

# Ties That Bind 3: Strategies for the Preservation of Little Tokyo as an Historic Heritage Community

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## Places and Activities That Build Community workshop

**Moderator:** Dean Toji, Associate Professor  
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### Summary Recommendations:

1. Rec Center
2. LTCC plan for community as a whole
3. Nisei Week
4. Affordable housing
5. Ongoing activities that provide connections to the community
6. Parking
7. Marketing

### TTB1 led to the development of the Declaration for the Nikkei Community

- Questions presented by the moderator:
  - How do we make the Nikkei community better/stronger?
  - What have we done thus far?
  - What can we do now?

### Decline of Little Tokyo: What led to the decrease in visitors to Little Tokyo?

- Nisei Week
  - Fading away: No longer has a carnival. Not publicized—doesn't draw people
  - After '92 riots, there was less interest in participating in Nisei Week events because of the perception that downtown is dangerous.
  - Less Japanese cultural activities since Japanese businesses are gone
    - Nikkei Games are a thriving part of Nisei Week
  - What did you like about Nisei Week? What drew you to it?
    - Craftsmanship, calligraphy, etc.
    - Something interactive, less like a museum
- JACCC
  - Started by Issei, now run by Sansei
  - People only come to JACCC for special events
- Japanese food/activities are more mainstream and accessible in locations outside of LT
  - LT no longer has the monopoly on good Japanese food
  - Far East is gone – hub for Japanese Americans

### Solutions: What can we do to bring cultural community-building activities back?

- Rec Center
  - How to bridge basketball to the big "C"—Is the little "c" building the stronger community?
  - Leadership problems -> coaches
  - Rec Center as a place to see judo and kendo
  - Basketball as culture—think of b-ball as an asset and resource
  - People who wouldn't normally come together can meet, e.g. brought together Tom's Sansei son and Kibe friend of his wife
  - Rec Center is the key to bringing people back to LT, but LT has a lot more to offer.
- Activities, programs and uses are what bring people back.

- Promote activity in public spaces
- Open up the streets of Little Tokyo to draw people to the community
  - Street fairs, farmers markets, athletic events
- Events are good but need activities that are ongoing
- Design is important to bringing in people
  - Design for foot traffic
  - Connect different venues, shopping centers, tourist attractions
  - Create spaces that are inviting and friendly
  - Design guidelines for LT—official document that controls the future of LT, however it focuses on preservation (i.e. sign control), not land use
  - Downtown buildings tend to have a fortress architecture/design that is uninviting
- Improve parking
  - Inconvenient, difficult parking is a deterrent for potential visitors
  - New parking is being built when the police station moves
- Shuttle service?
- Marketing
  - Create a master calendar
  - Tours of Little Tokyo
- LT as a central point
  - Link other JA communities through LT
  - LT needs to provide something other communities can't provide

#### **Additional Questions & Concerns**

- Who is going to support, both financially and with people-power?
  - There is a need for leaders
  - Investing in internships/leadership development to draw younger groups to LT
  - Begin creating a bond between the youth and the community
  - A sense of belonging and vested interest in what happens in LT and to the JA community is what will bring people to work, volunteer and invest.
  - Example: Go For Broke Monument
    - A place where WWII veterans gather and that people have a connection to—need to nurture more connections like this to draw people to LT and the community.
  - Rising Stars
    - Train new leaders to be responsible for the future of the Japanese community.
    - Started in 2003 for high school-aged students
      - Encourages them to be involved in their communities
    - Recruit through basketball teams
      - Getting youth and parents involved in the process
      - Adult and youth groups to plan the following years activities
- Are we talking about getting people or culture?
  - Get people, and culture will develop
- What's the future of LT?
  - LTCC working with Jan Perry
    - Credits success to solidarity within group
    - But which way is it taking LT?
- Concerns over developments
  - Keeping new housing w/in reach for people who are invested in the community
  - Shaping LT as a livable community versus a tourist destination
    - Affordable housing
- What is the core/boundaries of LT? How do we protect what we have and gain more?
  - Come up with plans for how to protect LT land