



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

April 6, 2022

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi
Office of the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC20515

Dear Madam Speaker,

The San Francisco Recreation and Park Department (RPD) is in support of the Japantown Peace Plaza Renovation Project for the 2023 Community Project Funding through the Office of the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives.

The Japantown Peace Plaza Renovation Project vital to the Japanese American community, Asian American and Pacific Islander community. For over 110 years, over 5 generations, San Francisco's Japantown is one of the last three remaining Japantowns in the United States. The Peace Plaza open space has been the cultural heart of the Japantown and is key destination site for cultural festivals and community celebrations in Northern California. It is home to culturally significant community organizations, institutions, artists, businesses and buildings.

During COVID19, we saw record numbers of San Franciscans seeking solace and refuge in our City Parks for exercise and better mental health, especially in denser neighborhoods and in Equity Zones. Japantown Peace Plaza served this purpose for the city. With the passage of the 2020 San Francisco Health and Recovery Bond, RPD was allowed to prioritize shovel-ready projects delivering essential government services, support economic recovery through job creation for San Franciscans, provide funding for behavioral health and health access, while prioritizing basic infrastructure investments in our parks and recreation facilities and right-of-way infrastructure so people can get back to work quickly and help San Francisco recover. The benefits of parks are long lasting, and it clear that planning for better days ahead will ensure that our open spaces are resilient.

COVID-related financial impacts and unforeseen structural requirements, with infrastructure now at approximately 70% of the current construction budget. The City is committed to delivering the project successfully by addressing the structural constraints and current waterproofing issues. The 2023 Community Project Funding will allow our Japantown Peace Plaza project to be complete and support Japanese American, Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Philip A. Ginsburg".

Phil Ginsburg
General Manager
San Francisco Recreation and Park Department



April 14, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the US House of Representatives
90 7th Street, Suite 2-800
San Francisco, CA 94103:

Dear Madam Speaker:

On behalf of the Japantown Community Benefit District, I am seeking your urgent support for San Francisco Japantown's Peace Plaza repair and renovation project. Although Japantown secured \$25 million from San Francisco's 2020 Health and Recovery Bond, the project is now facing a deficit of \$8 million due to cost overruns.

The Peace Plaza symbolizes many things to each of us. It shows not only the strong ties we have with Japan, but also the struggles of the Japanese Americans who faced life changing struggles throughout the years. It is a public space that welcomes thousands of visitors each year and during COVID it again served as an important purpose to support our restaurants so that visitors would enjoy take out meals in an open setting.

The Japantown community, our residents, property owners, organizations, small business and those who come to visit this important destination for our City understands how important this project is for the future of our neighborhood and for Japantown to survive and thrive. We are asking for your support to secure additional assistance from the federal government so that we can see the Peace Plaza Renovation Project come into fruition.

Sincerely,

Grace Horikiri
Executive Director
Japantown Community Benefit District



Japanese American
Citizens League
San Francisco Chapter

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
U. S. Congress
Via email

April 14, 2022

Dear Madame Speaker,

I am writing to you as the President of the San Francisco Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, the oldest Asian American civil rights organization, started in 1929. We were very honored to have had you visit our San Francisco Headquarters to speak to our community a few years back. Your friendship and leadership inspire and are much appreciated.

Our SFJACL Headquarters has been in San Francisco's Japantown for more than 90 years now, a testimony to this strong community and your efforts over the years to appreciate the rich history and culture of our community. This community has had many crises, and yet we still struggle to keep our cultural assets and the teachings of our Issei and Nisei for future generations.

The Peace Plaza, which stands as a symbol, and as a promise is now showing its age and wear. The preservation and renovation of the Plaza and the Pagoda is at a critical point. In 2019 San Francisco voters enacted a parks bond that dedicated \$25 million dollars to repair and renovate. The long delays and stalls have caused the cost of the work to increase by \$8 million over the original estimate. We are now looking at a \$33 million dollar project, and the shortfall puts this renovation project in jeopardy.

This Peace Plaza was built after the City's Redevelopment of the Western Addition, which removed most of the Japantown neighborhood. So, as the story will be told, and passed down to generations, this Plaza holds the spirit and dreams of those who came before us. We ask that you support efforts to secure the \$8 million needed to complete this work to save the Peace Plaza. Help Japantown retain and preserve a beloved landmark.

With gratitude,

Judy Hamaguchi
President



April 12, 2022

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
90 – 7th Street
Suite 2-800
San Francisco, CA 94103

RE: JAPANTOWN PEACE PLAZA

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

In 2019, Proposition A was passed which allocated \$25M towards the renovation of the Japantown Peace Plaza. It has come to our attention that due to rising costs and reasons beyond control, the project is now estimated over the \$25M price tag and we ask for your support to help balance the shortfall.

The Japantown Peace Plaza has gone through two prior failed attempts which the community had no input and continues to leak water inside the garage below. If the garage structure is compromised forcing a part or full closure, it would have a devastating impact on our community. Our merchants, customers and community organizations rely heavily on parking which the garage was originally intended to revitalize Japantown from the harm caused by urban renewal.

The proposed renovation has had extensive community input and have been assured that the design includes proper waterproofing to prevent leakage into the garage below.

Therefore, we sincerely request your support to provide the needed funding.

Sincerely,
JAPANTOWN MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION
OF SAN FRANCISCO

Richard Hashimoto
President



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San Francisco, CA
94115

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April 14, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the US House of Representatives
90 7th Street
Suite 2-800
San Francisco, CA 94103:

Dear Madam Speaker:

On behalf of the Japanese Community Youth Council, I am seeking your urgent support for San Francisco Japantown's Peace Plaza repair and renovation project. Despite successfully securing \$25 million from San Francisco's 2020 Health and Recovery Bond, this project now faces an additional \$8 million in cost overruns. The proposed redesign and renovation of the Peace Plaza is long overdue, and it is time for Japantown to have an open space that appropriately reflects the priorities of our residents, community organizations, businesses, and visitors.

The Peace Plaza is deeply symbolic of the plight and struggles of San Francisco's Japanese American community. With the World War II mass incarceration still vivid in the collective memories of Japanese Americans, the community was forcibly removed from Japantown a second time in the 1960's and 1970's by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency.

My father was among the few who stood with the African American community of the Western Addition to resist the destruction and removal of the community. Ultimately the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency prevailed in permanently displacing the vast majority of Japanese American residents. The Peace Plaza was constructed on the very location where Japanese Americans were evicted from their homes and businesses. The property that was forcibly acquired by the Redevelopment Agency represents a staggering amount of generational wealth that will never be recovered.

We understand that San Francisco has many urgent priorities, but our community has never truly healed from what is now acknowledged as one of the most egregious examples of government exploitation in San Francisco history. Today, our community has a shovel ready project that needs additional assistance from the federal government to make amends and finally atone for the many historical wrongs experienced by San Francisco's Japantown community.

Sincerely,



Jon Osaki
Executive Director

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
U.S. Congress
Via email

April 13, 2022

Dear Madame Speaker,

I am delighted to be writing to you as the new Executive Director of the Japantown Task Force, working closely with President Sandy Mori. I thank you for your leadership, mentorship, and friendship over the years.

As you know, San Francisco is home to one of three remaining Japantowns where once there were over 80 communities across this nation. Through your efforts, cultural assets such as the Nihonmachi Terrace Senior Facility continue to enrich families with close ties to Japantown and create a thriving community. The Peace Plaza is literally the heart of Japantown. I was there last weekend to staff the 55th Annual Cherry Blossom Festival that attracted an estimated 25,000 people each day. The heart of Japantown was beating loudly as the Peace Plaza hosted a wide diversity of community-based entertainment showcasing aspects of Japanese culture, from *naginata*, a martial art originally practiced by women samurai warriors, to the Rosa Parks Elementary School children's choir, to a lively Japanese animated figure costume contest.

The Japantown community has partnered with the San Francisco Department of Recreation and Parks to undertake a major renovation of the Peace Plaza which is literally crumbling and leaking as the result of poor design and workmanship of the last renovation. You may recall that, in 2019, San Francisco voters enacted a major parks bond that included \$25M dedicated to the Peace Plaza renovation. After nearly a year of extensive structural analysis, RPD General Manager Phil Ginsburg informed us that the project will now cost \$33M, \$8M beyond what was anticipated just 3 years ago. By convening multiple community meetings, the Japantown Task Force facilitated a broad-based community process to develop the design vision for the renovation. However, the budget shortfall is putting the community vision in serious jeopardy. We ask for your support to secure the necessary \$8M from federal sources for this critical project. Without it, we risk losing the heart of Japantown.

Yours very truly,



Emily M. Murase, PhD
Executive Director