

Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development
City and County of San Francisco



London N. Breed
Mayor

Eric D. Shaw
Director

October 11, 2023

Julianne Polanco
State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Historic Preservation
Sacramento, CA 95816
Delivered via calshpo.ohp@parks.ca.gov

Re: Japantown Peace Plaza Renovation and Pagoda Seismic Retrofit Project - 1610 Geary Boulevard, San Francisco, CA 94115

Dear Ms. Julianne Polanco,

The San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department is proposing the renovation and seismic retrofitting of the Japantown Peace Plaza and Pagoda which encompasses a plaza and a pagoda located at **1610 Geary Boulevard, San Francisco, CA 94115** (the “proposed project site”). Funding sources for the project include financial assistance from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended; and Title 24 Part 58 of the Code of Federal Regulations, as amended; San Francisco Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) as the responsible entity (RE) will be asked to certify a Categorical Exclusion Subject To (CEST) environmental review that will, among other things, analyze the effects of the proposed project on historic architectural and archeological resources. The project would be managed by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department.

The proposed project site 1610 Geary Boulevard is within the block bounded by Post Street to the north, Laguna Street to the east, Geary Boulevard to the south, and Webster Street to the west, in Japantown in San Francisco’s Western Addition neighborhood. The proposed project site currently encompasses the Peace Plaza, a public open space that occupies the Buchanan Street alignment between Geary Boulevard and Post Street. The Peace Plaza contains the Peace Pagoda, a circular-plan reinforced concrete structure that is a Modernist interpretation of a traditional Japanese pagoda form, which was designed by Japanese architect Yoshiro Taniguchi. The Peace Plaza and Peace Pagoda were completed in 1968 as part of a transnational project involving the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, working in collaboration with developer National-Braemer and Japan-based investor Kinetsu Enterprises Company. The Peace Plaza’s landscape design was originally Modernist in character but was renovated during the early 2000s.

The Undertaking includes waterproofing, new planting, shade structures, paving, seating, lighting, and structural reinforcement of the Peace Plaza and Peace Pagoda. In 2000-2001, the 37,000-sf Peace Plaza was renovated to address water intrusion issues that was affecting the parking garage. During this renovation much of the Plaza's original 1968 features were removed. The 2000-2001 renovation did not successfully address the water intrusion issues and the Plaza is still leaking water into the garage below. The currently proposed renovation of the Peace Plaza will address the water intrusion issue. The new design seeks to provide the community with more functional access to the Plaza, both for everyday and special event use, while harnessing the symbolism that the Plaza holds within the neighborhood, city and county, and region. Meanwhile, the seismic retrofit of the Peace Pagoda, which does not require any excavation, will involve the following:

- Installation of 0.5" steel reinforced tendons along the columns of the structure;
- Addition of stainless-steel plate reinforcement to joints between concrete roof panels, and in-kind replacement of copper standing seam roof covering;
- Addition of concrete massing on the horizontal roof ring beams at each roof level, in a minimally visible location;
- Installation of carbon fiber wrapping around each column up to the third story roof, approximately 1" thick;
- Addition of Fiber Reinforced Polymer strips along each column until the third story roof, located under the carbon fiber wrapping; and
- Alterations to the podium of the Pagoda, which would absorb the lowermost step and expand the second step while replacing the three upper steps in kind.

The renovation and seismic retrofitting of the building, object and structure have been determined would not have an adverse effect upon historic resources. The San Francisco Planning Department determined that the Peace Plaza and Peace Pagoda are both eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as individual property. This conclusion is based on the Planning Department's determination that the subject building, object and structure are eligible for individual listing under NHRP Criterion A and C associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history and embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. Accordingly, the Planning Department found that the subject building is eligible for listing in the National Register for local significance under Criterion A (Events) and Criterion C (Design/Construction).

In accordance with Stipulations VIII and IX of the 2007 Programmatic Agreement, I am initiating the consultation process for the resolution of adverse effects of this Undertaking on a historic resource and the potential effects of the Undertaking on archeological resources.

It is our opinion that development of a Standard Mitigation Measures Agreement as set forth in the 2007 PA was not necessary given the *no adverse effects* determination resulting from the Undertaking on a historic resource eligible for listing on the National Register. Due to the nature of the project scope and activities, it was also determined that the project would not have any impact on archeological resources. The Japantown Peace Plaza and Pagoda are located on the roof of a subterranean garage building and the extent of the scope of the Plaza renovation and Pagoda seismic retrofit will be limited to above groundwork. As such, a records search from the Northwest

Information Center (NWIC)'s California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) was not necessary since the project will not encompass any ground disturbance.

Therefore, in accordance with Stipulations VIII (Treatment of Historic Properties) and IX (Resolution of Adverse Effects), the following documents are attached:

1. Area of Potential Effects (APE) Map from Architectural Resources Group (ARG)
2. APE Memo from Architectural Resources Group (ARG)
3. Proposed project architectural renderings
4. Proposed project structure design memorandums – two (2) documents
 - a. Inner City Fund (ICF) Memo
 - b. Holmes Structures Memo
5. SF Planning Historic Preservation Commission adopted resolution to initiate landmark designation
6. SF Planning Historic Preservation Commission Draft Landmark Designation Report
7. SF Planning, Recreation and Parks Department, and Public Works introduction of proposed project to Historic Preservation Commission
8. Form A - Submission to San Francisco Planning Department (regarding historic evaluation)
9. Form B - Historic Resource Evaluation Response from by the San Francisco Planning Department & DPR 523A-L Forms - California State Department Building, Structure, and Object Records for 1610 Geary Boulevard (Peace Pagoda & Peace Plaza) Prepared by ARG
10. Resume of the selected consultant, ARG, who performed the National Registry eligibility study
11. CEQA Categorical Exemption Determination from the San Francisco Planning Department
12. List of public engagement meetings held by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (proposed project grantee) during the planning stages
13. Correspondence directed to members of the public
14. Responses from members of the public including – three (3) documents
 - a. Richard Hashimoto, President, Japantown Merchants Association
 - b. Emily M. Murase, Executive Director, Japantown Task Force, Inc.
 - c. Glynis Nakahara, President of the Board of Directors, Japantown Task Force, Inc.

Should you have any questions about this project, you may contact me at the Lorena.Guadiana@sfgov.org or 628-652-5965.

Sincerely,



Lorena Guadiana
Acting Compliance Coordinator
SF MOHCD