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## SAVE JAPANTOWN BOWL

### Aiming to Preserve a Community Spot from Corporate Interest

#### 2000 | San Francisco, California

The Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC) and community members rallied together to preserve the neighborhood bowling alley, Japantown Bowl.

At the time, Japantown Bowl was the largest of the three remaining bowling alleys in San Francisco with two stories and 40 lanes. It had 2,000 league bowlers, attracted 150,000 people each year and turned an annual profit of \$500,000. This space served as a valuable social hub that united a diverse community, despite racial, gendered, and generational differences.

Japantown Bowl was an asset to the community. However, during the Summer 2000, the alley's owners (i.e. Kintetsu Enterprises Co. of America) announced plans to close the nearly 25-year-old alley and sell its property. This news resulted in public protests from bowlers—including elderly Nisei, Japantown residents and city officials.

Advocating on behalf of the community's interests, the JCCCNC collaborated with an investment firm (Kaji & Associates) to present Kintetsu Enterprises Co. of America a \$6.7 million offer to purchase and preserve the neighborhood bowling alley. The JCCCNC disclosed its plans to buy Japantown Bowl and bring in a local Bay Area company to help manage the business. However, Kintetsu rejected the \$6.7 million offer, claiming that the JCCCNC's public offer sparked higher bidders to make private offers for the property. Instead of keeping the community sports center open, Kintetsu sold the property to a corporation with plans to convert it into a commercial retail complex.

Although its outcome was unfavorable, Save Japantown Bowl brought together the Japantown community—young and old—to protest, voice a great concern and take a stand for its values.