



Sustainable Little Tokyo Releases “Protecting Ibasho” Report on Impact of Arts and Culture in LA’s Historic Japantown
with Launch Event & Panel Discussion

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Japanese American Cultural & Community Center
244 S San Pedro Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Contact: Scott Oshima, soshima@jaccc.org

EVENT: Protecting Ibasho: Launch Event & Panel Discussion
DATE: Thursday, January 30, 2020
TIME: 4:00–6:00PM
LOCATION: JACCC, 244 S San Pedro Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Sustainable Little Tokyo (SLT) and its organizational leaders—Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, Little Tokyo Community Council, and Little Tokyo Service Center—are thrilled to announce the release of the important new report, *Protecting Ibasho: The Impact of Arts and Culture in Little Tokyo* with a launch event and panel discussion.

The report, prepared by Jonathan Crisman, PhD, examines the economic and socio-political impact of arts and culture in Little Tokyo. Little Tokyo is 1 of 3 remaining historic Japantowns left in the entire nation. It has survived multiple waves of redevelopment and displacement, yet continues to be the cultural home to Japanese Americans across Southern California. Little Tokyo is now home to more than 15 major Japanese American and Asian American Pacific Islander cultural organizations and countless legacy small businesses. Arts and culture alone generate more than \$55.5 million dollars annually within our 150-acre neighborhood, and the impacts radiate outwards across Los Angeles and California. Yet more than simply economic impacts, arts and culture have also brought the Little Tokyo community together to build social and political power. SLT and its cross-sector partners are continuing decades of community organizing, arts-based activism, and creative placekeeping to maintain Little Tokyo as 居場所 (ibasho)—a Japanese word connoting the sense of home and belonging, a place where one can be oneself.

The launch event will include a presentation summarizing the key findings from the report by researcher Jonathan Crisman, PhD, and a panel discussion moderated by



Crisman with a selection of local cultural institutions, including a local arts and cultural organization, a legacy business, and arts activist:

Panelists:

- Alison De La Cruz, Vice President of Programs at JACCC
- Brian Kito, 3rd-generation legacy business owner of Fugetsu-Do Confectioners
- Nobuko Miyamoto, Founder and Artistic Director of Great Leap, and Co-founder of SLT's FandangObon Festival

“This report seeks to answer the following questions: Does arts and culture have impacts in the Los Angeles’s Little Tokyo community, and what are those impacts? The short answer is a resounding yes,” said Jonathan Crisman, PhD, in his introduction to *Protecting Ibasho*.

“Little Tokyo presents a new paradigm of how a unique history of arts-based activism is used to hold onto place and generate economic benefit,” said Alison De La Cruz, Vice President of Programs at JACCC.

“*Protecting Ibasho* provides an important alternative to the current narrative of artists and their relationship to gentrification. In Little Tokyo, artists are leaders in the fight for equitable community development—and their art brings us together to celebrate and fight for our community, culture, history, and hopes for the future,” said Scott Oshima, SLT Program Director at JACCC.

“This document will be critical in our advocacy for the future of our historic Japantown. *Protecting Ibasho* shares both qualitative and historical information on Little Tokyo’s invaluable role in the culture and economy of Los Angeles and California,” said Kristin Fukushima, Managing Director of Little Tokyo Community Council.

“The report demonstrates the need for community-based development and policies to support and protect the cultural identity, legacy small businesses, and residents of Little Tokyo for future generations,” said Grant Sunoo, Director of Planning at Little Tokyo Service Center.

Protecting Ibasho: The Impact of Arts and Culture in Little Tokyo was prepared by Jonathan Crisman, PhD, for Sustainable Little Tokyo, and generously funded by the Surdna Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and ArtPlace America, with support from California Arts Council.

For more information, please see www.sustainablelittletokyo.org/protecting-ibasho.



ABOUT SUSTAINABLE LITTLE TOKYO

Sustainable Little Tokyo is a community-driven initiative working to ensure a healthy, equitable, and culturally rich Little Tokyo for generations to come. SLT began in 2013 as a multi-day community vision effort and has evolved into a holistic, neighborhood-wide campaign to promote the environmental, economic, and cultural sustainability of Little Tokyo. SLT is led by JACCC, Little Tokyo Community Council, and Little Tokyo Service Center. www.sustainablelittletokyo.org

ABOUT JAPANESE AMERICAN CULTURAL & COMMUNITY CENTER

Founded in 1971, JACCC 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. www.jacc.org

ABOUT LITTLE TOKYO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Established in 1999, the LTCC is the nonprofit community coalition of residents, businesses, and religious, cultural, and community organizations as well as other vested stakeholders in the Little Tokyo community. By bringing together a broad range of Little Tokyo stakeholders to speak with one voice, we protect, preserve, and promote the character and values of our historic community. www.littletokyo.org

ABOUT LITTLE TOKYO SERVICE CENTER

Little Tokyo Service Center is a social service and community development organization that has been creating positive change for the people and places in Southern California for nearly 40 years. We preserve and strengthen the unique ethnic communities of our region and help people thrive. Starting with our own home in Little Tokyo, we build and strengthen communities throughout Southern California where people, culture and our collective future matter. www.ltsc.org

ABOUT LITTLE TOKYO

Established in 1884, Little Tokyo is LA's second oldest neighborhood and the largest of four remaining Japantowns in the United States. The neighborhood continues to serve as a cultural center for Japanese Americans across Southern California and the nation. In its 135-year history, Little Tokyo has withstood numerous acts of displacement, including the forced removal and incarceration of people of Japanese descent during



World War II and the demolition of whole tracts of housing, businesses, churches, and temples during the city's urban renewal and Civic Center expansion of the 1950s through the 1980s. Today, what remains of Little Tokyo is roughly nine square blocks. The latest threat to the cultural and historic identity of Little Tokyo comes in the form of the market rate housing boom in Downtown LA, which is making the neighborhood less accessible to small businesses and individuals and families of all incomes.