Positive Change in 2021

ANNUAL REPORT
Welcome

In 2021, Little Tokyo Service Center ensured the safety of residents, essential workers and community members, while also taking steps forward in our mission.

When vaccines first became available, LTSC mobilized quickly to bring clinics to Little Tokyo with the help of Wesley Health Centers. LTSC provided outreach and multilingual support, making sure that no one was left behind.

As racist attacks on the AAPI community increased nationwide, LTSC worked with other organizations to ensure the safety of our seniors. This included multilingual educational materials, self defense classes and personal alarm donations.

We celebrated a major milestone in our longtime fight for community self-determination with the footprint of our First Street North apartments tripling the number of affordable housing units and expanding retail, community and green space.

Our affordable housing efforts expanded past Little Tokyo into East Hollywood and East Los Angeles. Construction started on our Santa Monica Vermont Apartments project, and we acquired an apartment building with our partner, Fideicomiso Comunitario Tierra Libre, that will become resident-owned in a few short years.

Last summer, the next generation of Little Tokyo’s stakeholders graced the gym floor as part of Terasaki Budokan’s youth summer camps. Children’s laughter and the squeaking of their shoes finally filled the gym. Since opening to the public, Budokan has successfully brought families back to Little Tokyo, bringing the vision that started the project 30 years ago to life.

As we reflect on 2021, we’re overwhelmed with gratitude for our supporters. YOU make it possible for us to carry out our mission, and your contributions to LTSC help us create positive change.

Thank you for your generosity and support. We hope you enjoy these highlights of our work over the past year.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

How we help communities

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Statement of Activities and 2021 Highlights

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LTSC provides vital community services that preserve Little Tokyo’s cultural roots and build a more sustainable neighborhood for future generations.

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LTSC keeps families strong by offering childcare, youth, and other programs.

P 8-9 HELPING SENIORS
LTSC offers an array of services to promote mental health and wellness for seniors in Little Tokyo and beyond.

P 10-11 BUILDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING
Facing LA’s housing crisis, LTSC builds and acquires property for rehabilitation to put affordable housing within reach for Angelenos.

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LTSC is a one-stop service center with multilingual assistance for those in need.

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Along with key partners, LTSC helps provide assistance to small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs in Little Tokyo and throughout Los Angeles County.

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Board of Directors and Ways to Give

Little Tokyo Service Center is a social service and community development organization that improves the lives of individuals and families and promotes the rich heritage of Southern California’s ethnic communities.

Featured story photography by Evan Kodani and Zen Sekizawa

Welcome
2021 highlights

YOU MADE THIS POSSIBLE!

Changing Tides launched CT Stream, a culturally sensitive therapy stipend program targeting AAPI young adults.

Even though A3M officially closed its doors after 30 years of finding transplant matches for patients with blood related diseases, the work continues with Be the Match.

LTSC partnered with Wesley Health Centers JWCH Institute to bring vaccine clinics to Little Tokyo. Hosted at Terasaki Budokan, seniors and essential workers received 529 vaccine shots and 137 booster shots.

The First Street North Apartments project nearly tripled in size and will provide 248 units of affordable housing, retail, community and green space.

Mi CASA launched its inaugural class of afterschool programming at Terasaki Budokan as well as its first youth leadership internship program for teens.

Terasaki Budokan came to life through recreation leagues and sports activities. Cultural programming includes martial arts and taiko for all ages.

In response to anti-Asian hate crimes, LTSC distributed in-language safety flyers and personal safety devices, and conducted workshops, and self defense classes.

With the pandemic raging on, our annual fundraiser went virtual, rebranded as Sake on the Couch! The virtual event raised $260,000.

Together with our neighbors we uplifted the voices of low-income, immigrant and unhoused residents impacted by the DTLA 2040 Community Plan.

Statement of activities

REVENUE

Contributions $2,559,106
Grants $8,678,834
Special Events $449,449
Fees for Service $1,853,444
Real Estate Revenue $564,884
Budokan Rental & Activities $328,515
Gain on Investments $400,713
Forgiveness of Debt $1,316,641
Miscellaneous Income $100,086

EXPENSES

Program Service $10,515,921
General and Admin $1,437,355
Fees for Service $1,853,444
Real Estate Revenue $564,884
Budokan Rental & Activities $328,515
Gain on Investments $400,713
Forgiveness of Debt $1,316,641
Miscellaneous Income $100,086
When the pandemic hit two years ago, Setsuko Hayashi realized that she was disconnected from her community. Despite being a long-term resident in LTSC’s Casa Heiwa apartments, she barely knew her neighbors. As a renowned artist, she was typically busy traveling the world hosting workshops and Little Tokyo was just a place to stay between trips. Sheltering in place, feeling isolated and lonely, she needed to build connections in her community.

How do you meet new friends during a pandemic, especially when they speak a different language? Hayashi-san went back to basics. “With art, you don’t need to know each other’s language to understand each other. You can express your feelings through art,” she explained. Carol Zou, LTSC’s artist in residence, also believes in building community through art. When Carol asked Hayashi-san to join a resident art project at Terasaki Budokan, a path opened for Hayashi-san to get more involved with LTSC and the Little Tokyo community.

Then, Hayashi-san was asked to join “Little Tokyo Neighbors,” a diverse group of LTSC’s affordable housing residents who advocate for positive change in the community. “I wasn’t quite sure what to expect when I joined,” admitted Hayashi-san. “But it seemed like a good way to get out and meet more neighbors.”

Her work with Little Tokyo Neighbors led her to Nancy Alcaraz, LTSC’s Director of Resident Services, who invited Hayashi-san to host an art workshop at Mi CASA’s summer school program. The workshop was a major hit with the youth and Hayashi-san is looking forward to the next one.

Through art and opportunities with LTSC, Hayashi-san was able to break through the language barrier and get involved in her community. She even started taking zumba classes at Budokan with a few neighborhood friends. Now, Little Tokyo is more than a place she stays between trips—it’s her canvas for connection.
Bilha Escun immigrated from Guatemala hoping to provide a better life for her children. When she first arrived, Bilha and her husband worked strenuous hours at sewing factories in the garment district and struggled to make ends meet. But even worse, she barely had time to spend with her children. The dream of a better life seemed far away.

Fortunately Bilha's eldest child attended LTSC's Angelina Preschool. The preschool director, Adriana Perez, noticed Bilha's situation and approached her about becoming a Family Child Care (FCC) provider. As an FCC provider, LTSC would help Bilha earn her license, transform her home into a childcare, and become a small business owner. For Bilha, it seemed too good to be true. She signed up for orientation right away and has been a FCC provider for 5 years. With support from both LTSC and Head Start, Bilha has thrived, even taking additional coursework from a local college to become a better childcare provider.

"When I first came to the US, I never thought that good opportunities like this would come to us. I'm accomplishing goals that I never thought I would achieve," said Bilha. "I'm also becoming a better parent thanks to my training and I'm applying parenting methods that aren't known in my Guatemalan culture. Economically, I can offer my family a better life and I'm able to spend more time with my children."

Bilha and her family are no longer living paycheck to paycheck, and she's been able to start saving for a house where she can expand her childcare business. "I want to give back to the community, by helping the children build a strong foundation. This way they can grow up and make something of themselves, just like I did," she explained.
Keiko Ishiki received a call from LTSC that she’ll never forget. Her friend Kawasaki-san had taken a bad fall and had been admitted to the hospital. Since Kawasaki-san had no family in the US, Keiko knew her friend needed her now more than ever.

Soon it became clear that it would be in Kawasaki-san’s best interest to have Keiko obtain power of attorney to make her medical decisions. Although Keiko is very sharp, helping in this way was a completely new challenge for her. She was not sure she was prepared for the huge responsibility she would incur.

LTSC caseworker, Ayumi Nagata, reassured Keiko that everything would be okay. Whenever Keiko was unsure of what to do, Ayumi’s experience as a social worker and her network of professionals pointed Keiko in the right direction. With Ayumi by her side, Keiko confidently navigated the obstacles that arose after gaining power of attorney. “If I didn’t come across LTSC, I may have given up. Ayumi-san was with me every step so that I could support Kawasaki-san and make sure her wishes were fulfilled,” Keiko told us.

Although Kawasaki-san sadly passed away earlier this year, she was able to pass peacefully, knowing that her affairs were squared away. Keiko is proud that she supported her friend until the end and was grateful for the support she received from LTSC. “For my generation, [seniors] may feel shy and not want to reach out for help when they don’t know what to do. LTSC is a great organization and every person needs an organization like LTSC to give them help,” said Keiko.

If I didn’t come across LTSC, I may have given up.
— Keiko, LTSC client

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To afford rent these days, it’s not easy. You might need to work 2 or 3 jobs to make ends meet or live with other families. Even after that, you might not live in housing with dignity,” explained Fanny Ortiz of Fideicomiso Comunitario Tierra Libre (FCTL.) This scenario is all too familiar in Boyle Heights where gentrification fuels the rapid displacement of long-time and lower-income residents. Having experienced the housing crisis first-hand and living in affordable housing as a single mom of 5 kids, Fanny found her calling at FCTL.

“I feel like I owe it to all those people who are facing housing insecurity in this extractive world that uses housing as a commodity to make profit, as opposed to making sure that we are all housed with dignity and security,” she said.

FCTL is a community land trust in Boyle Heights that Fanny co-founded three years ago. FCTL aims to take land and housing off the speculative market and return it to community control. To get FCTL off the ground, Fanny needed to learn the technical skills to purchase and manage a property. Luckily, Fanny found LTSC and the two organizations partnered in a LA County pilot program to purchase a property last summer. LTSC is making much-needed repairs to the property and is mentoring FCTL in real estate acquisition, asset management and property management. “LTSC is the guiding light to lead us, which will eventually allow for FCTL to take over on its own,” explained Fanny.

Though this is only the beginning, LTSC is excited to work with mission-aligned community partners like FCTL who battle gentrification and fight for community self-determination. “As low wage workers and immigrants, we wouldn’t be able to become homeowners on our own. And that’s the way we feel about FCTL, we wouldn’t be able to do it alone. That’s why it’s important to build these relationships with community based organizations like LTSC,” Fanny told us.
“I decided to leave the relationship. I had injuries on my body and needed to go to the hospital. I felt helpless, and sad,” shared Mei. When Mei immigrated to the US, she had no family nearby and struggled with English. Since her husband forbade her from getting her driver’s license, it was difficult to find a job or make social connections. She endured physical and emotional abuse, and felt scared and hopeless. Despite this, Mei courageously left the relationship to keep herself and her children safe, determined to regain her independence and rebuild her life.

Mei found the Center for Pacific Asian Family (CPAF), a nonprofit providing in-language support for API survivors of domestic violence. They provided Mei temporary shelter before referring her to Kosumosu, LTSC’s transitional housing for survivors of domestic violence. When Mei arrived at Kosumosu, she finally felt safe, and as she settled in, she was surrounded by people who truly cared for her wellbeing.

“I was impressed that LTSC staff went out of their way to make sure my family was safe and it showed that they really cared about us,” explained Mei.

While at Kosumosu, language classes improved her English and LTSC social workers helped her manage stress and anxiety. She also received case management, legal referrals, childcare referrals and rental assistance. Now, after graduating from Kosumosu’s temporary shelter into permanent housing, Mei has come a long way. “Kosumosu gives survivors the tools, but it is up to each woman to dedicate herself to starting her new life,” explained Vivian Lee who oversees LTSC’s Kosumosu program. “Mei never gave up and she should be proud of what she has accomplished.”

With a stable job, housing and newly regained independence, Mei is looking forward to her future. “I have regained hope in life,” she told us.

“I have regained hope in life.”
— Mei, resident at LTSC’s Kosumosu Transitional Housing
When Carol and Keith married 17 years ago, they shared a dream of retiring to own their own business. However, it wasn’t until a few years ago that inspiration hit. One Christmas, Keith designed and built a handmade wooden ukulele stand for Carol that could be folded to fit in the instrument’s case. Upon receiving the gift Carol thought, “This is it! This is what we can build our business on!” They enthusiastically committed to the idea, but quickly realized that it took more than an amazing product to run a successful enterprise. “There were times we wanted to give up,” admitted Keith. “As seniors, we didn’t have that energy and drive to keep on going on our own,” added Carol. They needed guidance but did not know where to go.

One lucky day, the two were out for a walk when they saw a flier for an entrepreneurial workshop hosted by LTSC’s small business counselor, Mariko Lochridge. The workshop proved to be exactly what they needed. They learned essential skills like writing a business plan, marketing and applying for small business loans, but more importantly they found a network of support and resources.

“Without the workshops, we wouldn’t be here today talking about our business,” said Keith. “Having Mariko’s support gave us confidence and kept us going. We didn’t want to let her down,” remembers Keith.

In 2021, Carol and Keith received a patent for their original wooden music stand, known as the K-Stand. With Mariko’s guidance, the couple is exploring ways to expand their business, by adding a lower cost plastic version of the K-Stand. Though their business has continued to grow, they are most proud of their granddaughter who was inspired by them to start her own business. “When we give her advice, we have confidence that we’re telling her the right things,” Carol said with a laugh.

Keith building a K-stand (top left).
Carol sews a cover for the K-stand (bottom left).
Carol and Keith show off their K-stand designs (below).
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A very special thank you to LTSC’s supporters for grants and donations received between January 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021.

Scan QR code to view list of donors and volunteers or visit www.LTSC.org/donorlist

Please contact Emily Weaver to request a printed copy of the donor list at eweaver@LTSC.org or 213-473-1613.

Ways to give

DONATE – Donate online at www.LTSC.org, by calling 213-473-1613, or by check made out to “LTSC” and mailed to Donations / Little Tokyo Service Center / 231 E. Third St, G-106 / Los Angeles, CA 90013.

MONTHLY GIVING – Give monthly and join LTSC’s Cornerstones! Monthly gifts let us flexibly address the most pressing needs first, whether it’s mental health support for teens or rental assistance for families.

VOLUNTEER – Make a difference in the lives of our clients and residents and positively impact the community. Opportunities range from one-time event help to providing ongoing support for various programs.

PLANNED GIVING – A way to support LTSC in the future by making arrangements now in your estate plan.

MATCHING GIFTS – Thousands of companies that “match” employee charitable contributions with corporate dollars. A corporate matching gift can double, or even triple, the impact of your personal contribution.

DONATE A VEHICLE – A convenient alternative to selling or trading. It’s easy, free, tax-deductible, and the proceeds go directly to LTSC.

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