures. The famously long-lived Japanese-American elders provide a tangible link to the past. The desire to provide a home that honors and respects them is deeply rooted in the values of the culture.

**Attract young people and families:** The demographics of Japantown are changing, and once again, young people and young families are calling the neighborhood home. The Site should beckon them and include uses and spaces that encourage them to come, to stay, and to enjoy Japantown.

**Activate the Site with retail:** The Nihonmachi Business District is central to the identity of Japantown. The walkable, small town feel of the Nihonmachi should be continued and reinforced with any new retail. The Site should feel and be a part of the business district with uses that complement existing businesses and activate the neighborhood with commercial activity.

**Weave in cultural space and activities:** Cultural activities and events should be part of the regular life of Japantown. The developer should seek to create spaces that intentionally support fertile cultural and artistic life on the Site. The Site should complement existing spaces used for cultural activities. The design and function of the site should visibly connect with the culture of Japantown and explicitly honor the history of the community.”

## FUNDING OF AMENITIES

Primary funding for implementation of the priority community amenities is from a portion of land sale proceeds, specifically \$7.4 M and approximately one acre of land described in the Exclusive Negotiating Agreement. From initial cost estimating it is clear that the amenities described below will cost significantly more than \$7.4 M, and as such it will not be possible to implement these amenities without, identifying additional resources, scaling back or both. Because of this gap in funding the choice of what is constructed on the corporation yard will have a significant impact on the availability of funds for other priorities. In particular, the performance space as scoped will likely require the entire budget available for amenities. Therefore, in the event that priorities

require additional funding, sources such as future Redevelopment Agency funding and competitive Community Development Block Grant funds must be considered. Since several community-based organizations have been identified as potential participants, achieving multiple priorities will require that these organizations contribute to capital costs as well as bear the full costs of operating proposed facilities.

### **PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS**

These priorities are specific to the community amenities, with limited reference to the residential component of the proposed Olson/FCH development. The entitlement and environmental reviews to come will engage the community in that discussion. In light of the substantial work ahead, it should be recognized that the Community Focus Group's feedback on the community amenities is part of the larger community engagement process.

The draft presented below is based directly on the expressed priorities emerging from the Community Focus Group process. The next step will be to present this document for validation and refinement to the Community Focus Group, and subsequently to the broader community at the 15 July 2006 Town Hall meeting. The Community Focus Group will convene again to review the feedback from the Town Hall and make any final recommendations for changes. The community amenities priorities will then be presented to the City Council/Redevelopment Agency Board for their consideration.

The seven top community amenity priorities are presented below. The first priority deals with the Corporation Yard site itself, the remaining six focus on strengthening assets and institutions in the existing fabric of Japantown. These priorities reflect a package, and therefore are not in priority order.

#### **1. The Corporation Yard should be a catalyst to revitalize Japantown with retail, urban plaza, performance space, and a strong historical connection.**

The City of San José, Redevelopment Agency, and Olson Company should ensure that the Corporation Yard development provides the following community amenities on site:

- 1.1. A community building (or space in a mixed use building), providing space for performances that activate the area with performing arts and links to the Pan-Asian past and future of the neighborhood. A roughly 250 seat, 10,000 square foot facility with associated parking has been proposed by the Contemporary Asian Theater Scene (CATS). The City/Agency should negotiate an agreement with CATS, reflecting capital contributions as well as operating self-sufficiency of such an undertaking before proceeding. The viability of this performance space will need to be immediately analyzed. If the performance space is not viable then other viable community priorities should be considered.
- 1.2. Vibrant retail that strengthens the existing retail along Jackson and serve as a catalyst for the Japantown Neighborhood Business District. The Community Focus Group believes that on-site retail should be significantly larger than the 8,000 square feet reflected in Olson's initial proposal and should not draw from community amenities funding.

- 1.3. An Urban Plaza that connects Corporation Yard visitors to Jackson Street, enhancing street level dining and pedestrian activity, and support small events.
- 1.4. Storefront or other exhibit space that points visitors to the nearby Japanese American Museum of San José (JAMsj), as well as opportunities to tell the stories of prior residents of this historic block.

## **2. Secure a Japantown home for Taiko**

The Redevelopment Agency should pursue options to assist San José Taiko secure a permanent studio in Japantown.

## **3. Establish a senior wellness and youth center at the Boys and Girls Club site**

The City should partner with Yu-Ai Kai, CYS, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Silicon Valley to develop the City's property at 110 E. Jackson Street as a community organization-based senior wellness and youth activities center. This senior wellness and youth center would serve as the western anchor of Jackson Street while the new Corp Yard development would serve as the eastern anchor. The City should negotiate an agreement that reflects the groups' primary responsibility for capital as well as operating self-sufficiency. This center should focus on activities that are not provided at the Northside Community Center.

## **4. Develop and implement a comprehensive Japantown Retail Strategy**

Recognizing that the Corporation Yard retail alone cannot revitalize the commercial district, the Redevelopment Agency and the community should develop a strategy activate retail within the boundaries for the Japantown Business District with a particular focus along Jackson Street through measures such as:

- 4.1. Identify priority market segments and strategies for the long term vitality of Japantown retail
- 4.2. Analyze existing structures to determine Code deficiencies for retail reoccupancy and develop strategies to correct
- 4.3. Modify parking requirements to allow and encourage new retail uses
- 4.4. Improve facades to improve the appearance and function of existing buildings
- 4.5. Seismically retrofit buildings to permit them to be safely occupied
- 4.6. Proactively work with property owners and brokers to find tenants for vacant spaces
- 4.7. Upgrade signage within Japantown and "wayfinding" to Japantown to connect the business District to the freeway, major arterials, and Light Rail
- 4.8. Upgrade streetscape including refreshing banners and reducing clutter

## **5. Develop and implement a Parking Strategy**

The City should increase the availability of public parking to meet business and institutional needs, and avoid negative impacts to neighborhoods, by:

- 5.1. Ensure that the Corporation Yard development meets its parking demand on-site, and to the extent possible provides excess parking for the district
- 5.2. Renew lease of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street lot for public parking
- 5.3. Pursue options to maximize on-street parking on Jackson Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Street, and 6<sup>th</sup> Street

- 5.4. Pursue a Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) grant to fund an improved pedestrian, transit, and cycling environment in addition to parking, signage, and streetscape upgrade
- 5.5. Work with the Buddhist Church and other land owners to ensure compatibility between off-street parking uses and the surrounding neighborhood

## **6. Historical and Cultural Preservation**

The City should continue to work with the Japantown community to ensure that the history and culture of Japantown is preserved by;

- 6.1. the possibility of creating an historical district including preservation of key historic buildings and cultural institutions
- 6.2. Continue the work of creating historical markers and locations that evoke the culture and history of Japantown such as the Landmark Monument, Ikoi-No Ba

## **7. Revisit the Jackson Taylor Strategy**

The Jackson Taylor Strategy has guided the community through the conversion of most of the nearby industrial land to residential and retail. The City should review the Jackson Taylor plan to determine the next steps for long range planning of the area.