



HISTORIC RESOURCE REVIEW

Record No.: 2024-002014HRR
Project Address: Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way
Zoning: Japantown Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District
50-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: N/A
Staff Contact: Rebecca Salgado – 628-652-7332
rebecca.salgado@sfgov.org

HISTORIC RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION

PROJECT SPONSOR SUBMITTAL

To assist in the evaluation of the proposed project, the Project Sponsor has submitted a:

Consultant-prepared Historic Resource Review report
Prepared by: Page & Turnbull (P&T), *California Department of Parks and Recreation Building, Structure, and Object Record* (May 2009)

Staff consensus with Consultant’s report: Agree Disagree

Additional Comments: Planning Staff concurs with the report provided by P&T. Please see the Project Evaluation section of this document.

BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

Neighborhood: Western Addition
Date of Construction: 1976
Property Type: Pedestrian Mall
Architect/Urban Planner: Rai Okamoto
Artist: Ruth Asawa
Size: Approximately .4 acres
Landscape Features: Wood and concrete entrance gate at north end, metal decorative, circular concrete planters
Topography: slight slope downward north to south

Vegetation: Prunus serrulate, Podocarpus gracilior, acer palmatum, pinus nigra
Structures: None
Circulation: Cast-in-place exposed aggregate concrete, cobblestones
Furniture: Wood fixed benches, semicircular stone benches around water fountains
Constructed Water Features: Two water fountains with bronze sculptures

EXISTING PROPERTY PHOTOS / CURRENT CONDITIONS



Source: San Francisco Planning Department (2022/2023)

PRE-EXISTING HISTORIC RATING / SURVEY

- Category A – Known Historic Resource, per: _____
- Category B – Age Eligible/Historic Status Unknown
- Category C – Not Age Eligible / No Historic Resource Present, per: _____

Adjacent or Nearby Historic Resources: Yes No 1830 Sutter Street (Landmark No. 291); Kinmon Gakuen/Golden Gate Institute (Landmark No. 288)

CEQA HISTORICAL RESOURCE(S) EVALUATION

Step A: Significance

Individual Significance	Historic District / Context Significance
Property is individually eligible for inclusion in a California Register under one or more of the following Criteria: Criterion 1 - Event: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Criterion 2 - Persons: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Criterion 3 - Architecture: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Criterion 4 - Info. Potential: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Period of Significance: <u>1976</u>	Property is eligible for inclusion in a California Register Historic District/Context under one or more of the following Criteria: Criterion 1 - Event: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Criterion 2 - Persons: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Criterion 3 - Architecture: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Criterion 4 - Info. Potential: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Period of Significance: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Contributor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A

Background

The following evaluation is based on the DPR form prepared by Page & Turnbull (dated May 2009), primary and secondary source materials submitted by the project sponsor as part of the Historic Resource Review application, additional information found in the Planning Department’s files, and other records such as newspapers, articles, and city agency reports.

The subject property at Buchanan Mall, AKA Osaka Way, is a pedestrian mall/open space that extends from Sutter Street to Post Street in Japantown, with entrances to the mall at both ends of its one-block span. Two- and three-story buildings housing shops, restaurants, and office uses line both sides of the mall. Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way was designed by architect and planner Rai Okamoto in collaboration with artist Ruth Osawa. The primary features of the mall include a winding cobblestone “river” extending the length of the mall with select inset boulders, flanked by exposed aggregate concrete sidewalks on either side of the cobblestone river; two bronze fountains located within the river, each encircled by multilevel stone benches; a wood-and-concrete entrance gate at Sutter Street; wood benches with decorative concrete side panels; round concrete planters irregularly interspersed around the mall; rectangular in-ground planting areas; and decorative metal light poles featuring Japanese characters and origami figures. The park is open to the public at all hours.

Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way is located in Japantown, within the larger Western Addition neighborhood. Japantown’s boundaries roughly follow the boundaries of California Street to the north, O’Farrell Street to the south, Gough Street to the east, and Fillmore Street to the west. The Japantown neighborhood contains a range of building types reflecting the neighborhood’s multiple periods of development. The majority of the commercial buildings flanking Buchanan Mall and located elsewhere in Japantown were built in the 1960s through the 1980s, with most buildings being between one and three stories tall. Many of the residential buildings surrounding Japantown to the north date to the turn of the 20th century, with some dating from as early as the 1870s. The Japan Center Malls and Peace Plaza and Peace Pagoda occupy the blocks directly to the south of Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way.

The Western Addition neighborhood first began being developed as part of the City of San Francisco in the mid-to-late 1800s, as the city extended its boundaries further and further west toward the Pacific Ocean. Starting in the 1870s, speculative rowhouses began to be built in the neighborhood, whose new residents benefited from convenient streetcar access to San Francisco’s downtown for work and shopping, and a commercial strip developed along several blocks of Fillmore Street. While most of the occupants of the primarily residential Western Addition neighborhood prior to the 1906 earthquake and fires were of European descent, the neighborhood underwent significant demographic changes as a result of this natural disaster. Because this neighborhood remained mostly intact after the earthquake and fires, many San Franciscans who had been displaced from other neighborhoods moved to the neighborhood for temporary or permanent housing. The Western Addition also served as the temporary location of many institutional and commercial services for the city as a whole, and even housed the offices of City Hall while the Civic Center neighborhood was being rebuilt. Existing single-family homes were subdivided into apartments, and the overall residential density as well as the neighborhood’s racial, ethnic, and economic diversity increased. This post-earthquake period is when present-day Japantown first began to take shape. The following description of the 20th century development of the Japantown neighborhood is taken from the draft landmark designation report for the Peace Pagoda, located across the street from Buchanan Mall:

Japanese residents began moving to this area of the Western Addition soon after the 1906 Earthquake, and by the 1920s had established a thriving and self-contained community. By 1940, Japantown embraced more than a dozen blocks and was home to more than 200 businesses owned by Japanese Americans. At the outbreak of World War II, however, all persons of Japanese ancestry in the neighborhood were forcibly removed and sent to concentration camps. Their former homes were soon occupied by thousands of newly-arrived war workers, most of whom were African American.

Following the war, many Japanese returned to the Western Addition and worked to reestablish themselves within the neighborhood. The area’s aging building stock and multi-racial, multi-ethnic demographics, however, led some civic leaders to characterize the area as “blighted.” This opened the door to the federally-funded Western Addition Redevelopment projects A-1 and A-2, administered by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. Though vigorously opposed by many leaders of the African American and Japanese American communities in the Western Addition, these projects would eventually demolish dozens of blocks and displace

thousands of residents.¹

The Western Addition Redevelopment project, one of the first urban renewal projects of its scale in the United States, had been in the works since 1942, when civic leaders expressed a desire to “find a suitable plan that will prevent the Japanese district from turning into the worst slum in the history of the city.”² The larger Western Addition Redevelopment project was broken down into two phases, A-1 and A-2. Phase A-1, which began in 1958, focused on the blocks along Geary Street and involved the displacement of 8,000 residents and many minority-owned businesses from a 27-block area of the Fillmore and Japantown. Many buildings in the redevelopment area were demolished and replaced with the Geary Expressway, the Japan Cultural and Trade Center (now the Japan Center Malls), and several housing complexes including St. Francis Square and The Sequoias.

Phase A-2 of the Western Addition Redevelopment project began in the early 1960s. The 2011 *Japantown Historic Context Statement* prepared by Donna Graves of Page & Turnbull, Inc. for the Planning Department includes the following information about Phase A-2 of the Western Addition Redevelopment project, under which Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way was designed and constructed:

Planning for the A-2 phase of redevelopment began even before ground was broken on Japan Center, and encompassed an even larger area of seventy blocks and 277 acres surrounding the A-1 area and extending from Bush to Grove streets and from Broderick Street to Van Ness Avenue. As the SFRA announced plans for the launching of the A-2 phase, community members who had witnessed the ongoing mass evictions and clearance of the neighboring A-1 area became concerned and alarmed at the possibility of the same occurring in the remainder of Japantown. SFRA director, Justin Herman, stated his commitment to preserving existing buildings in the project area “as much as possible.” In part at the urging of the SFRA, the United Committee for the Japantown Community (UCJC) was formed in 1962 with over 200 members. The group’s “Statement of Policy” included retention of Japanese American residents and businesses as the highest priority. After negotiations with the SFRA, the UCJC formed the *Nihonmachi* Community Development Corporation (NCDC) in 1964, which became responsible for “allocating development sites to its members, undertaking the financing an development of shared facilities, [and] coordinating community interests” with the Agency. “*Nihonmachi*” became the formal designation for the four-block area bounded by Webster, Sutter, Bush and Laguna streets.

The architectural team of Rai Y. Okamoto and Van Bourg/Nakamura was selected by the SFRA from a list of consultants drafted by the UCJC to prepare concept plans envisioning a new “village-scale” development and a community center for *Nihonmachi*. Okamoto and Van Bourg/Nakamura’s urban design study for *Nihonmachi* describes “the wishes of the local citizens” for an environment characterized by an “intimate scale of buildings and spaces.” These objectives were clearly a response to the massive scale of Japan Center and its erasure of historic Japantown. The report devoted several pages to discussing the implications of the SFRA and UCJC’s expressed desire that “ethnic character” be encouraged wherever possible. Rather than propose that particular eras or styles of Japanese design be the model for a new *Nihonmachi*, the authors listed aspects of traditional and contemporary design in Japan as “critical areas where sensitivity and good judgment should be applied.” Attention to Japanese use of materials, structure, space, modularity, roofs and gardens by “gifted architects and landscape architects” would “serve the special needs of a *Nihonmachi*.”³

The central feature of the A-2 phase was to be Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way, with small-scale commercial buildings flanking a pedestrian mall in a reference to traditional Japanese villages. After World War II ended and Japanese Americans were able to return to the Japantown neighborhood, the area around Buchanan Street and Post Street became the new commercial center of Japantown. The creation of Buchanan Mall would require the demolition and relocation of many of these businesses, but the intention was for the Buchanan Mall to reimagine the commercial center of Japantown and provide a place “where shoppers may move from shop to shop in an environment not

¹ San Francisco Planning Department, *Draft Landmark Designation Report: Peace Pagoda* (San Francisco, December 6, 2017), 4.

² “Slum Danger in ‘Jap Town’ Under Study; Civic Leaders Seek Suitable Plan for Evacuated Region,” *San Francisco News*, April 13, 1942; Quoted in Donna Graves, Page & Turnbull, Inc., *Japantown Historic Context Statement* (San Francisco, May 2011), 53; accessed online on 3/21/2024 at <https://sfplanning.org/project/citywide-historic-context-statement#completed>.

³ *Ibid.*, 60–61.

unlike Tokyo's Ginza in its variety and activity."⁴

In 1963, Okamoto and Van Bourg/Nakamura shared their early vision for the desired character of open space in the A-2 Redevelopment Area in their report "Nihonmachi: An Urban Design Study in the Western Addition Area A-2," which provided design guidelines for the overall form and character of the Nihonmachi area:

Open Space

Emphasis has been placed on an open-space pattern which will provide a unifying system in the form of a pedestrian pathway which establishes a continuous thread through all parts of the Nihonmachi. This thread will have small pause points at locations determined by the need for recreation or rest areas, contact with parking, location of art objects, special landscape features, and access to residential groups or community structures and institutional buildings. The form of the open-space system is the result of careful placement of buildings, walls, landscape elements, and street furniture.... It will be an urban hallway, linking the various elements of the Nihonmachi and designed to be used by walkers only.

An additional function of the proposed open space system is to assist in controlling the appearance and character of the Nihonmachi. High standards of design for the spaces in terms of materials, textures, planting, furniture, lighting, and the preservation of a small, intimate scale will do much to achieve the desired urban qualities regardless of the design of buildings.

Landscaping

Attention has been given to the selection and organization of natural materials which will relate to the traditions suggested by the nurseries and plant shops in the area.

Trees, ground cover, shrubs, and turf will be used to define further and emphasize the pedestrian spaces as well as to humanize service and parking areas. Different plant species will give particular identity to various areas—pedestrian, service, rest, vehicular—and will impart visual variety when juxtaposed at pause points and intersections. For example, geometric clumps of conifers will be placed at strategic plaza points. Plane trees along Sutter Street will form a pedestrian canopy, and a variety of specimen trees will accent the shopping malls.

Exterior Furnishings

Exterior furnishings include street lighting devices, trash containers, communications and information elements, rest and public seating facilities, direction indicators, public shelters, small personal vehicle storage facilities and the materials, textures, forms, walls, rails, and stairs which must be assembled and related to form these devices or relate them to each other.

In the case of street lighting a unique opportunity exists to identify and intensify the special character of the Nihonmachi. Fixtures should be designed which provide adequate illumination, but of a quality approximating that which we expect from lanterns. Literal imitation of traditional lanterns should, of course, be avoided. A similar design philosophy should underlie the other elements of exterior furniture. Hence, a telephone kiosk should not resemble a pagoda, but might be detailed in a way consistent with Japanese wood construction. It is important to remember that the best architecture of any derivation demonstrates qualities and characteristics similar to its counterparts elsewhere.⁵

While this document came out more than a decade before Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way completed construction, many of these early principles—including the desire for an intimately scaled pedestrian pathway, geometric groupings of landscaping, and specialized light fixtures—found their way into the open space's final design, which was developed throughout the 1970s.

⁴ Van Bourg/Nakamura & Rai Y. Okamoto, "Nihonmachi: An Urban Design Study in the Western Addition Area A-2," (San Francisco Redevelopment Agency: San Francisco, 1963), 5; accessed online at <https://archive.org/details/nihonmachiurband1519okam/page/n3/mode/2up>.

⁵ Van Bourg/Nakamura & Rai Y. Okamoto, "Nihonmachi: An Urban Design Study in the Western Addition Area A-2," (San Francisco Redevelopment Agency: San Francisco, 1963), 14–16; accessed online at <https://archive.org/details/nihonmachiurband1519okam/page/n3/mode/2up>.

Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way was primarily designed as a collaboration between architect and urban planner Rai Okamoto and artist Ruth Asawa. Okamoto was the first to become involved with the project, as he was a member of the team chosen to provide concept plans for the entire A-2 phase redevelopment area along with Van Bourg/Nakamura, an Oakland-based architectural firm founded in the 1950s by Mitchell Van Bourg and Noboru Nakamura. The San Francisco Planning Department's *Architecture, Planning, and Preservation Professionals* written compilation has identified Rai Okamoto as an architect of merit, and provides the following biographical information:

Rai Yukio Okamoto was born in Philadelphia in 1927. He studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and graduated in 1950. He went on to receive a master's in architecture from MIT in 1951 and a master's in urban planning from Yale University in 1954. He was a Fulbright Scholar in France in 1954 and 1955.

After he returned, he started his independent architecture practice in San Francisco in 1960, where he worked until 1963. In 1963, he began work on the Japantown Redevelopment Project with the firm Van Bourg/Nakamura. In 1964, he opened the firm, Okamoto-Liskamm, Incorporated and worked there until 1993; the firm was successful and eventually opened offices in Seattle and New York. In the 1970s, he worked on the Buchanan Mall in Japantown and from 1976 through 1980, he served as the Director of Planning for the City and County of San Francisco. He died in 1993.⁶

Notable projects in the Bay Area attributed to Mr. Okamoto include the larger Nihonmachi Redevelopment Urban Design (1963, with Van Bourg/Nakamura), Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way (1976), and Oakland City Center Redevelopment (1966).

Artist Ruth Asawa first became involved with the design for Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way in 1973, when Okamoto reached out to her after first becoming aware of her work in the 1950s. Asawa was born in 1926 in Norwalk, California. In 1942, during World War II, she was held in internment camps with her family, from which she graduated high school. In 1943, she attended Milwaukee State Teachers College through the assistance of a Quaker organization, with the intention of studying to become an art teacher, and later attended classes at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, an experimental art and design school where she studied with artist Josef Albers. While still a student there, Asawa's wire sculptures began to gain attention from the art world and the press. In 1949 she moved to San Francisco, where she continued her artistic practice. In addition to her work on Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way, notable projects in the Bay Area created by Ruth Asawa include *Andrea*, a fountain in Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco (1966); the *Hyatt on Union Square Fountain* in San Francisco (1973); the *Aurora*, a fountain at Bayside Plaza in San Francisco (1986); and the *Japanese Internment Memorial Sculpture* in San Jose (1994). Her works are held in the collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among other institutions. Asawa was also deeply involved with art education and advocacy activities in San Francisco throughout her career, and in 2011 a public high school for the arts that she helped to create was renamed the Ruth Asawa School of the Arts in her honor. In 1982, San Francisco declared February 12 to be "Ruth Asawa Day," in recognition of her work as an artist and arts education advocate. Ruth Asawa died in 2013.

The elements of Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way that Asawa had direct involvement with include the two fountains, the cobblestone river path, and the wood benches with decorative side panels. Both Asawa and Okamoto had studied with Josef Albers, and Asawa attributed the design for her fountains both to her time spent working with folded paper in Albers's design studio as well as her experience of origami when she was a child. The relief panels at the sides of the benches found in Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way, which feature imagery from Japanese festivals and folk tales, were designed by Asawa in collaboration with neighborhood children.

Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way officially opened to the public at a ceremony held on March 27, 1976. The following year, however, the fountains in the mall were turned off due to drought and remained dry until 1979. When the fountains were turned back on, they did not function properly, and the steel fountain sculptures began to rust. In 1995, the

⁶ San Francisco Planning Department, *Architecture, Planning, and Preservation Professionals*, "Bios M through O" (San Francisco, 2023), 71; accessed online on 3/21/2024 at <https://sfplanning.org/project/architecture-planning-and-preservation-professionals-collection-biographies#info>.

deteriorated steel fountains were removed, and neighborhood community groups set about to find a way to replace the fountains with replicas. In 1997, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and the Nihonmachi Parking Corporation agreed to fund the recasting of the fountains in bronze using molds made of the original fountains. In 1999, a rededication ceremony was held for the replacement fountains. At the same time that the fountains were reinstalled, modifications were made to the cobblestones around the fountains to give them a smoother texture. In 2007, Buchanan Mall was given the honorary street name of Osaka Way via a Board of Supervisors resolution to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the San Francisco-Osaka Sister City Association.

While Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way is not listed within the Planning Department's San Francisco *Modern Architecture and Landscape Design, 1935–1970 Historic Context Statement*, since it postdates the study period of that report, the Nihonmachi urban design plan created under the A-1 redevelopment phase by Royston, Hanamoto & Mayes is listed as a notable example of a Modern commercial- or corporate-designed landscape typology. The context statement notes that "common design elements of these commercial spaces include lighting features, benches and seating areas, grassy areas, signage, trees, walkways and pedestrian circulation, planters, fountains, and sculpture."⁷ Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way could be considered as a late example of this typology since it was completed just six years after the context statement's study period and it contains almost all of the common design elements mentioned in the historic context statement.

Analysis

Based upon a review of the available information, it appears that Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way is eligible for individual listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) under Criterion 1 for its strong association with Phase A-2 of the Western Addition Redevelopment project and the related efforts of the community to establish elements of cultural identity within the Japantown neighborhood under that Redevelopment project. While the Western Addition Redevelopment project overall has a mixed legacy that included widespread destruction and forcible resettlement, it was nonetheless an influential project that continues to shape San Francisco today. With lessons learned from Phase A-1 of the Redevelopment project, Phase A-2 was undertaken with more community involvement, especially through the *Nihonmachi* Community Development Corporation, and with a more concerted effort to retain the characteristics that made Japantown a distinct neighborhood. Today, San Francisco's Japantown as reimagined and reconstructed in the 1960s and 1970s is one of just three remaining Japantowns in the United States, along with those found in San Jose and Los Angeles.

The subject property does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the CRHR under Criterion 2, as the creation, development, maintenance, and occupancy of Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way is not tied strongly to any one individual.

The subject property can be considered individually eligible under Criterion 3 both for its connection to architect and planner Rai Okamoto and artist Ruth Asawa and as a notable example of Modernist landscape architecture. The DPR form prepared by P&T states that "It is notable that Buchanan Mall was designed by a Japanese American architect and planner, with collaboration from a Japanese American artist, illustrating the strength of cultural ties within the Japantown community. Buchanan Mall fits within the context of Rai Okamoto's broader work, which included other redevelopment and urban design projects. Ruth Asawa is also recognized as a prominent artist and her origami fountains as trademark elements of her portfolio, reflecting both her ethnic heritage and her best known subject matter; metalwork and fountains."⁸ Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way is also significant under Criterion 3 as a notable late example of a Modern public landscape in San Francisco that incorporates multiple characteristic features of a Modernist landscape.

Based upon a review of information in the Planning Department's records, the subject property is not significant

⁷ Mary Brown (San Francisco Planning Department), *San Francisco Modern Architecture and Landscape Design, 1935–1970* (San Francisco Planning Department, January 12, 2011), 154–55.

⁸ Page & Turnbull, *California Department of Parks and Recreation Building, Structure, and Object Record: Buchanan Mall* (May 2009), 9.

under Criterion 4 since this criterion typically applies to rare construction types when involving the built environment. The subject pedestrian mall is not an example of a rare construction type. Assessment of archeological sensitivity is undertaken through the Planning Department’s Preliminary Archeological Review process and is outside the scope of this review.

Beginning in early 2023, Department staff conducted SF Survey fieldwork in the Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD), as defined by the Planning Code and Zoning Map of San Francisco. The SF Survey Team collaborated with Japantown Task Force staff and Japantown community members in the development of survey findings for the neighborhood commercial district. This involved several outreach and engagement events including a Community Walk, meetings with the Japantown Task Force Board of Directors, Cultural Heritage and Sustainability Committee, and Land Use Committee. A capacity-building Community Briefing was held along with a Community Experts Workshop to review the draft SF Survey Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District Findings in collaboration with the Japantown Task Force and Japantown Cultural District. As part of this outreach and engagement, community partners identified a potential Japantown Business Historic District that would be predominantly located along Buchanan Street between Post and Bush streets and encompass buildings that have historically housed Japanese and Japanese American businesses. Community partners identified 11 buildings along Buchanan Street that may contribute to this district. This item has been identified as a potential community-led initiative to be led by community partners in Japantown with SF Survey Team support. Further research, documentation, and engagement is needed to progress this effort. For more information on the collaboration, engagement, and outreach occurring in Japantown, including community-led initiatives and areas requiring further outreach, please see the [Japantown/Upper Fillmore Neighborhood Commercial Districts Community Input Tracking](#). Findings for the Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District are still under development with community partners and will be finalized in 2024. The SF Survey Team did not make a determination on the historic resource status of the Buchanan Mall or Japan Center Mall due to requests from community partners for further outreach.

Step B: Integrity

The subject property has retained or lacks integrity from the period of significance noted in Step A:

Location:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retains	<input type="checkbox"/> Lacks	Setting:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retains	<input type="checkbox"/> Lacks
Association:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retains	<input type="checkbox"/> Lacks	Feeling:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retains	<input type="checkbox"/> Lacks
Design:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retains	<input type="checkbox"/> Lacks	Materials:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retains	<input type="checkbox"/> Lacks
Workmanship:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retains	<input type="checkbox"/> Lacks			

Analysis:
 In order to be determined eligible for the CRHR, the subject property must be found to retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under Criteria 1 and 3. Planning staff concurs with the consultant report’s finding that the building retains all seven aspects of integrity. Very few changes to the mall’s materials, design, and workmanship have occurred since it first opened to the public. The buildings flanking the mall have remained largely the same both in use typology and physical appearance, and the mall functions today as when it first opened—as a pedestrian path, commercial center, and site for community events—allowing Buchanan Mall to retain integrity of location, association, setting, and feeling. Therefore, Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way retains integrity and is a historic resource individually eligible for the CRHR under Criterion 3.

Step C: Character Defining Features

The period of significance is 1976, Buchanan Mall/Osaka Way’s year of completion, and as such, the subject open space’s character-defining features that retain enough integrity to convey its significance are:

- Winding cobblestone “river” extending the length of the mall with select inset boulders
- Exposed aggregate concrete sidewalks on either side of the cobblestone river
- Two bronze fountains located within the river
- Multilevel stone benches/walls encircling fountains
- Wood-and-concrete entrance gate at Sutter Street
- Wood benches with decorative concrete side panels
- Decorative metal light poles featuring Japanese characters and origami figures
- Round concrete planters irregularly interspersed around the mall
- Rectangular in-ground planting areas

CEQA HISTORIC RESOURCE DETERMINATION

- Individually eligible Historical Resource Present
- Contributor to an eligible Historical District / Contextual Resource Present
- Non-contributor to an eligible Historic District / Context / Cultural District
- No Historical Resource Present

NEXT STEPS

- Project Evaluation Required
- Categorically Exempt, consult:
- Design Advisory Team
- Current Planner

Historic Resource Identification: Principal Preservation Planner Review

Signature:  _____

Date: 4/12/2024 _____

Elizabeth Gordon-Jonckheer, *Principal Preservation Planner*
Historic Preservation Team Lead for Districts 1, 2, 5 & 8

HRR ATTACHMENTS:

- Consultant-Prepared HRR report, dated: May 2009

State of California — The Resources Agency
 DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
 HRI # _____
 Trinomial _____
 NRHP Status Code _____

Other Listings _____
 Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

Page 1 of 6 *Resource name(s) or number (assigned by recorder) Buchanan Mall

P1. Other Identifier: Osaka Way

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted *a. County: San Francisco

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad: San Francisco North, Calif. Date: 1956 (rev. 1973)

*c. Address: Buchanan Street btwn. Post & Sutter streets City: San Francisco Zip: 94115

d. UTM: Zone: 10 mE/ _____ mN (G.P.S.)

e. Other Locational Data: Assessor's Parcel Number (Map, Block, Lot): N/A

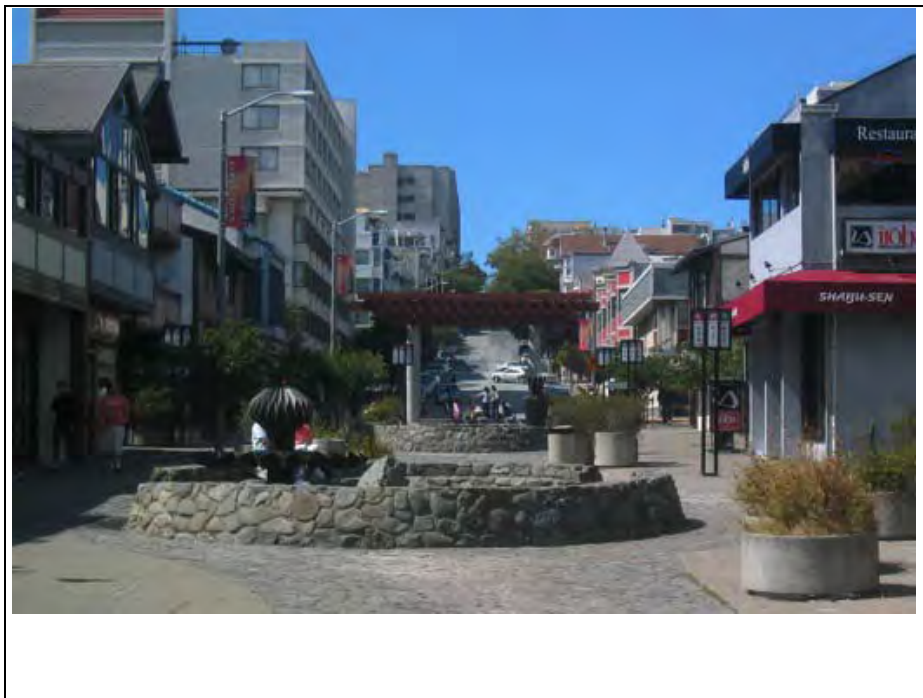
*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries.)

Buchanan Mall comprises a one block stretch of Buchanan Street, between Post and Sutter streets. Development of the Mall was undertaken from 1975 to 1976 and resulted in a pedestrian street flanked by two- to three-story commercial buildings, primarily designed in a Japanese-influenced modern style. The majority of the buildings were constructed around the time that the Mall was developed and are recorded on separate DPR 523 A forms.

Buchanan Mall consists of an open area enhanced with public art. The Mall is paved with a "river of cobblestones", laid in a pattern reminiscent of flowing water, and flanked by walkways of smooth concrete. Two fountains are located on the mall and consist of origami flower forms cast in bronze. They are surrounded by low, circular stone walls. A gate, reminiscent of a mountain temple gate, is located at the north end of the mall and consists of four round concrete piers supporting a tiered, wood trellis. Concrete benches decorated with sculptural relief are located along the length of the mall. Concrete planters are scattered along the mall and small cherry trees line walkways. Metal light posts resembling Japanese paper lanterns that incorporate illuminated signage of Japanese characters also line the walkways. Buchanan Mall is in good condition.

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (list attributes and codes) HP31. Urban open space

*P4. Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other



P5b. Photo: (view and date)
View north from Post Street

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources: Historic
1975-1976

*P7. Owner and Address:
N/A

*P8. Recorded by:
Page & Turnbull, Inc.
724 Pine Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

*P9. Date Recorded:
July 11, 2008

*P10. Survey Type:
Reconnaissance

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none") None

*Attachments: None Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record
 Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record
 Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (list)

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

*NRHP Status Code 7N1

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*Resource Name or # (assigned by recorder) Buchanan Mall / Osaka Way

___ B1. Historic name: Buchanan Mall
 ___ B2. Common name: Buchanan Mall
 ___ B3. Original Use: Commercial pedestrian mall / open space
 ___ B4. Present use: Commercial pedestrian mall / open space
 ___ *B5. Architectural Style: Japanese-influenced modern

*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)
 Pedestrian mall and public art constructed, 1975-1976. Flanking commercial buildings constructed, 1971-1982. Corroding steel origami fountains removed, 1995, and replaced with bronze duplicates, 1999. Mall repaired and revitalized, 1999.

*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____

*B8. Related Features: None.

B9a. Architect: Rai Okamoto (pedestrian mall) b. Builder: Unknown

*B10. Significance: Theme Cultural community development Area: Japantown, San Francisco, California
Open space /

Period of Significance 1971 - present Property Type Commercial Applicable Criteria A/1, C/3
 (Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity)

Buchanan Mall was constructed as part of the A2 phase of redevelopment that was began by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in 1966. A2 was the second phase of a federally funded urban renewal program that attempted to alleviate perceived physical blight in the Western Addition. Covering an area much larger than the phase A1 area, the A2 phase attempted a more community-based approach to redevelopment than had previously been undertaken in A2. Based on the widespread objections to unmitigated demolition and displacement enforced by the A1 phase, A2 sought community input, invested in the rehabilitation of existing structures, and concentrated on constructing residential and community buildings with a smaller, neighborhood scale. An urban design study completed in 1963, authored by Van Bourg-Nakamura architects and Rai Okamoto, expressed the need to synthesize the goals of the Redevelopment Agency and the Japantown community. Therefore, plans for the Buchanan Mall area were drafted in cooperation with the United Committee for the Japanese Community. Special consideration was given to the area's historic, cultural, social and visual character to create a plan that would best represent the neighborhood's existing character. (continued)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP31. Urban open space, HP6. 1-3 story commercial buildings, HP36. Ethnic minority property (JA)

***B12. References:**

Hokubei Mainichi. "Soko Hardware, a Fixture in S.J. Japantown Community, Closes." 2/20/2008.
 Japantown Task Force, Data Sheet: Buchanan Mall Gate, 9/15/04.
 Japantown Task Force, Data Sheet: Rai Okamoto's Rock River & Ruth Asawa's Origami Fountains, 7/18/04. (continued)

B13. Remarks:

*B14. Evaluator: Caitlin Harvey, Page & Turnbull/
 Matt Weintraub, SF Planning Department

*Date of Evaluation: May 2009

(This space reserved for official comments.)



B10. Significance (continued)

In response to community desires, the A2 phase concentrated on preserving the intimate scale of buildings and spaces, on renovating building exteriors to modern standards and consistent with culturally relevant appearances, and on reorganizing spaces and sites to facilitate community activity. One such space was Buchanan Mall, a pedestrian area that the urban design plan compared to "Tokyo's Ginza district in its variety and activity"; Ginza is an area known for shopping and dining, and also features a pedestrian mall.

The segment of Buchanan Street, between Post and Sutter streets, was previously a trafficked city street, open to vehicles and lined by a variety of older commercial, residential and mixed-use buildings. Redeveloped as the Buchanan Mall, this area became an open air pedestrian plaza lined with new commercial buildings designed in Japanese-influenced modern styles. The Mall was designed as a north-south extension of Peace Plaza, an urban open space associated with Japan Center and the A1 phase of redevelopment, which is located to the south across Post Street. Plans for Buchanan Mall referenced Japan Center, aiming to complement the more stylized, larger-scale architecture of the earlier development with a more casual architectural style and village-scale.

In 1976, the pedestrian plaza and public art components of Buchanan Mall were completed and dedicated during a ceremony that included a ritual cleansing performed by a Konko-Kyo priest. Buchanan Mall gained the ceremonial moniker Osaka Way in 2007, in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the sister city relationship between San Francisco and Osaka, Japan. The naming ceremony was presided over by San Francisco's Mayor, Gavin Newsom and Osaka's Mayor, Junichi Seki. As part of the ceremony the mayors pledged to continually promote the business and cultural ties between the cities.

Mall Open Space

The open space of Buchanan Mall was planned in the mid-1960s by *Nikkei* architect and planner Rai Okamoto in partnership with the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. The urban design plan described the intent of Buchanan Mall as an "urban hallway, linking the various elements of Nihonmachi and designed to be used by walkers only." It was to be "lively and active," but with "contrast to the larger scale, highly stylized development across Post Street to the south [to] be sharp." The original plans for Buchanan Mall included a large metal sculpture to be located at the entrance to the pedestrian mall. The metal sculpture was never installed, however, and the Buchanan Mall gate was created instead. Standing across the north end of the Mall, this gate consists of concrete posts that support a tiered wood trellis structure. It is noted that though it resembles a *Torii* gate, like those traditionally located in front of Shinto shrines, it is actually intended to represent a Japanese garden gate, welcoming visitors to Buchanan Mall's garden-like setting.

The rest of the mall is characterized by a "river" of cobblestones. The cobblestone material itself references historic San Francisco streets, but its irregular, swirling patterns are reminiscent of water in Japanese traditional design. The cobblestone river interacts with the two fountains that stand on the mall and bubble water directly onto the cobblestone surface at their base. The river "flows" from Sutter to Post Street, symbolically uniting Buchanan Mall with the Peace Plaza on the south side of Post Street. Like the fountains, the river of cobblestones was created as public art. The smooth concrete paths on either side of the "river" represent the river banks and were designed to provide passage for pedestrians.

Nikkei artist Ruth Asawa designed the metal "origami" fountains, which resemble flowers of folded paper. She, and her friend and assistant, Mae Lee, hosted origami workshops for the Japantown community at festivals and street fairs for many years, which was the inspiration for the design of the origami fountains on Buchanan Mall. However, even at their initial installation, the fountains experienced pump problems and did not function as designed. In 1975, a period of drought forced the City to turn off public fountains throughout San Francisco, including the origami fountains. The fountains corroded due to disuse and were removed as a safety hazard in 1995. However, at the urging of the community and Ruth Asawa herself, Buchanan Mall was revitalized and replacement bronze replicas of the fountains, created by Asawa, were installed in 1999. At that time they were designated as City Art Pieces by the San Francisco Arts Commission.

Asawa also created the wood and concrete benches located at intervals along the Mall. She enlisted the help of the Buchanan Mall merchants' children in making the relief panels that adorn the benches. Depicting scenes from Japanese fairytales and festivals, the panels were sculpted in dough (one of Asawa's favored mediums) before being cast in concrete.

Planner & Architect Rai Okamoto

Rai Okamoto (1927 - 1993) was a Japanese American architect and planner, who worked with the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in 1963 to develop a master plan for the second phase of redevelopment in Japantown. In the 1970s, he was hired to design Buchanan Mall and was responsible for inviting Ruth Asawa to contribute sculptural elements to the design.

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B10. Significance (continued)

Okamoto attended architecture school at the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He also had a graduate degree in city planning from Yale. From 1960 to 1963 he independently practiced architecture, and then entered into partnership with William Hugo Liskamm, forming Okamoto-Liskamm, Inc., Planners and Architects, which he was connected with until his death in 1993. Both firms were based in San Francisco, with Okamoto-Liskamm having branch offices in Seattle and New York. During the 1970s, Okamoto also served as the director of the San Francisco Planning Department.

In the 1960s and 1970s, both as a private practitioner and Planning Director, Okamoto was involved with urban renewal and redevelopment projects. In 1966, Okamoto-Liskamm, Inc. was responsible for the redevelopment of Oakland City Center, which received an award from *Progressive Architecture* for its master planning design. Most of Okamoto's work is associated with San Francisco, however, and he was a liaison and strong proponent of community involvement with the A2 phase of redevelopment in the Western Addition.

Artist Ruth Asawa

Ruth Asawa (1926 -) is a second-generation Japanese American artist based in San Francisco. She is best known for her metal sculptural work, including wire sculpture and many fountains that have been installed throughout San Francisco and the Bay Area. She is nationally known for her public commissions and her dedication to furthering arts education. Her work has been exhibited throughout the country at major museums including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the de Young Museum in San Francisco.

Asawa grew up in a farming community in Norwalk, California. She credits the development of her artistic talents to World War II internment, which exposed her to the tutelage of other interned Japanese American artists. After the war, she studied to become an art teacher, but could not secure a teaching position due to lingering discrimination against Japanese Americans. Instead, she went on to study with Joseph Albers of the Bauhaus school and pursued a career as a professional artist.

In the 1960s, Ruth Asawa began receiving commissions to create public art. Some of her best known works include: *Andrea*, the mermaid fountain in Ghirardelli Square (1966); the *Hyatt on Union Square Fountain* (1973); the *Buchanan Mall Fountains* (1976); *Aurora*, an origami-inspired fountain at Bayside Plaza (1986); and the *Japanese Internment Memorial Sculpture* in San Jose (1994). In 2002, she was involved in the creation of the Garden of Remembrance at San Francisco State University, which incorporated boulders from each of the ten Japanese internment camps. These and other major public art works have provided opportunities for Asawa to collaborate with a variety of other artists and craftsmen, including landscape architects, metal smiths, and foundry workers. Many of Asawa's works, including the origami fountains on Buchanan Mall, reference her cultural heritage in form, subject matter and location.

Another important aspect of Asawa's career has been her involvement with art education and advocacy. She was instrumental in the establishment of the Alvarado Arts Workshop, which eventually spread to public schools throughout San Francisco (1968); the Music, Art, Dance, Drama and Science (MADDS) Festival, a city-wide youth arts festival (1973); and a School of the Arts (SOTA) High School (1982). In 1968, Ruth Asawa was also appointed to the San Francisco Arts Commission by Mayor Joseph Alioto, and in 1974 served on the Commission of Mental Health established by President Carter, advising on the role of the arts. Her public service has also included work with the California Arts Council (1976) and the National Endowment for the Arts (1977). From 1989 to 1997, she served as a trustee of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Buchanan Mall Buildings, Occupants and Uses

The majority of the buildings flanking Buchanan Mall are of a Japanese-influenced modern design. The 1963 urban design plan called for the avoidance of literal imitation of traditional Japanese elements, but approved of ornamentation that was consistent with Japanese construction. It specified elements of ethnic character to be employed in new construction, such as combinations of wood and concrete to resemble timber construction, modular discipline influenced by traditional *tatami mat* modular planning, strong roof forms, and interaction between interior and exterior spaces. These elements are found in the designs of the buildings flanking Buchanan Mall.

Most businesses currently located on Buchanan Mall have a Japanese theme. Several significant businesses were located on the Mall when it was first developed. Today, a number of culturally significant businesses continue to operate in the Mall, including Soko Hardware, Paper Tree, Kimochi, and Benkyodo.

Soko Hardware, located at the southern end of Buchanan Mall, was established in 1925 by the Ashizawa family and is one of the few remaining *Issei*-founded businesses in Japantown. The store has been located at its current site since its opening; however, the current building is a product of the period of urban renewal in Japantown. "Soko" is the Japanese name for San Francisco that was used by the *Issei*. The business has been owned and operated by three generations of the Ashizawa family and in 1951 a branch store was opened in San Jose.

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The San Francisco store is currently run by Philip Ashizawa, the grandson of the original owner, Masao Ashizawa. The Ashizawa family lived in the house located on the same block, at 1644-1648 Post Street – the only building on the block that was not razed during A2 redevelopment.

Paper Tree was established on Buchanan Mall in 1978 by the Mihara family. The family had previously owned a publishing and import business in the 1950s, which was responsible for publishing one of the earliest English-language books on origami. Today, Paper Tree is a store that specializes in selling origami paper and supplies and also hosts instructional workshops. The store's promotion of the traditional Japanese art of origami indicates that it is a significant cultural establishment on Buchanan Mall.

Kimochi, Inc. was established in 1971 as a non-profit, community-based senior care organization that reflects the importance of interaction with, concern, and respect for older generations in Japanese and Japanese American culture. Kimochi was started by a group of *Sansei* (third generation Japanese Americans) who realized that many aging *Issei* required assistance overcoming language and cultural barriers to access public services. Although the organization began operations in buildings that were eventually condemned and redeveloped, Kimochi soon established its first stable location on the Webster Street Bridge between the Kinokuniya and Kintetsu mall buildings in Japan Center. Later, the organization expanded into two other facilities in Japantown, including the former Nichi Bei Bussan department store building located on Buchanan Mall, which serves as the organization's headquarters. In 1983, a residential facility, Kimochi Home, was established at 1531 Sutter Street, and the Webster Street Bridge facility became a social center, Kimochi Lounge. The organization currently provides support for over 3,000 Bay Area seniors, mostly of Japanese ethnicity.

The Benkyo-do Co. is located at the northern end of Buchanan Mall in the only building on the pedestrian plaza that did not result from the A2 project undertaking. Constructed in 1959, the building's period of construction and its relative modernity are compatible with the Buchanan Mall project. The business that is housed in the building is a *mochi* and *manju* bakery that was established in Japantown in 1906. Today, it is run by the third generation of the Okamoto family that established the business and still produces *mochi* and *manju* using traditional methods. This business is considered extremely significant within the Japantown community. (More information can be found on the DPR 523 B form for 1745-1747 Buchanan Street.)

Also located on Buchanan Mall is the headquarters of the Japantown Merchants Association, which is a non-profit organization that supports businesses and merchants by encouraging economic development within Japantown, by promoting local businesses, and by funding community events to increase commercial traffic. The Association also responds to security issues that affect local businesses and sponsors community-betterment operations like litter removal. The Association was founded in 1968 and originally served primarily *Issei*-run businesses. More than 90 Japantown businesses and community-based organizations are now members of the Association.

A few other historic businesses like Nichi Bei Bussan and Honnami Taieido were also located on the Mall when it was first constructed, but are no longer there. Nichi Bei Bussan, owned by the Tatsuno family, was established in 1902 as an American dry goods store catering to Japanese immigrants and later became a martial arts supply shop. Honnami Taiedo was a Japanese department store, which later specialized in Japanese art goods. It was one of the first Japanese American businesses to open after World War II. These two historically significant businesses relocated to the Mall during its initial development. The former Honnami Taiedo store is now Kimochi, Inc.

In addition to commerce and pedestrian activity, Buchanan Mall also supports the regular observance of community events, which reflect the culture of the Japantown community. These include traditional festivals like *Obon*, the summer festival to honor deceased loved ones, which features *bon-odori* dancing. Events associated with the Cherry Blossom Festival and Nihonmachi Street Fair also occur along the Mall. The Japantown Merchants Association and businesses located on the Mall sponsor such events, but most importantly the Mall plays a physical role as a venue for such celebrations.

Evaluation

Buchanan Mall is associated with several important trends and events that have affected the Japantown neighborhood, and the site is also an icon of culturally relevant design by significant Japanese American architects and artists. The establishment of Buchanan Mall may be understood in relation to the growth of the post-war neighborhood and its culture during the period of urban renewal in Japantown, and it also may be recognized for the designs of Rai Okamoto and Ruth Asawa as significant within Japantown and the City of San Francisco.

Buchanan Mall functions today as it was originally designed — as an outdoor pedestrian open space and retail plaza. Therefore, Buchanan Mall retains integrity of association with its original use. The Mall retains integrity of location as none of its elements have been relocated or reoriented, which also indicates high integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Neither the buildings

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B10. Significance (continued)

flanking the Mall nor the landscape elements of the Mall's open space appear to have undergone many or major alterations, also indicating high integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The setting within which the Mall was constructed, the commercial center of the Japantown neighborhood, remains vital and intact. Therefore, the Mall also retains integrity of feeling.

Buchanan Mall is an example of how the A2 phase of redevelopment in the Western Addition differed from the A1 phase and resulted in a more neighborhood-based design scheme that incorporated community input. As the 1963 urban design plan states, "the only sure way for residents [and businesses] to remain in the area is to be connected in some way with its development." This philosophy resulted in a redevelopment project, Buchanan Mall, that has served the community well and that was more widely accepted and appreciated than was A1 development, because it respected the neighborhood's history, culture, and existing physical traits. Buchanan Mall, as a product of the later A2 phase, may be considered an urban redevelopment design that is sensitive and appropriate to the surrounding Japanese American community, which largely resulted from the Japanese American community's activism.

It is notable that Buchanan Mall was designed by a Japanese American architect and planner, with collaboration from a Japanese American artist, illustrating the strength of cultural ties within the Japantown community. Buchanan Mall fits within the context of Rai Okamoto's broader work, which included other redevelopment and urban design projects. Ruth Asawa is also recognized as a prominent artist and her origami fountains as trademark elements of her portfolio, reflecting both her ethnic heritage and her best known subject matter; metalwork and fountains.

The status code of 7N1 assigned to this site means that it may become eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places when it meets specific conditions. Specifically, the site needs to be reevaluated when it has achieved more than fifty years of age (at the time of this evaluation, the site had achieved significance within the past fifty years, and the requirement for establishment of exceptional significance pursuant to Criterion G had not been determined) and/or when sufficient perspective and research regarding the complex legacy of urban renewal in Japantown has been achieved (in order to fully understand the subject site as well as its relationship to other properties associated with the period). If determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the site is accordingly deemed eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources and for local listing. This property was not fully assessed for its potential to yield information important in prehistory or history, per National Register Criterion D.

B12. References (continued)

"A New Look for S.F.'s Bit of Japan," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 23, 1963.

Japantown Task Force, *Images of America: San Francisco's Japantown*. Arcadia Publishing, San Francisco. 2005.

"Japantown Fountains Reawaken," *San Francisco Examiner*, 10/21/99.

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Pease, Ben. San Francisco's Japantown and Western Addition maps; 1910, 1920s, 1940, 1948-49, 1956-59, 1972, 2004.

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Van Bourg/Nakamura, Rai Y. Okamoto, and the SFRA. *Nihonmachi: An Urban Design Study in the Western Addition Area 2*. 1963.