

### **Community Planning Bureau**

City Hall • 200 N. Spring Street, Room 667 • Los Angeles, CA 90012



May 13, 2008

TO:

City Council

ATTN: Planning and Land Use Committee (PLUM)

Barbara Greaves

VIA:

S. Gail Goldberg, AICP

Director of Planning

FROM:

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SUBJECT:

ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS FOR PRESERVING THE SEPARATE AND DISTINCT

**IDENTITY OF LITTLE TOKYO** 

On January 29, 2008, the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee adopted a motion instructing the Department of City Planning to report with recommendations and options for preserving the separate and distinct identity of Little Tokyo, including creating for Little Tokyo its own planning area to be considered separate and apart from the rest of Downtown. This report is prepared in response to this instruction.

#### Recommendation

- 1. Maintain the existing boundaries of the Central City Community Plan which include the Little Tokyo Community as defined by the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Project Area,
- 2. Through the Central City Community Plan Program, consider the development of design guidelines, land uses changes, and other planning implementation tools to preserve and promote the community's unique character including possibly:
  - a. Establishing a Community Design Overlay District (CDO) to promote the distinctive character and visual quality of the Little Tokyo Community, to prevent the development of structures which are not of acceptable exterior design or appearance, and to provide for on-going community involvement in project design and the evolution of the Design Guidelines. The exact boundaries of the CDO would be refined through the public participation process.

b. Establishing a Streetscape.
Community through consistent and appropriate improvement projects within the public right-of-way.

Proposing land use changes and other planning tools in the context of the Central City Community Plan as a whole to address the community concerns regarding the types of uses and the intensity and density of development including the possible expansion or modification to an existing [Q] condition in order to create a pedestrian oriented regulations and incentives as appropriate.

discussion and will result in policy development and implementation programs for preserving the distinct identity of the Little Tokyo Community. The benefit of incorporating the necessary design guidelines and land uses changes to maintain and promote the unique character of the Little Tokyo Community into the current Community Plan Program is the opportunity to coordinate the development of Little Tokyo with the development of the Downtown as a whole to ensure the appropriate balance of uses as the districts of Downtown are interdependent neighborhoods that together comprise a center designated by the General Plan Framework as the Downtown Center. Through the public participation process, coordination with other departments, and staff analysis; the appropriate tool or tools will be determined. The intent of the Central Community Plan Program is to present all necessary implementation tools and zone changes to achieve the goals and implement the policies of the Community Plan for adoption at the time the updated plan is presented to City Council.

Furthermore, Community Plan Area boundaries are administrative boundaries by which various data are collected in the Department. Keeping the Central City Community Plan boundaries intact will insure the ability to compare and analyze data and observe trends over time using consistent data. Breaking up the boundaries will not only be detrimental to such analysis but will also be harmful to comprehensive planning and analysis of cumulative impacts by focusing on too small an area, apart from its interconnected surroundings and context.

#### **Background**

#### Brief Historical Background

The Little Tokyo Community is one of California's three remaining Japantowns with a diverse history that goes back over 120 years and has experienced tremendous change during these years. In the 1930s, Little Tokyo grew into America's largest Japanese settlement and extended from Main Street to the Los Angeles River and 1<sup>st</sup> Street to 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The community was then disrupted with the internment of persons of Japanese decent during World War II. Many of the Japanese Americans did not re-settle in Little Tokyo which, along with the loss of housing and commercial areas as a result of the 1950's expansion of the Civic Center, resulted in the decline of the area. In 1970, a nine block area of Little Tokyo was designated as a redevelopment area for 30 years. City Council approved a 10-year extension to the redevelopment plan in 2000. The goal of the project area is to reconstruct and preserve a mixed use, full service community that will continue to serve as the cultural, religious, social, and commercial center of the Japanese American community in Southern California. In 1984, the commercial lots on the north side of 1<sup>st</sup> Street from Judge Aiso to Central Avenue were designated a Federal Historical District which requires compliance the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

#### Little Tokyo Planning and Design Guidelines

Voted into legislation in 2001, Senate Bill 307 created the California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project, which was designed to help the state's three major Japantowns in the City of Los Angeles, the City of San Jose, and the City and County of San Francisco promote cultural preservation while integrating new economic development opportunities and urban renewal projects. In the City of Los Angeles, the project resulted in the establishment of the Little Tokyo Planning and Design Guidelines "to ensure that both significant physical (tangible) properties and transmission of intangible aspects of the culture...are given protection and priority in the future development of Little Tokyo." development of the Guidelines involved extensive community input and were adopted the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board in April 6, 2006. The Guidelines focus on incorporating a Japanese aesthetic in new developments, promoting a pedestrian oriented environment through design, and creating a cohesive community through the creation of gateways, requirements for improvements in the public right-of-way, and design guidelines for new buildings, signage, and landscaping on private property. The boundaries for the Guidelines encompassed not only the CRA project area, but also extend north to Temple Street, south to 4th Street between San Pedro Street and Alameda Street, and west to Vignes Street between Temple Street and 1st Street and Garey Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets. Currently, the Guidelines are implemented through CRA staff and review of projects by the Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC). The intent of the

community, the CRA, and City Council (Council File 06-1086) was to have the Department of City Planning initiate a Community Design Overlay (CDO) in coordination with the CRA Guidelines to ensure the implementation of the Guidelines outside the CRA project area and within the redevelopment project area after it expires. This CDO was never initiated due to limited staff resources and the potential to incorporate the Guidelines into a Civic Center/Little Tokyo Master Plan.

#### Existing [Q] Condition

In December of 2006, the City Council adopted a Zone Change Ordinance establishing a [Q] Condition to limit future ground floor commercial retail uses to those Neighborhood Retail and Neighborhood Service uses listed in Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 13.07C, or other uses as deemed appropriate by the Office of Zoning Administration, for all of the commercially zoned properties within the CRA Little Tokyo Project Area. The need for this [Q] Condition stemmed from community concern regarding the proliferation of bail bond brokers in the commercial areas which, due to their function as a single stop destination, had the potential to damage the cultural identity and neighborhood character of Little Tokyo, decrease the pedestrian traffic, and reduce the viability of the existing commercial uses. The established [Q] condition not only prohibits the bail bonds brokers, but requires ground floor retail uses that are consistent with the current and historical retail uses in the community, serve the needs of the community, and promote the pedestrian-oriented environment.

#### **Community Concerns**

Through initial conversations with community members and CRA staff, the following summarizes the primary concerns of the Little Tokyo Community regarding neighborhood preservation:

- New Development: The cultural identity will not be preserved with the new development of large parcels in the community. The new designs and uses will not maintain the character nor promote the cultural identity of the existing community. This also includes concerns regarding the redevelopment of the Japanese Village Plaza, which is under new ownership, and other existing developments.
- **Distinct Area:** The Little Tokyo Community is distinct from other areas of the Downtown. It should have its own plan and should not be grouped with a Civic Center Plan. Improvements in the public right-of-way should also promote this identity.
- CRA Project Area Expiration: When the CRA project area expires in 2010; there will be no oversight of by-right development in Little Tokyo. The community should have direct input into projects to ensure the cultural identity of the area is maintained.
- **Gentrification:** New commercial uses do not cater to the existing Japanese American population. The existing network of social services for this population would be impacted by new uses. New residential uses are not affordable to the existing population. If development progresses in the current pattern, the cultural identity of the existing community will be lost.

#### Discussion of Recommendation

#### Little Tokyo as a Community Plan

In the City of Los Angeles, the 35 Community Plans comprise the Land Use Element of the City's General Plan. The Community Plans supplement the City's General Plan Framework Element, which is the long range development plan for the City, by providing more specific policies and more detailed patterns of land use development for a geographic area to meet the communities' needs. The Community Plans and their boundaries were developed in conjunction with the City's Centers Concept, the predecessor of the Framework Element, which was adopted by City Council in 1974. The boundaries of the Community Plans are administrative boundaries and, to the extent feasible, are drawn to keep community plan areas' geographic boundaries consistent over time to facilitate land use and statistical analysis; to keep neighborhoods and communities intact; and to utilize natural barriers and street lines as boundaries so as to not divide communities, per City Charter Section 557.

The boundaries of Central City Community Plan are Cesar Chavez Boulevard, the Harbor Freeway, the Santa Monica Freeway, and Alameda Street. The eastern boundary, which is the most relevant to the Little Tokyo Community, was designated with the intention of Alameda Street becoming a part of the

Industrial Freeway which would serve as a natural barrier. Today, Alameda Street does function as a major north/south thoroughfare for both industrial and commuter traffic and therefore remains an appropriate boundary for the Community Plan.

The General Plan Framework Element designates the entire Central City Community Plan as the Downtown Center. Downtown Los Angeles serves as the international center for finance and trade that functions as the focal point for the population of the 5-county region as the largest government center in the region, a 24-hour residential and commercial community, and the location of major cultural and entertainment facilities.

The boundaries of the Central City Community Plan should remain intact as they are well established administrative boundaries which define the Downtown Center. The Little Tokyo Community contributes to the Central City Community as it is a cultural resource which is unique to the Downtown Center. In addition, by being included in the larger Community Plan area, a discussion of the balance of needs and uses, via this current update of the Central City Community Plan, will allow the coordination of the development of the Downtown area in a manner beneficial to all.

#### Little Tokyo and the Central City Community Plan

The Central City Community Plan Program presents opportunities to enhance the community identify and recognize the unique neighborhoods within the Community Plan through policies and goals in the text of the Community Plan and the development of programs to implement these policies. For the Little Tokyo Community, the current Central City Community Plan Program facilitates community participation and provides the opportunity to develop design guidelines for both private property and the public right-of-way to preserve and promote the distinct character of the community and to create a cohesive community identity. During this process, the boundaries of the Little Tokyo Community and the implementing planning tools will be discussed and could expand outside the current CRA Little Tokyo and Central City Community Plan Boundaries. Also, the Community Plan Program will examine the opportunities for City Council to enact land use changes to ensure the right mix of uses based on community input. For the Little Tokyo Community, this presents the opportunity to examine land use changes, which reflect both the desires of the Little Tokyo Community to have a pedestrian-oriented area with a mix of uses that maintains the community's cultural identity and recognizes the role of the area within the entire Community Plan and the City.

#### Implementation Tools

Potential tools for implementing design guidelines like the existing Little Tokyo Planning and Design Guidelines include a Community Design Overlay (CDO) and a Streetscape Plan. The CDO would provide design guidelines for the construction of new buildings and the alteration of existing structures. These guidelines would address site planning including building orientation, setbacks, and site circulation; architecture and building standards including articulation, windows, entry treatments, surface materials, and lighting; landscaping; signage; and guidelines for historic structures. These guidelines would ensure new development and building renovations would be designed in a manner that acknowledges the distinct cultural identity of the Little Tokyo Community and promotes a pedestrian-friendly environment. A CDO becomes effective after the City Planning Commission adopts the guidelines and standards, and the boundaries are adopted by the City Council. Land uses changes such as the establishment of [Q] Conditions are necessary to implement any standards which are to become requirements rather than guidelines.

A Streetscape Plan would implement the guidelines that address improvements in the public right-of-way. This would include a variety of streetscape elements including street furniture, landscaping, paving, and signage. These standards are used to establish a distinct and consistent image for the community, which would reflect the historical and cultural identity of Little Tokyo. A Streetscape Plan requires the approval of the Board of Public Works, the Cultural Affairs Commission, and the City Planning Commission. After the Plan is established, any public or private project within the public right-of-way would follow the guidelines and standards.

A Specific Plan could address both design and land use issues. Because a Specific Plan would involve land use changes and incentives, the environmental analysis of the impacts is more intensive then for a CDO and a Streetscape Plan, which would delay the projected date of implementation of any guidelines. An analysis of the benefits of the establishment of Specific Plan and the additional time required creating the Plan compared to other implementation tools should be conducted as part of the Community Plan Program in light of the expiration of the CRA project area.

Through the community outreach process of the Central City Community Plan Program, the Department of City Planning will determine what appropriate land use changes and/or other planning tools which address use and intensity and density of development rather than design. The existing CRA Guidelines do not address land use changes, and therefore additional community outreach is necessary to determine what issues the community has with the current land use designations. This could include refinement of the existing [Q] Condition or additional land use requirements to facilitate a development pattern which is consistent with the existing community. This analysis of land use changes will consider the relationship of Little Tokyo with the rest of the Central City Community Plan and the adjacent Central City North Community Plan

#### Summary

Historically, the existing Central City Community Plan boundaries have been in place since 1968 (and were adopted by the City Council in 1974) allowing consistent analysis, comparisons, and trend studies. The addition of new Community Plans or the break up of an existing Community Plan is not necessary to achieve the goals of addressing Little Tokyo's needs, but such a break up could produce a rush to break up the 35 Community Plans into more than 100 such Plans which would not be in the best interest of building communities, comprehensive planning, or analysis of cumulative impacts. The Central City Community Plan provides the administrative boundaries for the implementation of the land use element of General Plan and has policies to enhance and preserve the distinct and significant districts in the Downtown area. The current restudy of the Central City Community Plan is in the initial phases of community outreach. The resulting policies and implementation tools from this program will promote uses and new development which are guided by a comprehensive vision of the future that includes the continued development of the Downtown as a dynamic 24-hour community and a commitment to the history and cultural character of the many distinct neighborhoods and communities within the Central City Community Plan. The new Central City Community Plan Program presents the opportunity to work with the community to develop appropriate planning tools that preserve the unique identity of the Little Tokyo Community including potentially a Community Design Overlay, Streetscape Plan, and land use changes.

#### Attachments

Exhibit "A" Motion

Exhibit "B" Central City Community Downtown Neighborhoods and Districts Map

Exhibit "C" Little Tokyo Redevelopment Area

Exhibit "D" Little Tokyo Planning and Design Guidelines

Exhibit "E" Ordinance No. 178,185

JAN 29 2008

PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT

#### MOTJON

The Little Tokyo area of Los Angeles is a unique community with its distinct skyline and other land use characteristics.

Because of its proximity to the rest of Downtown Los Angeles, there is legitimate concern that Little Tokyo will be overtaken by the development activity in the rest of Downtown - eventually losing its distinct characteristics and becoming lost as part of Downtown proper.

In order to preserve the unique nature of Little Tokyo while at the same time. allowing it to develop in its unique way so as to preserve this distinct and valuable area of the City, it is appropriate that we explore options available to us for preserving Little Tokyo, including creating for Little Tokyo its own planning area to be considered separate and apart from the rest of Downtown.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Planning Department be directed to report with recommendations and options for preserving the separate and distinct identity of Little Tokyo, including creating for Little Tokyo its own planning area to be considered separate and apart from the rest of Downtown.

PRESENTED BY:

JAN C. PÉRRY

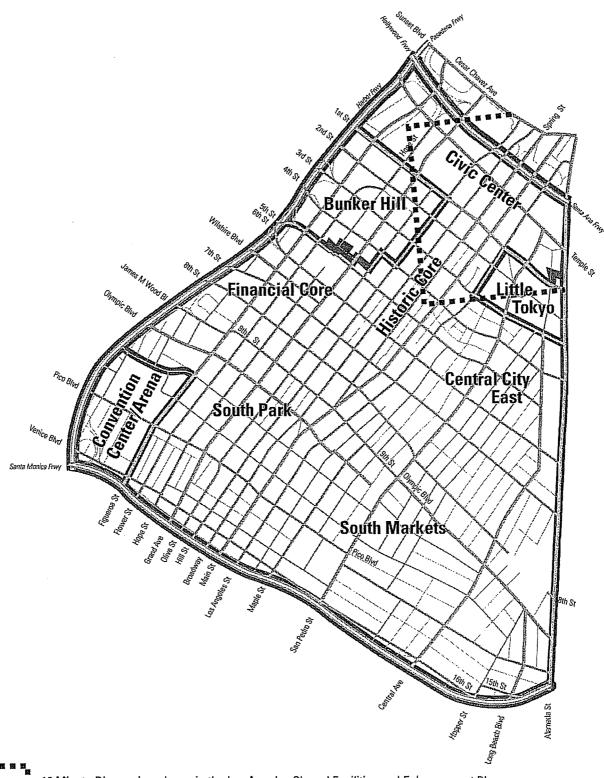
Council woman, 9th District

JAN 29 2008

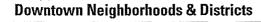
SECONDED BY:

08-0224 cog

# **Central City Community**

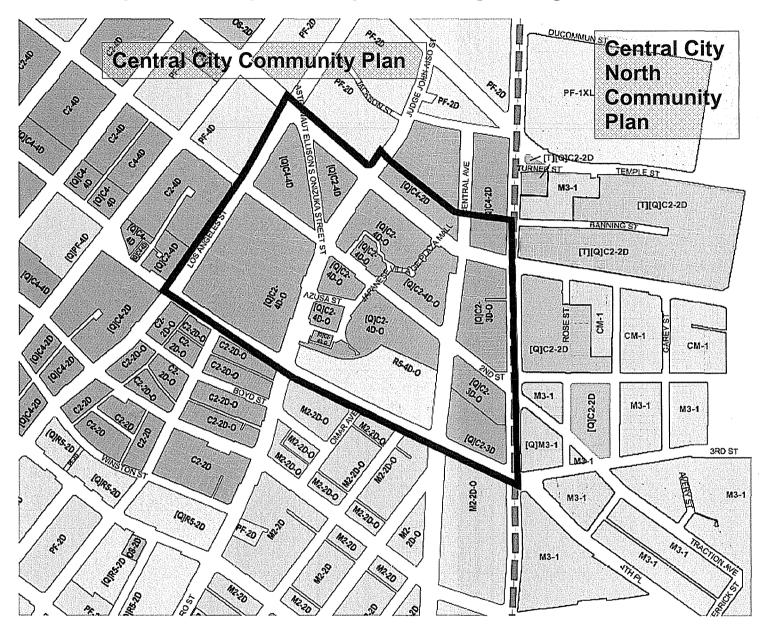


10 Minute Diamond as shown in the Los Angeles Shared Facilities and Enhancement Plan





## Little Tokyo Redevelopment Project: Existing Zoning





Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) and Mayor's Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee (LTCDAC)



# LITTLE TOKYO PLANNING & DESIGN GUIDELINES

Prepared by the
Little Tokyo Planning and Design Guidelines
Joint Task Force

November 2005

Cover logo: Standards have been established by the Wayfinding Confederation Grant for use of the logo. Those wanting to use this logo for publication should contact the Little Tokyo Business Improvement District (BID) at (213) 620-0570. LTCDAC APPROVED 11/16/05 CRA BOARD APPROVED 4/6/06 Page 2

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#### **SECTION I -- PLANNING**

#### INTRODUCTION

The Little Tokyo Community has been participating in a yearlong statewide pilot project – *California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project*. Part 1 of the project, funded by the State Department of Parks and Recreation, focused on defining *cultural preservation* in California's three major Japantowns - Los Angeles, San Jose and San Francisco<sup>1</sup>.

Part 2 of the project calls for a more detailed assessment of the use of the State of California's Specific Plans and other planning mechanisms.

The Los Angeles strategy involves establishing Little Tokyo Community Planning and Design Guidelines "to ensure that both significant physical (tangible) properties and transmission of intangible aspects of the culture…are given protection and priority in the future development of Little Tokyo".

A community workshop to gather Little Tokyo community stakeholders' ideas and input on culturally appropriate land use and design elements was funded by the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) and co-sponsored by the Little Tokyo Community Council; the Honorable Jan Perry, Councilmember, Council District 9; the Mayor's Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee, CRA/LA; the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Project; the Nikkei Interfaith Fellowship; the Little Tokyo Business Association; and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California.

The Little Tokyo Community Planning and Design Workshop was held on December 4, 2004, CRA/LA engaged the services of Kumamoto Associates to coordinate and facilitate the Workshop, and Suisman/Campbell/Rios, the Project Restore design consultants, to provide technical planning and design expertise.

Upon receiving the workshop report, the Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) and the Mayor's Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee (LTCDAC) set up a joint task force to examine the workshop data along with other planning documents and develop the Little Tokyo Planning and Design Guidelines to be submitted to the CRA/LA Commission and City of Los Angeles for adoption.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Defining Cultural Preservation, September 29, 2004, Edited November 12, 2004, Prepared for Little Tokyo Community Council, Los Angeles, California; Prepared by: TBA West, Inc. 1950 Sacramento Street, #1, San Francisco, CA 94109

Members of the task force included Nancy Araki (Japanese American National Museum), Ellen Endo (*The Rafu Shimpo*), Ron Fong (Little Tokyo Service Center). Frances Hashimoto (Little Tokyo Business Association), Tim Keating (Los Angeles River Artists and Business Association), Wilson Liu (Little Tokyo Business Improvement District) Mike Saijo (Artist/Resident), and Karen Yamamoto (Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles). The task force activities were facilitated and coordinated by Alan Kumamoto and Joanne Kumamoto (Kumamoto Associates).

#### **BACKGROUND**

"A neighborhood is made up of people and places. It is defined through the experiences of those who consider it home. And it holds their hopes for the future and their memories of the past."<sup>2</sup>

As in most urban settings, the neighborhood called "Little Tokyo" has undergone several metamorphoses. Little Tokyo is situated less than half a mile south of the founding site of the city, El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park and about the same distance east of the Los Angeles River. Today, it is surrounded on the north by federal buildings, to the west by the Los Angeles Civic Center and the City Hall, to the east by First Street Bridge, which crosses the Los Angeles River into East L.A.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Little Tokyo grew into America's largest Japanese community settlement, stretching from Main Street to the 1st Street Bridge, or three-quarters of a mile east-west and a half-mile north-south (1st Street to 5th Street). In 1970, Little Tokyo was designated a project of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) of Los Angeles and defined as a nine-block area.

The City of Los Angeles was founded at the site of a large Indian village in 1781 by people of Spanish, African American, Native American, and mestizo descents. By the 1830s, vineyards, orchards and farms flourished in the rich soil of the Los Angeles River basin.

Gravitating toward what was familiar to them in language, foods, and customs, Mexican, African American along with European American pioneers made their homes and built businesses and communities in and around this area. The Catholic religious center, St. Vibiana's Cathedral, was built within the area at 114 E. 2nd St. in 1880.

From the early 1800s through the early 1900s, Asian migrants and immigrants added yet another layer to Los Angeles' multi-ethnic population, bringing their customs and religions.

The first Japanese Buddhist temple, Rafu Bukkyo-kai, or Los Angeles Buddhist Mission, was founded in 1904 in what was basically a converted house at 229 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street. It moved to San Julian Street in 1907, then to 319 Boyd Street two years later. Eventually, the temple moved to Boyle Heights and was named Higashi Honganji. In 1976, Higashi moved back to its roots in Little Tokyo.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> From "Boyle Heights: The Power of Place," Japanese American National Museum exhibition, 2004.

Similarly, Nishi Hongwanji traces its roots to the Nanka Bukkyo-kai Mission established in 1905.

The worldwide Pentecostal Church dates back to 1906 and occupied a site at San Pedro and Azusa Streets near what is now the center of Little Tokyo. The first Catholic mission dedicated to the Japanese in the Americas began in Boyle Heights in 1912. By 1915, eight women from Nagasaki arrived to assist in the mission and eventually established Little Tokyo's first elementary school, Maryknoll School on Hewitt Street.

The name "Li'l Tokio" became fixed to the area sometime during the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the number of *Issei* (first-generation Japanese immigrants) continued to grow and they established residences, businesses and religious, social and cultural institutions. The area was also referred to as "Sho Tokyo," "Japanese Town," "J-Town," and eventually became known widely by its current designation, "Little Tokyo." By 1915, over 7,000 Japanese lived in the Los Angeles area, the mainland United States' largest Japanese settlement at the time.

The Immigration Act of 1924, the result of two decades of growing anti-Japanese sentiment, ended further immigration from Japan, isolating the *Issei* whose values and traditions were rooted in Meiji era Japan (1868-1912). This isolation period continued until the changes b the immigration laws in 1952. Even today, one can trace the Japanese American family and community values, ethics, customs, and even the Japanese language learned in family settings, back to the Meiji era.

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, America entered World War II. In response to growing anti-Japanese sentiment, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, resulting in the mass incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans from the west coast of the United States. Vibrant communities like Little Tokyo became virtual ghost towns within a matter of months. Three and a half years later, Japanese Americans, whether released from one of America's 10 concentration camps or returning as heroic veterans who fought for democracy in Europe and Asia, gradually went back to areas like Little Tokyo to rebuild communities and restart their lives.

By the mid-1950s, community leaders began discussing ways to revitalize Little Tokyo. By 1962, the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association was formed as a non-profit organization by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California with membership made up of both *Issei* and the American-born second generation, *Nisei*. Dues collected from businesses, property owners and non-profit organizations helped support the vision toward revitalization. Joining this group were City planners who as volunteers met with the group each Friday afternoon at the Chamber offices. The discussions led to the

identification of a rine-block area designated for redevelopment. A plan was presented to the City, and in 1970, the City Council approved the proposal and created the Little Tokyo redevelopment area as a separate district for 30 years. (A 10-year extension was added in 2000.) Now, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Little Tokyo is at a new crossroad. Social and economic changes have impacted property values, making the area desirable for new development. In many cases, land and structures left vacant for the past twenty years have suddenly increased in value.

Growth opportunities also bring the obligation to ensure that Little Tokyo's historical importance and rich cultural heritage are preserved as inextricable components of Los Angeles and California history.

To this end, the Little Tokyo Design Guidelines project has been created with consideration of the multicultural elements within the history of this neighborhood as well as looking forward to adding new dimensions that will enrich its unique heritage.

#### Resources:

Hayden, Dolores, The Power of Place/Urban Landscapes as Public History, The MIT Press 1995

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Kaji, Bruce, oral history, Redevelopment in Little Tokyo, 2005

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Japanese American History / An A-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present, edited by Brian Niiya, Japanese American National Museum 1993

#### A. VISION

It is the intent of the Little Tokyo Planning and Design Guidelines Task Force to develop design guidelines that will respect Little Tokyo's ethnic heritage while encouraging development and redevelopment in a manner that is aesthetically pleasing, sustainable, attentive to detail, harmonious with the existing structures and maintains the area's unique cultural identity.

Guidelines are meant to encourage individual expression in the development of land and buildings while maintaining continuity in the design of the urban environment. At the same time, the intent of design guidelines is to protect and enhance those qualities and characteristics, which seem mutually advantageous to the Little Tokyo community, the City in general, and to the property owners, merchants, residents, and workers.

The guidelines establish the policies and concepts for good design and quality development but are flexible enough to allow for individual expression and imaginative solutions to fit the existing Little Tokyo environment. The design guideline is a culminating document incorporating data from numerous community focus group sessions conducted since the year 2000 with the latest in 2004.

The Little Tokyo Planning and Design Guidelines Task Force was created in 2004 and assigned the task of synthesizing the tremendous amount of community, general public and civic input concerning the future vision for the area known as Little Tokyo. Among the documents is the California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project funded by Senate Bill 307. The Project centered on the preservation of three of California's remaining Japantowns in Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Jose.

Since 1962, Little Tokyo has continuously monitored and responded to public and private development plans to ensure the unique cultural character of this historical and cultural neighborhood. This review process was conducted primarily through the Mayor's Community Development Advisory Committee of the Los Angeles Redevelopment Agency and more recently through the Little Tokyo Community Council.

As the State Legislature declared in SB 307, "development should be guided by a comprehensive vision of the future with a commitment to the history and cultural character of the neighborhoods and communities."

With an understanding of social, cultural, political, and economic forces that have historically shaped the urban landscape of Little Tokyo, these same factors need to be considered when examining the future development and revitalization of the neighborhood. This includes issues of ethnic heritage (language, culture, art), human attachment (sentimental values, history,

memory), and power (private investment, public input, community empowerment, and city politics).

In 2002, the California Japantown Planning and Preservation Conference created a preliminary definition of cultural preservation as:

The protection, interpretation, and documentation of (1) cultural properties, structures, sites, objects, and artifacts; (2) culturally significant businesses and economic development; (3) culturally relevant architecture, design, aesthetics and landscapes; (4) textiles and clothing; (5) folklore, stories, language and literature; and (6) food and cuisine. Preservation was also viewed as a political, economic, and social concern that preserves and protects places that reflect the meanings, ideologies, beliefs, values, and views shared by a group or groups.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of this yearlong process in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, a definition of cultural preservation for Little Tokyo was refined to:

Cultural Preservation combines political, economic, and social elements that protect Japanese Americans' rich and dynamic traditions, associations, and heritage within the context of the physical and cultural landscapes of their neighborhoods. The objective of cultural preservation as a planning mechanism is to ensure that both significant physical (tangible) properties and the transmission of intangible aspects of the culture, such as oral traditions, arts, music, and the community's essence, are given protection and priority in the future development of Little Tokyo.

In this definition of cultural preservation, the scope of preservation is broadened to be more inclusive of the various factors that have shaped and continue to shape the physical and cultural landscape of ethnic neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are situated in areas that carry both historic and cultural significance to ethnic communities. Thus, throughout this report, the usage of "cultural preservation" refers to the preservation of physical and cultural spaces rooted in a particular physical place. The use of the term "built environment" and "tangibles" are used interchangeably in reference to the physical spaces, whereas "intangibles" refer to the cultural and social elements in the community and would be of great importance in creating design guidelines for Little Tokyo.

The definition embraces the wishes of the community as represented in the preceding documents, the result of many hours of preparation and years of community dialogue and input.

#### **B. THEMES AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **SUMMARY OF THEMES**

The following themes summarize key recommendations received from a variety of community sessions and reflect feedback received from community members<sup>4</sup>.

# Theme I: Promoting and Sustaining a Thriving and Active Community

#### A. Mixed Land Use

Little Tokyo is envisioned as a diverse residential and business community where people come to visit, work, worship, and socialize. The following recommendations, aimed at attracting more people and increasing activity in the neighborhood, emerged from a visioning workshop co-sponsored by the Little Tokyo Community Council and Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles:

- 1. Create a variety of land uses, including residential, retail, commercial, religious, cultural, recreational, and entertainment purposes.
- 2. Augment and support daily activities of both residents and nonresidents by providing facilities and amenities that appeal to a variety of tastes.
- 3. Provide elements such as daycare, post office, market, school, recreation center, playground, social and public services, community gathering space, and Japanese consulate.

#### B. Venues and Activity

Creation of a "24-hour" Little Tokyo community would allow for opportunities for people to stay active in the community after most retailers and offices close.

The LTCC cultural preservation report found that "people...want activities that engage the vitality and charm of the neighborhood." Community members made the following suggestions:

- 1. Create places to socialize and recreate, especially for the younger population.
- 2. Enhance and increase the number, quality, and variety of food, entertainment, and other amenities.

<sup>•</sup> Source: Beverly Wong, Summary of Little Tokyo Visioning/Planning Documents, 2004

- 3. Develop a viable Little Tokyo nightlife.
- 4. Encourage the addition of more local businesses, especially those that promote community culture, history, and a sustainable community economy.

#### C. Access and Transportation

Optimizing community access and improving circulation within the community would allow for greater ability to access and utilize Little Tokyo's resources and encourage patron activity.

Parking accessibility, availability, and affordability can be addressed through such means as free parking, free limited parking, validation, and additional parking structures.

Enhancing pedestrian access for those traveling within or to Little Tokyo can help increase activity within the neighborhood as well as pathways from Little Tokyo to surrounding communities.

Aesthetics and amenities suggested include benches, public restrooms, crosswalks, and trees that offer shade. Study participants believed that creating a pedestrian-friendly environment would foster better connections with downtown LA, the Arts District, and other communities.

Little Tokyo is envisioned as a transportation center. While acknowledging the benefits of the coming MTA Gold Line Station, participants would also like to see more DASH stops, more affordable public transit, a shuttle program, and increased weekend and night transit stops.

#### D. Housing

In its formative years, Little Tokyo became a destination for immigrants of varying nationalities. It continues to embody diversity among its residents, merchants, and workers today. Housing should be available for households of all income ranges.

Mixed-income housing and mixed-use developments that include housing are encouraged. The availability of affordable housing continues to be stressed by community members. Interaction among residents and patronage of local businesses should be encouraged.

### Theme II: Preserving Cultural Identity and Character

#### A. Cultural Icon and Gathering Place

Preserving and promoting Little Tokyo's cultural identity and historical background are essential to developing its image as a unique destination

in order to attract visitors and residents. People should feel a sense of place when in the community.

Suggestions for enhancing the community as a cultural icon include:

- 1. Urban design elements that reflect the Japanese tradition and are culturally sensitive, including landscaping, signage, public art, and architecture.
- 2. Cultural landmarks, facilities, businesses, and events.
- 3. Cultural activities that perpetuate Japanese presence in the community and attract visitors.

Little Tokyo, one of only three remaining Japantowns, is regarded by many as the hub or center of the Japanese American community and a link between America and Japan.

#### B. Cultural Institutions

There are eight temples and churches in Little Tokyo symbolizing the cultural and religious diversity among Japanese Americans. Worshipers from throughout Southern California continue to visit Little Tokyo on a regular basis. These institutions have been part of Little Tokyo for over 100 years and are the original cultural symbols of the community. Other cultural symbols and resources include but are not limited to:

- Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC).
- Japanese American National Museum (JANM).
- 1st Street Historic District.
- Union Center for the Arts, including East West Players, L.A.
   Artcore and Visual Communications.

Public art, such as murals and sculptures should be preserved and supported in the community. Teaching traditional arts and culture is also important, including collaboration with community artists and the Arts District.

Community members emphasized the need to preserve religious institutions, while better connecting them to the community through compatible development and by creating friendly pathways.

#### C. Neighborhood Character

Little Tokyo is a gateway for immigrants, especially for residents and community members in need of culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services. Little Tokyo serves as a safety net for the Japanese speaking community, immigrants, and lower-income people that utilize community institutions that provide social services, small

business assistance, job opportunities, health care providers, affordable housing, and cultural amenities.

# Theme III: Attracting People of Various Cultures and Generations

#### A. Beautification

Along with promoting Little Tokyo's unique cultural character, beautification efforts will make the neighborhood presentable and attractive.

Comments emerging from the LTCC public meetings include the definition of Little Tokyo as an active, attractive, friendly, safe and fun place which serves those of Japanese ancestry as well as the multicultural community of Los Angeles."

From a list of seven general priorities for Little Tokyo, beautification ranked first overall (along with security). Common beautification ideas include landscaping with trees or other greenery and designating a park or green space.

#### B. Safety and Security

Along with beautification, security ranked first among participants in the LTCC public meetings. Both public safety and security are common issues of concern among community members. Safety as well as the image of safety was deemed important in bringing people to the community.

One common concern, especially for senior citizens, is pedestrian safety, which could be improved by installing better lighting and wider sidewalks. In addition, people often mentioned addressing the homeless situation.

#### C. Multigenerational Environment

Intergenerational programs and activities that promote interaction among youth, families, and seniors, add to the community's vitality and attract a broader population. Community members often call for:

- 1. More youth-targeted venues, facilities, events, activities, and job training to provide youth a place in the community.
- 2. Amenities that accommodate families such as daycare, children's park, grade school, adult school, recreation center or space, and community center or space.
- 3. Amenities that accommodate seniors, e.g. senior center or facility.

#### D. Multicultural Environment

Attracting a multi-cultural crowd enhances Little Tokyo's viability as an entertainment and dining hub. Increasing the variety of restaurants, retail stores, entertainment venues, art and cultural facilities, and recreational outlets will help draw people from outside the Japanese American community.

# Theme IV: Fostering Social Relationships and a Sense of Community

#### A. Community Space

Many people envision Little Tokyo as a:

- Neighborhood, home, or family.
- Hub or center of activity.
- Gathering place.

Some ideas mentioned, which would contribute to greater interaction and socialization are:

- 1. Community space in various forms, including open space, plaza, green space, park, basketball courts, recreation center, community center, playground, sports field, or garden.
- 2. Public features such as sidewalks and benches.
- 3. Intangible items that lead to social interaction, such as community events.

#### B. Community Voice

Decisions that affect the community should take into consideration the feelings of members, through a process that is democratic or otherwise includes community input.

Participants in community sessions strongly expressed the need for increased power in determining the community's future. In particular, the LTCC community planning report concluded, "The need for political power was articulated at several meetings." Recommendations included holding community meetings and delegating a community representative to deal with city level politics.

#### C. BOUNDARIES

#### RATIONALE FOR DEFINING LITTLE TOKYO BOUNDARIES

Little Tokyo's boundaries have fluctuated over time, often the result of external factors, not the least of which was the World War II mass evacuation of its inhabitants in 1942 and Los Angeles' eventual transformation into a major metropolis.

Industrialization of the area began in 1831 when Jean Louis Vignes began commercial winemaking. The section just west of the First and Fourth Street Bridges was formerly known as Wolfskill Grove, where the first commercial production of citrus fruit in America commenced in 1838. The grapefruit tree in the courtyard of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center is of the type Wolfskill planted. Around the turn of the century, both Vignes' enterprise and Wolfskill's agricultural business began to depend on Japanese workers.

Little Tokyo's first known business was a small restaurant established in 1885 at 340 E. First Street by Hamanosuke "Charles" Shigeta, a shipwrecked seaman. About 25 Japanese lived in Los Angeles at the time. Soon, residential hotels and other businesses cropped up. The Linda Lea Theater, a popular entertainment venue for immigrants who wanted to see first-run films from Japan, still stands on Main Street, a reminder of Little Tokyo's earlier western boundary.

Plans in 1950 to build a new police headquarters, later named Parker Center, on the north side of First Street, claimed more of Little Tokyo's territory, displacing several Japanese-owned businesses and moving the Little Tokyo's nucleus eastward.

Parts of the neighborhood can also be called the Arts District, particularly the area south of First Street and east of Alameda Street. Little Tokyo cultural institutions such as Maryknoll Japanese Catholic Center and Zenshuji Temple coexist in the area that once was the home to many artists. For the area south of First and east of Alameda, it is suggested that land use and design be sensitive to the needs of both the Arts District and Little Tokyo.

From an historical perspective, Little Tokyo's natural growth corridors on the east and south suggest that its boundaries more naturally extend beyond what is currently regarded as its borders. The eastern portion might also include the Mangrove site, where the Little Tokyo/Arts District Gold Line station is slated for construction.

The southern growth would extend to Alameda then shift south one block to Fourth Street, which then becomes the south boundary. San Pedro Street, becomes the west boundary for one block until the south boundary resumes west to Los Angeles Street, where it would rejoin the existing western boundary. Such expansion would include Little Tokyo Shopping Mall (f.k.a. Mitsuwa Plaza), Centenary United Methodist Church, the Professional Building, and Jodoshu Buddhist Mission, all of whom serve the Japanese American community.

Like tree rings, Little Tokyo's varying boundaries provide useful historical maps that reflect the area's social, economic, and physical changes through the decades. It has been suggested that a canopy of Gingko trees, the first to be saved from extinction at the hand of man, be planted to symbolically define and preserve Little Tokyo's outer edges.

Expanding Little Tokyo's boundaries could allow for residential, commercial, and recreational growth consistent with the changes that will inevitably come with enhanced access to public transportation with the opening of the Gold Line station on its eastern edge.

Moreover, southern expansion would allow for the adaptive reuse of older commercial buildings into live/work spaces, such as that in the Arts District, becoming a bohemian area for artists and younger people.

#### **Contiguous Border**

Starting in the northeast at Temple and Vignes Streets, the suggested contiguous boundary for the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay District proceeds south on Vignes to 1st Street; west on 1st Street to Garey Street; south on Garey to 3rd Street; west on Third to Traction Avenue; northwest on Traction until it becomes 2nd Street at Alameda Street; south on Alameda Street to 4th Street; west on 4th Street to San Pedro Street; north on San Pedro Street to 3rd Street; west on 3rd Street to Los Angeles Street; north on Los Angeles Street to Temple Street; and east on Temple Street to Vignes Street. (See map next page.)

#### **Outer/Directional Boundaries**

Suggested outer boundaries for the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay District are:

• Northern Border: Temple Street from Los Angeles Street to Vignes

Street.

Eastern Border: Vignes Street from Temple to 1<sup>st</sup> Street; Garey Street

from 1st Street to 3rd Street; Alameda Street from 2nd

Street to 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

• Southern Border: 1st Street from Vignes Street to Garey Street; 3rd

Street from Garey Street to Traction Avenue; Traction to Alameda Street; 4<sup>th</sup> Street from Alameda Street to San Pedro Street; 3<sup>rd</sup> Street from San

Pedro Street to Los Angeles Street.

• Western Border: Los Angeles Street from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to Temple Street

including the west side of Los Angeles Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets; San Pedro Street from

4th Street to 3rd Street.

#### **SECTION II – DESIGN GUIDELINES**

#### INTRODUCTION

A number of factors contribute to what ultimately defines Little Tokyo as a viable and vibrant community within Los Angeles, a large metropolitan area that is simultaneously growing and changing. Design guidelines suggest ways to execute the overall vision while reinforcing Little Tokyo as the historic nucleus of Japanese culture and history in Southern California. The future design of Little Tokyo should incorporate a Japanese aesthetic.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The following guidelines identify objectives and define specific aspects intended to support Little Tokyo's development. In many cases, these principles have been successfully applied in communities with needs and issues similar to those in Little Tokyo. Also addressed are aspects unique to the area.

#### A. Primary Gateways

Gateways are the points of entry that establish an image or identity for the community being entered. While there are a number of intrinsic gateways in Little Tokyo, such as Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple on the east, there are no officially designated points of entry. In the future, however, no gateway is likely to be more evident than the planned Gold Line light rail at Temple and Alameda Streets or 1<sup>st</sup> and Vignes Streets. coming from East Los Angeles.

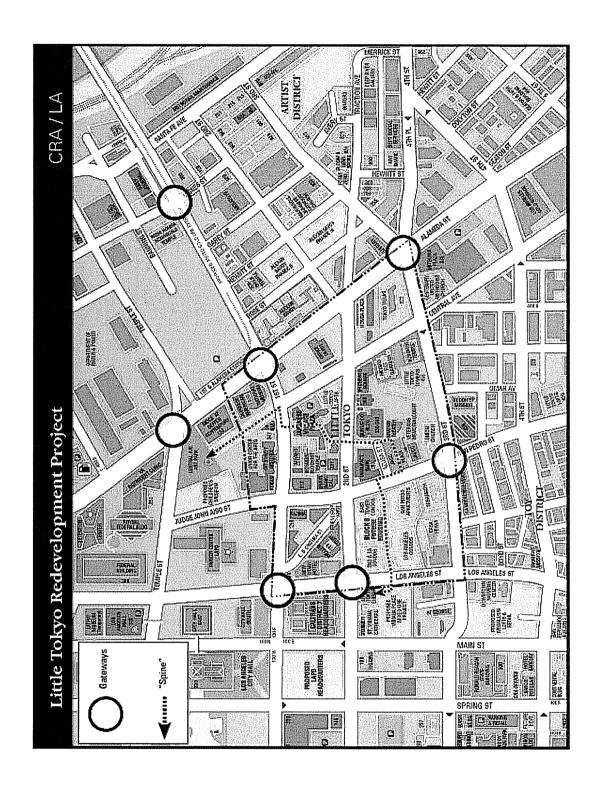
- A1. Accentuate the following primary gateways into Little Tokyo (see map next page):
  - First Street intersections with Los Angeles and Vignes Streets
  - Second Street intersection with Los Angeles Street
  - Third Street intersections with San Pedro and Alameda Streets
  - By car, Temple and Alameda Streets are a frequently used gateway into Little Tokyo.
  - For pedestrians, 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Alameda might be considered a likely gateway.
- A2. Reflect the unique identity of Little Tokyo in the design of the gateways, through the use of certain symbols of Japanese culture (e.g., stone lanterns, banners) and appropriate materials (e.g.,

- cloth, stone, wood). The design would prominently identify the points of entry into the ethnic neighborhood.
- A3. Establish a sense of place at gateways through the unifying design elements of landscaping, street furniture, lighting standards, paving materials and parking lot design.
- A4. Incorporate a bold and legible signage system at the gateways, entry points and strategic locations within Little Tokyo. The use of Japanese writing (e.g., katakana) is encouraged.
- A5. Provide plaques at the pedestrian level to identify notable gateway and other important elements within Little Tokyo.
- A6. Illuminate gateway elements at night.

#### B. Central Linkage and Pedestrian Circulation

A central linkage or "spine" through a community connects important destinations within the community, contributing to the cohesiveness of the community. A central pathway also allows for easy access and circulation.

- B1. Little Tokyo's central linkage starts on the north with the Go For Broke Monument and travels southeast past the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), through the Japanese Village Plaza (JVP) then to the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC) Plaza, and then proceeding west through the proposed Block 8 mixed-use project, where a planned tree-lined corridor would lead to the Little Tokyo Library, and the anticipated Little Tokyo Recreation Center on Los Angeles Street. (See map.)
- B2. Key elements, or branches, along the "spine" include the Museum of Contemporary Art, East West Players' David Henry Hwang Theater, Weller Court, Little Tokyo Branch Library, New Otani Hotel, Japan America/Aratani Theater, Little Tokyo Towers, Casa Heiwa, Honda Plaza, Little Tokyo Mall (formerly Mitsuwa Plaza).



B3. An easy to follow pedestrian path system would connect the major destinations in Little Tokyo, including those that overlap the Arts District. In addition, the path system would lead to open spaces and gateways, such as the proposed Art Park being planned for the northside of East 1st Street. The path system could also incorporate public art and/or other symbols of Japanese culture and heritage.

#### C. Site Planning/Building Orientation

Site planning involves the proper placement and orientation of structures, open spaces, parking, pedestrian and vehicular circulation on a given site. Factors such as the size and massing of buildings, the orientation of storefronts, clearly identifiable and enhanced entries and circulation greatly influence the quality of the pedestrian experience.

The purpose of good site design is to create a functional and attractive development, to minimize adverse impacts, and to ensure that a project will be an asset to the community.

- C1. The site planning of new buildings and the rehabilitation of existing buildings in the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Area should encourage:
  - Good design (with complementary landscaping) that would create vibrant commercial areas fostering a pleasant and desirable character, pedestrian activity, and economic vitality;
  - Continuity of the historic and cultural context of buildings in relationship to the existing pattern and scale of streets, sidewalks, meeting areas and parking;
  - Harmony between new and existing buildings, and sensitivity to the scale, form, height, and proportion of surrounding development;
  - Compatible building-orientation to streets, which promotes pedestrian activity along the sidewalks of Little Tokyo, and facilitates pedestrian access to and from the sidewalk to adjacent properties;
  - Easy sidewalk access for pedestrians by locating vehicle access and loading areas where there will be minimal physical or visual impact on pedestrians, the flow of traffic, and/or adjacent uses.

- C2. Buildings shall be oriented toward the main corridors passing through Little Tokyo to encourage pedestrian activity along the sidewalks and facilitate pedestrian access to and from the sidewalk to adjacent properties.
- C3. All buildings shall have a primary ground floor entrance that serves the building as a whole. In addition, there shall be at least one entryway serving each business fronting the main corridor.
- C4. Projects with rear lot lines abutting a street, alley, or parking lot should incorporate pedestrian entrances that are easily identifiable and enhanced at the rear lot line in addition to those on the main corridors.
- C5. New buildings shall be constructed to the front lot line after observing the code-required sidewalk dedication in order to preserve the existing street wall along the main corridors. Corner buildings shall be constructed to the front lot lines of the main corridors.
- C6. All vehicular entrances should be located off of a side street or an alley in order to minimize pedestrian and vehicular conflicts. Pedestrian circulation shall be enhanced with enriched materials to create a favorable hierarchy for pedestrian use.
- C7. Loading areas shall be located at the rear of structures for minimum visibility from the main corridors and where there will be minimal negative impact on pedestrians, the flow of traffic, and uses adjacent to and across the street from the loading area.
- C8. Passenger loading zones located on the street should not impede foot traffic or sidewalks and should complement the pedestrian experience.
- C9. Parking lots and structures should be designed to provide safe pedestrian circulation between parking vehicles and the primary building through the use of clearly marked pedestrian walkways, stop signs, speed bumps, lighting, or other similar measures.
- C10. Locate utilities, storage areas, mechanical equipment, fire alarms, sprinklers and other service areas so that they are not visible from the public right-of-way.

# D. Site Specific Design Guidelines: Buildings in the Little Tokyo Historic District

The buildings in the Little Tokyo Historic District are subject to the provisions of the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings. For the latest version of these standards, please access the Secretary of Interior's website, as follows: www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/standards/standards complete.pdf

#### E. Public Art and Special Features (Landmarks)

For a neighborhood or community to have a sense of identity and character, it needs distinctive, memorable places and landmarks by which it is known. (See Public Art locations on map next page.)

- E1. Existing public art and special features should be preserved, and new public art and special community-oriented features should be incorporated into the design of new projects as well as in public gathering areas and other key locations.
- E2. Opportunities for creating special places that capture significant history, memorialize special features, individuals or characteristics of the neighborhood, and which propose design solutions for specific sites should be identified and prioritized.
- E3. Identify landmarks on maps located at public transportation stations, hotels and other activity centers. Clearly identify locations and routes to be taken.
- E4. Promote the installation of kiosks with maps of the area with notable elements noted and described.
- E5. Include elements in the landscape to mark important places and create a sense of direction, movement, arrival.
- E6. To the extent practicable, existing public art and special features should be preserved.

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COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

### F. Public/People Spaces

Public spaces create opportunities for people of all backgrounds to come together as well as provide open areas for a wide range of activities.

- F1. Support improvements in public spaces that enable use of wireless communication technology (such as computer laptops and personal digital assistants).
- F2. Incorporate, where appropriate, symbols of the ethnic and cultural community
- F3. Plan activities that attract pedestrians to existing open spaces. Use temporary street closures for special events like the Tofu Festival, Nisei Week, open-air markets, or book fairs.
- F4. Improve street edges by providing active uses on the ground floor of buildings along pedestrian-oriented streets.
- F5. Landscape the street and building edges of parking lots and enhance existing chain link fences with landscaping, or replace with wrought iron or "art fences". Discourage the use of razor wire.
- F6. Provide seating opportunities for more user-friendly spaces but incorporate elements to discourage long term uses (sleeping).
- F7. Encourage the use of enriched paving and other distinctive materials to create user-friendly spaces. The spaces should be easily maintainable and kept clean.

### G. Sidewalks

Sidewalks should be pedestrian-friendly, contributing to the comfortable use of the sidewalk, as well as supporting sidewalk activity.

- G1. Develop standards for street furniture, including benches, bus shelters, bollards, drinking fountains and tree grates. Encourage the use of symbols of Japanese culture.
- G2. Locate street furniture along the curb line to create a buffer between vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Maintain curbside parking, when feasible, on selective streets such as (identify) to enhance pedestrian safety.

- G3. Encourage outdoor dining on sidewalks near restaurants and cafes.
- G4. Provide ample and appropriate landscaping (i.e., trees, shrubs) and/or shade structures (e.g. awnings, canvas structures, wood overheads, etc.) to create opportunities for shade from the elements.
- G5. Encourage the use of enriched materials at key locations such as intersections, major entries, and places of significance.
- G6. The Agency's sidewalk treatment for Little Tokyo (see attached plan below) shall be maintained when appropriate for all sidewalks in Little Tokyo.
- G7. Allow for a minimum sidewalk width of 15-22 feet along San Pedro Street from face of curb to face of building.

### H. Street-Level Uses

When a building's ground-level space is walled off, boarded-up, or screened with security grills, the quality of the pedestrian environment suffers. An opportunity to reinforce the character of a district is lost, and the pedestrian experiences a sense of separation from the activity within the building. Additionally, an impression of danger may be created because street activity cannot be observed by ground floor users.

- H1. Allow for transparency at the ground level to create a more interesting pedestrian environment. Pedestrians should be able to sense ground floor activity.
- H2. Provide views to building interior thereby contributing to an interesting pedestrian environment.
- H3. Differentiate the ground floor from the upper stories of multi-story buildings through the use of complementary but different building materials, textures, colors and size of openings.
- H4. Identify the building entry by recessing or projecting the opening, by using awnings or special signage, or by varying the façade treatment around the entry. Consider moveable walls to open up and create better interior/exterior relationships.
- H5. Provide for a variety of shops and extended day activities at the street level.

- H6. Provide for nighttime illumination of showcases and other building interiors abutting the main corridors.
- H7. Provide for a secondary source of sidewalk illumination on all streets within the Little Tokyo Design Guidelines area.
- H8. Use art to transform vacant ground-level spaces and blank walls into an attraction.
- H9. Plant vines to prevent graffiti on blank walls and implement the "greening" of Little Tokyo.
- H10. Ground-level uses on secondary streets should be neighborhoodoriented and appeal to residents.

### I. Streetscape (including Landscaping)

Through the use of a variety of plant materials such as trees, shrubs, ground cover, perennials and annuals, as well as other materials such as rocks, water, sculpture, or paving materials, landscaping unifies streetscape and provides a positive visual experience. Landscaping also can emphasize sidewalk activity by separating vehicle and pedestrian traffic, provide shade, define spaces, accentuate architecture, create inviting spaces and screen unattractive areas.

- 11. Use streetscape elements (e.g., plant materials, garden elements, street furniture, lighting) to identify the Little Tokyo area.
- 12. Use street trees to reinforce the planned character of streets, consistent with established street patterns.
- 13. Street tree spacing should be 20-30 feet on-center; although a closer spacing is encouraged, where feasible. Trees should be maintained and pruned in accordance with accepted standards.
- 14. Maximize the use of tree planted areas on plazas and in building setback areas to intensify the "greening" of Little Tokyo. Provide landscaping on upper building levels.
- 15. Parking lots should be landscaped with trees, shrubs and ground cover adjacent to public walkways, consistent with City standards.
- 16. Publicly visible blank walls should be planted with creeping vines or screened with landscaping.

- 17. Public accessible green spaces such as plazas and courtyards should be incorporated in the design of buildings to reinforce the image of a pedestrian-oriented community.
- 18. The use of Japanese native plant materials in landscaping can reinforce the character of the Little Tokyo neighborhood is encouraged, including more flowering and colorful foliage types of materials at key areas. (See Appendix B for a list of Japanese plants.)
- 19. A standard sidewalk treatment and tree grate design should be used as a unifying design element for the community.
- 110. Encourage planters located on second story windows and patio areas to cascade and create a "softening" of the architectural façade where feasible.
- 111. Street trees shall be planted with min. 4' x 8' tree wells with in-line drip irrigation, or min. 5' x 5' tree grates with in-ground irrigation to be maintained by property owner (grate openings must be enlarged as tree grows).

### J. Functional and Decorative Lighting

Lighting can be used as a unifying element, defining districts and streets and conveying moods. Lighting should be used to light both vehicular and pedestrian pathways.

- J1. Incorporate wall-mounted fixtures into the design of buildings to emphasize and define building entrances and to contribute to the nighttime ambiance.
- J2. Encourage building owners to illuminate signage and to use interior lighting for nighttime effect.
- J3. For drama, illuminate landmarks and use lighted trees along major pedestrian streets at night.
- J4. Locate lights in areas of pedestrian/vehicular interface and other safety areas.

### K. Security and Defensible Design

Many building owners and tenants hesitate to allow large areas of unprotected glass at the ground level because of security and safety concerns. Common responses to these concerns include boarding-up of the entire ground floor or adding security grills. These conditions deface the built environment as well as create a sense of danger for residents and visitors.

- K1. Decorative security grills should be encouraged.
- K2. Provide attractively designed security bars that allow visual access to the portions of buildings being protected. If possible, place security grills behind the glass.
- K3. In new buildings, integrate roll-down grills and their housing into the building's design. Creating a usable, pedestrian space between the security grill and the building entrance at the ground floor should also be considered.
- K4. Use graffiti-proof, roll-down doors that are not visible when stores are open for business.
- K5. Provide nighttime illumination, as discussed above, as well as other measures of defensible design such as the use of landscaping.

### L. Signage

The Signage Guidelines for the Little Tokyo Historic District (Appendix D) shall apply.

Signage that is used to identify the character of a business and advertise its location is often directed toward automobile users and is thus over scaled for a pedestrian environment.

Without standards, most signage is developed for maximum visibility. The result is often a state of visual chaos in which signage conflicts with architecture, and there is no coordination between the signage of neighboring buildings.

L1. Provide a unified signage system (incorporate a cohesive range of sign design for individual identity), which includes designs for vehicular control, street names, place identification and transit information.

- L2. In areas of pedestrian concentration, provide orientation maps, directional signs and tourist information boards.
- L3. The Little Tokyo logo that currently appears on all municipal signage and on wayfinding signage recently installed throughout the downtown area should be incorporated into all visual references to Little Tokyo such as maps, web sites, printed materials, and

walkways to identify key areas or along certain paths.



Standards have been established by the Wayfinding Confederation Grant for use of the logo. Those wanting to use this logo for publication should contact the Little Tokyo Business Improvement District (BID) at (213) 620-0570.

This logo could be incorporated in tile form in

- Consider signage as part of the building and integrate it with L4. architectural elements.
- L5. Respect the viewing experience of the pedestrian over vehicular when determining size and location of signage, especially along pedestrian-oriented streets.
- Develop a clear graphic signage for parking lots and integrate it L6. with fencing and other screening material. Perhaps a system of signage character and size could be incorporated through each particular use type.
- L7. Prohibit billboards.

brochures.

- L8. Eliminate advertisement signage on street benches.
- L9. Encourage the use of Japanese writing (e.g., katakana).

### M. Parking

Whenever possible, Downtown parking should be easily identified with prominent, uniform signage designed to fit into its architectural context and support a pedestrian-friendly environment. Parking structures should be designed with the same care and principles as other buildings in Little Tokyo.

Design for compatibility with the context of the Little Tokyo district M1. and maintain the integrity of street walls and street uses.

- M2. Develop interesting elements at street level that respect the pedestrian scale and make walking adjacent to a parking structure a pleasant experience. Landscaping, wall treatment and lighting are elements should be incorporated into the design.
- M3. Enhance blank walls with artwork, such as relief works, murals, cascading landscape plantings and wall sculptures
- M4. Develop creative screening components to mitigate the impact of horizontal openings at every level while still allowing for ventilation.
- M5. Create characteristic vertical elements to counterbalance the horizontality of the parking levels.
- M6. Encourage the provision of parking spaces for easy access to street-level retail.
- M7. Consider the needs of pedestrians when locating vehicular entrances and exits. Include safety measures, such as signage, audio signals, and a change of enhanced paving materials at the crossing of vehicular and pedestrian paths.
- M8. Consider using HVAC elements, such as ducts and vents, as opportunities for creative expression.
- M9. Where appropriate, design the ground floor of parking garages with flexibility so as not to preclude conversion to commercial use.
- M10. In structures large enough to require several entrances and exits, consider separating them in order to minimize gaping openings at street level.
- M11. Safety measures within parking structures such as lighting should be encouraged.

### **APPENDICES**

### APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY

Low-rise building – Up to three stories or 45 feet in height.

Mid-rise building – Between four to six stories or up to 75 feet in height.

High-rise building – Over six stories or 75 feet in height.

Articulation – Relationship of horizontal architectural features.

Baffle – A wall used to deflect light or air.

Canopy – An awning or marquee.

Cornice - Horizontal architectural band.

Façade – The face of the building.

Frieze - Ornamental architectural band.

Ground Floor – The lowest story within a building that is accessible to the street, the floor level of which is within three feet above or below curb level, is parallel to or primarily facing any public street.

Parapet – A low wall along the edge of a roof.

Pedestrian Amenities – Outdoor sidewalk cafes, public plazas, retail courtyards, water features, kiosks, paseos, arcades, patios, covered walkways, or spaces for outdoor dining or seating that are located on the Ground Floor, and that are accessible to and available for use by the public.

Spandrel – The triangular space between the right or left exterior curve of an arch and the framework of another arch or the area between two arches and a horizontal cornice above them.

Streetwall – The wall of facades created in a pedestrian-oriented area where stores are built to the front lot-line and built from side lot-line to side lot-line.

Structural Bay – Any division of a wall marked off by vertical supports.

Building identification (Wall) Sign — A sign containing the name and/or address, or a logo of the building to which the sign is attached (as per the Building Code).

Business Identification (Wall) Sign – A sign containing the name of the business conducted and/or the names of the product sold or services offered on the premises where the sign is located provided that building identification signs shall not include signs on the exterior windows or doors of any premises (as per the Building Code).

Premises – A building or portion thereof together with adjacent yards, courts, and/or public parking areas used as a location for a single business.

### APPENDIX 2: JAPANESE PLANTS, TREES, AND SHRUBS

Acer palmatum – Japanese Maple
Albizzia julibrissin – Silk Tree
Ardisia crenata – Coral Berry
Athyrium nipponicum – Japanese Painted Fern
Aucuba japonica – Japanese Aucuba (Spotted Laurels)

Berberis thunbergii;lkjh – Japanese Barberry (Megi)

Callicarpa japonica – Beauty Berry (Murasaki-shikibu)
Camellia japonica – Camellia (Tsubaki, Sazanka)
Carthamus tinctorius - Safflower
Chrysanthemum spp. - Chrysanthemum
Cinnamomum camphora – Camphor Tree
Citrus spp. – Orange (Mikan)
Clethra barbinervis – Japanese Sweet Shrub
Colocasia esculenta - Taro
Cryptomeria japonica – Japanese Cedar
Cycas revoluta - Cycad

Daphne odora – Sweet Daphne Dianthus superbus L. – Dianthus Diospyros kaki – Japanese Persimmon

Equisetum arvense – Horsetail Eriobotrya japonica – Loquat Eurya ochnaccea; E. japonica – Eurya

Fatsia japonica – Japanese Fatsia

Gardenia jasminoides – Gardenia Ginkgo biloba – Maidenhair Tree

Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola' – Japanese Forest Grass Hemerocallis fulva – Day Lily Hydrangea macrophylla – Hydrangea

Imperata cylindrica 'Rubra' – Japanese Blood Grass Ipomoea nil – Japanese Morning Glory Iris spp. – Japanese Iris

Juncus effuses var. decipiens – Mat Rush (Tatami Reed)

Lilium spp. – Golden Rayed Lily of Japan; Tiger Lily; Showy Lily; Japanese Lily Liquidambar formosana – Sweet Gum Liriodendron spp. – Tulip Tree Lycoris radiata – Equinox Flower

Magnolia spp. - Magnolia Melia azedarach – Chinaberry Miscanthus sinensis 'Yaku Jima' – Silver Grasses, Japanese Plume Grass Morus alba – Mulberry

Nandina domestica – Heavenly Bamboo Nelumbo nucifera – Lotus

Osmanthus asiaticus; O. fragrans - Sweet Olive

Paulownia tomentosa – Paulownia

Perilla frutescens - Shiso

Photinia glabra -- Japanese Photinia

Photinia serrulata - Chinese Photinia

Phyllostachys bambusoides - Bamboo (Ma-dake)

Phyllostachys pubescens – Bamboo (Moso-chiku)

Phyllostachys nigra - Black Bamboo

Pipal - Bodhi tree, Banyan or Bo

Platanus spp. – Plane Tree (London, Oriental, American)

Platycodon grandiflorus - Bellflower or Balloon Flower

Podocarpus macrophyllus - Japanese Yew

Polygonum cuspidatum (P. japonicum) - Japanese Knotweed

Polystichum polyblepharum - Japanese Lace Fern

Prunus spp. - Apricot; Peach; Nectarine

Prunus spp. - Cherry (Sakura)

Pyrrosia lingua – Japanese Felt Fern

Pyrus kawakamii - Evergreen Pear

Pyrus pyrifolia (P. serotina, P. ussuriensis) – Asian Pear

Radish – Chinese White Rhapis excelsa – Lady Palm Rhapis humilis – Slender Lady Palm Rhododendron spp. – Azalea

Sophora japonica – Pagoda Tree

Trachycarpus fortunei – Chinese Windmill Palm

Wisteria floribunda; W. sinensis - Japanese Wisteria; Chinese Wisteria

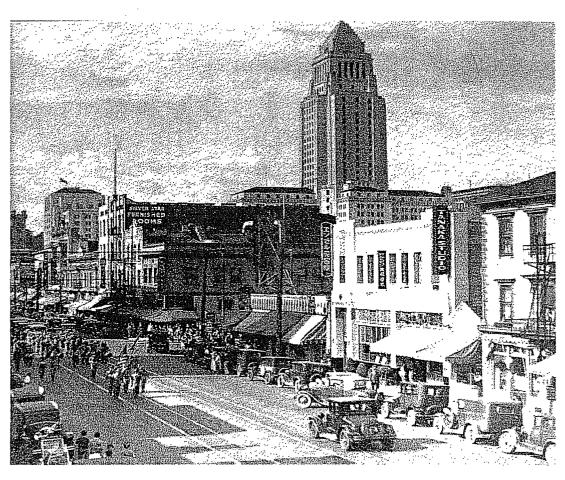
## APPENDIX 3: Site Specific Design Guidelines for Buildings in the Little Tokyo Historic District

The buildings in the Little Tokyo Historic District are subject to the provisions of the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings. For the latest version of these standards, please access the the Secretary of Interior's website, as follows:

www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/standards/standards\_complete.pdf

**Signage Guidelines for the Little Tokyo Historic District APPENDIX 4:** 

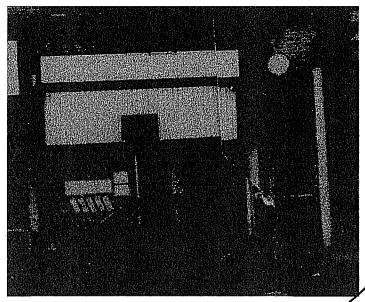
# GUIDELINES FOR THE LITTLE TOKYO HISTORIC DISTRICT



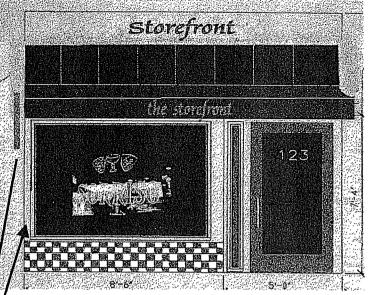
Approved by CRA Administrator, John Molloy, Dec. 1997
Endorsed by Councilwoman Rita-Walters, May 1998
Endorsed by Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee, Jan. 1998
Endorsed in concept by Jay Oren, Architect Cultural Affairs, Dec. 1997
Endorsed (by variance for San Pedro Firm Bldg., "Pedestrian Level Blade Sign") Sign Advisory Committee, May 1998

LITTLE TOKYO REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

# Suggested Guidelines For Historic District HANGING OR BLADE SIGN, AND WINDOW DECALS/SIGNS



**EXISTING CONDITIONS** 



PROPOSE STOREFRONT DESIGN





PROJECTION SIGN REQUIREMENTS



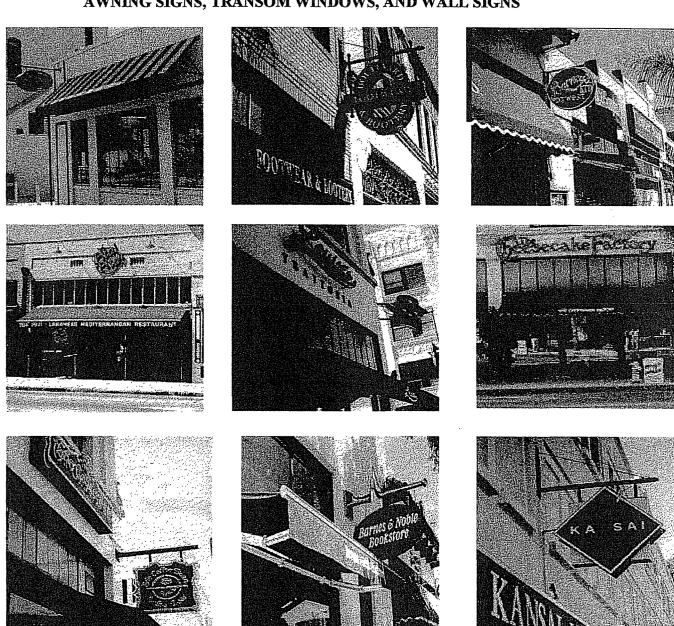


**EXAMPLES OF WINDOW SIGNS** 

A <u>Hanging</u> or <u>Blade Sign</u> must be mounted at least 8 ½ feet above the sidewalk and should project no more than 3 feet. <u>Window Signs</u> should not obscure the display area. The color of the letters should contrast with the display background. Light colored letters or gold leafed letters and decals are effective and recommended. Paper signs or advertisements temporarily placed on the window are not allowed.

Little Tokyo Historic District-Commercial Façade Program LITTLE TOKYO REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

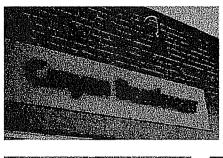
# Suggested Guidelines For Historic District EXAMPLES OF EXISTING STOREFRONTS WITH PROJECTION SIGNS, AWNING SIGNS, TRANSOM WINDOWS, AND WALL SIGNS

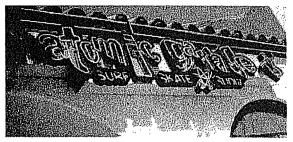


The <u>Transom Windows</u> can be clear tinted, oblique, or stained glass. An <u>Awning</u> can be attached above the display windows and below the cornice or sign panel. It is highly recommended that the Awning be mounted between the Transom and the Display Windows. This will allow light into the store while shading the merchandise and pedestrian from the sun. All <u>Awnings</u> must be retractable. Letter height on Awning valance shall not exceed 6 inches. A <u>Sign</u> should express an easy to read, direct message. It should be simple. A storefront is not allowed more than TWO SIGNS, one primary and one secondary. The <u>Bulkheads</u> must have tile.

<u>Little Tokyo Historic District-Commercial Façade Program</u> LITTLE TOKYO REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

# Suggested Guidelines for Historic District FLUSH-MOUNTED SIGN BOARD (WALL SIGN)







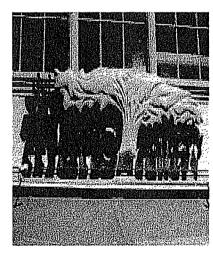


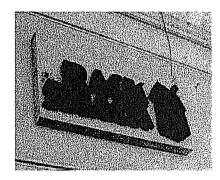


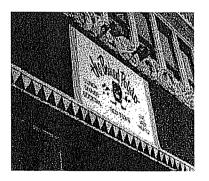












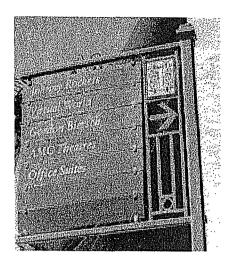
A <u>Flush-Mounted Sign Board or Wall Sign</u> may extend the width of the storefront but should not be more than 2 ½ feet high. The <u>SIGN</u> must be mounted somewhere above the storefront display windows and below the second-story window sills, but never in or covering the transom windows. Lettering should be between 8 to 18 inches high and occupy about 65 percent of the Sign Board.

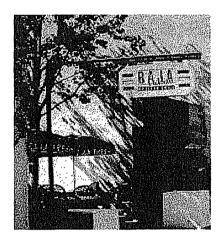
Little Tokyo Historic District-Commercial Façade Program
LITTLE TOKYO REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

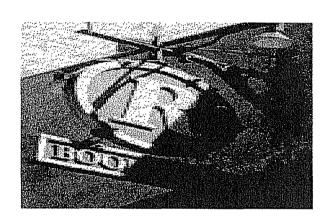
### Suggested Guidelines for Historic District EXAMPLES OF BLADE SIGNS, SIGNAGES WITH LIGHTING, LOCATIONS, AND PROJECTED POLE SIGNS

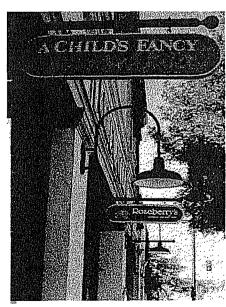




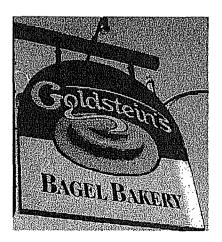






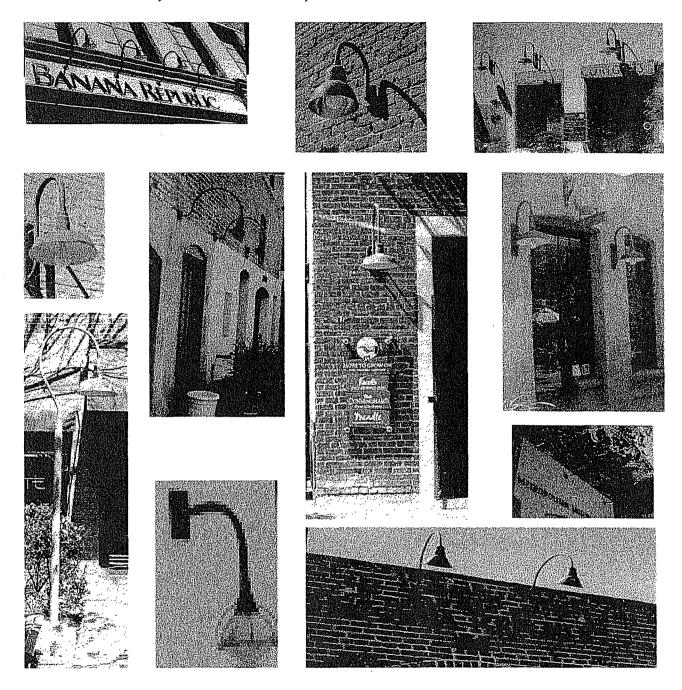






Little Tokyo Historic District-Commercial Façade Program
LITTLE TOKYO REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

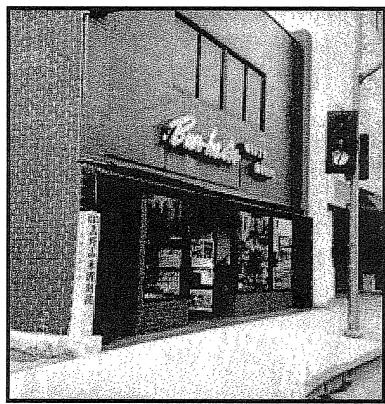
### Suggested Guidelines for Historic District EXAMPLES OF LIGHT FIXTURES FOR WALLS, BULDINGS, SIGNS, STOREFRONTS, ENTRYWAYS & WALKWAYS



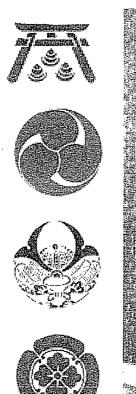
Circular, arch or gooseneck types of Light Fixtures are highly recommended. Flood Lamps or floodlights, or contemporary lighting fixtures will not be permitted.

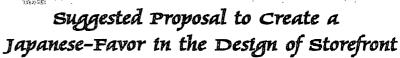
Little Tokyo Historic District-Commercial Façade Program LITTLE TOKYO REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

### SuggestedGuidelines for Storefronts NOT in Historic District









Tourism is the strongest economic stimulus in the Little Tokyo community. It has been stated that Little Tokyo has become too exotic and has no uniqueness to the architecture or shopping experience. Japanese goods and services can be found in many suburban neighborhoods. These Design Guidelines are in the effort to reshape the physical form of Little Tokyo as it approaches the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is highly recommended that all Storefronts provide a façade or graphics with Japanese-favor design as shown in the illustration above, thereby creating an uniqueness in the community that no suburban area can offer, which may in turn augment tourism and economic growth. Through the effort of the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles and the community, Commercial Façade and Signage Grant Programs of up to \$25,000 are available to business and building owners.

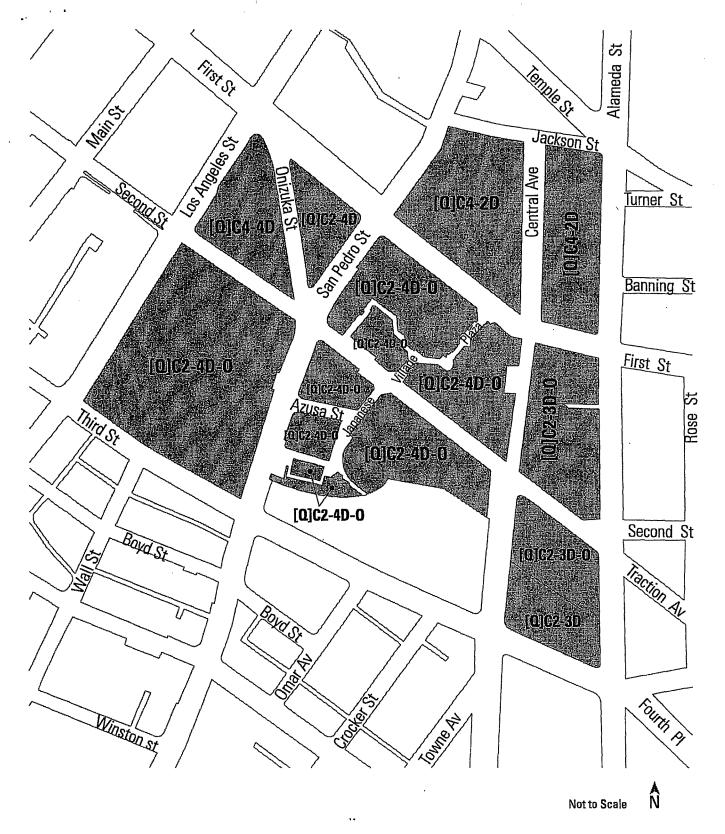
# Little Tokyo Commercial Façade Program LITTLE TOKYO REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

ORDINANCE NO.	1	7	81	8	5	

An ordinance amending Section .12.04 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code by amending the zoning map.

### THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES DO ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Section 12.04 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code is hereby amended by changing the zones and zone boundaries shown upon a portion of the zone map attached thereto and made a part of Article 2, Chapter 1 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, so that such portion of the zoning map shall be as follows:



### **Little Tokyo Zone Change [Q] Conditions**

CPC No 2006-4566-ZC

### [Q] QUALIFIED CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

Section 2. Pursuant to Section 12.32.G of the Municipal Code, the following limitations are hereby imposed upon the use of the subject property, subject to the "Q" Qualified classification.

 Use. The use and development of the subject property shall limit future ground floor commercial retail uses to those Neighborhood Retail and Neighborhood Service uses listed in LAMC Section 13.07C. The "use list" is the only portion of Section 13.07C that applies.

**Neighborhood Retail.** Neighborhood retail uses shall be limited to retail sale of goods needed by patrons of a Pedestrian Oriented District including:

Art Galleries:

Art supplies;

Athletic/sporting goods;

Bakeries:

Books or cards;

Bicycle sales and repairs;

Clock or watch sales and/or repair;

Clothing;

Computer sales and repair;

Drug stores;

Fabrics or dry goods;

Florists:

Food/grocery stores, including supermarkets, produce, cheese and meat markets and delicatessens;

Hardware:

Household goods and small appliances;

Newsstands;

Photographic equipment and repair;

Sit Down Restaurants, excluding drive-through service;

Stationary;

Toys; and

Other similar retail goods as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

**Neighborhood Services.** Neighborhood services are those services used by residents and patrons on a regular basis, including:

Barber shop or beauty parlor;

Blueprinting:

Child care facility:

Club or lodge, bridge club, fraternal or religious associations;

Copying services:

Custom dressmaking;

Dry cleaner;

Financial Services:

Laundry or self-service Laundromat;

Locksmith;

Optician;

Photographer;

Shoe repair:

Tailor: and

Other similar services as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

Sec. 3. The City Clerk shall certify to the passage of this ordinance and have it published in accordance with Council policy, either in a daily newspaper circulated in the City of Los Angeles or by posting for ten days in three public places in the City of Los Angeles: one copy on the bulletin board located at the Main Street entrance to the Los Angeles City Hall; one copy on the bulletin board located at the Main Street entrance to the Los Angeles City Hall East; and one copy on the bulletin board located at the Temple Street entrance to the Los Angeles County Hall of Records.

I hereby certify that the foregoing ordinance was introduced at the meeting of the Council of the City of Los Angeles of December 12, 2006, and was passed at its meeting of DEC 1 9 2006

FRANK T. MARTINEZ, City Clerk

Approved DEC 2 9 2006	Deputy Deputy
Approved as to Form and Legality	Mayo -
ROCKARD J. DELGADILLO, City Attorney	Pursuant to Section 558 of the City Charter, the City Planning Commission on September 14, 2006, recommended this ordinance be adopted by the City Council.
By City Attorney	Gabriele Williams Commission Executive Assistant II
File No. 06-2724	Y

### DECLARATION OF POSTING ORDINANCE

I, MARIA C. RICO, state as follows: I am, and was at all times hereinafter mentioned, a resident of the State of California, over the age of eighteen years, and a Deputy City Clerk of the City of Los Angeles, California.

Ordinance No. 178185 - Zone change for various locations within Little

Tokyo, west of Alameda Street - CPC 2006-4566-ZC - a copy of which is
hereto attached, was finally adopted by the Los Angeles City Council on

December 19, 2006, and under the direction of said City Council and the
City Clerk, pursuant to Section 251 of the Charter of the City of Los

Angeles and Ordinance No. 172959, on January 3, 2007 I posted a true copy
of said ordinance at each of three public places located in the City of Los

Angeles, California, as follows: 1) one copy on the bulletin board located
at the Main Street entrance to the Los Angeles City Hall; 2) one copy on
the bulletin board located at the Main Street entrance to the Los Angeles
City Hall East; 3) one copy on the bulletin board located at the Temple

Street entrance to the Hall of Records of the County of Los Angeles.

Copies of said ordinance were posted conspicuously beginning on January 3, 2007 and will be continuously posted for ten or more days.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Signed this 3rd day of January 3, 2007 at Los Angeles, California.

Maria C. Rico, Deputy City Clerk

Ordinance Effective Date: February 12, 2007 Council File No. 06-2724

Rev. (2/21/06)