



Sustainable Little Tokyo Public Art Guidelines **Updated 11/2017**

Sustainable Little Tokyo is a community initiative that envisions a healthy, prosperous Little Tokyo that maintains its historic and cultural roots for future generations. Its mission is to develop a dynamic community-driven future for Little Tokyo through green initiatives, small business development, and cultural and arts programming that perpetuates its historic character.

These guidelines, approved by the Little Tokyo Community Council, are recommendations for all new public-facing art, whether on public or private property. This document provides a brief history of Little Tokyo, a recommended community process, a list of recommended content, and a list of recommended local, community-based artists. These guidelines are not intended to restrict or censor creative expression. Art has been an essential part in the growth and history of Little Tokyo, and our community welcomes and encourages all new art that respects the neighborhood's history and culture.

History

Little Tokyo is 1 of 3 remaining historic Japantowns left in the nation, over 135-years old, the second oldest neighborhood in the City of Los Angeles, and one of 14 of the inaugural California Cultural Districts. Because of racial covenants and redlining, Little Tokyo was one of the few places in Los Angeles where Japanese Americans could live and own property and businesses. Yet the neighborhood grew to become the home to Southern California Japanese and Japanese American community, culture, businesses, food, and spiritual institutions.

At 150 acres, Little Tokyo is one-quarter the size it was historically. Three waves of redevelopment and displacement have reshaped the community: the forced incarceration of people of Japanese descent during WWII from 1942-46, during which Little Tokyo became Bronzeville—a home for Black community and culture; the Civic Center expansion and loss of an entire block through eminent domain from 1952-53; and mass evictions and redevelopment by the Community Redevelopment Agency and Japanese investors in the 1970-80s. While Little Tokyo has been shaped by various outside forces, it also has a long history of community organizing for self-determination: labor and housing rights organizing, the Redress Movement for WWII reparations, the creation of Little Tokyo Service Center for culturally-specific social services and low-income housing, and more.

Little Tokyo has historically been and continues to be the center for Japanese Americans across Southern California, as well as a hub for the greater Asian Pacific Islander communities. We also acknowledge and celebrate our history as an multi-ethnic, multi-generational neighborhood, with strong ties to Latinx/Chicanx and Black/African American communities. As the community faces cultural, economic, and environmental changes with the Metro Regional Connector, the Metro West Santa Ana Branch, and the new Civic Center expansion, Little Tokyo is continuing decades of community work to sustain its history and culture as a home for the Japanese American community.



Recommended Selection Process

Option A

1. Inform the building tenants and impacted neighbors of the plan to create new public art.
2. Send out a Request for Proposals (RFP), incorporating the SLT Public Art Guidelines and giving priority to Little Tokyo artists (see Recommended Artist list).
3. Designate a selection committee made up of community stakeholders and representatives, and artists. SLT can coordinate the formation of this committee. We recommended including:
 - a. Little Tokyo Business Association or a business owner
 - b. Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC)
 - c. Little Tokyo Historical Society
 - d. Sustainable Little Tokyo (SLT)
 - e. Little Tokyo resident
 - f. Artist with community-based practice: experience engaging communities in either content creation or production, or in creating community-specific and culturally-relevant artworks
 - g. Representatives from spiritual institutions (Higashi, Nishi, Zenshuji, or Koyasan Buddhist Temples; Union or Centenary, St Frances Xavier Churches)
4. If it is not possible to form a selection committee, the existing SLT Cabinet, which consists of representatives from the four organizational partners, acts as selection committee.
5. The selection committee selects the top 3-5 artists, or 2-3 if a smaller pool.
6. The top artists are then given time to put together a design and presentation to the committee, for which they are paid.
7. The selection committee presents the designs to the developer/building owner and LTCC Board.
8. The selection committee then holds a community presentation at the LTCC General meeting to gather input from the public.
9. The top proposal is chosen and the artist is then contracted for the work.

Option B

1. Inform the building tenants and impacted neighbors of the plan to create new public art.
2. Consult with SLT and LTCC about content, placement, and artist options.
3. Prioritize local, vetted, and recommended artists from SLT Artist Shortlist.
4. Present completed proposals and concepts to LTCC General and Board meetings for community input prior to finalizing artwork.

Recommended Fees

- Proposal/design fees: \$1,000 to \$2,500 or more; for smaller commissions, \$500 to \$700
- Commission fees for painting: \$5,000 to \$50,000 or more, depending on the size, complexity, and materials



Recommended Content

- **Historically accurate depictions** of Little Tokyo. Representations of both the past, present, and future. *Contact Little Tokyo Historical Society for historical guidance.*
- **Culturally relevant** representations for Little Tokyo's historic Japanese American community, which also acknowledge and reflect our historically multiracial, multigenerational neighborhood. *Contact Little Tokyo Community Council for community guidance.*
- **Culturally sensitive** representations. We recommend avoiding stereotypical imagery when possible, but are open to innovative interpretations. *Contact Sustainable Little Tokyo for community guidance.*

Recommended Medium

We appreciate all forms of public art, but encourage mediums beyond painting murals and sculptures, such as:

- Recurring arts or cultural programming
- Performing arts
- Maintenance of existing public art

Examples of Acceptable Public Art



Louis Quaintance and Eugene Daub
California Japantown Landmarks Project (2006)

Three-sided bronze sculpture sharing a larger history of U.S. Japantowns in LA, San Jose, and San Francisco.

- Shares community-specific and broader Japanese American history
- Visible from all sides and angles
- Long-term durability



Tony Osumi, Sergio Diaz & Jorge Diaz
Home is Little Tokyo (2005)

A large 16x40' painted mural with figures and icons representing important history and culture related to Little Tokyo.

- Shares history and culture
- Community engaged in content creation and actual production
- Warm and colorful aesthetic coupled with community-specific content
- Placed in highly visible, centralized location
- Lighting and graffiti mitigation



**Sheila Levrant de Bretteville with Sonya Ishii
Omoide No Shotokyo (Remembering Old Little Tokyo) (1996)**

A Little Tokyo historical timeline (1890-1940), quotes, and illustrations inlaid into the sidewalk along Historic First Street.

- Shares history
- Creative installation
- Integrates seamlessly into the neighborhood

Examples of Unacceptable Public Art



**Angelina Christina & Fin DAC
Mural on Winston St (2017)**

- Stereotypical imagery of Japanese person in traditional clothing
- Disconnected from community's history





Toyo Miyatake plaque at Wakaba (2017)

- Poor placement, lack of visibility (small, away from more trafficked areas)
- Lacks historical context or information
- Lacks lighting, no graffiti mitigation

However, we encourage art that shares important history and figures, and appreciate the collaboration with Toyo Miyatake's studio and family to create this plaque.



	<p>Seating at Ava (2017)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nonfunctional seating (uncomfortable, no shade)• Sculptural form is inconsistent with neighborhood• Lacks connection to community's culture or history <p>However, we encourage public art forms aside from painting and recommend using public art to make functional public or recreational spaces,</p>
	<p>Bicicleta Sem Freuioural Mural on Boyd St (2014)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lacks community-specific or culturally-relevant content• Primarily aesthetic (colors, shapes, abstraction)• Obstructed visibility (main figure is only visible from afar, in a car, or from rooftop)• Lacks graffiti mitigation

Recommended Artist Shortlist

Sustainable Little Tokyo strongly encourages prioritizing local and community-centered artists who have shown commitment in our community. Please note that some of the artists do not have websites or representative online portfolios. To give equal opportunity to our elders and offline artists, please contact them directly for their portfolios.

Please review the SLT Recommended Artist List living document here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19ZKDIMGwqf6nrVuLQynm6z8uzDCH-Xm22AMLFdOeTXM/edit?usp=sharing>

Community Consultation Package

For more in-depth community engagement, SLT can offer a community consultation package at a negotiable rate for the following:

1. Creation of project-specific artist deck from SLT Artist Shortlist.
2. Outreach, coordination and facilitation of community meetings.
3. Participation in artist reviews and/or interviews.
4. Historical walking tour of Little Tokyo for developers, building owners, and prospective/commissioned artists to provide important, site-specific context.



Resources

Community and Culture

Los Angeles Buddhist Temple Federation

<https://labtfinfo.weebly.com> | revpeterhata@gmail.com | Facebook: @losangelesbuddhisttemplefederation

The Los Angeles Buddhist Temple Federation is comprised of eight temples with the common goal of sharing the timeless teachings of the Buddha. The mission has its roots in the history of the Japanese American community of Southern California. At the beginning of the 20th century, large numbers of Japanese immigrants began to settle in the Los Angeles area and Buddhist temples were built to serve the spiritual needs of the community. The first Buddhist temple was founded in 1904 in present-day Little Tokyo, and many others followed. Though the temples were often of various denominations, they joined together every year to hold joint Hanamatsuri services (the "flower festival" which celebrates the Buddha's birthday on April 8) and Bodhi Day services ("enlightenment" day which celebrates the Buddha's awakening on December 8). This twice-a-year cooperative effort was the foundation for the present Los Angeles Buddhist Temple Federation. In 1966, the Los Angeles Buddhist Temple Federation was incorporated as a non-profit religious organization under the laws of the State of California.

Japanese American Cultural & Community Center

www.jacc.org | info@jacc.org | (213) 628-2725

Founded in 1971, Japanese American Cultural & Community Center is one of the largest ethnic arts and cultural centers of its kind in the United States. A hub for Japanese and Japanese American arts and culture and a community gathering place for the diverse voices it inspires – Japanese American Cultural & Community Center connects traditional and contemporary; community participants and creative professionals; Southern California and the world beyond.

Little Tokyo Community Council

www.littletokyola.org | info@littletokyola.org | (213) 293-5822

The Little Tokyo Community Council is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) with membership representing the business, residential, organizational, and religious stakeholders in Little Tokyo as well as other vested interests. LTCC advocates on behalf of the Little Tokyo community, and provides an inclusive space for a broad range of stakeholders where key community issues can be discussed and the community can speak forcefully with one voice to affect positive change for Little Tokyo.

Little Tokyo Service Center

<http://www.ltsc.org> | communications@ltsc.org | (213) 473-3030

LTSC CDC collaborates with other nonprofit, community-based organizations to help them build multifamily affordable housing projects that serve their communities, and increase the capacity of the organizations to engage in broad neighborhood-based community building work including affordable housing. Through these collaborations, LTSC CDC has partnered with over 15 community-based organizations and has completed 22 projects with 800 units of affordable housing and approximately 125,000 square feet of community facility space. LTSC CDC has developed more than \$200 million in community-serving nonprofit real estate projects.



Sustainable Little Tokyo

www.sustainablelittletokyo.org | sustainable@littletokyola.org | 213-268-2727 ext.107

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Small Business and Property

Little Tokyo Business Association

<http://www.visitlittletokyo.com/> | (213) 880-6875

Founded in 1959, the Little Tokyo Business Association (LTBA) is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization dedicated to the growth and development of Little Tokyo as a vibrant, diverse and multi-faceted district of Downtown Los Angeles

(Also Little Tokyo Service Center)

History

Little Tokyo Historical Society

<http://www.littletokyohs.org/> | littletokyohs@gmail.com |

The Little Tokyo Historical Society (LTHS) focuses on researching and discovering the historical resources, stories, and connections of sites, buildings, and events related to Little Tokyo as an ethnic heritage neighborhood. LTHS is committed to documenting and verifying history of locales, sites, and buildings, as well as preserving and sharing the history and personal stories of Little Tokyo and its residents.

Japanese American National Museum

<http://www.janm.org> | info@janm.org | (213) 625.0414

The Japanese American National Museum is the largest museum in the United States dedicated to sharing the experience of Americans of Japanese ancestry. The mission of the Japanese American National Museum is to promote understanding and appreciation of America's ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience.

Go For Broke National Education Center

<http://www.goforbroke.org/> | info@goforbroke.org | (310) 328-0907

Go For Broke's mission is to educate and inspire character and equality through the virtue and valor of our World War II American veterans of Japanese ancestry. Founded in 1989, GFB built the Go For Broke Monument in 1999 and the National Education Center in 2016—both located in Little Tokyo. GFB has trained over 3,000 teachers, collected more than 1,180 oral history interviews, and opened a one-of-a-kind history exhibition. And much more.