

California Japantown Planning & Preservation Conference Public Participation

San Francisco, California

Client:

CA Civil Liberties Public Education Program
California State Library
PO Box 942837
Sacramento, CA 94237-0001



Japantown storefront in San Francisco, 1940

Background: Before World War II, more than three-dozen Japanese-American communities (Japantowns) were located in California. When the war ended in 1945, California experienced the beginning of a dramatic reduction of its Japantowns—the result of multiple factors, such as occupation by wartime laborers, and later, the Urban Renewal policies of the 1960s.

In consonance with California's overall preservation goals, Senator Vasconcellos spearheaded SB 307, a legislative effort to preserve the State's three surviving Japantowns, located in San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles. With the approval of the bill by former-Governor Gray Davis, the first of many steps to preserve the history and culture of California's Japantowns was initiated. Participants of this conference included residents, municipalities and representatives of community organizations.

Assessment: TBA WEST participated in numerous aspects of the conference, including a morning panel session. The focus of TBA WEST's session was on historic and cultural preservation methods and issues at the local and national levels. Following the various speakers, conference participants were organized into three groups to answer questions regarding (1) cultural aspects of Japantowns that must be preserved, (2) current city preservation plans and policies, and past preservation efforts, and (3) who should be involved in the planning process and how plans can be implemented. TBA WEST prepared the material for the breakout groups and facilitated the discussion in one of the sessions.

Following the breakout sessions, conference participants reconvened to review recommendations and discuss the next plan of action. At the conference conclusion, the intent was to strengthen our understanding of historic and cultural preservation, a heightened commitment towards working together to move the project forward in anticipation of subsequent efforts to revitalize California's Japantowns.



Japanese owned business in San Francisco's Japantown, 1940