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JAPANTOWN HISTORY WALK
A Way to Explore San Francisco's Japantown
December 1, 2008 | San Francisco, Japantown

The Japantown History Walk was created as the first tangible display to educate pedestrians, students and locals about the unique historical and cultural significance of the space the Nikkei community has established in Japantown over the past 110 years. The Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California coordinated the History Walk with the goal of leaving local communities and visitors with a richer understanding and different perspective of the physical space the Japanese American community occupied. Funded by the State of California Proposition 40 Bond Measure, this project established permanent historic and educational markers in a combination of private and public areas of San Francisco's Japantown, highlighting points of identity, experiences and legacies of Japanese Americans.

In this self-guided tour, sixteen interpretive signs, historical business/organization building plaques and Japanese American History Walk icons were integrated along an approximately 10-block route. It details the struggles and successes of the Japanese Issei (first generation Japanese Americans) who established the community and the Japanese American Nisei (second generation Japanese Americans) and Sansei (third generation Japanese Americans) who sustained the Issei's vision. In addition to the sixteen plaques, a giant "Sensu," or folding fan, overlooks Webster Street between Geary Boulevard and Post Street. This fifteen-foot tall sculptural interpretation of the Japanese folding fan represents historic and modern community and traditional Japanese motif. The sculpture serves as a gateway into Japantown, as well as a stunning visual focal point adorning our Japanese community.

The Japantown History Walk serves to empower and encourage individuals from local communities to support Japantown, as it is a thriving and substantial community. It engages, educates and enriches visitors, making Japantown a place for discovery, exploration, validation, inspiration and recognition.