Little Tokyo is one of a kind. It is my home.”
— Irene Simonian, Long-time Business Owner, Bunkado

Little Tokyo Service Center
is a social service and community development organization committed to improving the lives of individuals and families through culturally sensitive social service care, strengthening our neighborhoods through housing and community development, and promoting the rich heritage of our ethnic communities.

Cover art credit: Riko Enomoto, “Home is Little Tokyo,” 2015.
Welcome to the 2015 edition of Little Tokyo Service Center’s Annual Report

It has been a year of major milestones for LTSC. We started this journey in 1980 with three people and now we’ve grown to a staff of more than 130. At our 35th Anniversary Celebration in November, we introduced our new tagline that synthesized our mission: Positive Change for People and Places.

Much of our work and activity focused on our home in Little Tokyo. In Japanese, there is a word, furusato, meaning hometown. Japanese will often move to the city for work or school, but remain emotionally attached to their furusato. Little Tokyo is furusato for generations of Japanese Americans and the cultural and historic center for the Southern California Japanese American community.

The preservation and continuation of Little Tokyo as a viable, culturally rich community is a priority for LTSC. With aggressive Downtown development and the impact of construction from the Regional Connector transit project, Little Tokyo is in jeopardy. At least a dozen local businesses closed their doors in Little Tokyo in 2015, driven out by increased rents and other impacts to business.

LTSC continued to partner with the Little Tokyo Community Council to implement the Sustainable Little Tokyo initiative, with goals of ensuring an economically, culturally and environmentally sustainable community. Our capital campaign to construct Budokan of Los Angeles gained great momentum in 2015, reaching more than 80% of the total fundraising goal. We also received a significant grant from ArtPlace America to assist us in integrating arts and culture in our community development work.

We continued to provide culturally sensitive services in Little Tokyo and neighboring communities, especially for seniors and low-income individuals and families. Our recently opened Far East Lounge bustled with activities and services like exercise classes, arts & crafts, music and computer classes.

We are strengthened by your support and recognition of our commitment to building equitable, culturally rich neighborhoods. Thanks to all of you – our donors, supporters, volunteers and dedicated staff – together we will make positive change for people and places.

Thank you for 35 years of supporting our home base, Little Tokyo!

“Our work is about a belief that everyone, every single person deserves the opportunity to lead healthy, independent lives; and a place to call home where our communities and cultures can thrive, and where all of us can come together to help and support one another. That’s the positive change for people and places that we here at Little Tokyo Service Center have been and are committed to creating for Little Tokyo, for the Nikkei community, and for greater Los Angeles.”

Excerpt from Dean Matsubayashi’s Anniversary Dinner remarks, November 4, 2015, Los Angeles.

From the 35th Anniversary Dinner Celebration: Top left to right: LTSC Board President Debra Nakatomi, honoree Nancy Matsui of American Airlines, honoree Bruce Saito of California Conservation Corps, Sonia Rahm of Corporate Citizen Award recipient Cit, and LTSC Executive Director Dean Matsubayashi; “Atomic Nancy” Sekizawa performed Nobuko Miyamoto’s “American Made”; LTSC Board Chair Alan Nishio talks with Hikaru Ebihara; LTSC former Executive Director Bill Watanabe and honoree Bruce Saito.

Debra Nakatomi President, Board of Directors

Dean Matsubayashi Executive Director

Excerpt from Dean Matsubayashi’s Anniversary Dinner remarks, November 4, 2015, Los Angeles.

Thank you for 35 years of supporting our home base, Little Tokyo!

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Excerpt from Dean Matsubayashi’s Anniversary Dinner remarks, November 4, 2015, Los Angeles.
A multi-purpose sports and activities center that will serve as the community’s Home Court for All by connecting people with the history and culture of Little Tokyo.

Sports have played a central role in building character and developing friendships within the Japanese American community.

During World War II, more than 110,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans were imprisoned in concentration camps. Internees overcame some of the adversity by organizing sports activities for young people. Both boys and girls played basketball and volleyball.

From the prewar years when Japanese youth were excluded from participation in mainstream sports activities to today, when Japanese American sports include a broad cross-section of our community, we have fought to provide the home court advantage for our children.

2015 Project Milestones

- 80% + of total fundraising goal met
- $160,000 raised at the 35th Anniversary Celebration
- 2017 ground breaking

Find out how you can be part of history visit budokanoflosangeles.com
“We have the power to shape the evolution of Little Tokyo.”
— Silvia Yoshimizu-Yee, Budokan Campaign Volunteer

“Budokan will be a space where our community can preserve culture and connect back to who we are.”
— Natalie Nakase, Los Angeles Clippers

Natalie grew up in Huntington Beach playing basketball on Japanese American leagues and clubs as a third-generation (Sansei) Japanese American. “Playing basketball gave me a sense of community. Building Budokan will give us a way to ensure that these traditions and cultural values will continue to thrive.”

Silvia grew up with Little Tokyo as part of her life. “This place is a poignant reminder of my family’s lineage, my values as a Japanese American, and the important role in which Little Tokyo plays in preserving our community’s historical and cultural presence. Building the Budokan is especially important; it will be a gathering place for people, a place to play sports, to socialize, to learn, and a place to connect to a community uniquely rooted in Japanese American culture and history. It will be a Home Court for all.”
“The Far East Lounge provides a space for me to find community.”

— Linda Kaneko, Volunteer and Tai-Chi Class Enthusiast

“I am in a transitional period in my life. Being over 65 years old and no longer working, I suddenly found myself with a lot of free time on my hands. I travel from Montebello at least once a week because the Far East Lounge provides a space for me to make friends and socialize. They don’t have that where I live. For me, being a senior can sometimes be a very isolating experience and FEL helps me feel connected to a whole community. I really hope to see this space thrive. Our community is stronger with a place like the Far East Lounge.”

Providing a Vital Gathering Space at the Far East Lounge

The Far East Lounge has been serving as a community gathering space since 2014 providing free and low-cost activities like arts and crafts, yoga and tai-chi to seniors and other individuals.

21 classes offered

3717 people attending classes

Integrating Arts & Culture Into Community Development

In September, Little Tokyo Service Center was awarded a $3 million grant from ArtPlace to integrate arts and culture into community development and planning. Over the next three years, LTSC will creatively support and preserve local assets through community engagement, tapping into Little Tokyo’s spirit of resiliency to exert control over the future of Little Tokyo.

Celebrating Little Tokyo with Sake on the Rocks

The 9th annual sake and food tasting event, Sake on the Rocks, drew more than 700 people to the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center plaza. With sake provided by Mutual Trading Co., Inc. and an array of food offerings from LA’s top restaurants, this annual event highlights and celebrates the vibrancy and diversity of Little Tokyo.

Preserving Affordable Housing with the Daimaru Hotel

Little Tokyo Service Center acquired the Daimaru Hotel on historic First Street in June 2015 with plans to renovate its 48 Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units and three commercial spaces on the ground floor.
As the longest-running program of Little Tokyo Service Center, the Social Services department has been enhancing the quality of life for the community since 1980. More than 2,000 individuals are served each year through workshops, support groups and case management in six languages.

CLIENT HIGHLIGHT

“I thought I was going to lose my Medicare benefits.”
— Sachiko Yamashita

Sachiko Yamashita was packing for a trip to Japan when she received a letter from Medicare indicating that her benefits would expire in less than three days.

Translated from Japanese:
“My heart sank when I got that letter from Medicare that my benefits would expire. I was so worried because I was leaving the country the next day and I didn’t speak enough English to call. I didn’t know the system. I didn’t even know who to call, so I went to LTSC because they spoke Japanese. The Social Services staff was on the phone for hours and finally got through to a Medicare representative to resolve the issue. I can’t afford health insurance, so this was really important to me. LTSC helped me keep my benefits.”

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

“I learn so much about myself through helping others.”
— Junko Ashida

Junko Ashida has been a volunteer with Little Tokyo Service Center since 2009, after a 30 year-long career as a Japanese school teacher. Junko helps with the Nikkei Helpline, a hotline where Japanese speakers can talk confidentially about their concerns, and receive emotional support and referrals.

Translated from Japanese:
“Helping others helps me discover myself and what I can do to contribute to our community. I get a lot of calls with questions about services, but what is surprising is that I also get a lot of calls from Japanese-speaking seniors who are just looking to talk to another person. Being a senior can be a very lonely experience and part of what we do here at LTSC is to offer that sense of community.”
Little Tokyo Service Center provides multi-faceted services to residents at Casa Heiwa and Angelina Apartments through after-school programming, academic enrichment activities, tenant meetings, financial education and civic engagement programs.

Laytonia Lefear has been living at Angelina Apartments for the past 16 years with her three kids, 18 year-old Carnell, 14 year-old Katana, and 13 year-old Leslie whom she adopted in 2011.

“I’ve been a single mom for the past 12 years. When my husband passed away in 2005, I was really moved by how LTSC and the other tenants stepped in to help me. They started a donation program and even helped take care of my two little kids while I went to work.”

I’m a school bus driver for Inglewood Unified School District. On a typical day, I’d get up at 4 a.m. and don’t get to return until 6 p.m. Depending on my shifts, sometimes I don’t get home until late, so it’s important to me to know that my kids have a safe after-school program to go to. I can see my kids now wanting to go to college because of LTSC.

With the help of LTSC’s financial planning workshops, I am now starting the process of purchasing my first home. It’s always been a dream of mine to own a home. I grew up in foster care as a child, so it’s really important to me to provide stability for my kids. If it wasn’t for Angelina and the financial workshops, I would have never been able to save up for a home.”

“Little Tokyo Service Center has given me a place to call home.”
— Laytonia Lefear, Resident, Angelina Apartments

| Resident Services |

571 people living at Casa Heiwa in Little Tokyo and Angelina Apartments in Angelino Heights

$16,284 median household income, significantly below the state average

80% of youth enrolled in after-school programs see their grades improve

75 participate in Casa Heiwa Angelina Mentorship Program (CHAMPS)

20 field trips taken include: college visits, parks, hiking, swimming, beach day, and Six Flags

53 youth are enrolled in after-school programs

Rocking the vote with Civic Engagement
Since 2014, our teen residents have been actively participating in various civic engagement opportunities. With election season around the corner, these teens wanted to better mobilize and organize local residents to vote. In November, a group of teens traveled to Atlanta to participate in NeighborWorks America’s Community Leadership Institute, a three-day training event that aimed to strengthen the voices and skills of resident volunteer leaders.
Since 1999, Little Tokyo Service Center’s Child Development Program has provided high-quality infant and toddler care services to more than 2,000 children through the Grace Iino Child Care Center, Angelina Preschool and Family Child Care network of home-based providers.

**CHILD CARE PROVIDER HIGHLIGHT**

“There are so many low income families that also need childcare. I love it that I get to help teach and guide the children of those who need it the most.”

— Mayra Marin

Mayra Marin began her career in childcare as an Associate Teacher at LTSC’s Grace Iino Child Care Center for four years. She is now a licensed Family Child Care provider with LTSC.

“I came to the US from Columbia when I was 15 years old. I’ve always loved working with children so after high school, I took Early Childhood Education classes at East LA College. LTSC put me on the right career track. Working at the Grace Iino Child Care Center really encouraged me to continue on this path. LTSC helped me build my experience in working with infants and toddlers as well as gave me the tools to pursue a license as a Family Child Care Provider.

A year and a half ago, my husband and I had our first baby, which required a lot of staying at home. Having my own license gave me the flexibility to stay at home and make a living. Now I have six children that I provide care for each day at home and I love it. I couldn’t have done it without LTSC.”

Children’s reading time at Angelina Preschool.
Little Tokyo Service Center’s Community Development department is a national leader in building affordable housing, community facilities and commercial spaces. We integrate organizing and planning as part of a comprehensive strategy for neighborhood development and ensure that all voices are heard.

“"If not for Casa Yonde, I would still be living in a shelter.”

— Sandy Martinez, Resident, Casa Yonde

Sandy Martinez is a young mother working hard to give her three sons a good life. Sandy is currently an Americorps Volunteer assigned to Weingart Center on Skid Row and working at Starbucks on the weekends. When her Americorps service concludes, she plans to use her education award to go to school.

“I am so grateful for this opportunity and thankful for this housing. I can relax here and spend time with my children.

I was homeless for a while living in different shelters. I don’t have any credit history and without that you can’t rent an apartment in LA. It was really hard to live in the shelters with my three kids.

LTSC really changed my life with Casa Yonde. I was so happy when I learned that I was accepted as an applicant. Now my kids have a place to belong. All I want is to give my kids a good home.”
Affiliated Programs and Partners

The following organizations, supported by Little Tokyo Service Center through fiscal sponsorship, further our core values and mission of making positive change for people and places.

Alliance for Community Transit-Los Angeles (ACT-LA)
ACT-LA envisions Los Angeles as a transit-rich city where all people have access to quality jobs, affordable housing, necessary social services, ample transportation options, and a voice in decision-making. The goal of a sustainable community is the reduction of toxic air pollution, the promotion of public health, and the strengthening of community culture and heritage. As of 2015, ACT-LA has 31 coalition members.

For more information, visit allianceforcommunitytransit.org.

Asian Pacific Islander Small Business Program (API SBP)
Formed in 1999, API SBP is a collaborative of 5 community organizations: Chinatown Service Center, Koreatown Youth & Community Center, LTSC, Search to Involve Pilipino Americans and Thai Community Development Center. API SBP provides free counseling and workshops regarding business planning, loan applications, access to capital, basic business preparation and franchise acquisition. In 2015, API SBP served 2,500 entrepreneurs.

For more information, visit apisbp.org.

Asians for Miracle Marrow Matches (ASM)
Since 1991, A3M has been a recruitment center for Be The Match, operated by the National Marrow Donor Program. In 2015, more than 10,000 individuals registered through 563 conducted drives in the African American, Chinese, Japanese, Hispanic, Korean, Pilipino, South Asian, Vietnamese and multi-racial communities to increase and diversify the national marrow donor registry.

For more information, visit a3mhope.org.

Nikkei Helpline (NHL)
NHL was the first crisis hotline for the Japanese and Japanese American community. In 2015, more than 10,000 individuals called bringing the total calls since its inception in 1984 to over 40,000. Calls range from getting help with immigration, education and traffic accidents to illness, drug abuse and relationship conflicts. NHL serves Japanese, English and Korean-speaking community members.

For more information, visit nikkeihelpline.org.

Japanese Speaking Parents Association of Children with Challenges (SPACC)
Since 1994, SPACC has played a key role as a parent support organization for Japanese-speaking families with special needs children. In 2015 with the Special Olympics world games in Los Angeles, a number of game watches were organized for children and families to cheer on athletes from Japan. Nearly 200 members now make up this association with 210 seminars held since its inception.

For more information, visit jspacc.org.

Ryugakusei Hotline (RHL)
RHL provides information and referrals to thousands of Japanese students living in the US. Since its inception in 1991, RHL has provided service for more than 15,000 students on issues involving mental health, landlord-tenant questions, relationship counseling, automobile accidents and visa regulations.

For more information, visit ryugakusei.ltsc.org.

Completion Projects

Casa Yonde
1053 S. New Hampshire
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Community Partner:
Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)
LEED Platinum

Acquisition of the Daimaru Hotel
345 E. First Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Supporters

A very special thanks to LTSC’s supporters for grants and donations received between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2015.

Honor Grove

Members of LTSC’s Honor Grove have pledged to make an annual donation in support of LTSC’s programs and services.

Honor Grove Levels:

- Bonsai Level: 26+ Years of Giving
- Maple Level: 16-25 Years of Giving
- Pine Level: 11-15 Years of Giving
- Cherry Level: 6-10 Years of Giving

Honor Grove:

- Memorial
- Pine
- Bamboo
- Cherry
- Maple

Honor Grove Donor Levels:

- $100,000 and up
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- $25,000-$49,999
- $10,000-$24,999
- $5,000-$9,999
- $2,500-$4,999
- $1,000-$4,999
- $250-$999
- $100-$249

Donations

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Thank you to all our donors and supporters who continue to make a difference in the lives of Los Angeles County’s most vulnerable seniors, especially those who are isolated, low-income, and frail.
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