



## Japantown **Special Area Design Guidelines (SADG)** **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What are Design Guidelines?**

Design guidelines are a tool for neighborhoods, the public, architects, developers, planners, and the Planning Commission to guide how proposed projects connect with and visually fit within a neighborhood. Japantown's proposed design guidelines are intended to support Japantown's neighborhood character. They **do not affect zoning, heights, parking, or uses**. The Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines will work in concert with the City's Urban Design Guidelines but provide more detailed guidance for projects in Japantown. They are applied during design review and conformance with the guidelines is required for project approval.

### **Why are SADG's important?**

Design guidelines encourage culturally sensitive development – whether new buildings, exterior remodels, or other environmental interventions – to steward Japantown's unique sense of place and urban experience. They help to advance development over time, in a way that strengthens Japantown's unique cultural character. Without guidelines articulating its neighborhood design values, Japantown's cultural identity is left vulnerable to inharmonious development.

### **Where would they apply?**

The area of application is still under discussion. There are areas within the Japantown SUD and specific areas or properties outside of the SUD deemed culturally relevant that are also within the boundary of the Japantown Cultural Heritage District.

### **What is design review?**

Design Review is a comprehensive evaluation process in which Planning Department staff architects assess a proposed project to ensure that it meets the City's existing policies and general principles of good design and neighborhood compatibility. Design review staff use guidelines as a basis for review.

### **How do these guidelines relate to JCHESS? And the Cultural Heritage District planning process?**

The Japantown Cultural Heritage & Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHESS), formally adopted by the City in 2013, specifically recommended the adoption of neighborhood design guidelines as a means to ensure harmonious and culturally compatible development and construction in Japantown. Initial work on the design guidelines, which began even before the approval of JCHESS, was put on hold while the City developed its Urban Design Guidelines, completed in 2018.

The current Cultural Heritage District process underway will build upon the JCHESS, and its initiatives, as its foundation. Planning staff will be coordinating these to ensure they are in alignment. Public input is welcomed for both.

### **Why is this design guidelines process moving so quickly?**

Development of Japantown's design guidelines has restarted with urgency after we learned a few weeks ago that new state legislation signed into law in October – SB 330, the "Housing Crisis Act of 2019" - materially limits the application of "non-objective" design standards (design guidelines) adopted on and after January 1, 2020. Because the concept-based guidelines will help sustain Japantown's cultural character, adoption before year's end is a priority.

**How can I be involved in the development of the Japantown SADG?**

Public workshops are planned for November 21st and December 3rd. An initial draft of the proposed guidelines will be available for public comment on November 21st with a subsequent revision on December 5th. An informational hearing is scheduled at the Planning Commission on December 5th with an adoption hearing scheduled for December 19th.

**How do I find out more and keep up to date with this process?**

Please visit <https://sfplanning.org/project/japantown-special-area-design-guidelines>