

From: [Board of Supervisors, \(BOS\)](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: FW: Letter of Support: File #210064 Japanese YWCA/Issei Women's Building - 1830 Sutter Street
Date: Friday, April 2, 2021 2:53:56 PM
Attachments: [APIAHIP Letter of Support - Japanese YWCA - April 2021.pdf](#)

From: Michelle Magalong <michelle@apiahip.org>
Sent: Friday, April 2, 2021 11:06 AM
To: Preston, Dean (BOS) <dean.preston@sfgov.org>; PrestonStaff (BOS) <prestonstaff@sfgov.org>; MandelmanStaff, [BOS] <mandelmanstaff@sfgov.org>
Cc: Peskin, Aaron (BOS) <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>; MelgarStaff (BOS) <melgarstaff@sfgov.org>; Board of Supervisors, (BOS) <board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org>
Subject: Letter of Support: File #210064 Japanese YWCA/Issei Women's Building - 1830 Sutter Street

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Dear Supervisors Preston and Mandelman,

Thank you for sponsoring the legislation to recognize the Japanese YWCA/Issei Women's Building at 1830 Sutter Street as a San Francisco Landmark. I am writing to you on behalf of the board of directors of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans for Historic Preservation, which has previously supported the building's listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 2019. I have attached our letter of support for the landmark designation for your consideration.

We support the City landmarking of the Japanese YWCA/Issei Women's Building as an important part of the history of Asians in America and of the local Japanese American community in San Francisco and the Bay Area. The full recognition on national, state and local levels will help to bring a greater understanding and appreciation of the efforts of Asian and other marginalized and communities of color to participate in American society.

Sincerely,
Michelle

Michelle G. Magalong, PhD
President
Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation
www.apiahip.org
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@APIAHIP



April 2, 2021

Supervisor Dean Preston
Supervisor Rafael Mandelman
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
City Hall, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

Dear Supervisors Preston and Mandelman,

Thank you for sponsoring the legislation to recognize the Japanese YWCA/Issei Women's Building at 1830 Sutter Street as a San Francisco Landmark. I am writing to you on behalf of the board of directors of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans for Historic Preservation, which has previously supported the building's listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 2019.

The mission statement of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation is protect historic places and cultural resources significant to Asian and Pacific Islander Americans through historic preservation and heritage conservation.

In 1912, Japanese immigrant women of the Soko Bukai, an association of Japanese Christian churches in San Francisco, established a Japanese YWCA in that city to serve Japanese women and girls who recently emigrated from Japan. In the early 1900s, San Francisco YWCA policy in the forbade Japanese and other minority women and girls from living in their residence halls, and this discriminatory policy was adopted, enforced, and periodically reaffirmed by the San Francisco YWCA. The Japanese YWCA, in response to this discriminatory policy, undertook a fundraising campaign to purchase a building that would serve as a residence hall for Japanese women and girls. In 1920–21, the Japanese YWCA raised the funds to purchase the building and property, with the San Francisco YWCA Board agreeing to hold this property in trust for the permanent use of the Japanese YWCA.

Ten years later, noted architect Julia Morgan donated her services to design a new Japanese YWCA building as a tribute to the architectural heritage of Japan. The celebrated Morgan donated her services and even brought some treasured antiques from her employer William Randolph Hearst's San Simeon castle to decorate the new YWCA. The building also has an authentic Noh theater. The ranma, decorative wooden panels below the ceiling, were designed by artist Chiura Obata.

In 1932, the Japanese YWCA celebrated the opening of its building at 1830 Sutter Street in San Francisco and continuously and exclusively occupied, controlled, and provided services to Japanese women and girls from that building. Programs and services of the Japanese YWCA were abruptly ended in 1942 when Executive Order Number 9066 forcibly removed all Japanese Americans from the West Coast to internment camps.

The Japanese YWCA building is the only surviving prewar building constructed in San Francisco through the efforts, dedication, and vision of Japanese immigrant women and is their legacy to the Japanese American community. This historic building at 1830 Sutter Street, one of the few structures built before World War II to survive the redevelopment of the Japantown area in the 1960s.

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APIAHiP
2279 Glendale Blvd., #3
Los Angeles, CA 90039
www.apiahip.org

In 1996 the San Francisco YWCA threatened the existence of the Japanese YWCA building by attempting to sell the property at its highest commercial value , rejecting the Japanese American community's request that the San Francisco YWCA honor the trust established by the Japanese immigrant (Issei) women , and rejecting the community's good faith offer to purchase the Japanese YWCA property to preserve it for community service. The SF YWCA refused to recognize or honor the trust and a lawsuit followed. The Soko Bukai and activists within the Japanese American community fought for the enforcement of the trust and to secure the property for the Japanese American community. The Soko Bukai settled the lawsuit against the YWCA in 2002, which enabled Nihonmachi Little Friends to purchase the property.

The building is also significant as the first home of the Western Regional chapter of the American Friends Service Committee, which organized the college placement program that allowed Nisei in the internment camps to attend colleges outside of the west coast exclusion zone. The AFSC also hosted the Mattachine Society (the first national LGBTQ organization in the US) and also civil rights leader Bayard Rustin.

The aim of the California Alien Land Law of 1913 was not to let Japanese (and other Asian immigrants) gain a foothold in America. That is important history to preserve. This building - the Japanese YWCA in San Francisco - is the embodiment of that painful yet important history of community-building and resilience.

We support the City landmarking of the Japanese YWCA/Issei Women's Building as an important part of the history of Asians in America and of the local Japanese American community in San Francisco and the Bay Area. The full recognition on national, state and local levels will help to bring a greater understanding and appreciation of the efforts of Asian and other marginalized and communities of color to participate in American society.

Sincerely,



Michelle G. Magalong, PhD