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****PRESS RELEASE****

COMMUNITY BENEFIT DISTRICT FORMS FOR JAPANTOWN

Commercial Property Owners Vote to Support Special Assessments to Provide Historic Preservation, Supplemental Cleaning, Security, and Economic Enhancements in the Community

San Francisco, CA – Supervisor London Breed, the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, and the Japantown Community Benefit District Steering Committee announce the creation and establishment of the Japantown Community Benefit District (CBD) today. With a 55% weighted majority vote, property owners approved the formation of the Japantown Community Benefit District. The goals of the District will ensure the historic preservation, physical maintenance, beauty, cleanliness, safety and economic vibrancy of Japantown. This formation joins 14 other Community Benefit Districts overseen by OEWD citywide.

“The Japantown Community Benefit District is an important milestone for the preservation and celebration of the Japanese American community in this City,” said Mayor Ed Lee. “San Francisco’s Japantown is only one of three remaining in the country and the formation of this District will ensure that the area’s cultural and historical resources remains vibrant. The community deserves significant recognition for working to sustain their rich cultural heritage for generations to come.”

“The culture and history of Japantown are an important part of what makes San Francisco a great and diverse city,” said Board of Supervisors President London Breed. “Today’s establishment of the Japantown Community Benefit District was a community-driven process and will help strengthen the cultural heritage and economic sustainability of Japantown. Today’s creation of the CBD will further empower the community to grow and thrive as a dynamic part of our city.”

The Japantown Community Benefit District was formed after a decade in the making. It will raise approximately \$393,750.00 in special assessments to commercial properties to carry out its management plan per year over the next ten years. The boundaries of the District include 67 parcels located on approximately seven whole blocks including blocks and partial blocks bounded by Geary Boulevard, Fillmore Street, Post Street, Laguna Street, Webster Street, Buchanan Street, and Sutter Street. The investments will go toward services that will provide:

- Maintenance teams that sweep, scrub, and pressure wash sidewalks and public spaces to remove litter, graffiti, and trash.
- Beautification improvements to make Japantown more visually attractive; which may include green spaces, wayfinding signage, trashcans, and enhanced streetscapes.
- Business liaison services to connect the merchant community with available resources and build a stronger economic climate.

- Marketing to promote a positive image of Japantown as a regional destination.
- Services aimed at attracting a cultural consumer base, quality commercial, retail, and office tenants, and private investment.

“The Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) has been working in partnership with the community over the past decade to support Japantown’s economic vitality and promote the neighborhood’s rich cultural heritage,” said Todd Rufo, director of the Office of Economic and Workforce Development. “The Japantown Community Benefit District is a transformative public and private partnership which will bring in new investment to increase neighborhood cleaning, implement new beautification projects, and promote Japantown. I want to thank Mayor Lee, Supervisor Breed, all the members of the Japantown Steering Committee and the CBD team at OEWD for all their hard work in making the City’s 15th community benefit district a reality.”

This Community Benefit District (CBD) was a recommendation of the [Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy \(JCHES\)](#) completed in 2013. The Strategy is the first document in San Francisco to focus specifically on how to preserve and promote a neighborhood’s cultural heritage including: 1) securing Japantown’s future as the historical and cultural heart of the Japanese and Japanese American Community 2) securing Japantown’s future as a thriving commercial and retail district 3) securing Japantown’s future as a home to residents and community-based institutions 4) securing Japantown’s future as a physically attractive and vibrant environment. Property owners, business owners, and other community leaders came together over a two year period to develop the management plan for the new District. Technical assistance was provided throughout the process by the Invest in Neighborhoods (IIN) division of the Office of Economic and Workforce Development over the past decade. IIN will continue to work with the CBD to ensure the smooth operation of the District and that it follows all legal and community obligations.

“The team here at Hotel Kabuki fully supports the development of a Community Benefit District in Japantown. Just as we are investing in the property to open a brand new hospitality experience in the heart of Japantown, so too do we wish to see an investment in the neighborhood. It would also provide enhanced promotional and marketing tools to local businesses, our hotel included, to benefit group business, tourist traffic, event and partnership growth,” said Craig A. Waterman General Manager of Hotel Kabuki and member of the Japantown Steering Committee.

“San Francisco Japantown continues to share its rich history and culture to all that have made this community their home as well as all who come to visit from near and far. Our community must always remember that we would not be here today if it were not for the support, hard work, and efforts by the many past organizations and individuals who were committed to working together for the betterment of all,” said Alice Kawahatsu, President of the Japantown Task Force. “On behalf of the Japantown Task Force, we want to express our gratitude to the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, District 5 Supervisor President London Breed, the board members, the steering committee, Japantown property owners and community members, and staff for their guidance and continued support of the Japantown Community Benefit District.”

More information on the Japantown Community Benefit District and the Management District Plan can be found at: www.oewd.org/community-benefit-districts

About the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD)

The Office of Economic and Workforce Development's (OEWD) mission is simple – to create shared prosperity in San Francisco. OEWD provides city-wide leadership for workforce development, business attraction and retention, neighborhood commercial revitalization, international business and development planning. For more information, go to: www.oewd.org

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