Resolution celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Japantown in the Western Addition.

WHEREAS, The first wave of Japanese immigrants arrived in San Francisco in the 1880s and settled in the Western Addition, on the edge of Chinatown, South Park, and in the South of Market area; and

WHEREAS, After the great 1906 earthquake San Francisco's Japantown, known as Nihonmachi, re-established itself in its current Western Addition location; and

WHEREAS, After the earthquake, the Board of Education attempted to segregate Japanese American students, and this controversy led to President Theodore Roosevelt negotiating the 1908 "Gentlemen's Agreement" between the United States and Japan, which drastically reduced immigration of Japanese laborers; and

WHEREAS, The "Gentlemen's Agreement" did allow immigration of former residents, parents, wives and children of former residents in the United States, which promoted the growth of Japanese families, community and the Nisei, or second generation, who would further integrate Japantown into San Franciscan and American culture; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco's Japantown is the oldest in the United States and one of only three remaining in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Japantown is a city within a city with an identifiable main street on Post Street; major public gathering places such as the Peace Plaza; a commercial core found at the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center, now known as the Japan Center; and areas with community and cultural facilities on Sutter Street and the Buchanan Mall; and

WHEREAS, Japantown has persevered through such adversities as the Heney-Webb Alien Land Act, which forbade property ownership by Japanese immigrants, and the unjust
incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II who were taken from their homes to US detention and internment camps from 1942 until 1945; and the razing of half of the core of Japantown by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency; and

WHEREAS, The US Japan Peace Treaty was signed in San Francisco in 1951, making the City a symbol of reconciliation between the two nations; and

WHEREAS, February 19, 1979 was proclaimed Day of Remembrance to commemorate President’s Roosevelt’s signing of Executive Order 9066 which set into motion the eventual removal and incarceration of 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry in 1942, and to recall the lessons of the Japanese American World War II internment, and to reflect upon our shared responsibility to protect the rights of all people at all times; and

WHEREAS, The Walter-McCarran Immigration and Nationality Act, passed in 1952, enabled Asian immigrants to become naturalized citizens and allowed first generation Japanese immigrants, or Issei, to become Americans; and

WHEREAS, In 1948, 27 blocks of the Western Addition, including much of Japantown were selected for the A-1 portion of redevelopment, which led to the displacement of a large number of residences and small businesses; and

WHEREAS, The A-2 portion of redevelopment, commenced in 1966, resulted in the loss of nearly 4,000 units of affordable housing, and spurred the people of Japantown to organize the Nihonmachi Community Development Corporation (NCDC) and Citizens Against Nihonmachi Evictions (CANE) to protect Japantown; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, Japantown’s resilience continues to prevail and adapt in light of substantive land-use changes and speculative threats as posed by both private and public interests; and
WHEREAS, Japantown is enjoying a renaissance with the creation of the Japantown Special Use District by the Board of Supervisors and plans for the new J-Pop Center to be built on Post Street; and

WHEREAS, Two family-run businesses, Benkyodo confectionary store and Uoki Sakai grocery store, are also celebrating their centennial; and

WHEREAS, Japantown provides unique cultural, educational, and commercial opportunities for San Francisco residents and tourists, and it continues to serve as the epicenter for Japanese American culture; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco honor San Francisco’s Japantown, or Nihonmachi, for its contributions to the cultural heritage of San Francisco on the occasion of its 100th anniversary.
Resolution celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Japantown in the Western Addition.

September 26, 2006 Board of Supervisors — ADOPTED
Ayes: 10 - Ammiano, Daly, Dufty, Elsbernd, Ma, Maxwell, McGoldrick, Mirkarimi, Peskin, Sandoval
Excused: 1 - Alioto-Pier

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on September 26, 2006 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Gloria L. Young
Clerk of the Board

Date Approved

Mayor Gavin Newsom