



Mayor London N. Breed  
Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager

**Date:** August 7, 2019

**To:** Recreation and Park Commission  
Capital Committee

**Through:** Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager  
Toks Ajike, Director of Capital and Planning Division

**From:** Mike DeGregorio, Project Manager

**Subject:** Japantown Peace Plaza – Approval of Concept Design

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### **Agenda Wording**

Discussion and possible action to approve a conceptual design for the Japantown Peace Plaza. Approval of this proposed action by the Commission is the Approval Action as defined by S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31.

### **Strategic Plan**

Strategy 1: Inspire Public Space: Keep today’s parks safe, clean, and fun; promote our parks’ historic and cultural heritage; and build the great parks of tomorrow.

Objective: 1.2. Strengthen the quality of existing parks and facilities.

Objective: 1.4. Preserve and celebrate historic and cultural resources.

Strategy 2: Inspire Play: Promote active living, well-being and community for San Francisco’s diverse and growing population.

Objective 2.3 Work with partners and neighborhood groups to activate parks through organized events, activities, and unstructured play.

Strategy 3: Inspire Investment: Through community engagement, advocacy, and partnerships, cultivate more financial resources to keep San Francisco’s parks and programs accessible for all.  
Objective 3.2. Broaden engagement and strengthen external communications with park users and park partners.

## **Background Information**

The Peace Plaza is located in Japantown, Supervisorial District 5, bound by Post Street to the North, Geary Boulevard to the South, and the Japan Center Mall to the East and West. The park's area is approximately 32,000 square feet and sits atop an MTA-owned parking garage. The plaza was originally built in the 1960s and for much of its life it has leaked into the garage below. Following a 2016 report by McGinnis Chen Architects that assessed the extent of repairs, it was determined that a full renovation of the plaza was needed to re-waterproof the entire structure below. These findings, coupled with overwhelming community activism to reinvigorate this critical public space into a space that they could continue to embrace framed the approach of the redesign. The intent of the project is to renovate and upgrade the plaza so that all existing infrastructure is repaired to remedy current deficiencies and site elements meet the current public needs, as well as all applicable codes and regulations.

## **Community Process**

One of the core tenets of the entire “vision plan” process was comprehensive community outreach. With support from the Japantown Task Force (JTF), RPD set out an engagement plan that emphasized a multi-layered approach to outreach that would allow multiple feedback mechanisms and be able to reach audiences near and far. In addition to the design team, a Japanese Design Consultant and Community Liaison was hired to ensure the design progress was informed by core values of Japanese design – a principle that was highly valued by the community. From the project's inception in June 2018, RPD began with listening – attending community events both small (Tea Ceremony) and large (Japantown Festivals) to understand the community's needs. This also included regular attendance various committee meetings within the community, to answer initial questions and get to know community members. The first community meeting in July 2018 focused on inventory, analysis and initial design & programming ideas, allowing for community feedback on these ideas. The “dot boards” for these ideas was brought to community events and festivals to allow for feedback from a wider audience, while a survey was distributed both digitally and as an intercept survey to understand the community's current usage of the plaza and their desires for the renovation.

The design team took this information and developed 3 design options, The Frame, The Wave, and The Loop, presented to the community in October 2018. Each concept presented a unique layout and “look and feel”, but shared many of the same programmatic requirements. The community meeting included an hour-long round table discussion of the near 100 participants, ending in each table reporting back their findings to the larger group. Feedback was gathered at the meeting, through an online survey, as well as a host of “focus groups” targeted at a variety of demographic groups, as well as design charrettes that included RPD, the SF Public Works Design Team, Design Advisor, and a small group of JTF representatives, where design ideas were discussed and refined.

The survey findings, feedback from the focus groups and charrettes all informed a refined design concept that refined The Wave concept, in addition to integrating strengths from the other two concepts. The final preferred design was presented to the community on March 19, 2019. Like the second community meeting, Meeting 3 included roundtable discussions which proved very

helpful. The final design and the findings of the design alternatives will be documented in the Vision Plan Report, which will also highlight the community engagement process.

In total, the project team held 3 community meetings, 28 focus group meetings/committees with local organizations, 2 design charrettes, and 3 community festivals.

### **Proposed Plaza Renovation Program**

The scope of work for the project includes the complete renovation of the plaza and its associated amenities. Please refer to the attached concept design for plans and views of the proposed project. The concept plan is fully accessible and meets all ADA guidelines for accessible design and remedies the current deficiencies related to the waterproofing and water intrusion. The proposed improvements include:

- Paving, including special paving areas
- Increased planting areas
- Increased seating opportunities
- Accessible seating opportunities
- Retained historic-cultural elements
- Increased lighting
- Increased usability during events
- Improved circulation system
- Seating Terraces
- Water Feature
- Improved Geary Boulevard Edge
- Pagoda (Requires additional analysis)

### **Funding**

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\$400,000 - Concept Plan - General Fund

TBD - Potential fund source includes 2020 Parks Bond

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### **Project Schedule**

Planning Phase: June 2018 – May 2019

### **Environmental Review**

The project has been reviewed by the Planning Department and was issued a Categorical Exemption under Class 1 – Existing Facilities, Class 3 – New Construction, and Class 4b – Minor Alterations to Land.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the conceptual design to renovate Japantown Peace Plaza. Approval of this proposed action by the Commission is the Approval Action as defined by S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31.

### **Supported By**

Japantown Task Force  
Japantown CBD  
Japantown Merchants Association  
Nihonmachi Street Fair  
Osaka Matsuri Festival  
Cherry Blossom Festival  
Kimochi, Inc.  
Japanese Benevolent Society of California  
Kokoro Assisted Living  
Tule Lake Committee  
Japanese American National Library  
St. Francis Square Cooperative, Inc.  
Buchanan YMCA  
Christ United Presbyterian Church  
Community Meeting Attendees

### **Opposed By**

None known

### **Attachments**

Attachment A.	Concept Design Package
Attachment B.	Categorical Exemption
Attachment C.	Letter of Support from Japanese Benevolent Society of California
Attachment D.	Letter of Support from Kimochi, Inc.
Attachment E.	Letter of Support from Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival
Attachment F.	Letter of Support from Japantown Merchants Association
Attachment G.	Letter of Support from Japantown Community Benefit District, Inc.
Attachment H.	Letter of Support from Japantown Chounaikai (Osaki Matsuri)
Attachment I.	Letter of Support from Nihonmachi Street Fair
Attachment J.	Letter of Support from Japantown Task Force
Attachment K.	Letter of Support from Kokoro Assisted Living
Attachment L.	Letter of Support from Japanese American National Library
Attachment M.	Letter of Support from Tule Lake Committee
Attachment N.	Letter of Support from St. Francis Square Cooperative, Inc.
Attachment O.	Letter of Support from Buchanan YMCA
Attachment P.	Letter of Support from Christ United Presbyterian Church
Attachment Q.	Letter or Support from Michiko Yamada
Attachment R.	Letter of Support from Adrienne Shiozki-Woo