



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Memo to the Planning Commission

HEARING DATE: DECEMBER 5, 2019

Date: November 27, 2019
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Project: Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines
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Recommendation: **None - Informational**

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PURPOSE OF THIS HEARING

The Planning Commission will be presented with the proposed Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines (Japantown SADGs) for informational purposes (see Exhibit A/Attachment A).

BACKGROUND

The Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines began as a recommendation from the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHESS) adopted in 2013. JCHESS recommended a proposed strategy to "Create Japantown Design Guidelines." The first draft of design guidelines began in 2013 and into 2014 but, after consultation with community members, were set aside during the adoption process of the San Francisco Urban Design Guidelines (UDGs). The Urban Design Guidelines, which apply in the Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District, were adopted by the Planning Commission in 2018. With the creation of the Special Area and Topic Design Guidelines that add detailed guidelines to complement the Urban Design Guidelines, the Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines process restarted in late 2019. Given the recent passage of SB 330 which prevents the application of non-objective design standards adopted on or after January 1, 2019 to housing projects approvals, the Planning Department seeks completion and adoption of these design guidelines by the end of the year. The guideline draft as included for this first informational is in progress and will be more complete after the community meeting on December 3rd (note omitted "means" under many of the guidelines).

FRAMEWORK

The Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines were developed in order to encourage culturally relevant architecture in new building and site designs and in renovations and additions to older buildings and sites to support a physically beautiful and socially vibrant neighborhood. The use of these guidelines is to promote, maintain, and accentuate the authentically expressive qualities of Japanese-inspired designs that contribute to the uniqueness of Japantown. They are intended to help convey the concepts that support and help express the contextual and unique aesthetic and spatial qualities of Japantown. Fundamental goals include:

- Protect and strengthen the unique qualities and character that make Japantown special.
- Preserve historically-significant structures and places in Japantown.
- Support a fine-grained scale of the neighborhood.

- Enhance pedestrian activity and walkability of Japantown.
- Promote environmental health and sustainability.

Outreach and Guideline Development

The Planning Department restarted these design guidelines after discussion with interested community members. The Department is working closely with the Japantown Task Force and in alignment with and as a continuation of many recent community outreach efforts including for the Cultural Heritage District, the redesign of Peace Plaza lead by San Francisco Public Works and Recreation and Parks, and participants in the JCHESS to establish community consensus on guidelines that fulfill the intent of the JCHESS recommendation. These outreach meetings are on-going and the draft document is expected to evolve quickly. The Department continues to welcome public participation, comment, and feedback.

Applicability

The Japantown SADGs apply to parcels in the Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District zoning as well as on parcels under the R District zoning within the bounds of the Japantown Cultural Heritage District if the proposed project includes non-residential uses or for residential projects that include a frontage of 150 feet or longer or 25 or more housing units. This is the same existing applicability as the UDGs within the cultural district.

They are intended to work in concert with the Urban Design Guidelines, which currently apply to this area. While the UDGs provide a broad level of design guidance that is generally applicable to neighborhood commercial districts throughout San Francisco, the Japantown SADGs provide additional guidance that is specifically tailored to local context. Consistency with both sets of guidelines is mandatory in the design review process. Should application of the respective guidelines conflict, the Japantown SADGs supersede the UDGs. Depending on location, other design guidelines may also be applicable and project applicants should consult with Planning Department staff to confirm.

Design Review

These guidelines are to be applied during the design review process. Projects demonstrate conformance with design guidelines during design review. Procedurally this occurs during project entitlements per design finding requirements in Code Sections 309, 311, 312, and 329, along with a variety of other designations (Conditional Use authorizations, for example). This work is done prior to Planning Commission approval but can also follow through the application of conditions of approval, Discretionary Review process, post-entitlement revisions, or addendum approvals. The Planning Department is also asked to confirm that projects involving public uses or public land conform to policies and design principles of the General Plan via General Plan Referrals.

REQUIRED COMMISSION ACTION

RECOMMENDATION:	None - Informational
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Attachments: Attachment A - Initial Draft Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines

JAPANTOWN

SPECIAL AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES



REVIEW DRAFT
27 November 2019

San Francisco
Planning



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Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines

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Japantown History & Context

Japantown is the historical and cultural heart of the Japanese and Japanese American community, a thriving commercial and retail district and a home to residents and community-based institutions.

Built Environment of Japantown *Excerpted from Chapter 2 in the JCHES*

Japantown's built environment origin is a result of pre-1906 two- to three-story houses that typically had roots in European countries such as Germany, Austria, Ireland, England, Scotland and France. After the 1906 earthquake, the majority of the Japanese community moved into the present Japantown area in the Western Addition which began to form the culturally distinctive neighborhood of Nihonjin Machi, or "Japanese person town," as it was called by Nikkei. The heart of Nihonjin Machi was the area bounded by Geary, Webster, Bush, and Laguna Streets, although Nikkei presence extended over a 30-block area, as far as Presidio, California, McAllister and Gough Streets.

The World War II Internment had and continues to have a major impact on the identity and character of the Japantown community. Seeing no viable alternatives, the Nikkei of San Francisco Nihonmachi, together with other Japantown communities from Arizona to Washington, largely complied with the internment orders, making arrangements as best they could for their homes, businesses and possessions (many losing virtually all they had). Ultimately, over 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry were incarcerated in the camps from 1942 to 1946, with some held to as late as 1948. Scholars and historians have almost universally condemned the incarceration as a civil liberties disaster and one of the most shameful acts in U.S. history.

By the 1950s, local agencies had identified San Francisco's Western Addition as the site of one of the first federally funded urban renewal projects in the nation. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, vast swaths of Western Addition neighborhoods (including parts of the Japantown-Fillmore area) were cleared by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency for eventual new development. This era of "Redevelopment" resulted in displacement of thousands of established residents and scores of businesses, razing of hundreds of structures and relocating buildings, and disruption of social fabric. Occurring under the auspices of the Redevelopment Agency, but with increasing influence from the Nikkei community, the "urban renewal" of

Japantown displayed a cultural focus that was unusual for redevelopment projects. From the 1960s to the 1980s, much of the heart of Japantown was reconstructed with Japanese culturally-thematic designs and uses. The earlier stages of urban renewal in Japantown generally resulted in large-scale complexes, including apartments and a commercial mall. Later phases tended to result in smaller projects that were integrated into the neighborhood and that addressed specific community needs. These included a pedestrian commercial plaza with public art, Nikkei churches, organizational headquarters, libraries, and a community and cultural center.

As the neighborhood's demographics shifted to a more diverse and pan-Asian population, and Nisei retirements led to the closure of long-time businesses ranging from manga shops to markets, bookstores to bowling alleys, community energies have focused on the question of what is essential to Nihonmachi. At the same time, San Francisco's Japantown continues to hold immeasurable symbolic and cultural meaning. Nihonmachi is the foundation for a regional community through the cultural, educational and spiritual ties it creates for Japanese and Japanese Americans. In addition to ethnically specific goods and services, Nikkei throughout the



Bay Area visit Japantown for cultural and educational events. The streets of Nihonmachi are the site for annual events such as Obon festival, Cherry Blossom festival and parade, and the Japantown Street Fair, which bring the regional community together.

Complexity of Authenticity

San Francisco's Japantown's physical fabric expresses its layered and complex history of land ownership and control, interior choices and exterior impositions, cultural influences and experiences. When discussing the nature of how it expresses "Japanese" qualities or even "Japantown" characteristics, there are a variety of voices that participate and no singular interpretation or definition prevails. Some voices identify framed structures as reminiscent of Japanese villages of a certain era or storefronts as familiar in Kyoto, but note that these are sometimes expressed as nostalgic but not necessarily "authentic" to Japantown-- a place also deeply rooted in an American experience.

Any new development that proposes a site in Japantown should recognize that the existing fabric is full of variation, and that that is natural to the context for many people in the community. Some buildings in the context may not seem "Japanese" at all-- Victorian houses for examples-- but are still described as essential to the Japantown experience or that others may have exaggerated elements found in traditional Japanese architecture-- decorative rooflines for example-- that in the time they were built may have been viewed as authentic or expressed with purpose at the time but may now in the eyes of many residents seem pastiche. One common thread in discussions with community members is that the deeper principles noted in this document are more important than the more superficial matching of style or decoration. Members of the community express the importance of honoring the past and its context but of looking to the future knowing new structures will naturally be more modern.

A final note that this is a neighborhood that has been damaged irreparably by the presumptions of outsiders and that this history is potent and expressed in the built environment as it currently is. These guidelines are intended to articulate a neighborhood voice, but development should be approached with honest questions, sensitivity, and engagement.

Guideline Origin

The Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines began as a recommendation from the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHESS) adopted in 2013. JCHESS recommended a proposed strategy to "Create Japantown Design Guidelines."

The following Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines were developed in order to encourage culturally relevant architecture in new building and site designs and in renovations and additions to older buildings and sites to support a physically beautiful and socially vibrant neighborhood.

The use of these guidelines is to promote, maintain, and accentuate the authentically expressive qualities of Japanese-inspired designs that contribute to the uniqueness of Japantown. They are intended to help convey the concepts that support and help express the contextual and unique aesthetic and spatial qualities of Japantown. Fundamental goals include:

- » Protect and strengthen the unique qualities and character that make Japantown special.
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- » Promote environmental health and sustainability.

Japantown Design Values

Human-centered Neighborhood design should improve the experience of those who live, visit, and engage in culturally relevant activities in Japantown. It should reflect and support authentic Japanese/Japanese-American culture.

Community-Building and Identity Neighborhood development should encourage gathering and socialization at diverse scales and enhance a sense of community and facilitate communication among residents and visitors who find Japantown a part of their identity.

Integration, Harmony, and Sensitivity Projects should cultivate balance, enhance a sense of harmony, and encourage sensitivity and care towards others and the environment.

Flexibility, Diversity and Tolerance Projects should acknowledge Japantown's architectural diversity as a fundamental characteristic of the neighborhood. Provide flexibility to accommodate a variety of built forms that enhance and complement the unique urban qualities and character of Japantown.

Openness and Inclusiveness Development should focus on sustaining and enriching authentic Japanese/Japanese American culture through best practices and innovation. These guidelines are not intended to fix the appearance of the neighborhood in present time or past eras.

Uniqueness While there are expressions of Japanese culture across the globe, San Francisco's Japantown is a specific context and history of Japanese ancestry in a California context. The climate, the people, the other cultural influences and the events of the neighborhood create a distinct hybrid of influences that have resulted in its features. These guidelines are intended to enhance these specificities in light of the overall neighborhood goals.

Human-scale Human-scale is an important element to supporting Japantown as a neighborhood commercial and transit area. Projects should maintain Japantown's existing and historic human scale, particularly along Osaka Way/Buchanan Mall, the North side of Post Street, and Sutter Street. Development should encourage fine-grained scale along the street edge and reinforce diversity of detail and texture.

Cultural relevancy Project designers should consider consulting with community members to establish and reinforce culturally-relevant proposals that embody, assert, reflect and/or symbolize – in abstract or explicit ways – Japanese/Japanese American culture and values. Design – in concept and/or expression -- should possess meaning and relevance to Japantown and/or Japanese/Japanese American. Beyond architecture, project sponsors should consider integrating culturally authentic decorative elements, including standards for signage, banners, art, sculpture and other expressions of Japanese/Japanese American identity. This is a complex question and should be done with guidance.

Transparency and Permeability Where appropriate, projects should introduce and enhance opportunities for exposing cultural activities, goods, and services through transparency or culturally-relevant ideas of transparency such as screens. Renovations should open up existing monolithic developments to the street to increase porosity and permeability in existing projects. On the exterior, projects should integrate open space with built form.

Continuity Between Old and New Physical antiquity has not come as a crucial value for aesthetic and monumental appreciation in Japanese tradition, which might be due to frequent occurrence of natural disasters. Some preserved examples are not attributed to preference toward material permanency, but can be seen as results of intergenerational communication in succeeding a culture to next generations to come. For example, Ise Grand Shrine is not about preservation of a tangible object, but is rather about preservation of memory and wisdom that all come as a form of ritual. This is an important context to have when working on existing historic resource buildings or building on their adjacent properties.

Sustainability Projects should foster sustainable development that encourages resiliency in natural and human-built systems. Designers should use architectural and landscape materials that are climate appropriate, reduce waste, and employ building systems that reduce energy and water use.

Japanese Design Concepts

Landscape

Landscape and its related arts have never been “accessories” for the lives of Japanese and Japanese Americans. It is rather a source of identity, an opportunity for spiritual breathing, a place for communication and education, and also inspiration for creative ideas.

The Japanese American experience during WWII also proved that landscape for Japanese American is deeply rooted in their everyday lives. Instead of being crowned in a position of high art, it helped maintain their hope for the future and sense of dignity despite their harsh environmental reality.



inuyarai



sudare

Culture

Metaphor of Onigiri and Spam

Musubi Spam musubi is a Japanese-influenced snack food composed of a slice of grilled Spam on top of a block of rice wrapped in dried seaweed in the tradition of Japanese onigiri. It originated in Hawaii during WWII when Japanese culture met the popular American food. It is evidence of old tradition in a different place resulting in a new practice.

Privacy

Japanese houses were often made of thinner external elements with wider windows, which have consequently maintained a certain level of interface transparency. To protect the privacy of each tenant in the neighborhood with narrow streets, Japanese houses were more likely designed to minimize transparency without excluding ventilation routes and natural lights. While maintaining a certain level of privacy, external elements such as **sudare**, **koshi**, or **inuyarai** have allowed vibrant and interactive pedestrian experience through providing them “implications” of interior human activities and structural depth. Other example of a transition between public space and private interiors is the **engawa**, or Japanese Veranda, that links inside and outside as a continuous movement.

Design

Kanso Simplicity or elimination of clutter

Fu kinsei Asymmetry or irregularity

Shibumi Beautiful by being understated

Shizen Naturalness absence of pretense

Yugen Suggestion rather than revelation

Datsuzoku Freedom from habit or formula

Shijima Tranquility or an energized calm or stillness

Wa Harmony, peace balance

Ma Empty spatial void, interval of space or time

Yohaku no bi Appreciation of the beauty found in what is implied, unstated or unexpressed

*Ryushi Kojima, Architect

koshi



Public Space

“Squares” or “plazas” have never been developed nor planned as places for gathering or political monuments until the opening of Japan to the rest of the globe in 1868. Even after that historic turning point, Japanese cities did not widely reflected the idea of urban open space onto actual planning.

Even with their official absence, Japanese cities do generate forms of “public space.” Some examples in traditional urban forms like tsuji, roji, or ekimae (open spaces surrounding our modern-day train stations) can be interpreted as public space alternatives. The emergence of those elements cannot be attributed to intentional planning by civic leaders, but are rather the result of spontaneous reactions or utilitarian decisions made by residents and users of urban space.

In Japanese cities, public space is not something “planned” or “equipped,” but is in reality considered “everywhere besides my home.”

Sustainability

Mottainai What a shame to waste
Kodomo no tame ni For the sake of the children

Banbutsu Interconnectedness

*from Envisioning Little Tokyo's Future as a Cultural Ecodistrict Thomas Yee

Glossary

Adjacent

Near, close, or contiguous.

Articulation

The act of giving expression. In architecture, it is the definition of the formal elements of architectural design. Through degrees of articulation, each part is united with the whole in such a way that the joined parts are put together. The articulation of a building reveals how the parts fit into the whole by emphasizing each part separately.

Appropriate

Fitting or suitable to a particular situation, location, or setting.

Cadence

The flow or rhythm of events, especially the pattern in which something is experienced. This is a common design metaphor for how a series of elements (building detail or urban scale) can express a legible and harmonious rhythm that defines itself as a set. (See: *variation*)

Character

Prevailing existing architectural elements, including building mass, scale, and era they were built.

Comfort

To ease the trouble of. This document uses the word comfort to describe the physical ease—temperature, wind pressure, glare, safety, air quality—of the human body in an outdoor place.

Compatible

Able to exist or occur together without conflict.

Complement

Something that goes well with something.

This document uses this term to express how elements can be adjacent and agreeable in scale, proportion, composition, and type but not identical in style or manner.

Context

Setting. The interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs. Context in urban design parlance typically refers to the physical and cultural environment around a specific site or how a proposed building may be described within its surroundings.

When reviewing a project for contextual compatibility, the Department considers a site's context to include buildings and open spaces immediately adjacent to the subject site, the entire block face on which it sits, the facing block from the site, and the overall block pattern ranging in all directions by two or more blocks. The Department also considers the character of special or unique nearby structures, access to or frontage onto civic places and streets, and important nearby public environments such as neighborhood commercial districts.

Districts

Relatively large sections of the city distinguished by some identity or character. (From Kevin Lynch, [Image of the City](#).)

Edges

Perceived boundaries such as walls, buildings, and shorelines. (From Kevin Lynch, [Image of the City](#).)

Fenestration

The arrangement of windows and doors on the elevations of a building. Fenestration is often examined as a pattern.

Glazing

Glass windows, doors, and walls.

Harmonize

To be combined or go together in a pleasing way. Like complement, this document uses this term to describe how elements can visually fit together, or make meaningful relationships without being identical or duplicative.

Historicism

Reference or influence of patterns or approaches of the past. False or cursory historicism is often used to suggest an unwarranted or excessive regard of the importance of past styles.

Human-Scale

The set of physical qualities and quantities of information characterizing the human body, its motor, sensory, or mental capabilities, and human social institutions. This document uses human-scale to set or describe the size of and relationships between elements.

Inflection

A bend or angle. In urban design, a point of inflection is where a consistent block or street pattern changes often where two streets come together at an unusual angle.

Landmarks

Readily identifiable objects which serve as external reference points. (From Kevin Lynch, [Image of the City](#).)

Mass

A quantity or aggregate of matter usually of considerable size. The act of creating an amount of matter. In architecture, mass is used to describe the three-dimensional volume or shape of a building or part of a building or the act of creating it.

Mid-block open space

Public or private site area, often including multiple lots, left as open space in the center of city blocks. This is typically created by an ensemble of many lots that follow a similar pattern, for example, consistent application and compliance with rear yard requirements.

Modulation

A volumetric regulating according to measure or proportion. A three-dimensional modelling and definition of form that repeats, and supports the overall design. Recesses, projections, or other changes in facade planes, along with windows, materials, patterns and colors, and other similarly scaled elements can be used to modulate.

Parti

The chief organizing thought or decision behind an architect's design presented in the form of a basic diagram and/or a simple statement. A parti often explains a building's form, circulation, program, or overall site strategy.

Program

An architectural program or brief is a statement of a client's requirements. A program typically includes a list of uses, adjacencies, and circulation issues of the project.

Proportion

The relationships of the various objects and spaces that make up a structure to one another and to the whole. These relationships are often governed by multiples of a standard unit of length known as a "module."

POPOS

Privately-owned public open space. Shared open spaces that are owned and managed by private entities but available for public use.

Reflect

To give back or exhibit as an image, likeness, or outline. This document uses "reflect" to describe how new elements may seem of the same family or extend a series of similar older elements. It is not intended to imply a mirror-like copy.

Relate

Indicate its connections with (something else). For the purposes of this document, one element relates to another if it expresses aspects of the other's geometry, form, circulation, detailing, materiality, or use.

Scale

A proportionate size, extent, or degree, usually judged in relation to some standard point of reference.

Sidewalk

An elevated paved path for pedestrians at the side of a road and often between the roadway and a building. For the purposes of this document, sidewalks do not include private property or vehicular travel lanes.

Solid / Void ratio

A comparison between the amount of openings or windows to the amount of wall on a facade. A facade may have different kinds or numbers of openings than another but its solid/void ratio could be the same.

Streetwall

Combined facades of buildings generally built to the property line facing a street or open space. A clear streetwall helps define "the urban room" or the public realm. A consistent streetwall that is visually interesting and active ground floor uses promotes pedestrian activity.

Variation

A change or difference in condition, amount, or level, typically with certain limits. In design, variation describes how adjacent elements can contain different attributes with enough similarity to be recognizable as related. A pattern of variation generally requires the repetition of three or more elements. (See: *cadence*)

Volume

A three-dimensional measure of space that comprises a length, a width, and a height. In architecture, a volume can describe a three-dimensional portion of a building or shaped element.

Racial & Social Equity Assessment

Advancing racial and social equity is a key priority of the City of San Francisco. Whereas government has played an important role in creating and perpetuating inequities through decades of discriminatory policies and practices at all levels, San Francisco's elected officials and City agencies have taken a leading role in addressing present-day inequities.

The San Francisco Planning Department is committed to eliminating structural racial inequities by examining its policies, plans, and programs to understand their equity implications and proactively designing them to ensure that a person's race does not determine life outcomes, statistically or experientially. In drafting the Japantown SADGs, planning staff considered the following questions when drafting new policies, programs, and processes:

What are the intended racial and social equity outcomes of this particular decision or process?

- » To articulate and honor the expressions of Japanese/Japantown cultural heritage and increase its representation the development of future architecture and landscape in Japantown.
- » Ensure that the guidelines are attainable for business owners and do not contribute to the displacement of existing commercial or residential tenants or owners.
- » Decrease the amount of community resources utilized, primarily measured in time, in reviewing and responding to project proposals.

Who will benefit from or be burdened by the particular decision or process?

The benefits of government policies, programs, and plans have historically been unevenly distributed--generally away from people of color and other historically marginalized groups. As the City seeks to improve equity outcomes for people of color and other vulnerable populations, government action may result in a shift of the distribution of benefits to a larger proportion of its residents and businesses.

The design guidelines promote cultural preservation, celebration and representation, and a sense of community cohesion/belonging that can

contribute to a reduction on the pressures of cultural displacement or erosion from neighborhoods.

Are there any unintended consequences?

As is often the case with a racial and social equity assessment, the answers for addressing racial and social inequities are complex and cannot be addressed by a single policy, project, or approach.

The assessment suggests that the benefits of design guidelines are broadly shared among project applicants, community stakeholders, and the City. Burdens would likely be borne primarily by project applicants, although they have the potential to be significantly offset by the benefits generated. Additionally, most guidelines are specifically written to allow for design flexibility such that their intent can be achieved through multiple methods, and therefore do not necessarily result in burdens for project applicants.

Potential Benefits, Burdens, and Unintended Consequences and Mitigations

Description		Stakeholder Impacted	Opportunity to enhance benefit
Benefits <i>The Japantown SADGs should result in...</i>	Clearer expectations from City staff and community during design review, which reduces review time and design costs. This could also address/off-set some of the burdens below.	City staff, project sponsors, community	Consider modifying pre-app meeting application to call attention to these guidelines/how the project addresses them early on in the project.
	Designs that honor the context of Japantown in architecture, landscape, and public space.	City, community	Update guidelines at a future date to demonstrate new examples that continue the guidelines' relevancy.
	Active ground floor character which reinforces pedestrian patronage and business vitality.	City, community	
Description		Stakeholder Impacted	Mitigation
Burdens <i>The Japantown SADGs could result in...</i>	Potentially somewhat higher construction costs due to higher quality materials and design expectations.	Project sponsors	Look for other ways to reduce costs in the project that do not diminish the public expression or benefits within the project such as through streamlined review.
	Minor limitations on design flexibility.	Project sponsors	Better design and neighborhood cohesiveness should enhance property value.
Unintended Consequences <i>The Japantown SADGs could result in...</i>	Potentially somewhat higher housing or retail rents/costs due to slightly higher construction costs due to higher quality materials and design expectations.	Community	Each site should be reviewed individually to evaluate the scale of those potential burdens and minimize them as is possible.

Application of the Guidelines

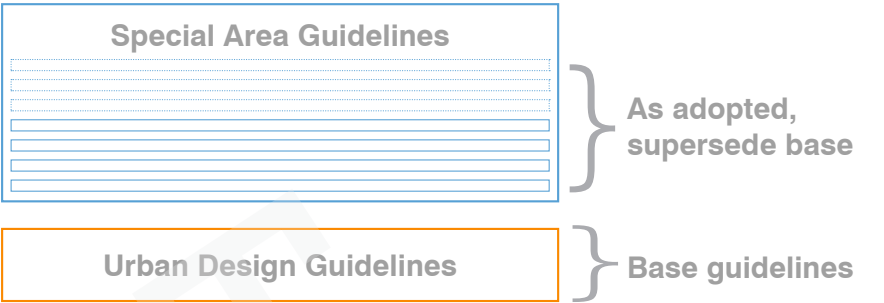
Guidelines are intended to create a common set of expectations related to design that can be used by neighborhood groups, the public, designers, property owners, developers, planners, and the Planning Commission in the creation or renovation of buildings. They address how building design impacts and supports the character of the existing city fabric; importantly, however, they do not change height limits, control land use or tenancy, or impact growth or transportation policy. Development projects must demonstrate compliance with applicable guidelines to be successfully entitled.

The Japantown SADGs apply to parcels in the Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District zoning, (as shown in Figure 1) as well as on parcels under the R zoning within the bounds of the Japantown Cultural Heritage District if the proposed project includes non-residential uses or for residential projects that include a frontage of 150 feet or longer or 25 or more housing units.

They are intended to work in concert with the San Francisco Urban Design Guidelines (UDGs), which currently apply to this area. While the UDGs provide a broad level of design guidance that is generally applicable to neighborhood commercial districts throughout San Francisco, the Japantown SADGs provide additional guidance that is specifically tailored to local context. Consistency with both sets of guidelines is mandatory in the design review process. Should application of the respective guidelines conflict, the Japantown SADGs supersede the UDGs. Depending on location, other design guidelines may also be applicable and project applicants should consult with Planning Department staff to confirm.

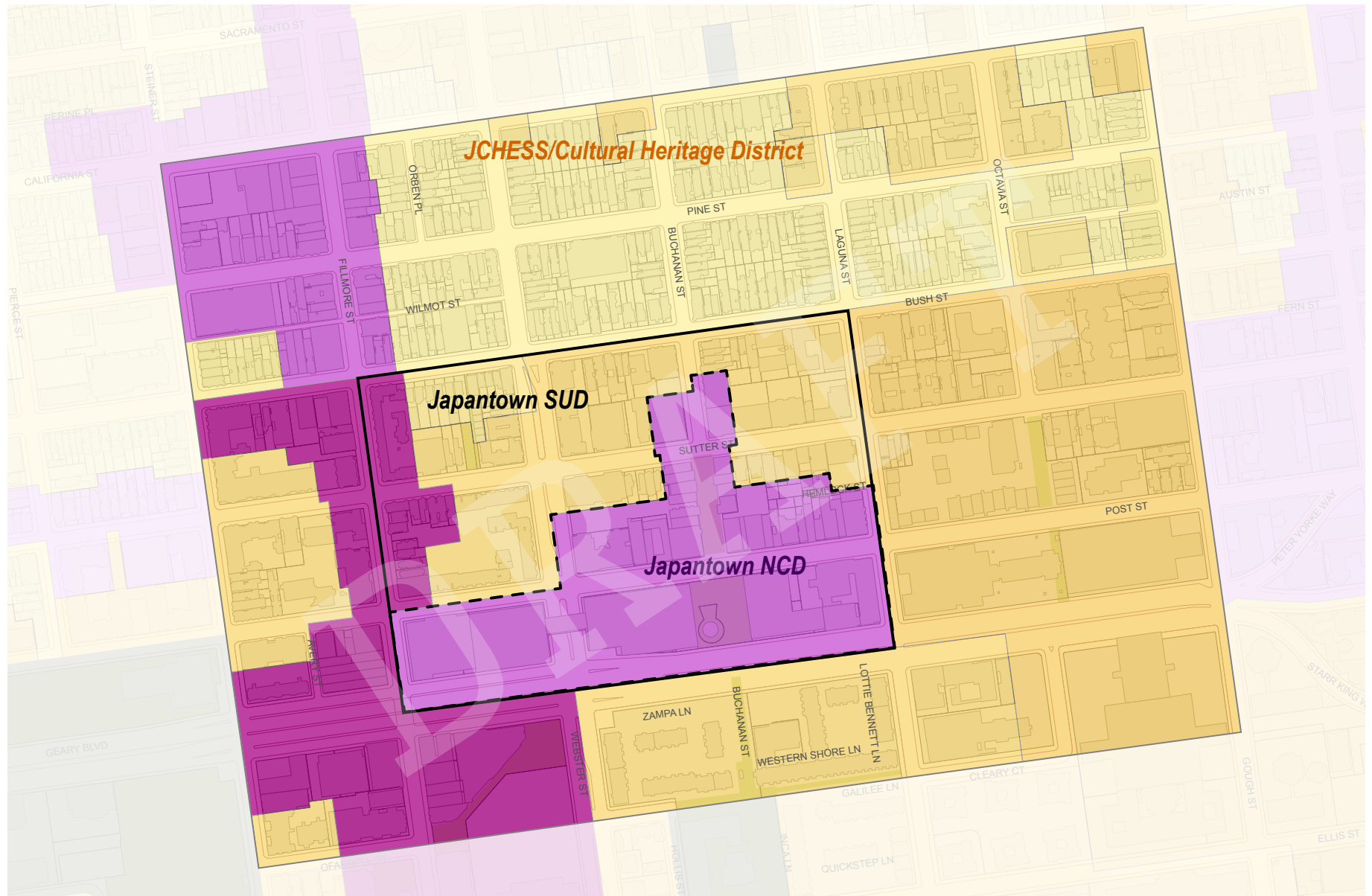
Guideline Structure

Each guideline is described at the top of the page, followed by a sidebar that explains the rationale for the guideline, a range of means by which one might achieve that guideline, and illustrations that further describe its application. The range of means describes important parameters and methods by which a project can meet the guideline, but is not a prescriptive list. Projects may satisfy the guideline by applying one or all of the means or by suggesting something unique to the project that meets the intent. The guidelines are organized to relate and elaborate with more specificity to the relevant guideline in the UDGs. For example, A1.1 of the Japantown Special Area Design Guidelines is related to A1 of the UDGs.



Note that the examples given under each guideline are being shown to exemplify principles of that specific guideline and are not intended to demonstrate compliance with all other guidelines and standards both inside and outside of this document. All examples are found in San Francisco except as noted.

GUIDELINE	RECOMMENDED ANALYSIS	RATIONALE	RANGE OF MEANS	EXAMPLE
A3.1 USE NATURAL MATERIALS IN FACADES AND FINISH THEM HONESTLY	<p>Craft is a foundational architectural principal in Japanese architecture where generation continuity is based more on handing down technique than physical structures. Natural textures express qualities of time, impermanence, and human-scale.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stucco and wood are common materials used in Japantown facades are smaller scales. If they are used at larger scales, they should be designed and dimensioned to work at that size and not just stacked or replicated without intention.Concrete and stone are common materials used in Japantown at larger scales. Concrete must be designed thoughtfully to include texture, joints, and high-quality components so that is refined, intentional, and warm in expression rather than haphazard, coarsely detailed, or forboding.Glass and steel are also natural materials and common in more modern Japanese	<p>architecture but they should be used to complement surrounding textures and scales rather than harshly contrast them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Combine and utilize materials so that they work together as expected: spanning materials should space, panel materials should work in planes, structural materials should hold weight, etc.Material finishes should exemplify their original qualities not mask them other than supporting basic maintenance. Wood should express its fibrous, flexible, and weathering qualities. Stone should have texture and porosity.Materials should not stand in for other materials.	<p>JAPTOWN 23</p> <p>Weathering is a natural wood expression.</p> <p>Stone should express permanence and texture.</p> <p>Glass is a natural material but should employ its natural characteristics.</p>



Map of Japantown showing the Japantown Special Use District, Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District, and JCHESS/Cultural Heritage District.



S SITE DESIGN

- S3.1 Sculpt Building Massing to Respond to Scale and Use of Peace Plaza and Osaka Way
- S4.1 Site and Organize New Development to Support Peace Pagoda as a Visual Landmark
- S5.1 Build to Front Lot Line or Vary Building Front Setbacks for Public Landscape Elements
- S8.1 Sculpt Building Massing to Reinforce Neighborhood "Bowl" Shape

S3.1 SCULPT BUILDING MASSING TO RESPOND TO SCALE AND USE OF PEACE PLAZA AND BUCHANAN

Peace Plaza and Buchanan are the primary public spaces around which the neighborhood defines its public space. Projects that directly relate to these features can support them by actively designing with them in mind.

- » Organize entrances and circulation in buildings to front these spaces.
- » Place common or public open spaces adjacent to these spaces only if they are well defined as separate, supportive, and complimentary.
- » Sculpt roof heights or shaping to support pedestrian scales of the plaza.
- » Use the geometry of the plazas to suggest building footprints.



Building massing can shape around important volumetric figures such as the pagoda.



The faces of buildings along Buchanan are two stories giving prominence to the volumetric figure along Post. New development can setback to lend this support.



Larger buildings are in the neighborhood but can balance their shapes to focus public space in these two important places.

S4.1 ORGANIZE NEW DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT PEACE PAGODA AS A VISUAL LANDMARK

Both the Peace Plaza Pagoda and the Nihon Machi sign on Buchanan are important visual markers and can be seen from many public vantage points. New massing can frame these elements to further orient pedestrians.

- » Shape the profiles of vertical building edges to frame views where possible.
- » Shift massing of taller buildings to accommodate visual access from important elevated public viewpoints.
- » Provide setbacks in private development or bay windows in publicly-accessible development to direct views towards these two locations.



Building edges can shape views from public space to help the pagoda read even if there is larger development.



Icons in Japantown layer against the backdrop of the city from many vantagepoints and connect them to the city at large.



Building rooftops can be shaped to reveal the top of the pagoda from important public spaces.

S5.1 BUILD TO FRONT LOT LINE OR VARY BUILDING FRONT SETBACKS FOR PUBLIC LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

Setbacks help define the transition between private spaces and public areas. While pulling buildings toward the street is generally encouraged, setbacks for public uses helps to vary the pedestrian experience.

- » In places where variable and pedestrian-scaled setbacks already occur, complement the pattern by providing a small setback for benches, plantings or other publicly accessible and supportive features.
- » In places where storefronts or building faces line up, extend that pattern and provide niches or volumetric entries to provide public engagement with facades.



A variable and pedestrian-friendly frontage.



Public space can also be found in the furnishing zone that partners with setbacks along the private edge.



Volumetric entries are more inviting.

S8.1 SCULPT BUILDING MASSING TO REINFORCE NEIGHBORHOOD "BOWL" SHAPE

Reinforcing topography is a critical value in Japantown because it both mirrors the landform and the historic pattern of the neighborhood which includes both low lying and tall development.

- » Shape or step rooftops to reflect the nature of the existing ground and roof planes.
- » Shape or step massing to reflect the geometry of the natural ground plane and the skyline to reinforce existing patterns.
- » High and low buildings fit together into the layered history of Japantown. New development should look at the unique condition of nearby buildings to appropriately offset or equalize massing to find a harmonious balance.



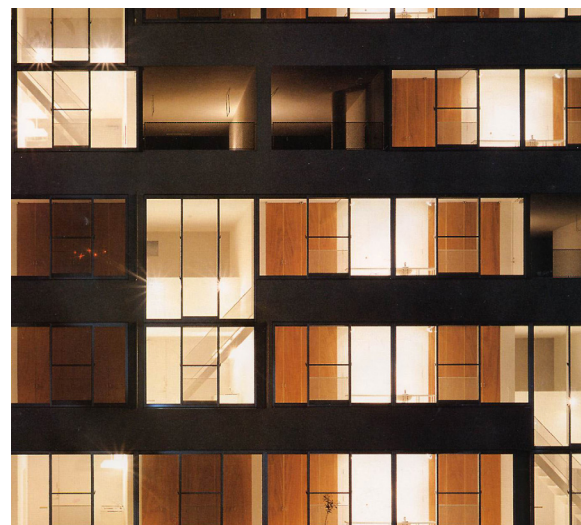
Peace Plaza is a focal and low point within the "bowl" shape.

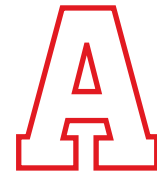


A historic photo showing an older shaping of buildings along the topography and the hills.



While Geary has been acted as a "back" to the neighborhood, the shape of Japantown topography welcomes connection across it.





ARCHITECTURE

- A1.1** Root Architectural Concepts in Japanese Design Principles
- A3.1** Use Natural Materials in Facades and Finish Them Honestly
- A3.2** Demonstrate Material Rhythm in Facade Expression
- A5.1** Shape Rooflines to Support Building Concept and Scale
- A7.1** Integrate Signage with Building Architecture
- A8.1** Use Transparency, Translucency, Screening and/or Layering at the Ground Floor Facade

Precedents outside of San Francisco

A1.1 ROOT ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPTS IN JAPANESE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Japantown was formed by many decisions external and internal to the community, but deep appreciation of Japanese cultural principles is at the core of hopes for future development over "style" or "decoration."

- » Review pages 6 and 7 for more in-depth explanation of principles commonly found in architecture, site design, and landscape projects in Japan, parts of the United States settled by Japan immigrants or by Japanese or Japanese America architects and landscape architects. This is not an exhaustive list but a starting point.
- » Buildings are but one element in what is really a landscape and designing them together holistically is a basic value for design.
- » Balance, harmony, and simplicity are fundamental values in Japanese design respected in Japantown. Having projects "fit" into the neighborhood is not a matter of visual alignments but a more compositional and comprehensive recognition of respect and naturalness in choice of materials, uses, access, shape, and manner.



Ruth Asawa art work: Origami Fountain and Concrete Bas-Relief Benches



Design for the new Peace Plaza uses a Japanese design principle of a "Wave" concept to convey tranquility and softness, highlighting the Japanese aesthetic of craft and simple, subtle, and unobtrusive beauty. A space that is, at its heart peaceful, using natural materials of carefully selected stone.

A3.1 USE NATURAL MATERIALS IN FACADES AND FINISH THEM HONESTLY

Craft is a foundational architectural principal in Japanese architecture where generation continuity is based more on handing down technique than physical structures. Natural textures express qualities of time, impermanence, and human-scale.

- » Stucco and wood are common materials used in Japantown facades are smaller-scales. If they are used at larger scales, they should be designed and dimensioned to work at that size and not just stacked or replicated without intention.
- » Concrete and stone are common materials used in Japantown at larger scales. Concrete must be designed thoughtfully to include texture, joints, and high-quality components so that is refined, intentional, and warm in expression rather than haphazard, coarsely detailed, or forboding.
- » Glass and steel are also natural materials and common in more modern Japanese

architecture but they should be used to complement surrounding textures and scales rather than harshly contrast them.

- » Combine and utilize materials so that they work together as expected: spanning materials should space, panel materials should work in planes, structural materials should hold weight, etc.
- » Material finishes should exemplify their original qualities not mask them other than supporting basic maintenance. Wood should express its fibrous, flexible, and weathering qualities. Stone should have texture and porosity.
- » Materials should not stand in for other materials.



Weathering is a natural wood expression.



Stone should express permanence and texture.



Glass is a natural material but should employ its natural characteristics.

A3.2 DEMONSTRATE MATERIAL RHYTHM IN FACADE EXPRESSION

Materials have a natural and comfortable span and expressing these dimensions helps provide pedestrian scale.

»



Wood framing expresses the commonly found lengths and dimensions of wood planks.



Stucco can present a strong and long planar face but is more human-scaled when broken with windows or other materials.



Wood slats help break facades into very fine-grained detailed proportions.

A5.1 SHAPE ROOFLINES TO SUPPORT BUILDING CONCEPT AND SCALE

Rooflines have historically varied in Japantown and represent different eras and types of Japanese influence or desired expression.

»



Smaller buildings with shaped roofs can break the scale of a long block face.



Roof shapes vary in residential areas as well with different types of historic styles.



Flat or sculpted more modern rooflines help define corners and strong streetwall edges.

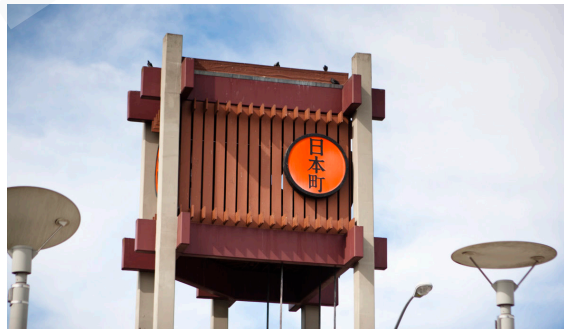
A7.1 INTEGRATE SIGNAGE WITH BUILDING ARCHITECTURE

Cultural and commercial expression can be thoughtfully integrated with architecture through the design and communication of signage. Signs can be thought of as smaller "architecture" rather than as incongruous decoration.

»



Depths at signage helps it fit into the building pattern.



Text can be added in intentionally compositional way.



Sign color and location can fit in balance and still be noticeable and explanatory.

A8.1 USE TRANSPARENCY, TRANSLUCENCY, SCREENING AND/OR LAYERING AT THE GROUND FLOOR FACADE

Privacy, semi-private, and publicness can layer into a ground floor facade both providing enlivening activity by both provoking interest and curiosity.

»



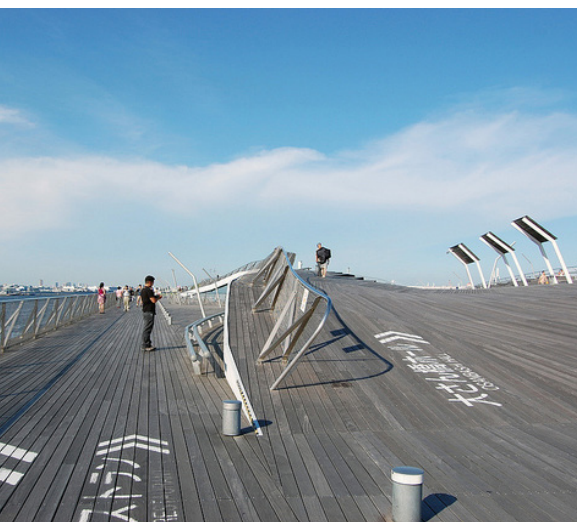
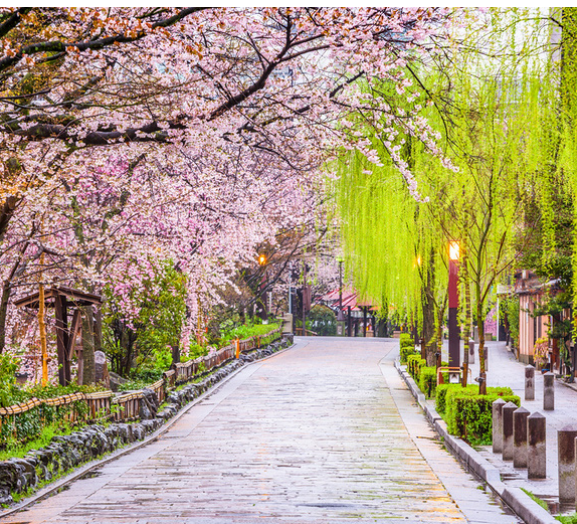
Landscape elements can help buffer the transition zones between inside and outside.



Screens, while they can seem more private, also invite light, some view, and variability.



Furnishing and signage can provide spatial layering between the interior and exterior areas.



P PUBLIC REALM

- P3.1** Create Public Space that Supports Cultural Activities
- P6.1** Balance Areas for Social Activity and Personal Space in Public Space Design
- P7.1** Highlight Sustainability Benefits of Open Space

P3.1 CREATE PUBLIC SPACE THAT SUPPORTS CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Japantown community members reflect that just being in Japantown public space is meaningful because it gives people a connection to others with shared histories, values, traditions, and continuity to the next generations. These "cultural spaces" works for many groups at different ages and provide a background for the events that root Japantown in its strength of experience.

»



Buchanan is designed more as a passageway, but mostly defines a singular block experience.



The mall interiors provide a sense of "public" space even though it is privately-owned and managed. Common space supports community experience.



Peace Plaza is a foundation space used as a destination and for large public events, such as the Cherry Blossom Festival.

P6.1 BALANCE AREAS FOR SOCIAL ACTIVITY AND PERSONAL SPACE IN PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

Open space has a dual role in Japantown, it is both: a place for people to meet, come together, and hold events and a place for personal reflection, a respite and to reconnect with nature.

»



Individual seating is important along with more open areas for gatherings.



Landscape may be for a visual natural experience alone.



The new Peace Plaza design proposal includes a variety of open and sheltered areas.

P7.1 HIGHLIGHT SUSTAINABILITY BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE

Sustainability not only has environmental benefits but the visual presence of natural features helps connect people to a fundamental principle in Japanese culture: to provide for future generations.

»



Adding natural elements in more dense urban spaces helps connect them visually to larger planting areas beyond.



Trees provide a significant spatial and sustainability benefit in otherwise paved areas.



Planting beds help define usage in open space, buffer people from larger groups, and provide stormwater benefits.

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