REPORT #4

SAWTELLE JAPANTOWN

Neighborhood Planning in Los Angeles Asian Neighborhoods

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PREFACE

These reports represent Asian American Studies' commitment to engaged scholarship through teaching and community-oriented research that are mutually beneficial. Community partners are instrumental in identifying research needs, participating in and facilitating data collection, assisting in analyzing information, and disseminating findings to inform policy debates and program development. For community members, we hope that they will gain insights from student research. At the same time, students gain real-world understanding of Asian American issues. The class that sponsored a community project serves as a bridge for students' academic training and their life after graduation. We hope that this project enables students to acquire and apply research skills and engage in broader social justice movements.

This course, "Capstone Community-based Research: Asian American Enclaves and Community Institutions," connected students to Sawtelle Japantown Association (SJA). The class was offered through UCLA's Asian American Studies Department. This year's project examines the factors that contribute to the vitality of ethnic enclaves and community institutions to then provide recommendations to SJA. SJA has been working since 2014 to preserve the cultural and historic aspects of the Sawtelle area. They are working to mobilize and strengthen community and cultural organizations so that its members have an active, strong, and effective voice in planning their neighborhood's future. This project emerged from a joint planning effort that started during the summer of 2014. Students conducted interviews with key stakeholders around four topics:

- Background and history of Japanese settlements in California and contemporary issues that Japantowns and Japanese neighborhoods experience.

- Efforts by Los Angeles Asian enclaves in seeking official neighborhood designation.

- The role of cultural institutions in preserving and promoting Asian American neighborhoods.

- Review of community-based initiatives to engage in neighborhood planning processes, particularly in Asian neighborhoods.

Most of these interviewees were located in the Los Angeles area. Based on their interviews, each group developed evidence-based recommendations to help SJA with its efforts of community building and preservation. We believe that the analyses and findings are also useful to other neighborhoods interested in promoting their unique cultural and ethnic identity.

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Sawtelle Japantown sign on Sawtelle Blvd.
Photo: C. Aujean Lee

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Neighborhood planning activity
Photo: Katy Wrathall

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to examine neighborhood planning in Los Angeles' Asian neighborhoods and provide recommendations to Sawtelle Japantown Association (SJA). We document various community-board approaches in their participation in neighborhood planning processes. Data was gathered from three neighborhoods: Chinatown, Little Tokyo, and Thai Town. Key leaders from neighborhood organizations were interviewed about neighborhood planning. A total of 11 interviews were conducted. (For more detailed information on the interviews and neighborhoods, please see Methodology in Appendix A.)

The report begins with background information on neighborhood planning, stakeholders and their roles, and examples of Asian American neighborhood case studies. We identify three key findings:

1. Importance of political connections;
2. Necessity of educating community members about upcoming plans within the neighborhood;
3. And providing the community with the resources it needs to engage in planning processes.

From these findings, the report concludes with recommendations for SJA to continue its efforts:

1. Continue to build strong relationships with political leaders;
2. Partner with universities;
3. And network with other neighborhoods and organizations to gain more resources.

These findings and recommendations can help facilitate and guide SJA in their future neighborhood planning.

Hashimoto Nursery on Sawtelle Blvd.
Photo: Randy Sakamoto

BACKGROUND

This section provides introductory information on neighborhood planning processes. First, this background explores the definition of neighborhood planning, the effects of neighborhood planning in communities, and the pros and cons of neighborhood planning. The next section explains what stakeholders are, their roles in contributing to neighborhood planning, and how their contributions can benefit a community. Lastly, the final section describes common issues in Asian neighborhoods and neighborhood engagement.

Neighborhood Planning

To define neighborhood planning, we first describe neighborhood and planning separately. From these definitions, we operationalize neighborhood planning as the process by which communities articulate their ideas about a neighborhood plan and attempt to improve their neighborhoods. These information provides background to understanding how community residents practically engage in these processes.

Defining neighborhood boundaries are notoriously challenging (Downey, 2006; Galster, 2001; Nicotera, 2007). Neighborhoods are both a geographic and social space "bounded differently by numerous and diverse individuals" (Lee, Oropesa, & Kanan, 1994). As part of their social aspects, many neighborhoods have community-based organizations (CBO) that help address resident needs (Entwisle, 2007). However, as McKnight (2014) recognized, a neighborhood is defined by "a related group of people," which may conflict with how the government and planners defines its boundaries.

Planners have defined "planning" based on their diverse set of values and visions (Allison, 1986). Allison (1986) highlights Wildavsky's conception that planning is "the attempt to control the consequences of our actions." A more updated definition for "planning" by the

American Planning Association (n.d.), explains that planning works "to improve the welfare of people and their communities by creating more convenient, equitable, healthful, efficient, and attractive places for present and future generations."

By combining these definitions, Action for Market Town (n.d.) defines neighborhood planning as attempts to aid people with greater ownership of plans and policies that affect their local area. Plans include housing type, density, land use, and future redevelopment plans. One way that residents can engage with these plans is by developing their own neighborhood plan that specific land use ideas. There has been an increase in the number of neighborhood plans created (Brunn et al., 2006). Through the different features that neighborhood planning addresses, there are different forms of benefits for the neighborhood. Benefits of neighborhood planning includes a variety of housing options, remodeling deteriorated and dilapidated structures, retaining the neighborhood characteristics, and increase the value of the neighborhood (City of Chelan, 2008).

According to Brunn et al. (2006), the most important outcome through neighborhood planning is outreach from the neighborhood to local institutions that are a critical part of the civic infrastructure which supports a community. However, planning efforts are defined by its stakeholders from within and outside of the neighborhood who have varying levels of power and agency. In particular, based on who is creating a neighborhood plan, stakeholder may minimally or extensively involve residents.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are defined as individuals or organizations who are affected by or who can affect a project's outcome (Nordmeyer, 2015). For example, stakeholders can involve planners,

developers, city officials, community residents, CBOs, and neighborhood visitors. Based on their level of engagement and power, stakeholders can provide valuable input to the community and improve outcomes (Ryckman, 2015). For example, stakeholders can secure resources to assist the neighborhood plans and build trust, which can lead to increased consensus for the project or final decision (Ryckman, 2015). However, stakeholders have different interests in a project, which can create conflicts or differences among these interests may pose as a difficulty (Budgetismo, 2014). Nevertheless, stakeholders who invest their time in neighborhoods often want a say in the decision making process. Depending on the dynamics of the process, more powerful stakeholders can focus on making the most profit (Budgetismo, 2014).

There are significant gradations to participation in neighborhood planning. Arnstein (1969) demonstrates the different levels of engagement through an 8-rung ladder: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control (see Figure 1). These steps highlight how participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless (Arnstein, 1969). Instead, participation without redistribution allows the power holders to claim that all sides are considered, but makes it possible for only them to benefit from the project (Arnstein, 1969). By understanding each of these stages, it is possible to achieve a fair plan from participating citizen and power holders.

Stakeholders can also be divided into primary, secondary, and key stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are those who are beneficiaries or targets of the planning, while secondary stakeholders are those who are involved with or are responsible for those whose jobs or lives may be affected by the neighborhood planning

("Community Tool Box," 2014). Lastly, key stakeholders are individuals (e.g., government official or policymakers) who can influence others and take an interest in the outcome of the planning ("Community Tool Box," 2014).

Another way to categorize stakeholders is by examining their power and interest (MindTools, 2015; see Figure 2). The Power/Interest Grid classifies stakeholders and provides suggestions on how to work with diverse stakeholders:

- High power, interested people: these are the people you must fully engage with and make the greatest efforts to satisfy.

- High power, less interested people: put enough work in with these people to keep them satisfied, but not so much that they become bored with your message.

- Low power, interested people: keep these people adequately informed, and talk to them to ensure that there are no major issues. These people can often be very helpful with details of your project.

- Low power, less interested people: Monitor these people, but do not bore them with excessive communication.

However, planners can help overcome these challenge by translating specialized information in a way that is accessible and understandable to everyone (Center for Watershed Protection, 2005).

Figure 1. Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation from Arnstein's eight-rung ladder

Source: Arnstein, 1969, p. 217
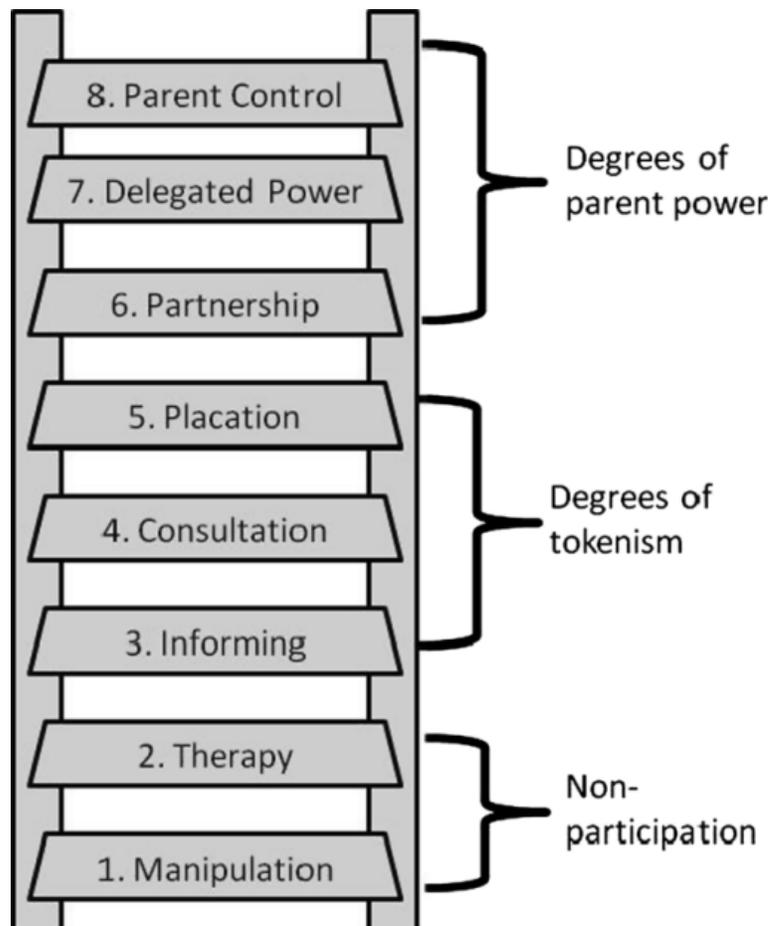
Neighborhood Planning Themes and Issues within Asian Neighborhoods

Using secondary research on neighborhood planning in Asian neighborhoods, we identified several themes: networking (gaining political support and or gaining more resources); establishing an identity for a community; the importance of cultural and historical preservation; and promoting resident civic engagement. These themes can help to inform how other neighborhoods engage with planners and policymakers.

First, networking plays a significant role in planning. It not only helps groups to gain political support, but also provides them the power to voice the community's opinions and gain access to resources. For example, in Asian-majority suburbs including Monterey Park, Asian American comprise a large enough proportion of the city to become a powerful voting bloc and helps with meaningful political participation (Kim, Tseng, & Zhou, 2008). According to Kristin Fukushima, political activism in a community can lead to empowering the community's voice (personal communication, February 25, 2015). In addition, networking helps communities to gain resources. For example, New York City's South Asian American population has been one of the fastest growing groups (Chhaya CDC, 2012). Thus, CBOs such as Chhaya Community Development Corporation (Chhaya CDC) work to gather data and publish reports that identify residents' needs (Chhaya CDC, 2012).

Community groups also can work to establish a common identity to help unify their position in neighborhood planning. Community groups can rally around establishing a physical landmark to identify the history of the area
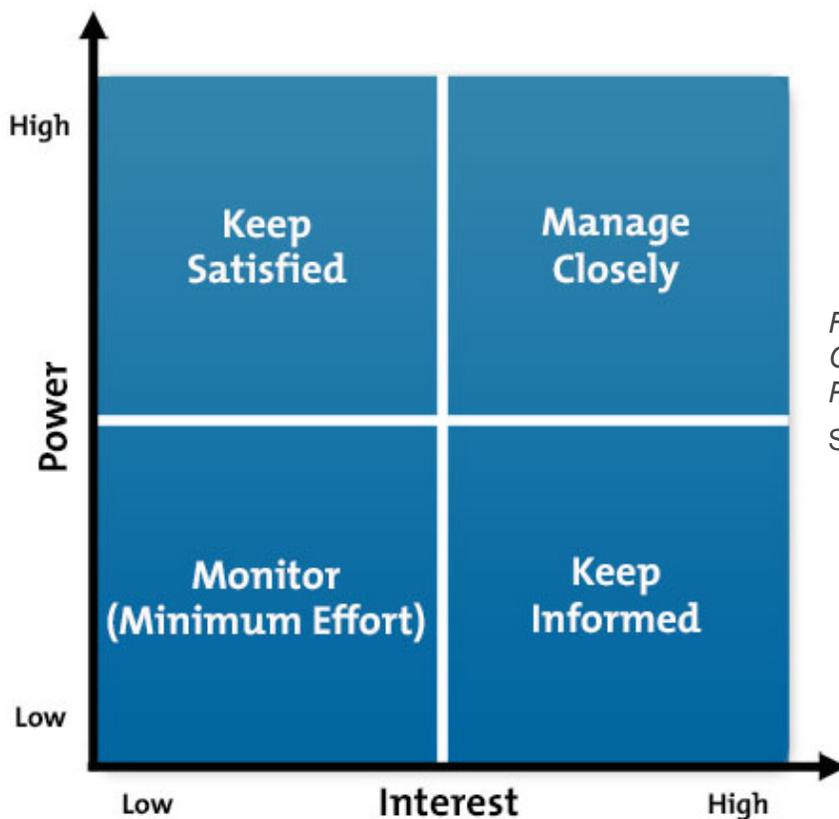
Figure 2. Power/Interest Grid for Stakeholder Prioritization
Source: MindTools, 2015.

Fan Cheng Wang and Lucy Chan meet with Amy Luengaalam (Thai CDC)
Photo: Fan Cheng Wang

and help retain their memories (Leong & Park, 2008). For example, the Thai chapel in the Silicon Valley creates a collective identity for local Thai (Bao, 2008). (See "Asian Neighborhoods and Official Designation" for more information about neighborhood designations.) By establishing an identity through neighborhood planning process, it will help signify the presence of an ethnic group living within that area.

Cultural and historical preservation is another key theme in Asian neighborhood planning processes. It can be difficult to decide which aspects of a neighborhood capture the culture and history of the area. For example, the Western South of Market (Western SoMa) Citizens Planning Task Force in San Francisco is a grassroots community-based group that brought together a broad range of stakeholders. The Western SoMA group hopes to preserve the cultural and economic diversity within the community, particularly historic sites and objects that were proposed to establish a Filipino social heritage district (Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force, 2008). By working through a citizens group, Filipino residents can incorporate their interests into future planning efforts.

Lastly, CBOs have worked to increase civic engagement and help empower residents to provide feedback. By informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities, and options, residents can genuinely participate (Arnstein, 1969). For example, the Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC) in Boston focuses on preserving and revitalizing Boston's Chinatown (ACDC, 2014). ACDC has actively encouraged community participation in the design and development of real estate projects (ACDC, 2014). They have host workshops that target residents and stakeholders who historically may have been marginalized to effectively participate in neighborhood planning processes and other civic engagement opportunities (ACDC, 2014). By empowering residents to participate, planning processes can ideally share power and decision-making.

Conclusion

By understanding neighborhood planning processes, we can learn how to become more inclusive as to who can participate. CBOs are particularly helpful in broadening resident participation in neighborhood planning. However, as previously described, Asian American CBOs have had to work to assert their residents' needs in planning. The next few sections of the report explore the different findings and recommendations obtained through interviews with key leaders from community based organization.

Neighborhood plan festival
Photo: litlnemo (Flickr)

REPORT FINDINGS

Based on our research, this section discusses three major findings:

1. Political connections help to support neighborhood planning;

2. A well-informed community is more effective at neighborhood planning;

3. and networking can help gather resources when CBOs lack staff and funding.

Each finding is described in further detail below.

1. It is important to be politically connected to gain support for neighborhood planning efforts.

All interviewees emphasized the idea of building a relationship with the City of Los Angeles, particularly city council members. Takao

Suzuki of Little Tokyo Service Center described how Los Angeles particularly has a strong city council structure (personal communication, February 20, 2015). Thus, even though a mayor typically holds power in most cities, Los Angeles is so large that city council members hold more power. Consequently, "without the support of city council in LA, nothing really moves" (Takao Suzuki, personal communication, February 20, 2015).

Having political connections has proven helpful for several interviewees. When city officials support projects, Scott Ito found that things will go smoothly and no one questions the plan (personal communication, February 9, 2015). At times, working with higher levels of politicians can help with credibility. For example, Kristen Fukushima, a member of the Little Tokyo Community Council, notes that when Little Tokyo was fighting for the Metro LA regional connector to be underground, Metro did not acknowledge Little Tokyo's request (personal

communication, February 25, 2015). However, the community council was able to gain support from Senator Daniel Inouye, who wrote a letter to Metro threatening to pull funding, After, Metro completely changed gears and began listening and accommodating some of the Little Tokyo Community Council's requests (personal communication, February 25, 2015).

On the other hand, without political support, some community efforts can become ignored. For example, Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED) and other Asian American CBOs attempted to pass an Interim Community Ordinance (ICO), which would limit the number of square footage a building could have, to prevent Walmart from moving to Los Angeles Chinatown. Unfortunately, the city council did not support the ICO because councilmembers typically agree with the standing member of the specific district (Daniel Huynh, personal communication, March 3, 2015). Similarly, Thai Community Development Center (Thai CDC) was working to hire a developer for a project. However, their councilmember at the time, Eric Garcetti, disagreed with their choice for a developer. After, he bifurcated the project, which eventually killed the project (Chancee Martorell, personal communication, February 18, 2015).

2. A well-informed community increases effectiveness in neighborhood planning.

Throughout this project, many interviewees expressed their belief that a well-informed community would increase their strength and ability to effectively participate in neighborhood planning. For example, Chancee Martorell explained that educating residents about the planning process increases community input in neighborhood planning process (personal communication, February 18, 2015). Doing so is

beneficial, as Eugene Moy of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance notes, because residents can then work to create a stronger voice in the neighborhood planning process (personal communication, March 1, 2015). Daniel Huynh adds that educating the community and its members of recent development plans is an important short-term goal that can later lead to a greater involvement in neighborhood planning (personal communication, March 3, 2015).

Kristin Fukushima also described how city agencies take advantage of residents' lack of understanding planning and intentionally do not reach out to gather opinions from diverse stakeholders (personal communication, February 25, 2015). Thus, CBOs are important because they can hold workshops and door-to-door campaigns about local events (Katie Wang, personal communication, March 4, 2015). Daniel Huynh also found that it was effective to hold workshops after work hours so that employed community members can attend these events (personal communication, March 3, 2015).

In conclusion, interviewees found that knowing one's rights helps residents to participate in neighborhood planning processes. By galvanizing residents, CBOs can help to strengthen and broaden the voice for community residents.

3. CBOs often lack staffing and funding resources. Thus, networking helps them to gather additional support and resources.

A majority of interviewees mentioned that they lack staffing and funding, which limits their effectiveness. Nevertheless, they have found ways to increase their resources, specifically through engaging with residents and connecting with other neighborhoods. These tactics not

Chinatown protest against Walmart, November 2013
Photo: C. Aujean Lee

only help CBOs gather additional supporters, but also helps them become acquainted with resident needs.

Chancee Martorell described several ways to engage a broad group of stakeholders:

> I think they need to make sure they engage all members of the community, all sectors and stakeholders, that they are as inclusive as possible…That they do adequate outreach and engagement, they should hold town hall meetings and then they should asses the needs of the community. You cannot plan without doing a need assessment because then you will be planning in vacuum (personal communication, February 18, 2015).

Here, she explains how including members of the community in the issues, they will more likely be more active and supportive in the future potential developments. Another tactic that was used by Thai CDC was a more personal form of networking, such as door-to-door knocking, distributing flyers on the street, letter mailing, and phone banking. This method is a direct way of engaging the neighborhood and has proven successful with Thai Town's official designation as well as other projects.

Another way to gather support is to form relationships with other neighborhoods and their organizations since many experience the same obstacles and can offer support and guidance to SJA. Chancee also described Thai CDC worked with other CBOs to obtain official designation, in part because Thai CDC had helped other ethnic communities in the past. Through inter-community networking as well as networking with other enclaves, support, whether it is through funding or staffing, can be found.

In conclusion, through conducting interviews with different community organizations in Little Tokyo, Thai Town, and Chinatown, CBOs experience a number of challenges with neighborhood planning. However, they have found some strategies to overcome these difficulties. The following section offers recommendations that can help SJA with more effective neighborhood planning.

UCLA Students on tour of Sawtelle Japantown with SJA
Photo: C. Aujean Lee

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on interviews, we offer three recommendations for SJA:

1. To become more politically connected;

2. To continue its partnerships with local universities;

3. And to network with community members and other communities.

Each action is discussed in further detail below.

1. SJA should continue to be more politically connected.

A short-term suggestion would be to develop relationships with political figures. Since Sawtelle is located in District 11 of Los Angeles, Sawtelle's councilman is Mike Bonin. SJA has already established a relationship with him, particularly through their campaigns for neighborhood designation. They can work to further develop this relationship by writing letters, attending campaign functions, updating his office on current affairs in Sawtelle, and inviting them to SJA events.

Additionally, SJA can use these connections to obtain an ordinance to help preserve the neighborhood. In the other three neighborhoods, they have restrictions on how tall buildings can be in the area. For example, Little Tokyo currently has a Community Design Overlay while Thai Town has a Vermont/Western Station Neighborhood Area Plan and Chinatown has a phrase in the Official City of Los Angeles Municipal Code. By using their political connections to obtain a similar city regulation can help SJA with its neighborhood planning processes.

After developing a relationship with their elected officials, SJA should also prepare for future politicians. Since politicians have term limits, SJA should continue to research and remain

informed about potential new candidates near the end of terms. They can invite candidates to speak at an SJA meeting to learn more about these individuals and establish a relationship with him/her before the person enters office.

2. As they have already done, SJA can continue working with local universities to become educated about the planning process.

SJA has already worked with the UCLA for this current report, connecting with Asian American Studies students. They should continue to nurture this relationship in addition to working with other universities.

Specifically in UCLA's Urban Planning Department, some classes consult with CBOs and provide strategies and research on ways to effectively work in planning processes. While these projects depend on the class and capacity of

instructors, some other partnerships can provide SJA with advice on their campaigns and projects. For example, UCLA has a site planning and development studio. At times, this class works with a CBO client. However, it is important that SJA contact these departments and instructors in advance, so they can properly accommodate SJA's requests in a timely fashion.

SJA can also pitch projects to undergraduate and graduate capstone courses in various departments. Currently, this course is under the Asian American Studies Department, rather than the Urban Planning department. Despite this course being under the Asian American Studies Department, much of this course connects with neighborhood planning.

In the long-term, SJA can create partnerships with other local universities, such as the University of Southern California's Sol Price School

SJA with councilmember Mike Bonin at Sawtelle Japantown designation ceremony

Photo: C. Aujean Lee

of Public Policy. SJA can connect with these universities to request for interns from their urban planning department. Following these steps, SJA can ensures SJA's success in creating a well-informed community and membership base to effectively engage in the neighborhood planning process.

3. Networking is important in gathering support from the community.

The first short-term recommendation is to outreach to local community members. Whether it be going door to door or making a phone call, establishing a relationship between SJA and the local community members is the first step in creating a network.

The second short term recommendation would be to have exciting programs to draw attention to SJA. Programs like the yearly Obon festival are a great way to attract people to participate and cherish the neighborhood. Other programs like education services and city tours are also great ideas.

Our first long-term recommendation is to continue to research other organizations that SJA can create partnerships. They may also offer advice for issues that are related to neighborhood planning. One way to search for potential partners is using the UCLA Asian American Studies Center's Asian American and Pacific Islander Community Directory (UCLA Asian American Studies Center, n.d.). The directory is available online and allows users to search for CBOs by location, keywords, services provided, and other terms. By building relationships outside of the community, SJA's network grows and their reach for support grows with it.

The last long-term recommendation would be setting up a networking/marketing committee. Perpetual growth for an organization is critical to a community, and through proper outreach,

SJA can thrive. By designating people who are interested in networking/marketing, strategies can be formed to take advantage of the current trends and interests of the community.

Conclusion

The recommendations that are provided in this report are based interviewees opinions. However, they had an overall consensus about the importance of political support, networking, and university connections. These recommendations can help SJA gain a more thorough understanding of the planning process and how to go about in the different sectors and aspects that influences the planning process.

SJA and Asian American Studies students
Photo: C. Aujean Lee

CONCLUSION

Sawtelle Japantown Association has already successfully engaged in neighborhood planning efforts through city council designation. However, we hope the report helps them broaden their participation in neighborhood developments, particularly with local gentrification and potential large commercial developments. By looking at organizations in Little Tokyo, Thai Town, and Chinatown, the report found the importance of CBOs in helping residents voice their opinions in their neighborhoods. While they experience challenges in fundraising and staffing, these CBOs have proved to also learn how to network with others to build their support base and gain more political say in their neighborhoods. In addition to Sawtelle Japantown, other neighborhoods can benefit from these findings to improve their effectiveness in neighborhood planning.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: METHODOLOGY

A total of 11 interviews were conducted with CBO leaders in Little Tokyo, Chinatown, and Thai Town. These neighborhoods were identified as locations where CBOs have engaged with neighborhood planning processes. Individuals were identified through first identifying CBOs in these neighborhoods using internet searches and recommendations from course instructors. From CBO websites, staff members with titles relevant to planning, real estate, or community development were contacted. If CBOs did not explicitly have staff members in these positions, we sent emails to directors or managers. Additional interviewees were recommended by other interviewees. A total of 25 organizations were contacted for interviews. In the end, interviews were conducted with 10 organizations.

The following provides more detailed information about key research questions, each neighborhood, and the interviewed organizations (see Table 1). This section also includes materials used during interviews, including a consent form, interview guide, and interview questions. Organizations were asked if they were involved in neighborhood planning—if they did not work in planning efforts, we asked them another set of questions. To develop the research questions and interview protocol, two mock interviews were conducted. These interviews help to understand how CBOs engage with neighborhood planning processes in Asian neighborhoods.

Key Research Questions

The goal of this report is to find how CBOs in Asian American neighborhoods engage in neighborhood planning. The interviews had the following key questions:

- What has been the nature of your organization's involvement in neighborhood planning?

- How has your organization been effective in neighborhood planning?

- What are some of the barriers that limit your organization's effectiveness?

- What are some ways that you think you can enhance your organization's effectiveness?

Table 1. Interviewee Information and Affiliated Organizations

NEIGHBORHOOD	INTERVIEWEE NAME	ORGANIZATION
Little Tokyo	Scott Ito, *Project Director*	Little Tokyo Service Center
Little Tokyo	Kimberly Kawasaki, *Community Manager*	Little Tokyo Service Center
Little Tokyo	Takao Suzuki, *Director of Real Estate*	Little Tokyo Service Center
Little Tokyo	Kristin Fukushima, *Member*	Little Tokyo Community Council
Little Tokyo	Patty Nagano, *Member*	Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress
Little Tokyo	Stephanie Nitahara, *Regional Director*	Japanese American Citizens League
Thai Town	Chanchanit (Chancee) Martorell, *Executive Director*	Thai Community Development Center
Thai Town	Amy Luengaalam, *Small Business Consultant*	Thai Community Development Center
Chinatown	George Yu, *Member*	Chinese Business Improvement District
Chinatown	Daniel Huynh, *Senior Project Manager*	Chinatown Community for Equitable Development
Chinatown	Katie Wang, *Member*	Chinatown Community for Equitable Development
Chinatown	Eugene Moy, *President*	Chinese American Citizens Alliance
Chinatown	Gilbert Hom, *Member*	Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

Note: Compiled by authors

Case Studies

Little Tokyo

Little Tokyo was chosen because of their extensive and consistent involvement in the local neighborhood plans. This enclave can be dated back to the late 1800s. During Executive Order 9066, many Japanese Americans lost their homes after their lives were uprooted (Asian Pacific Islander Preserve America Neighborhoods., n.d.b). After World War II, the neighborhood underwent urban renewal and led to increased Japanese corporation investment. Little Tokyo has an abundance of organizations that are constantly working together to make Little Tokyo a better neighborhood for all of its stakeholders. (See Figure 3 for a map of the neighborhood and "The Trajectory of Japanese American Neighborhoods" for more information.)

Figure 3. Little Tokyo

Source: Google Maps
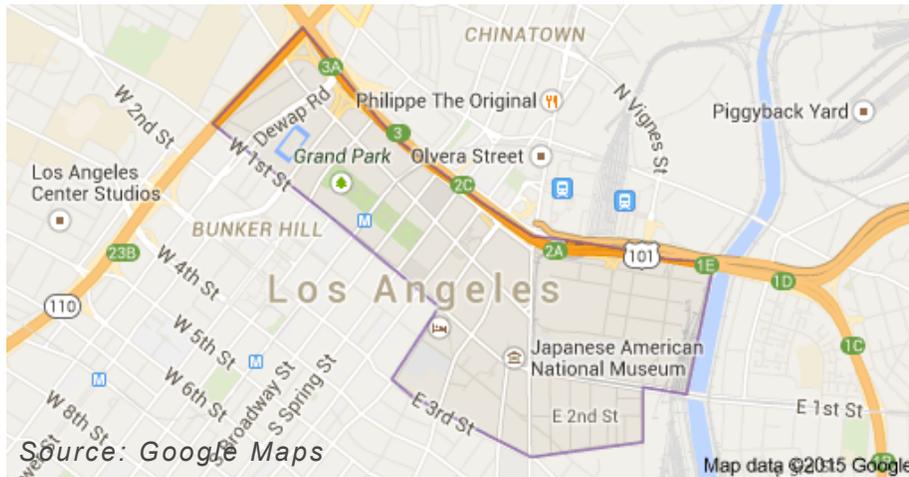
Chinatown

Chinese Americans were one of the first Asian Americans in Los Angeles, and Chinatown began during the 1850s. By 1870, an identifiable Chinatown was situated around what is now Union Station. However, the City of Los Angeles decided to relocate Chinatown in 1938 to build Union Station, forcing residents to move to the contemporary location of Chinatown. Chinatown is comprised of American-born Chinese families in the northwest area, while new Southeast Asian immigrants live in the southeast section (Asian Pacific Islander Preserve America Neighborhoods., n.d.a.; see Figure 4 for a map of Chinatown).

Figure 4. Chinatown

Source: Google Maps
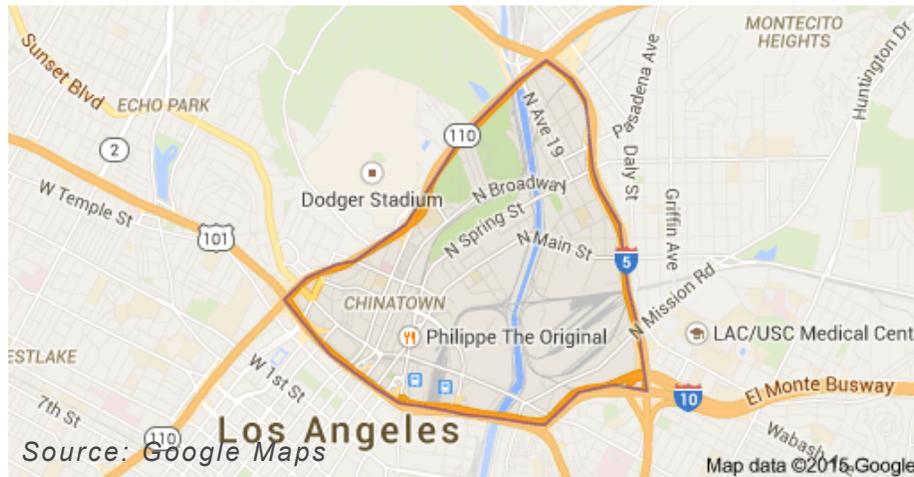
Thai Town

Thai Town is another Asian neighborhood that is helpful to look at for neighborhood planning. It is located in East Hollywood and has heavy congestion because of its proximity to Hollywood. The neighborhood has also emerged as an entry point for Thai immigrants since 1965, providing key cultural and economic services. After the 1992 Los Angeles uprisings and Northridge earthquake, Thai Americans organized to help revitalize their area that experienced much damage from these events (Asian Pacific Islander Preserve America Neighborhoods., n.d.c). The neighborhood has dozens of Thai-owned businesses. With a fast-paced environment and population growth, this area has developed and continues to change over time.

Participant Consent Form

University of California, Los Angeles

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH INTERVIEW IMPACT OF OFFICIAL DESIGNATION IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY NEIGHBORHOODS

I ,_____ on _____, volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by students from the Asian American Studies Department at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). I understand that the project is designed to gather information about the contributions of community organizations made to the development of their cities.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by student researchers from UCLA. The interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio recording will also be made. If I do not want to be recorded, I must let the interviewer know. If at any time during the interview I feel as if I no longer wish to be recorded, I may ask that the audio tape recorder be turned off.

4. I give consent that the researcher may use my name and any information obtained from this interview for the purpose of this study.

5. I understand that only the students of UCLA in AAS 185, the instructors of AAS185, and the community organization of the Sawtelle Project will have access to the recording and data from this interview.

6. I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

If you have any further questions, please contact Alex Okashita.

INTERVIEWEE: _____

DATE: _____

TIME: _____

LOCATION: _____

Our purpose today is to look at community-based organization initiatives that contribute to the development of neighborhood plans and programs. By interviewing key leaders of their respective communities, we are hoping to learn from their successes and failures.

With your consent, we would like to use the data collected from this interview to construct a plan for Sawtelle Japantown Association (SJA)'s future efforts as an ethnic neighborhood.

READ CONSENT FORM

The audio recording of this interview will be located in a password-protected dropbox and only be accessible to AAS 185 students and staff.

BACKGROUND

1. How long have you been working here?

2. Could you please tell us a little bit about your position and what you do at _____?

SCREENING AND NON-PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

I want to ask you some questions about _____and your participation in city and community planning process that affects your neighborhood.

For the purpose of this interview, we define planning as a comprehensive and in-depth planning for the future of one's neighborhood which focuses on meeting residents' needs and accommodating new development while maintaining the character of the neighborhood.

3. Do you and _____ think it is important for neighborhood stakeholders to be involved in the neighborhood planning process?

4. Has _____ participated in neighborhood community planning?

   a. IF YES, go to next section [Participating Organization]

   b. IF NO, continue to below question

5. Does _____ have any interest in becoming involved in neighborhood community planning?

    a. IF YES, continue to next question 4
    b. IF NO, ask why (e.g., because not within its mission, etc.)

6. Are there any barriers that are preventing _____ from being engaged in neighborhood plans? [e.g., lack of detail understanding, lack of staffing, lack of information] [Probe if necessary]

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATION

So next, I want to ask some general questions about _____'s participation in neighborhood planning.

7. Roughly how long and how frequent has _____ been involved in the planning process?

8. What has been the nature of _____'s involvement? (e.g., providing input to the development of plans, commenting on proposed developments, putting forth development proposals)

9. Does _____ have specific staff assigned to participating in the planning process?

10. Has _____ participated in any planning hearings, discussions or debates in a neighborhood council? Before the planning commission? Before the city council?

11. In general, do you think _____ has been effective in influencing the outcomes?

12. Does _____ participate in any government programs that have helped with _____'s neighborhood planning process?

13. What do you think are some of the barriers that limit _____'s effectiveness?

14. How are some ways that you think you can enhance _____'s effectiveness?

15. What is your personal role in contributing to _____'s neighborhood planning?

IF TIME: EXAMPLE OF SUCCESSFUL ENGAGEMENT IN A SPECIFIC PLANNING ISSUE

At this point, I would like to ask you some questions about a specific example of engagement in a planning issue. I would like to start with an example that you consider to be successful examples of how _____'s contributions to the neighborhood plans have helped shaped your community.

16. Do you have such an example?

    a. IF YES, go to NEXT QUESTION in this section.
    b. IF NO, make transition into NEXT SECTION

17. Can you briefly describe the issue or proposed development project? (Purpose, when, what, etc.)

18. What was the outcome?

19. Can you briefly talk about the approach or strategy used by _____ ?

    a. If response mentions STAKEHOLDER(S) go to Q 21
    b. If response does NOT mention STAKEHOLDER(S) go to Q 19

20. Were there neighborhood stakeholders (residents, business owners, etc.) and interested parties involved?

21. Were there other neighborhood stakeholders (residents, business owners, etc.) and interested parties involved?

22. How did _____ interact with these stakeholders?

23. Were there any obstacles? And if yes, how did you overcome them?

24. What factors do you think made _____'s participation successful?

25. What did you and _____ learn from this experience that improve your and _____'s effectiveness in subsequent planning efforts?

IF TIME: EXAMPLE OF UNSUCCESSFUL ENGAGEMENT IN A SPECIFIC PLANNING IS-SUE

Thank you for answers to the questions on a successful example. We believe that we can also learn lessons from a less successful example.

26. Do you have such an example?

   a. IF NO, GO TO NEXT SECTION.
   b. IF YES, continue

27. Can you briefly describe the issue or development project? (Purpose, when, what, etc.)

28. What was the outcome?

29. Can you briefly talk about the approach and/or strategy used by _____ ?

   a. IF RESPONSE TO MENTIONS STAKEHOLDER(S) GO TO QUESTION 31
   b. IF RESPONSE TO DOES NOT MENTION STAKEHOLDER(S) GO TO QUESTION 29

30. Were there neighborhood stakeholders (residents, business owners, etc.) and interested parties involved?

31. Were there other neighborhood stakeholders (residents, business owners, etc.) and interested parties involved?

32. How did _____ interact with these stakeholders?

33. What were the obstacles that made the effort unsuccessful? And if yes, how did you overcome them?

34. What did you and _____ learn from this experience that improve your and _____'s effectiveness in subsequent planning efforts?

CONCLUDING SECTION

Thank you so much for giving us your time and responding to our questions. I've only got a few more.

35. When a stakeholder asks you, "Why should I care", what would you say?

36. Are there any important points that I have missed regarding your and _____ 's participation in the planning process?

37. What advice would you give to a community organization that wants to become involved in neighborhood planning?

38. Is there any community-based organization that you would recommend us to interview? (Get contact information)

39. And lastly, do you have any tips on ways to improving our interviews?

Again, thank you for taking time away from your busy schedule. All this will definitely help us with our report, which will hopefully be completed in the next two to three months. We'll be sure to send you an electronic version.

REFLECTION

Difficulties that occurred:

Improvements to be made:

Misc. Notes:

Japanese Institute of Sawtelle mural
Photo: C. Aujean Lee