

1 [Endorsement of the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy]

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3 **Resolution endorsing the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability**
4 **Strategy (JCHESS).**

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6 WHEREAS, For over 100 years, Japantown has been the cultural heart of San
7 Francisco's and the region's Japanese American and Japanese communities; and

8 WHEREAS, Japantown has endured multiple challenges to its survival over this last
9 century, including entrenched societal and political racism; the denial of citizenship to the Issei
10 (first generation immigrant) generation, which denied them a political voice; the 1913 and later
11 Alien Land Laws, which prevented the Issei from owning most property; the World War II
12 Internment, which forcibly removed and incarcerated 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry
13 in desolate concentration camps for the duration of the war; and the Redevelopment of the
14 Western Addition in the 1950s-1970s, which devastated the residential and commercial bases
15 of the Japantown and Fillmore communities; and

16 WHEREAS, There are only three Japantowns left in the United States (Los Angeles,
17 San Jose and San Francisco); and

18 WHEREAS, California Senate Bill 307 was passed in 2001, which recognized the
19 significance of the state's three remaining Japantowns and created the California Japantown
20 Preservation Pilot Project that provided grants to promote the preservation of Japantown
21 neighborhoods. The San Francisco Japantown community has also been recognized by the
22 federal Preserve America Program as a place that embodies a unique cultural heritage that
23 deserves preservation; and

24 WHEREAS, San Francisco's Japantown contains hundreds of culturally significant
25 buildings, businesses, and organizations and it hosts many cultural events and activities that

1 are important to the region's Japanese American and Japanese community. The community
2 has developed memorials to its cultural history, including the Three Japantowns Monument,
3 and created the Japantown History Walk to perpetuate and share its history and culture; and

4 WHEREAS, Japantown is a central and desirable location in San Francisco that will
5 continue to face substantial economic development pressure to change and grow; and

6 WHEREAS, The Japantown neighborhood has been the subject of various planning
7 efforts over the past fourteen years. In 1999, the Japantown Planning Preservation and
8 Development Task Force created the "Concepts for the Japantown Community Plan". This
9 Plan was never adopted by the City. In 2006, the City enacted a Japantown Special Use
10 District to help "maintain the cultural and historic integrity and neighborhood of Japantown".
11 From 2007-2009 the San Francisco Planning Department drafted a Better Neighborhoods
12 Plan ("BNP") for Japantown with community input, but the BNP was not adopted by the City
13 due to community concerns related to lack of focus on supporting culturally significant
14 businesses and resources as well as to the potential for adverse effects of new development
15 in the area, including the potential disruption, displacement and elimination of important
16 community-based businesses, organizations and activities; and

17 WHEREAS, From 2009-2013 the community facilitated a process that focused on
18 ascertaining and articulating the community's vision of its future and its preferred cultural and
19 economic strategies for achieving that vision; and

20 WHEREAS, This process involved dozens of community and stakeholder meetings
21 over this four-year period, during which the community identified the need to protect and
22 support Japantown's cultural heritage as the neighborhood's top priority; and

23 WHEREAS, The Japantown community, Planning Department staff, and the City's
24 historic preservation consultants worked together to develop a new methodology for analyzing
25 and recording both the tangible and intangible elements of cultural heritage, which can serve

1 as a precedent for other communities within and outside of San Francisco. This work resulted
2 in an inventory of over 300 important cultural resources, including buildings, businesses,
3 organizations and institutions, and cultural activities and events; and

4 WHEREAS, The Japantown community, Planning Department staff, staff of the Office
5 of Economic and Workforce Development, and the City's economic consultants created a
6 compendium of economic and other tools to help support cultural resources, which was the
7 first time such a toolkit had been created in San Francisco or anywhere else in the United
8 States; and

9 WHEREAS, The Japantown Cultural Resource and Economic Sustainability Strategy
10 (JCHESS) is the result of the process of identifying the community's concerns, the types of
11 cultural resources in the area, and the potential tools to address the concerns and to support
12 these resources; and

13 WHEREAS, The vision of the JCHESS is that Japantown will thrive as a culturally rich,
14 authentic, and economically vibrant neighborhood, which will serve as the cultural heart of the
15 Japanese and Japanese American communities for generations to come; and

16 WHEREAS, The goals of the JCHESS are to 1) secure Japantown's future as the
17 historical and cultural heart of Japanese and Japanese American Community of the Bay Area,
18 2) secure Japantown's future as a thriving commercial and retail district, 3) secure
19 Japantown's future as a home to residents and community-based institutions, and 4) secure
20 Japantown's future as a physically attractive and vibrant environment; and

21 WHEREAS, To provide context, the JCHESS captures the existing conditions in
22 Japantown, as relates to its land, buildings, organizations and institutions, businesses, culture,
23 and public realm; and

1 WHEREAS, The JCHES lists twenty-three "Areas of Concern" identified by the
2 community as issues that have or could prevent the fulfillment of the vision of the JCHES;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, To fulfill the goals, and address the Areas of Concern, the JCHES
5 includes nineteen Recommendations, which are designed to encourage economic
6 development and re-investment in the buildings, businesses, organizations and institutions of
7 Japantown; and

8 WHEREAS, Some of these Recommendations include the ongoing implementation of
9 existing programs, while others are newly proposed and may require further review, such as
10 environmental review, by the Department prior to implementation; and

11 WHEREAS, Some of the strategies would be implemented primarily by the City, and
12 others primarily by the community; and

13 WHEREAS, The Recommendations fulfill the goals of the JCHES and address the
14 community's identified Areas of Concern; and

15 WHEREAS, The JCHES itself was vetted in over 30 community and stakeholder
16 meetings in the Spring of 2013 and public hearings at the Historic Preservation Commission
17 and Planning Commission in July of 2013; and

18 WHEREAS, The JCHES has the written support of 22 community groups, including
19 multiple property owners, businesses and business associations, and community-based
20 organizations; and

21 WHEREAS, The Planning Department has determined that the JCHES is not a
22 project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), per CEQA Guidelines
23 15060(c), and is thus not subject to environmental review; and

1 WHEREAS, The JCHESS has received the endorsement of the Historic Preservation
2 Commission and the Planning Commission through Resolutions 711 and 18965, respectively;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, All pertinent documents may be found in the files of the Department, as
5 the custodian of records, at 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco; now, therefore, be
6 it

7 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors endorses as City policy to support
8 Japantown as a culturally and economically vibrant community; and, be it

9 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors endorses the Visions, Goals,
10 and Objectives of the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy
11 (JCHESS) as City policy; and, be it

12 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors endorses the
13 Recommendations of the JCHESS; and, be it

14 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors supports initiation of legislation
15 to create the Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District which meets the goals and
16 objectives of the JCHESS; and, be it

17 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors supports adoption of
18 Japantown Design Guidelines that meets the goals and objectives of the JCHESS; and, be it

19 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors requests that the Planning
20 Department, Department of Public Works, Recreation and Parks Department, the San
21 Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, and any other relevant agencies proactively work
22 together to review for possible implementation those recommendations of the JCHESS which
23 involve capital outlay for infrastructure projects, such as improvements to Peace Plaza and
24 Buchanan Mall; and, be it

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1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors supports the Office of
2 Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) in using the Invest in Neighborhoods
3 initiative as the framework to deploy services and resources to Japantown; and, be it

4 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors recommends that OEWD reach
5 out to the property owners of the Japan Center Malls to discuss potential improvements to the
6 Malls; and, be it

7 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors recommends that SFTravel
8 help implement the JCHESS through the creation of a Cultural Heritage Program that would
9 include Japantown; and, be it

10 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors recommends that the San
11 Francisco County Transportation Authority and San Francisco Municipal Transportation
12 Agency design the Geary Bus Rapid Transit project in a timely manner that provides better
13 access to Japantown, and creates safer and more attractive pedestrian conditions for crossing
14 Geary Boulevard; and, be it

15 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors recommends that other City
16 agencies with jurisdiction and/or programs in Japantown implement those aspects of the
17 JCHESS which are in their purview; and, be it

18 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors recommends that the
19 community implement those aspects of the JCHESS which are in their purview.
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City and County of San Francisco
Tails
Resolution

City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

File Number: 130945

Date Passed: October 01, 2013

Resolution endorsing the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHES).

October 01, 2013 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

Ayes: 11 - Avalos, Breed, Campos, Chiu, Cohen, Farrell, Kim, Mar, Tang, Wiener and Yee

File No. 130945

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 10/1/2013 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

Unsigned

Mayor

10/11/13

Date Approved

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution, not being signed by the Mayor within the time limit as set forth in Section 3.103 of the Charter, or time waived pursuant to Board Rule 2.14.2, became effective without his approval in accordance with the provision of said Section 3.103 of the Charter or Board Rule 2.14.2.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board