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JAPANESE AMERICAN
NATIONAL MUSEUM

FOR RELEASE MAY 1, 2024

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National Trust for Historic Preservation Names Little Tokyo to Endangered List

LOS ANGELES, CA, May 1, 2024 – Today the National Trust for Historic Preservation announces that the historic Little Tokyo district in downtown Los Angeles is on the Trust's annual list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. Established in 1884, Little Tokyo has endured over a century of adversities, including the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, demolition and construction, gentrification, and urban renewal. The neighborhood is central to the Japanese American community, which fought to designate one block of the commercial corridor as a National Historic Landmark in the 1990s. The Japanese American National Museum and Little Tokyo Community Council, with other partners from the Sustainable Little Tokyo coalition, led a joint effort to receive the designation.

Today, Little Tokyo is now home to over 400 small businesses, including about fifty legacy businesses, but the community continues to fight for preservation of their neighborhood. Organizations like the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, JANM, the Little Tokyo Community Council, and the Little Tokyo Service Center form the Sustainable Little Tokyo coalition to shape a community vision that protects the neighborhood's culture, residents, and businesses. Residents, business owners, and supporters are also seeking a voice in infrastructure projects to prioritize Little Tokyo's culture and preservation. Attention, support, and investment in initiatives like the LA Legacy Business program, the Little Tokyo Community Investment Fund, and a potential cultural district program could help protect the people, places and institutions that make Little Tokyo distinct and irreplaceable.

"Little Tokyo and its multigenerational restaurants, businesses, and cultural institutions are a distinctive part of Los Angeles's history and character, as one of the only remaining Japantowns in the United States," said Carol Quillen, President and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "We hope that by bringing attention to displacement and gentrification occurring in the neighborhood, Los Angeles's Little Tokyo can get the support and policy protections needed so that the community can thrive long into the future."

"The Museum is proud to be a part of a community coalition to preserve and protect the legacy and culture of Los Angeles's Little Tokyo for future generations while being a steward of the Historic Building, one of the Museum's oldest and largest artifacts on its campus," said Ann Burroughs, President and CEO of JANM.

“JACCC is proud to celebrate this historic designation along with our many community supporters and sister organizations. We remain committed to preserving and advancing our shared history at this authentic crossroads of culture in Little Tokyo,” said Patricia Wyatt, CEO and President of JACCC.

“It is particularly meaningful for Little Tokyo to receive this designation this year, while we commemorate 140 years of Little Tokyo. Together, they serve as a testament to generations of community working towards the preservation of this historic community, as well as the ongoing fight for Little Tokyo’s future. 2024 also marks the 25th anniversary of LTCC, and the 10th year since the publishing of the SLT Vision, and LTCC is proud of how these coalitions has pushed Little Tokyo to adapt in the face of the threats to its existence,” said Kristin Fukushima, Managing Director of the Little Tokyo Community Council.

“A cornerstone of Little Tokyo Service Center’s mission is to preserve Little Tokyo as a historic cultural neighborhood and an equitable home to low-income residents, seniors, and longtime small businesses. We are proud to steward the preservation and re-use for community benefit of four historic buildings in the National Landmark Little Tokyo Historic District, as well as to be a partner in the Little Tokyo Community Council and Sustainable Little Tokyo, to fight for control over the neighborhood’s future development and growth,” said Erich Nakano, Executive Director of Little Tokyo Service Center.

About the Japanese American National Museum (JANM)

Established in 1985, JANM promotes understanding and appreciation of America’s ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience. Located in the historic Little Tokyo district of downtown Los Angeles, JANM is a center for civil rights, ensuring that the hard-fought lessons of the World War II incarceration are not forgotten. A Smithsonian Affiliate and one of America’s Cultural Treasures, JANM is a hybrid institution that straddles traditional museum categories. JANM is a center for the arts as well as history. It provides a voice for Japanese Americans and a forum that enables all people to explore their own heritage and culture. Since opening to the public in 1992, JANM has presented over 100 exhibitions onsite while traveling 40 exhibits to venues such as the Smithsonian Institution and the Ellis Island Museum in the United States, and to several leading cultural museums in Japan and South America. JANM is open on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday–Sunday from 11 a.m.–5 p.m. and on Thursday from 12 p.m.–8 p.m. JANM is free every third Thursday of the month. On all other Thursdays, JANM is free from 5 p.m.–8 p.m. For more information, visit janm.org or follow us on social media [@jamuseum](https://www.instagram.com/jamuseum).

About Sustainable Little Tokyo (SLT)

Sustainable Little Tokyo is a community-driven initiative working to ensure a healthy, equitable, and culturally rich Little Tokyo for generations to come led by Little Tokyo Community Council, the Little Tokyo Service Center, the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, and the Japanese American National Museum. What began as a robust community outreach and engagement effort in 2013 has turned into a neighborhood-generated framework dedicated to environmental, economic, and cultural sustainability. Sustainable Little Tokyo is committed to bringing this community-wide vision to life, while continuing to honor the neighborhood’s deep history as a center for Japanese-American communities and culture.

About Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC)

Established in 1999, the Little Tokyo Community Council (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. LTCC advocates on behalf of the Little Tokyo community, and provides the opportunity for the community to speak effectively with one voice for the best interests and betterment of Little Tokyo. 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.

About Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC)

The Japanese American Cultural & Community Center weaves Japanese and Japanese American arts and culture into the fabric of our communities. JACCC remains firmly rooted in Little Tokyo, providing a vital place to build connections between people and cultures, locally and internationally. Through inclusive programs and authentic experiences, we continue our living traditions and nurture the next generation of innovative artists, culture-bearers, and thinkers.

About Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC)

The mission of Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) is to provide a comprehensive array of social welfare and community development services to assist low income individuals and other persons in need, contribute to community revitalization and cultural preservation in Little Tokyo and among the broader Japanese community in the Southland, and to provide such resources to neighboring Asian Pacific Islander and other low income communities. Founded in 1979 and incorporated in 1980 by a group of Japanese Americans activists who wanted to form a multipurpose social service center, Little Tokyo Service Center aimed to provide linguistically and culturally sensitive social services to the Little Tokyo community and the broader Japanese American community in Southern California.

About The National Trust for Historic Preservation

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately funded nonprofit organization, works to save America's historic places.

SavingPlaces.org | [@savingplaces](https://www.instagram.com/savingplaces)"

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