



# SELF DETERMI- NATION





# WHAT IS TAKACHIZU?

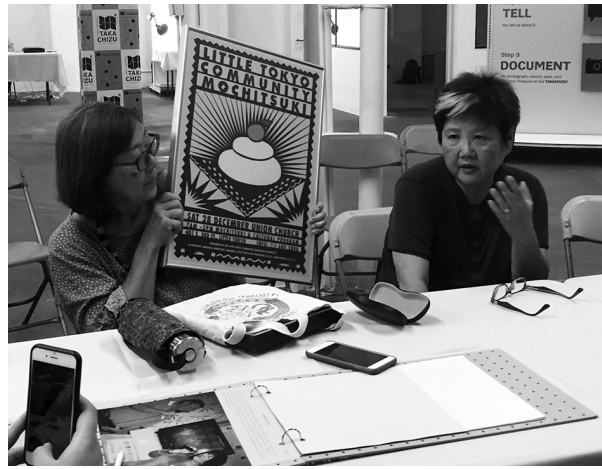
The Japanese words *Takara* (Treasure) and *Chizu* (Map) join to form *Takachizu* (Treasure map). Takachizu was a temporary community “show & tell” gathering space designed to identify and reflect on that which is most valuable, celebrated, and most in need of protection in Little Tokyo.

During 2016, we conducted dozens of workshops with residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors to Little Tokyo. Participants brought in “treasures” that represented Little Tokyo’s values to them. These treasures were shared in a group setting, documented, and then added to a temporary exhibition and online archive.

The gathered treasures will help give guidance and focus to a multi-year planning initiative of Little Tokyo Service Center and Sustainable Little Tokyo.

The full archive of collected treasures will be shared online at [takachizu.org](http://takachizu.org) and selections will be presented in themed zines like this one.

This zine showcases treasures that tell the story of Little Tokyo as a community of self-determination.

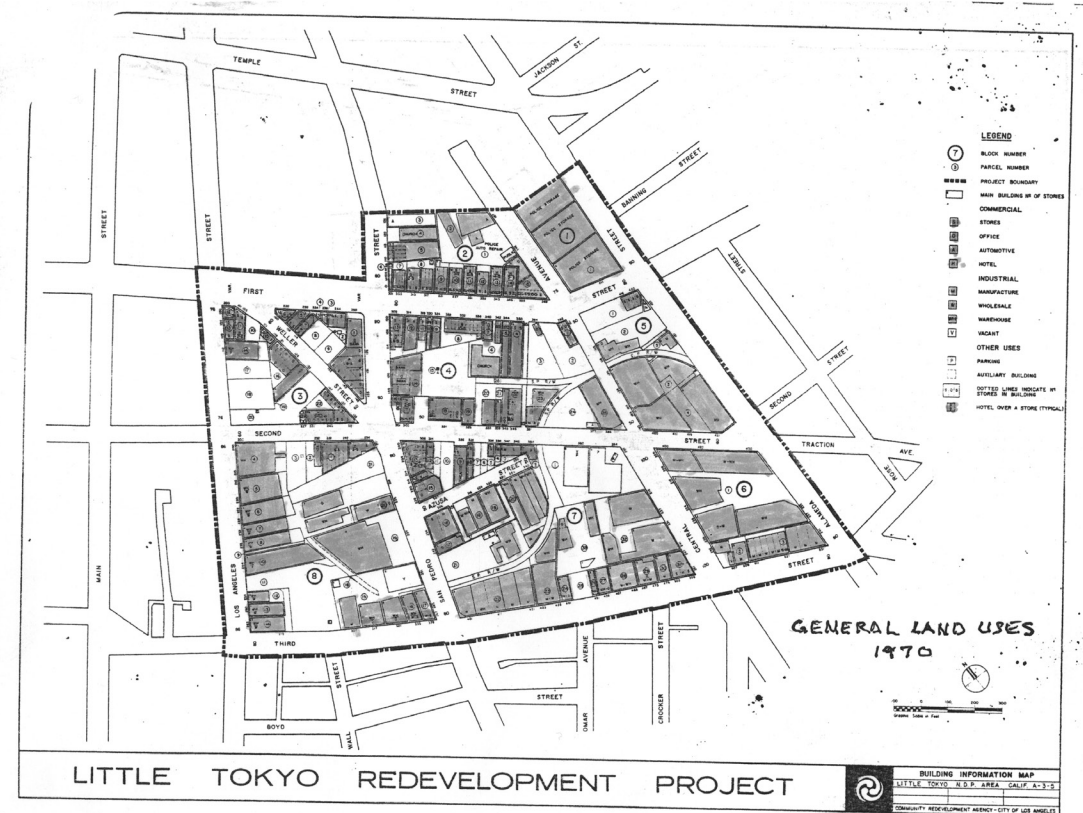


*Takachizu was developed and produced by artist Rosten Woo with Maya Santos and design by Tiffanie Tran and Tom Kracauer.*

**Takachizu is a project of Sustainable Little Tokyo initiated by +LAB, LTSC’s creative community development strategy utilizing collaboration and experimentation to advance Little Tokyo’s power over its future.**

# THE CHANGING BOUNDARIES OF LITTLE TOKYO

By Chris Komai



Like most ethnic enclaves, Little Tokyo was never planned. I’m pretty sure that the first Japanese restaurant owner in Los Angeles back in the 1880s wasn’t identifying the necessary components to develop a Japantown. Was urban planning even a term back then? Instead, Little Tokyo was created through the individual sweat equity of hundreds of business owners and community leaders. It was organized as the social, economic and religious center of the Southern California Japanese American community, and to a large degree over a century later, it still is. Every town, every city, every group of people benefits from having an actual place where there is a shared history with

the capacity to create new memories. Little Tokyo continues to fill that historic role today.

Consider that there are two family-run businesses (Fugetsu-do and the Rafu Shimpo) marking their 115-year anniversaries in 2018. There are five Buddhist temples (Nishi, Higashi, Koyasan, Zenshuji and Jodo Shu) and three Christian institutions (Centenary, Union Church and St. Francis Xavier Chapel-Maryknoll). The largest Nikkei history-based organizations (Japanese American National Museum, Go for Broke National Education Center), arts and cultural presenters (Japanese American Cultural and Community Center

and East West Players Theater) and social services provider (Little Tokyo Service Center) all operate out of Little Tokyo. The venerable Nisei Week Japanese Festival, begun in 1934, continues as the oldest and largest event of its kind each August, while the Japanese Chamber of Commerce organizes its annual Oshogatsu (New Year's Day) festival at Weller Court.

Well into building relationships with the fourth and fifth generations of Japanese Americans, our historic neighborhood is still subjected to external forces disputing jurisdiction and borders. Government agencies will often ask: where does Little Tokyo start and stop? Does it have boundaries? The City of Los Angeles and its many agencies and departments are often the entities asking. Or, sometimes, they are ones telling us where Little Tokyo begins and ends.

Positioned on the eastern edge of downtown Los Angeles in what was an industrial area, Little Tokyo has had limited options on where it could grow. The Civic Center loomed to its west and as it expanded, it ate away large chunks of Little Tokyo to build a police headquarters and the City Hall annexes. Because of institutional racism and segregation, Nikkei were expected to remain east of Los Angeles Street. The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s ignited a change in local attitudes toward people of color. When African American Tom Bradley was elected Mayor of Los Angeles in 1973, the City opened up employment opportunities to reflect Southern California's many communities. Little Tokyo's relationship with its elected officials and their staff has progressed since then.

Still, in the last few years, Little Tokyo has been subjected to our modern version of border wars. It seems that suddenly Little Tokyo is shrinking again.

In 2011, the City of Los Angeles began its once-a-decade process to reform the boundaries for its 15 Council Districts. Redistricting always takes place after the Census with the purpose of maintaining an approximate equal population in each district. Little Tokyo had always been part of the 9th District. But in 2011, the City proposed to move the 9th District's boundaries south of downtown (with one finger still around Staples Center). The rest of downtown and Little Tokyo would be absorbed by the 14th District.

Some of us Little Tokyo "old timers" like Bill Watanabe, Alan and Joanne Kumamoto and I attended redistricting public hearings and spoke against the City's plan. Simply, no one from the City could articulate any advantages for Little Tokyo by moving it from the 9th to the 14th. As with so many government endeavors, our feedback fell on deaf ears. Little Tokyo and most of downtown became part of the redrawn 14th District, which was City's intention all along.

In 2013, the Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC), of which I am currently the Board Chair, finally completed a long and tedious process with the City to institute the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay (CDO). The intent of the CDO was to provide guidelines for new buildings and public spaces within Little Tokyo. The hope was that the City-enforced CDO could be used "to help ensure that both public and private projects in the area respect the character of the neighborhood."

In the lengthy dealings with the City's bureaucracy, the question of where these guidelines would be enforced was much debated. In other words, what are the boundaries for Little Tokyo? LTCC wanted the guidelines to apply everywhere there were community businesses and institutions. But, because the area east of Alameda and

south of 1st Street is considered the Arts District, there was pushback against the CDO's implementation there. This disagreement delayed the implementation of the CDO.

Concerned that if there were no agreement, the guidelines would not go into effect anywhere, LTCC agreed to compromise. While the CDO map encompassed much of what was historic Little Tokyo, it left out institutions like Maryknoll (St. Francis Xavier Chapel) and legacy businesses like Fukui Mortuary and the Rafu Shimpō.

The Little Tokyo Business Improvement District (BID), run by the Little Tokyo Business Association (LTBA), was able to negotiate a more expansive map back in 2003. But even that stops at 3rd Street and excludes the venerable Southern California Gardeners' Federation building, Centenary United Methodist Church and the Jodo Shu Temple, among others.

Most recently, in 2017, a group representing the Skid Row community wanted to form its own Neighborhood Council, a City-certified and funded entity that represents the interests of a district with a population of 20,000 people or more. Skid Row is currently part of the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC), but wanted to break away and to organize its own council.

In a move to gain more voter support, the Skid Row initiative proposed borders that overlapped 3rd Street despite the fact that 3rd Street is historically part of Little Tokyo. The Historic Core Neighborhood Council (HCNC), to which Little Tokyo belongs, extends its southern boundaries east of Alameda as far south as 4th Street. Because of the proposal to subsume 3rd Street, HCNC members were allowed to vote on the Skid Row proposal.

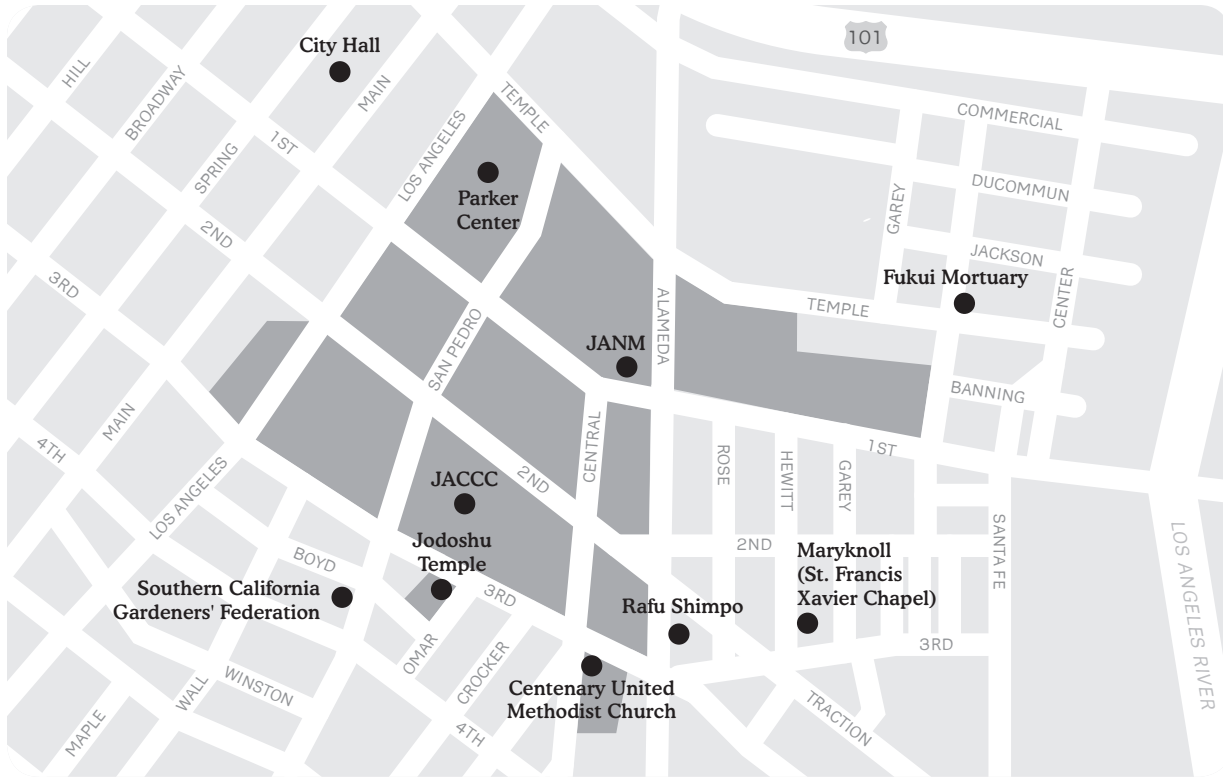
The proponents hoped that most HCNC members would view their desire for independence favorably and vote for their Neighborhood Council.

Little Tokyo representatives on the HCNC went around asking those located on 3rd Street, who would be directly affected by the change, how they felt. All of them indicated a desire to remain part of Little Tokyo and HCNC. So despite the fact many in Little Tokyo favored the creation of the Skid Row Neighborhood Council, a lot of us voted against the proposal, which lost.

None of us this is ideal and all of us involved would change things if we could. It is perhaps true that any of these boundaries are mostly symbolic, but letting others draw the lines goes against the basic concept of self-determination and identity. If Maryknoll, a long-time Japanese American institution, believes itself to be part of Little Tokyo, then it seems to me that they are. Once situated just south of three blocks of Japanese hotels, dressmakers, a barbershop and soda fountain in 1940, Maryknoll only appears to be geographically disconnected to Little Tokyo today because everything around it changed. Irene Tsukada Simonian, owner of Bunkado on 1st Street, remembers walking back from Maryknoll School to the family business every day without a sense of ever leaving the community.

What is more important for our Japanese American community is how we see ourselves. Part of maintaining our sense of identity, I think, is to object when outside forces try to define us and/or limit us. Unfortunately, it is a task that is unlikely to disappear and one that each new generation of Little Tokyo must confront.





**Little Tokyo CDO Boundary**



**CD9 Boundary in 2003**



**Proposed Skid Row NC**      **Historic Core NC**

# TREASURES

Treasure #000

## SUN BUILDING



*This treasure added by Jim Matsuoka*

The Sun Building was sort of like a key part of postwar Little Tokyo. You had Weller Street over there, which you don't have anymore. That street was sort of a unique angled street and you had the Sun Building on it. You had all these various entities in ths Sun Building. You had the JACS, you also had the JACL - key social service organizations. You also had the Japanese Chamber of Commerce, a very conservative group that we didn't necessarily get along with. You also had the JWRO Japanese welfare rights organization. That organization was created because after the war there was

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES  
FIND TREASURES COLLECTED  
BY TAKACHIZU





a lot of need for older people who were left behind so to speak when younger people moved out to the suburbs or they were just isolated and alone just by the circumstances and they were really hurting. When we had approached the state of California or City Hall they said 'oh, we thought you just took care of your own'. So we demanded that they provide information about the aid they could get and translate it into Japanese and kind of proved that people were willing to accept State aid. People had said 'no, no those people are too proud.' So, they formed an organization with 80 to 100 members to show people that they exist, the need is there, and they're not ashamed.

Also there was the Pioneer Center which was a senior center, that was a vibrant

area on the street floor put together by a composite group of seniors and young people. There was a need for a lot of these older people to have somewhere even to go to sit. You knew they were in dire trouble when they all wound up sitting at the bus benches. They had nowhere else to go. The unique thing about the Pioneer Center was that it wasn't funded by anybody. We charged 7 dollars and had 100 members so we had 700 bucks and that was the rent so we were able to do that on our own. Seniors brought books and newspapers and us younger people who put the Pioneer Center together - we formed an adjacent group called Pioneer Project we said lets help the older people with recreation events and so on -our big event was to see the flowers out in Palmdale-Lancaster. We sort of

provided the muscle for the older folks. So you had all those entities in the Sun Building. You had the Go club, still popular to this day and there was a group called BANKEI club and what they did was making miniature landscapes imagine a bonsai without the tree. kinda unique. They also had a Noh theater appreciation/practice group and classical Japanese dancers, so you had all the cultural groups, a couple of businesses too.

The reason I've managed to get these names is that when the word came down that they were going to put the New Otani hotel there, that created a ruckus and controversy. Many of the people in the Sun Building wanted some assurance that they would have somewhere to go. They didn't want to just be tossed out somewhere. This was a critical part of Little Tokyo. If you're going to knock this building down, you should have somewhere to go.

In 1970, I was hired by the CRA as a community info specialist for the city of LA. I lasted about 6 months I did not like the fact that the Otani hotel was going to be put there at the cost of us losing the Sun Building. I later joined a group that opposed the negative aspects of the redevelopment that was taking place. It was called the anti-eviction task force. This stuff I'm telling you is stuff I saved from the task force. Our high point was in 1974 when they had the groundbreaking for the New Otani hotel we ringed the place with 100 demonstrators and we had all the bigwigs coming in there to take part in the groundbreaking and during the ceremony we had 100 people shouting and we disrupted the ceremony by cranking up the audio of colonial bogey's



march from Bridge Over River Kwai and dropped a big banner right by it that said 'Save Little Tokyo' In the meantime people wore badges all over saying save Little Tokyo. We didn't like that the New Otani was going to be the single largest entity in the redevelopment. It was supposed to help local people replace the run down things and redevelop themselves it wasn't meant as an opening for foreign enterprises to come in and take advantage-which we thought the Kajima corporation was doing.

The fur flew.

I think about all of us bringing a bus down Weller street to load people to take them to Palmdale in the spring and all the older folks lined up. Normally we had about two or three busses -sometimes even larger busses. When you go out there, there's whole fields of poppies and blue lupin. In Japan they follow the cherry blossoms all the way up Japan as it gets warmer. I guess our version is to see the California wildflowers and they loved the fact that they got out of Little Tokyo, out of LA, to see other parts.

## PIONEER PROJECTS



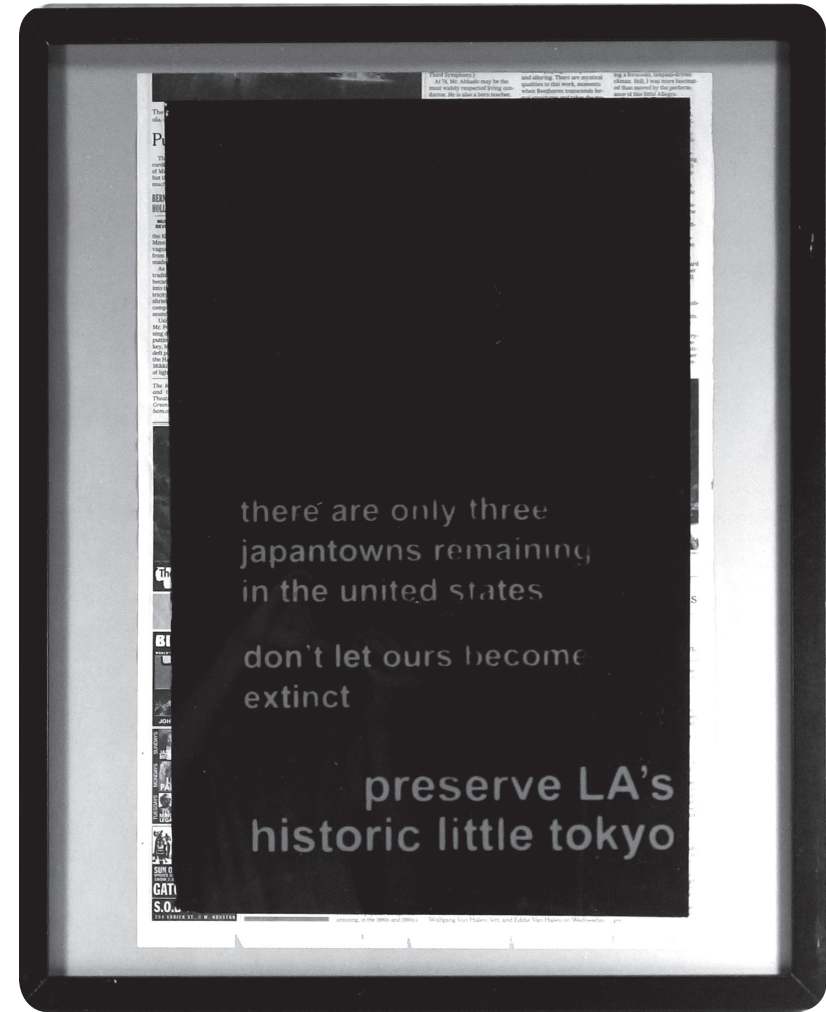
*This treasure added by Kathy Masaoka*

Sansei were returning to the community out of colleges and from the Vietnam War in the early 1970's. In spite of the language barrier (most of us did not speak Japanese) our strongest connection was to the Issei through Pioneer Projects, the first Community Day on Weller Street and Hanami outings. This poster shows the special spirit of activism and community that animates Little Tokyo organizations like JACS-AI. Here Nick Nagatani carries an Issei man

to a clinic. Below, a quote from Frantz Fanon. "Every time a man has contributed to the victory of the dignity of the spirit, every time a man has said no to an attempt to subjugate his fellows, I have felt solidarity with his act."

Community Day was started by the Japanese American Community Services - Asian Involvement where young Sansei were able to learn about issues and help start programs under the slogan "Serve the People."

## THERE ARE ONLY 3 JAPAN TOWNS LEFT IN THE U.S.

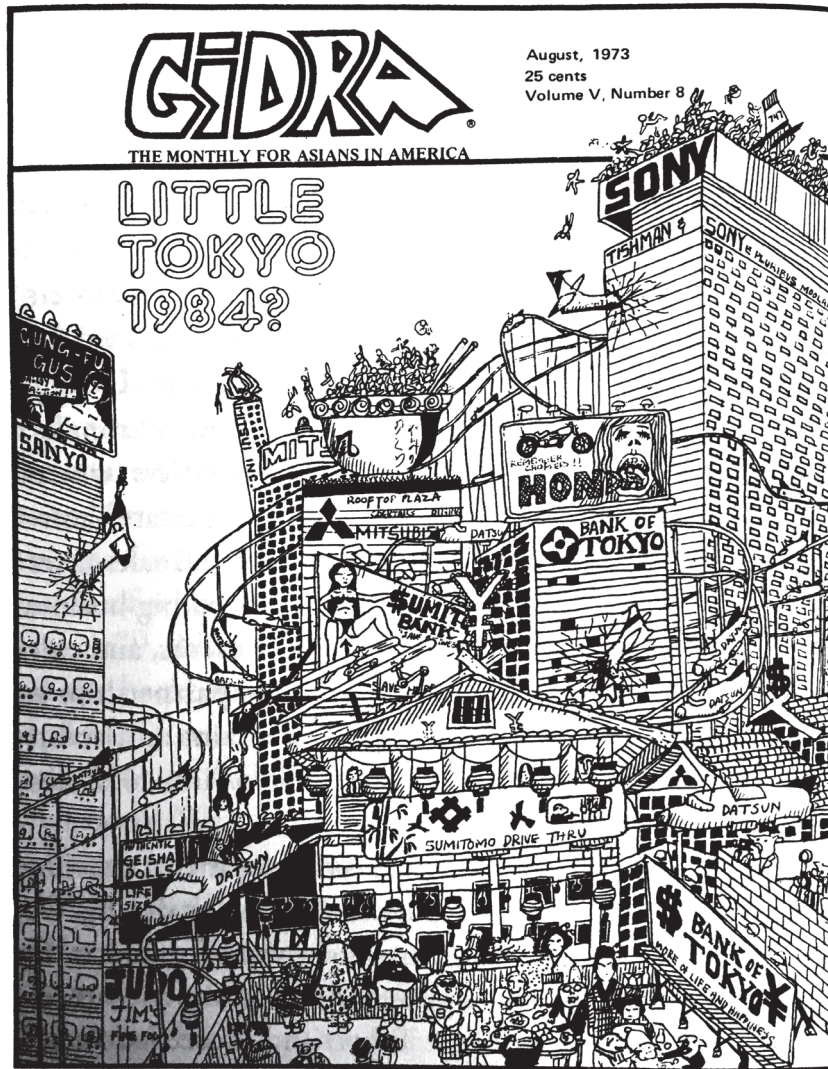


*This treasure added by Grant Sunoo*

Screen print on newspaper from "Guerilla art" campaign circa 2007. Little Tokyo has a history of being shaped by outside forces. When Weller Court and JVP were sold to private developers, some anonymous activists posted these posters in protest.



# FUTURE OF LITTLE TOKYO



*This treasure added by David Monkawa*

Artist David Monkawa imagines a future Little Tokyo after it has been redeveloped by Corporate Interests. This image was featured in *Gidra* and created in 1973 amidst concerns about redevelopment - concerns which are once again relevant today!

# RALLY ADVOCATING FOR LT REC CTR ON FIRST STREET NORTH



*This treasure added by Evelyn Yoshimura*

Circa 1999. A march and rally that saw over 500 supporters who marched around the FSN block to claim land for a long-sought community gymnasium & recreation center.



# KASHU MAINICHI ARTICLE - LITTLE TOKYO TOWERS

# MY DOOR

This treasure added by Carmen Vega

**LEGAL MORASS**  
**Zebra Trial Goes Into 5th Month**  
BY DARYL LEMHKE  
Times Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO—The young, white merchant seaman looked across the oak-paneled courtroom at the four black men, the defendants in the seemingly endless Zebra trial.

"Do you see in the courtroom the man who shot you?" asked Asst. Dist. Atty. Robert Dondoro.

The four defense attorneys objected strenuously, but Superior Judge Joseph Karamh overruled them, and allowed witness Ward Anderson, 20, to answer.

Anderson said the man who shot him twice in the back as he walked for a bus on the night of April 14, 1974, was present, he pointed across the room at defendant Manuel Moore, 30, and identified him as his assailant.

"Are you positive?" asked Dondoro.

"Yes, sir," Anderson, an unaffiliated witness wearing blue denim jacket and slacks and sporting a Fu Manchu mustache replied firmly.

This little drama unfolded last week in a proceeding that is well on its way to becoming the longest criminal trial in San Francisco history.

The trial heads into its fifth month Monday, having begun March 3. More than 80 witnesses have testified for the prosecution, which expects to call 20 more before it ends its case by mid July. Clinton White, one of the defense attorneys, said that presentation of the defense will take a month to six weeks, extending the length of the trial to about six months.

The primary reason the trial is taking so long is the multiple cross-examination by attorneys representing different defendants. As their right, they take turns going over the same territory in an effort to bring out discrepancies in the testimony by prosecution witnesses.

Another complication that lengthens the trial is the number of charges. The defendants, Moore, Larry Craig Green, 23, J. C. Simon, 28, and Jessie Lee Cooks, 30, were indicted by a county grand jury on 12 different counts.

All four are accused of conspiracy to commit murder during a wave of terror which swept San Francisco during a series of random attacks in which 25 white persons were killed or wounded from Oct. 20, 1973, through April 16, 1974. The case was named Zebra, after the radio channel which police used in the mountains to find the slayers.

Anthony Corbin Harris, the sometimes vacillating chief witness

**HOUSING FUND TO AID THOSE DENIED LOANS**  
BY JERRY GILLAM  
Times Staff Writer

...to be available to those denied loans with a wife and four children and...

**Little Tokyo Towers—A 33-Day Wonder**  
BY RAY HERBERT  
Times Urban Affairs Writer

Workers are getting ready to top out a new history apartment building in the Little Tokyo district of downtown Los Angeles and set some records—and precedents, too—along the way.

The building—a low-rent tower for senior citizens—has gone up in 33 days, believed a record for a structure its size. A unique construction method has produced a floor every other week day.

The structure is in an urban renewal area where things traditionally move at a snail's pace and red tape is hard to break.

But the speed of construction for the building—Little Tokyo Towers—has changed that, giving the Little Tokyo redevelopment project its first evidence of renewal after five years of planning.

It has set some unexpected precedents.

Little Tower renewal projects, this many men behind schedule.

"It's a great job on speed and quality," a development official says wistfully. "Other middle class housing in the long narrow building on 1st St. between San Pedro St. and Central Ave. has been a long time coming."

The first to move in will be 80 Little Tokyo residents, mostly single men, who have qualified for the towers' subsidized rentals on the basis of age and income. Most are Issei, first generation Japanese immigrants who came to Los Angeles many years ago.

Many are 75 years and older. They have been living in sordid old walk-up hotels scattered among the restaurants, curio shops, temples, and other "japany" businesses in the area.

Now the building towers above Little Tokyo. A topping out ceremony will be held Tuesday. Several months work remains to finish the towers. Little Tokyo redevelopment project manager, some tenants may be in by Thanksgiving.

Hirota says there have been applications from another 350 Japanese-Americans, blacks and other minorities for Little Tokyo Towers' apartments.

These are people—single persons and couples—now living in Boyle Heights, Gardens, Monterey Park

**Gibson Victory: A Milestone for Traditional Values**  
Council Leader's Ideology Rooted in Religious Beliefs  
BY IRV BURLINCH  
Times Staff Writer

It was a 10-5 vote to stick with traditional values when the Los Angeles City Council re-elected John S. Gibson Jr. to a record eighth two-year term as council president last Tuesday.

Gibson, at 72 the council patriarch, was shaken but survived the challenge of four younger councilmen backing Councilwoman Pat Russell for the presidency.

Has the generation gap arrived on the council?

"I could be out of harmony or they could be," Gibson said.

Gibson was a successful contractor when elected to represent the 15th Council District in 1951. He was described then by one political reporter as a liberal joining a very conservative council.

Councilmen being elected to the council for the first time today are a lot younger than they were when he became at age 48 the representative of the 20-mile Los Angeles strip extending from Watts to San Pedro.

Zev Yaroslavsky, 26, for example, has only recently taken the council seat to represent the West Los Angeles 5th District. He is of the generation that marched out carried picket signs for personal freedoms. Yaroslavsky, however, backed Gibson with his vote.

"The councilmen of yesterday," said Gibson, "were all men who had served in business for a good number of years and had an independent income. They were pretty well fixed and were not looking to the job for the salary it paid."

(When Gibson was first elected in 1951 the council salary was \$12,000. Today it is \$30,000, and a 10% raise is being considered.)

"I think they more or less felt they wanted to do something for the city that had helped them. Most of them were of medium wealth."

"When I came on the council 24 years ago it was not so much the salary as probably the prestige and honor and being able to work out what councilmen thought was best for the city."

By contrast, councilmen being elected in recent years "are adopting it as a career more or less, probably expecting to go higher in politics," said Gibson.

Gibson is amiable, well liked and doesn't get upset easily.

Things that do upset him he said, are today's permissive sexual standards and laws that would reduce marijuana possession penalties.

"Permissiveness is destroying the morality of the young people and contributes to rising crime," he asserted. "I don't claim to be inflexible but as long as I breathe a breath I shall do my best to at least call people's attention to these matters."

He told the council during an arduous debate over community sexual mores. "You have gone just in the opposite direction from good moral leadership with the laws that have happened lately and with the thinking... I am not even sure that the discussion of sex in some ways has been a step in the right direction. I am not opposed to that."

"I am opposing those things—obscenity, pornography, prostitution—that it seems to me destroy the morality of a coming generation."

...and I was a great expert smoker... but you are getting ready to tell them that they can smoke all the marijuana, perhaps again next... out of date. I think when you say these controls violate the Constitution, I don't think you understood what our constituents want to do when they provided the Bill of Rights."

Gibson's conservative ideology is firmly rooted in strong religious beliefs. He is an ardent adherent of the Rev. Billy Graham.

**Little Tokyo Towers—A 33-Day Wonder**  
A little more than 1½ months ago the site where the 140-foot high building now stands was a large vacant lot in the eight-square-block redevelopment area on the edge of the downtown Civic Center.

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This treasure added by Doug Aihara

The first low income housing project in J-Town. Was the result of community push for more affordable housing since a large apartment building was condemned forcing many elderly and low income issei to seek housing.

Ninety year-old. Yoshiko-san came to my door with a gift To show her gratitude. I'd helped when she was stuck in the backyard behind the gate that locks from the outside and she was in. It was coincidental.

And the time I held the heavy door to the elevator While she was laden with packages. When she forgot her keys in her apartment And I happened to be walking in the time...

A soft knock at my door, she held a gift in gratitude for something anyone would have done. I like you soh much! She said hiding her face with her small hands. I like you too, I replied.

I reserve the explanation: no really it was nothing... I reserve the explanation: I just happened to be there She would have not understood all the English chatter. Ultimately the deed was all that really mattered Thank you, I said.

I felt good when I closed my door and looked at my little room, it was suddenly a castle. My neighbors and I live in this city, and it just ours.

2013  
Yoshiko died December 2015



## HOME COOKING!



Tsukemono: Green/Yellow (on left): chayote, daikon, bread salt, beer massaged into vegetables. Purple (on right): ginger, nasu, daikon, cucumber shiso flavor

-Reiko Hamai



Yaki Onigiri (roasted rice ball): Onigiri was a travel food for Samurai during the Edo period. And now, it's a tasty snack food that has been updated with shoyu, miso, and grilled (roasted). With the advent of the izakayas, yaki onigiri has become very popular. Also a traditional decorative touch for celebrations is to add the nandina leaves and berries. Sometimes Yasuko teaches cooking classes at the Far East Lounge, talk to Yasue!

-Yasuko Sakamoto



Tangerine Kanten: Tangerine juice mixed with agar (gelatin), water and sugar. Original recipe from Aiko Uyeda.

-Hannah Yoshitomi



Kimpara Gobo: Fry gobo and season with shoyu and sugar, add togorashi to taste.

-Hiroko Yamagata

## MEL WONG'S HYDROPONICS

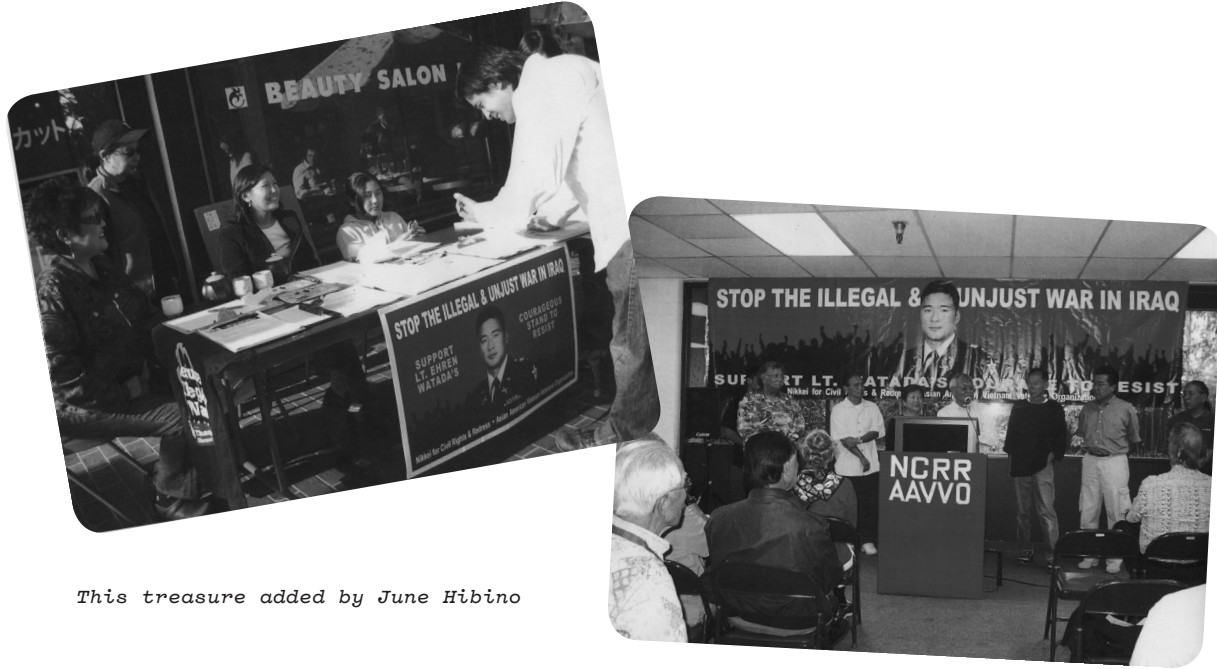


*This treasure added by Mel Wong*

I do hydroponic growing. I started it in Union Church. I want to come back to Little Tokyo. I do hydroponic growing but moreso I have a vision for Little Tokyo. In the past I helped put some in the buildings here. I have heart for Little Tokyo. But I've come back. I want to eventually have seminars to show seniors how to grow vegetables on their balcony. My vision is to connect to a farmers market here so that we as individual growers could bring vegetables here to sell. This would bring the economy back to the organization. The reason I want to train seniors to grow vegetables is so that we could have a barter system so if one is growing lettuce and another tomato, they can trade with one another so that seniors in our community can get involved. Also, I'd like the restaurants in Japan town to participate.

These are some of the Japanese cucumbers I've grown. The largest one is 24 inches. I've been hydroponic farming for 40 years. I have a 24 acre valley property in Simi Valley with some experimenting with hydroponic growing there. I kind of quit and then, since Union Church was interested in starting a garden project, I got involved in it. I want to make in J-town A-frames so sun can get to all the vegetables and put them on wheels to roll them around, so for an event we could display it by just rolling it there. I use osmosis water. I start with 0 minerals and add them in so I know exactly what's in the plant. I'm not against organic but when you do organic you don't know the condition of the soil. So you don't know what's in the plant. I actually know what's in the vegetables I grow.

## TWO PHOTOS OF WATADA SUPPORT GROUP 2006-2007



*This treasure added by June Hibino*

Little Tokyo is not only a place where our Japanese American history and culture are taught, remembered and flourish, but is also where many political struggles and issues over the years have been taken to the streets, to the people - a direct appeal for understanding and support.

Here are some photos taken of the Ehren Watada Support Committee in 2006-2007. In June 2006, Lt. Ehren Watada, a 28-year-old Army lieutenant, released a video press statement announcing that he was refusing to deploy to Iraq because the Iraq War was illegal and his "participation would make me party to war crimes." After three years of trying to

convict him by court martial, the Army finally gave up and allowed Lt. Watada to resign.

One photo is of a weekend informational table in Japanese Village Plaza. The other photo is of a support program featuring Ehren's parents Bob and Rosa, in the Garden Room of JACCC.

These pictures made me think about how important a physical community was/is in facilitating the ability to organize around different issues. How much more difficult it would have been for JAs to fight for redress/reparations if there were no physical community!

## NIKKEI COMMUNITY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



*This treasure added by Kristin Fukushima*

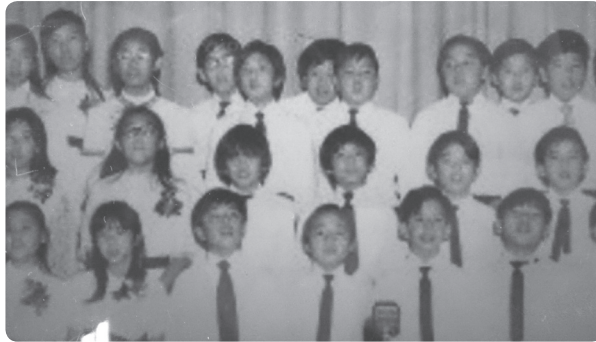
The Nikkei Community Internship program came out of a community need and concern over youth involvement/leadership/presence in Little Tokyo and the JA community at the Ties that Bind (1998) Conference: NCI officially started in 2002 and continues today to place college-aged students with Little Tokyo nonprofit organizations coupled with community history, workshops, & networking with leaders. NCI also runs in SF & San Jose Japantown, & is largely responsible for the pipeline of college students & young people in Little Tokyo.



## MARYKNOLL

*This treasure added by Clement Hanami*

5th Grade Elementary School Picture  
Maryknoll was a community building school that was more than a Catholic school. They had karate, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, choir, and an annual carnival. They also had other events for Issei's like Kibei-Kai and Fujin-Kai.



## CASA HEIWA AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

*This treasure added by Zoe Phoenix Ito Wong*

This is a very special pillow. It holds my preschool memories. When I was a toddler I went to the Nishi Hongwanji. I met so many good friends I am still connected with today. I had so many good memories, it was hard to let them go. Today, I still have lots of memories especially through my many pillows.



## REDRESS/KIDS WITH EDWARD JAMES OLMOS AT DAY OF PROTEST



*This treasure added by Kathy Masaoka*

Redress was passed on August 10, 1988 but no payments were made. NCRR organized a Day of Protest to push the government to authorize the funds on August 10, 1989 with about 1000 people in the JACCC Plaza. The kids are sitting with Edward James Olmos who spoke in support of redress. 200 Issei + Nisei were dying each month. NCRR archives (Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress) NCRR-la.org

# REGIONAL CONNECTOR

By Kristin Fukushima



Senor Fish was a beloved institution but it was also inside a historic building, which was the home of Atomic Cafe and Troy Cafe. Senor Fish ownership and management were very kind and generous. We held a lot of community parties there — they always let us post up there for free, and they would even let us collect donations at the door. It was a really beautiful example of what it means to be a community oriented business.

I think it was 2007 when Metro first came to Little Tokyo and they kind of just said ‘We’re looking at 30 different options of how we want to do this train, but the goal is really just to connect a lot of the Metro lines in L.A. so it’s easier to transfer.’ And because most of the options didn’t come through Little Tokyo we said ‘OK, that’s great. Thanks for letting us know’.

And then in 2009 they held a meeting that they were required to do by law. And they announced that they had narrowed down from the 32 options

to four options. One of them was no build, and one was shuttles (those are both legally required options) but the other two were both right through Little Tokyo above ground. One was going above ground down Second Street. Like it would be a train going down the street all the time. And another was going to go mostly underground but then emerge right by JANM and take out at least a block and then continue down Central and we were like, what happened? You had so many options to choose from, but then you chose the two that would be THE most impactful to our community. Where did this come from? Why? Why didn’t you talk to us?

In meetings with Metro, a lot of people brought up the jail as an example of how the city continually disregards Little Tokyo. We’d say, you know, you often try to do things here that you wouldn’t do to other communities because you just don’t care about us. And it’s really apparent in the way that you treat us.

So, they had these meetings and they would say things like ‘oh, Little Tokyo is the jewel of the city’ ...And then they would say like ‘but you know Little Tokyo really needs to sacrifice for the greater good of Los Angeles.’ And we are like ‘Do you not know our history? Our history is about sacrificing or being forced to give up things whether it is losing all our homes and properties during World War II or immediately after resettlement. Like losing an entire block or more to make way for the civic center expansion in the 50s.’

So that went on for a while where they would have these meetings they were required to hold and people would give their concerns and ask questions and Metro staff would sort of just nod and say ‘thank you for your comment.’

A turning point was when JANM got really concerned and involved, because they were facing huge impacts. Senator Daniel K. Inouye was on the board for JANM and the community asked the museum to contact him because as much as we were organizing in Little Tokyo and trying to work with the Metro staff, it didn’t seem like there was anything that could really help. So the museum asked and he agreed to weigh in, and he wrote to Metro and said something like — ‘I’m Senator Daniel K. Inouye. I am the chair of the Appropriations Committee in the U.S. Senate, and if you would like to see any federal money in FTA money for this project, you will listen to Little Tokyo and you’ll work with the community...’ And I think he even wrote ‘And you will not hurt my museum!’

Things really changed after that. They immediately called up the Little Tokyo people to be like ‘oh hey, like, we’d love to sit down and talk about what we could do to help your community. We definitely don’t want this project to hurt your community and want you all to be happy’ and for the community that was like ‘Oh really! Would you like to finally hear our ideas?’

We were able to get Metro to pay for a transportation planning consultant who could translate the jargon in the environmental documents for us and help us respond. Soon after that Metro agreed to take the project fully underground. That was amazing, but we also knew there would still be a lot of impact. So we were able to identify additional things to help ease those issues. We received marketing mitigations to help businesses impacted, and that funding became LTCC’s community marketing program, Go Little Tokyo. We also received parking mitigations, and we got a business interruption fund for businesses - which we had to really push for and didn’t win until much later. These all were written up in the Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program, and are legally binding.

The lessons of organizing and political power from the fight around the jail definitely helped prepare the community for this fight around the Regional Connector, and the level of organizing that was needed for the Regional Connector fight was really incredible and brought folks together. We also brought in a lot of new folks to this neighborhood work, like newer residents and businesses. It made us realize how important it is for us to have a strong political game and political capital, as well as just being well versed in planning and public projects.

I look back and realize that a lot of those property buyouts in the mid 2000s from that first wave of gentrification were obviously linked to the gold line being built (it was completed in 2008) and speculators getting ready. It’s much more obvious now that the rampant property flipping and new businesses wanting to come in plus older businesses being pushed out that it’s all related to the Regional Connector and what’s going to happen there - like the value of land skyrocketing. At the time people knew the changes were connected but maybe didn’t see it as clearly as you can now that we’re in a second more intense iteration of it.



# SAVE LITTLE TOKYO!

## Stop the erasure of our historic community!

First Street North is at risk. Located behind Japanese American National Museum, Far Bar, Fugetsu-Do, and more, First Street North is one of the last 3 remaining pieces of land that can be controlled by the community—or sold off to the highest bidders if the city doesn't hear our voice.

- **Sign the petition:** [bit.ly/savelittletokyo](http://bit.ly/savelittletokyo)
- **Write a letter or tag** @JoseHuizar and @EricGarcetti
- **Educate yourself** at [sustainablelittletokyo.org/fsn](http://sustainablelittletokyo.org/fsn)
- **Make a friend do the same and spread the word!**



**Sustainable Little Tokyo** is a community-driven initiative working to ensure a healthy, equitable, and culturally rich Little Tokyo for generations to come. Led by Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC), Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), and Japanese Cultural & Community Center (JACCC), Sustainable Little Tokyo began in 2013 as a multi-day community vision effort and has evolved into a holistic, neighborhood-wide campaign to promote the environmental, economic, and cultural sustainability of Little Tokyo.

[sustainablelittletokyo.org](http://sustainablelittletokyo.org)

### **+LAB**

is LTSC's effort to strategically incorporate collaborative and experimental creative strategies into key community development efforts in Little Tokyo. +LAB works to advance equity, sustainability, community empowerment, and cultural vibrancy within a community of color.

### **Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC)**

is a social service and community development organization committed to improving the lives of individuals and families through culturally sensitive social service care, strengthening neighborhoods through housing and community development, and promoting the rich heritage of our ethnic communities.

[ltsc.org](http://ltsc.org)