

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property**DRAFT**Historic name: Kinmon GakuenOther names/site number: Booker T. Washington Community Services CenterName of related multiple property listing: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California, 1850-1995

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 2031 Bush StreetCity or town: San Francisco State: California County: San FranciscoNot For Publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:_____
Date_____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:_____
Date_____
Title :_____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒
- Public – Local ☐
- Public – State ☐
- Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
- District ☐
- Site ☐
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: school

SOCIAL: meeting hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: school

SOCIAL: meeting hall

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS

Mediterranean Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: Concrete; Walls: Stucco, Wood;
Roof: Asphalt; Other: Ceramic tile, Wood
windows

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Kinmon Gakuen is located on the north side of Bush Street in Japantown, in the City and County of San Francisco, one of the last three remaining Japantowns in the United States. Bush Street is a three-lane, one-way street that runs east to west through the city. The property is located between residential units, mostly three-story Victorian style rowhouses, and occupies a footprint of 4,905 square feet on an urban lot that slopes slightly south. Set back from the front and east property lines, the building is sited along the west boundary of the parcel, partially abutting a neighboring rowhouse. A rear yard occupies the parcel's south end, and an alley separates the building from the multi-family residential building to the east. The three-story (with partial basement), wood-frame, stucco-clad, Mediterranean Revival-style educational building is L-shaped in plan and is capped by a flat roof. Clad in stucco, the main (north) façade is symmetrical with three vertical bays composed of wood multi-lite and replacement aluminum sash windows. The centered main entrance accessed from the elevated porch, is recessed into the wall, and features a segmented arch surrounded by decorative tile. An articulated concrete stucco-clad wall with decorative balustrades completes the front façade at the north property line

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and is flanked by L-shaped stairs leading to the entry porch. On the east, a metal gate set within a stucco-clad concrete wall with terra cotta half-barrel tile coping provides access to the sloped alley and the side, basement-level entrance at the south. The building remains in good condition, having received only minor alterations since its construction. The building retains all aspects of historic integrity.

Narrative Description

Setting

Kinmon Gakuen stands on an approximately 0.2-acre, L-shaped parcel on the south side of Bush Street between Buchanan and Webster Streets in San Francisco. The building is located between the National Register-eligible Japantown Community and Cultural Historic District and the locally designated Bush Street Cottage Row Historic District.¹ The L-shaped building abuts the boundary of the property line on the west, is set back from the north property line, has a setback partially along the east property line, and features a yard at the south (rear). The building and concrete paving cover the entire parcel except at the rear yard, which has minimal landscaping present around a play structure, including wooden box flower beds and some informal vegetation at the south wall. A mix of chain-link and wood fencing separate the parcel at the east, south, and west at the rear yard from adjacent properties.

Overall

The wood-frame building with a built-up flat roof is approximately 84 feet by 56 feet. The foundation, wood piers that reach down to the concrete footing, supports the three-story-over-basement L-shaped building with the short section of the ell oriented to the south. Textured stucco and painted horizontal wood siding clad the exterior walls, while half-barrel terra cotta tiles are found at the coping of the cornice at the north elevation and partially at the east. The mission tiling is mimicked at the cornice of the portal entrance gate on Bush Street. Most of the original materials—including the original stucco cladding, the terracotta tile coping, multi-lite wood windows, wood casement windows, paneled doors, and metal glazed skylight—are substantially intact.

Exterior

North (front) façade

The front entry façade faces north toward Bush Street. Terminating at a flat roof with a terra cotta tile cornice, the textured stucco-clad façade is divided into three bays composed of multi-lite wood, divided lite wood casement and replacement aluminum sash windows at the second and third floor. The first floor is visually dominated by the prominent entry porch that extends the width of the façade and consists of a concrete wall at the sidewalk flanked by terra cotta tile-clad double half-turn stairs that lead to the raised main entrance. Metal gates control access to the

¹ The Japantown Community and Cultural Historic District was evaluated for eligibility on the National Register of Historical Places and California Register of Historical Resources, and found significant under Criterion A/1. As sourced from the form: “The historic presence of the Japanese ethnic community in the Japantown neighborhood provides the basis for determining the significance of the Historic District.” Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Community & Cultural Historic District*, Department of Parks and Recreation District Record, May 2009.

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stair at each side of the wall facing Bush Street. The wall displays two interpretive panels discussing a brief history of the building, a sign for the Golden Gate Institute, and a bronze plaque for the City Landmark designation (#288, October 22, 2019). The signs on the wall are set between pilasters and above an articulated water table. The wall extends above the terra cotta-tiled porch surface and acts as a guardrail in conjunction with a partial balustrade of painted balusters on the north, east, and west sides.

Centered on the symmetrical façade at the second floor is a recessed entryway, set within a segmented arch opening composed of wood paneling and a decorative tile surround. The main entrance contains six-lite double wood panel doors, surmounted by an arched wood four-lite transom. Directly to the east is a tile vertical sign mounted on the wall displaying Japanese kanji that reads, "Kinmon Gakuen." Both second floor window openings are covered by metal security mesh screens. At the third floor, a painted metal balcony and a set of six-lite double wood panel doors are flanked by divided lite wood sidelites and a six-lite transom. On either side of the doors are aluminum-sash sliding windows with divided-lite wood transoms.

East Elevation

Looking from the sidewalk down the east side alley, both the east elevation and the recessed portion of the north elevation are visible. The east elevation forms the inner ell of the L-shaped plan. The wall facing north serves as the short end of the east-west ell, which abuts the eastern property line toward the south end of the parcel. The long, north-south (east) side of the ell faces a sloping concrete walkway accessed through a metal gate within a framed opening in the wall capped with half-barrel terra cotta tile. A short run of terra cotta tile-clad steps located just south of the gate lead to the walkway.

The north-facing wall of the ell is one bay wide with a pair of flush wood doors, that open to the stair tower, centered on the elevation at the auditorium floor below three vertically aligned wood-sash windows: nine-lite casement at the first floor and six-over-six double-hung at the upper two floors. The elevation is capped with terra cotta mission tiles at the cornice.

The east-facing wall features flush double wood doors at the south end of the wall, which opens to the auditorium. At the auditorium level, a band of six wood-sash, nine-over-nine, divided-lite double-hung windows are concentrated on the south end. The upper floors feature a mix of wood-sash divided-lite double hung and casement windows. The north end accommodates a secondary sloping concrete walkway that leads to the below grade boiler room. Terra cotta mission tile also caps the east elevation.

South Elevation

Clad in horizontal dropped wood siding, the south elevation is divided into four vertical bays at the auditorium level and five vertical bays at the upper floors. Window types, all with simple wood surrounds, include wood-sash divided-lite double-hung and aluminum-sash sliding of various sizes, some surmounted by a transom, and some paired. The recessed east end features a set of flush double doors at the auditorium floor and a sliding window on each of the upper floors, all vertically aligned. Another set of flush double doors, centered on the southernmost

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wall, leads to the auditorium from the back yard. The third and fourth floors each contain two doors with transoms that open to the metal fire escape: flush doors with a narrow lite at the third floor and flush doors with no lite at the fourth. A lightwell at the east side contains three wood-sash divided-lite fixed windows below grade. Metal bars cover most of the windows at the lower two levels, and numerous painted pipes and conduit are mounted to the south elevation.

West Elevation

Much of the west elevation is not visible as it is located at the property line, abutting the adjacent building. The elevation has no openings at the property line, bisected at the upper two floors by a recessed lightwell. The three-sided lightwell walls are clad in painted, horizontal dropped wood siding and feature several window openings with flat wood trim. At the west elevation two replacement aluminum fixed over slider windows punctuate each floor; at the north elevation one aluminum fixed over slider window is centered at the second floor and two original nine-lite wood awning windows pierce the wall at the east and west end of the third floor; and at the south elevation two vertically aligned aluminum windows are centered at each level. A hipped roof and steel framed skylight with wired glass covers the lightwell.

Rear Yard

The rear yard is located directly south of the building and is partially paved with concrete. The yard contains a wood-edged flower bed, a small one-story shed-roof wood building, and a play structure on sand. A wood fence stands along the east and south parcel boundary while a wire fence runs along the west and south parcel boundary. The wood-framed one-story shed abuts the east elevation of the main building on the south end. The shed faces south toward the yard at the rear and has two openings. Due to post period of significance construction, the shed is a noncontributing resource.

Interior

The interior occupies an area of 4,956 square feet at the auditorium, mezzanine, and boiler room. The second floor, 3,771 square feet, and the third floor at 3,812 square feet, contain offices, classrooms, and restrooms that surround double-loaded corridors on each level. Both floors hold three classrooms each, two along the south end, and one centered on the east side. The second floor serves as the main floor and is accessed from the entry porch on the north elevation.

Basement

The finished basement measures 368 square feet and features finished concrete flooring and painted plaster ceilings and walls. Unfinished crawl space occupies the majority of the basement level. At the south, a staircase leads to restrooms and a closet. The water heater and a window well are also located at the south end. As a utilitarian space there are few decorative features; chair rails and other simple wood trim elements are present on some walls. The doors are a mix of glazed wood and wood panel doors and window types include aluminum-sash one-over-ones and wood divided-lites.

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Auditorium

The auditorium occupies an area of 3,697 square feet, including the elevated stage. The partial mezzanine in the southeast corner is 406 square feet. Entrances from the exterior are located at the south and east, while an interior entrance is available from the south stair. The auditorium presents a large volume of assembly space with an approximately 18-foot high plaster ceiling and stained wood tongue-and-groove flooring. The interior walls are primarily stucco with a vertical board wainscot. A wood chair rail runs on the east and west walls, and partially on the north wall. Numerous acoustical panels have also been applied to the walls over the years. A series of projecting pilasters with decorative brackets on the east and west walls support boxed wood beams above, while the ceiling itself is painted plaster with crown molding.

The room was originally illuminated by a skylight in a central bay at the west side, and has since been covered.² Four large nine-over-nine wood sash windows allow daylight through the east wall and two large nine-over-nine wood sash window over two smaller sliders are open at the south. Common ceiling-mounted glass inverted dome fixtures, some with the shades missing, provide light to the space overall. The stage features surface-mount light bulbs set around the interior face of stage opening.

The elevated stage, approximately 25 feet wide by 14 feet deep, is centered on the north wall and occupies the space from floor to ceiling. A storage room is directly west of the stage, and the backstage area and a small restroom are to the east. Each room is accessed through flush or paneled wood doors at the stage and auditorium. The proscenium arch has molded wood surrounds and a molded wood crown caps the head of the arch. The stage apron is composed of painted wood panels. In the main volume of the auditorium, a wood casework storage space runs along the south wall and the south end of the west wall. A wood casework counter with a sink with cabinets stands at the east wall near the south exit. The exposed mechanical system runs on the east and west walls.

Constructed circa 1940, the mezzanine level is accessed by wood stairs, with a wood wing wall on the north. A wood door with a half lite opens to the office, an enclosed rectangular volume punctuated by an aluminum-sash fixed window and an aluminum-sash sliding window at the north interior wall. On the south wall, two wood-sash divided-lite double-hung windows are partially obscured by the mezzanine floor. The adjacent projection room is accessed through the exterior fire escape with only a small hatch connecting the two rooms at the interior.

Under the mezzanine office, the kitchen, added circa 1977, occupies a rectangular room oriented north-south. A wood door with an obscured glass panel opens to the kitchen, which features small quarry tile flooring, built-in wood cabinets, laminate and ceramic tile countertops and recessed can lighting. An aluminum-sash sliding window with molded wood trim punctuates the south wall.

² While there is no documentation of when the skylight was covered on the interior, it is estimated to have been closed when movies were regularly shown in the auditorium. The movie booth, which became the mezzanine, was added circa 1940. Photographic evidence shows the auditorium windows as covered by circa 1977.

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A small closet, and a children's restroom were also added circa 1977 and are located west of the kitchen on the south end of the auditorium. The restroom contains four stalls with low toilets, wall-mounted sinks, and a sliding window. Each partition is clad in ceramic tile, as is the wainscoting on all walls. The flooring consists of small quarry tile, and the room features recessed can lighting.

Second Floor

The second floor serves as the building's main level, and holds offices, classrooms, and restrooms. The L-shaped floor plan is organized around a central double-loaded L-shaped corridor. The corridor has stained wood flooring, flat plaster walls with wood wainscoting, molded wood chair and picture rails, crown molding, built-in fire extinguisher cabinets, a variety of interior and exterior wood-sash windows, and a flat plaster ceiling with pendant lighting. An open painted wood stair with metal handrails is located off the lobby at the east side and leads to the third floor. Another enclosed wood stairway with a wood guardrail is located at the southeast corner and connects all floors. A lightwell is located at the west. Within the lightwell, a hipped-roof skylight previously provided light to the auditorium. The skylight has since been covered on the interior. One-over-one panel wood doors and four-lite over single-panel wood doors, some with single lite transoms, are found throughout the corridor, and an original wall mounted ceramic drinking fountain extends into the corridor at the southeast end.

Classrooms and office space line the corridor on the east, west, and south. The classrooms are accessed through four-lite over single-panel wood doors, some with transoms. The offices are directly east and west of the entry lobby, and feature wood flooring and a variety of wood trim, such as crown, picture, and chair molding. The east office is accessed through a four-lite over single-panel wood Dutch door, which opens to a rectangular shaped room. A set of grouped wood-sash divided lite casement windows illuminate the north wall, and a six-over-six double hung wood window punctuates the east wall. The room is finished with stained wood floors, plaster walls and ceiling, wood base and crown, and simple wood trim at the windows and door. A single pendant light hangs in the center of the room. The office space to the west of the entryway also features a four-lite over single-panel wood door. The room is L-shaped in plan and includes a primary volume of the office space and an ancillary space for storage. Grouped wood-sash divided-lite windows pierce the north wall. The room is finished with stained wood floors, plaster walls and ceiling, wood wainscot and crown, and simple wood trim at the framed opening, window and door. A surface-mounted fluorescent light illuminates the office.

West of the corridor, two restrooms and two closets flank the central lightwell. One-over-one panel wood doors with wood trim open into these utilitarian spaces. The restrooms have vestibules with wood floor, a painted cementitious coating at the restroom floors, wood stalls, urinals in the men's restroom, and wall mounted sinks. The larger closet contains a sink, and both floors are finished with a painted cementitious coating and plaster walls.

Wood divided-lite doors with single-lite hopper transoms open to the classrooms, which each feature a variety of floor materials, including carpet, laminate flooring, and hardwood. Chalkboards, whiteboards, or bulletin boards are mounted on the walls of the classrooms. The

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plaster ceilings typically feature surface mounted fluorescent fixtures. Wood trim includes base board, chair rails and crown molding, as well as flat wood trim around the integrated chalkboards. All classrooms include windows on one wall and the central, east classroom has two interior six-over-six double hung wood windows with obscured glass.

Third Floor

Similar to the second-floor floor plan, three classrooms line the corridor to the south and east, and utilitarian spaces including a kitchen, restrooms, and closet occupy the west. The north end features a large multipurpose room, which spans the entire east-west length of the building. Finished with resilient flooring and plaster ceiling and walls, the multipurpose room is accessed by two wood panel doors on the east; a four-lite over single-panel wood door with a single-lite hopper transom opens to the corridor, while the other one-over-one wood panel door leads to the adjacent kitchen. A divided-lite panel double door with a divided-lite transom and sidelites opens to a metal balcony on the north. The door is flanked by casement sidelites with divided-lite wood frame transoms. A wood chair rail runs on all walls of the room, and whiteboards, chalkboards, and bulletin boards hang from the south, east, and west walls.

The kitchen is a rectangular room with a skylight. A wood panel door from the corridor opens to the kitchen on the east. A sink with tile clad walls is found on the west, while wood cabinets are affixed to the north wall. Similar to the second-floor classrooms, wood divided-lite doors with casement transoms open to the classrooms, which each feature a variety of floor materials, including carpet, laminate flooring, and hardwood. Chalkboards, whiteboards, or bulletin boards are found on walls of the classrooms. Two sets of stairs are located on the east. One set of stairs at the east of the "L," accesses all floors of the building, including the basement, while the other set is used for access between the second and third floors only.

Building Chronology³

Kinmon Gakuen was established in 1911 and took up residence in a Victorian building at 2031 Bush Street, where they remained until it was demolished in 1925. On April 17, 1925, the parcel was purchased by the Kinmon Gakuen Foundation and construction of the extant building was completed in 1926. The dedication ceremony for the building was held on April 26, 1926, and classes resumed in the new building soon after.

Nov 29, 1925 Groundbreaking for new building construction

1926	Construction complete
1940	Auditorium projector room/moving picture booth built
1977	New kitchen, restrooms, and office added to the auditorium.

³ Unless otherwise noted, the information is taken from the Landmark Designation: *San Francisco Planning, The Kinmon Gakuen Building, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, (Historic Preservation Commission, February 6, 2019), 10.

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- 1981 Non-bearing partition wall added above existing low kitchen partition
- 1987 Aluminum-sash windows installed in existing openings, Permit Application number 8717729, City and County of San Francisco, Department of Building Inspection
- 1990 Reroofing, Permit Application number 9000396, City and County of San Francisco, Department of Building Inspection
- 1992 Removal of tile from stairway and landing
- 1997 Water damage at an unspecified location repaired; tiles replaced at an unspecified location, Application number 9706015, City and County of San Francisco, Department of Building Inspection
- 1997-2024 Play structures and equipment placed in rear yard

Integrity

Kinmon Gakuen retains sufficient historic integrity to convey its historical significance. The building remains on its original parcel and retains integrity of *location*. Despite alterations, the building clearly communicates a design consistent with the San Francisco school building type of the early twentieth century and retains integrity of *design*.

Most of the area surrounding Kinmon Gakuen was largely developed prior to the time of the building's construction. Although changes have been made to the built environment throughout the twentieth century with continued development of Japantown, much of the residential, institutional, and commercial development that occurred on the block and immediate neighborhood prior to 1926 is still extant. The property retains integrity of *setting*.

The interior has received more changes to spaces and materials, some of which were replacements that were made in kind, likely due to the deterioration of the original. The property retains integrity of *materials*.

Integrity of workmanship is still evident in the original construction craftsmanship of the building's character-defining features, including the double stairs with quarry tile treads that rises behind a concrete wall, the decorative tile surrounds, the Mission terra cotta coping, and the vertically oriented sign in Japanese. The property retains integrity of *workmanship*.

Since the exterior materials and form of the building are substantially intact, the building retains the feeling of an early-twentieth century school building in San Francisco. The property retains integrity of *feeling*.

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The building was designed for the Kinmon Gakuen school and the Japanese community and still serves its original purpose in the Japantown community. The property retains integrity of *association*.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: ASIAN (Japanese)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1926-1952

Significant Dates

1942

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hays, William C.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Kinmon Gakuen is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Asian (Japanese), Education, and Social History for its association with the formation of the oldest Japantown in the continental United States and in the social, cultural, and educational development of Japanese immigrant and Japanese American children. For its association with the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center and the Center's role in community organization and activism in the African American community, the property is also eligible in the area of Ethnic Heritage: Black. The period of significance begins with construction in 1926 with a significant date of 1942, when the building was seized by the US military as a processing center where all persons of Japanese ancestry living in the City and County of San Francisco were required to register their family name and members of their household before they were forcibly removed from City limits and incarcerated at a local detention center before transfer inland to a U.S. concentration camp. The building served as the temporary facility for the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center to meet the rising need of African Americans who were recruited to work in San Francisco to meet the war time needs. The organization was responsible for creating programs aiding in housing and employment needs of the African American community. The period of significance ends in 1952 when the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center moved out and the Kinmon Gakuen School moved back into the building. As a property associated with Community Serving Organizations, Kinmon Gakuen meets the registration requirements of the *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California, 1850-1995* Multiple Property Submission.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

From the *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California, 1850-1995* Multiple Property Documentation Form,

Gakuen (*Japanese Language Schools*)⁴

Alongside churches, Japanese language schools, or *gakuen*, were the most central institutions to Japanese communities across the West Coast. The first recorded *gakuen* in California was San Francisco's *Shogakko*, established in 1902. According to historian Gail Dubrow, the hundreds of language schools in Japantowns up and down the Pacific Coast in the early twentieth century, "testify to the growing Nisei population, Issei anxiety over their precarious status in the United States as aliens ineligible for citizenship, and dismay over the manners of their American-born children." Because parents' acquisition of English was generally quite limited, one of the *gakuen*'s roles was to support better communication between parents and children. A 1921 volume, *California and the Japanese* by Kiichi Kanzaki, General Secretary of the Japanese Association of America, stated that a *gakuen*, "teaches the mother tongue

⁴ National Register of Historic Places, *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California, 1850-1995*, Multiple Counties, California, National Register #MC100004867, E-107-108.

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only so far as it is necessary for family harmony and for social efficiency and economy.” Japanese language schools allowed *Issei* parents to educate their children in the language

and customs of their home country, with the additional benefit that the youth would be prepared should the family decide to return to Japan. Japanese schools flourished throughout the state as *Nisei* children grew in numbers and age. Buddhist and Christian churches, as well as independent organizations such as local Japanese Association chapters, often served as sponsors for *gakuen*, which might operate out of space in churches and community halls. Some communities, such as Watsonville, Arroyo Grande, and Richmond, erected purpose built language schools. Large Japantowns, or areas with multiple Japanese concentrations such as San Francisco and Los Angeles, often had several schools.

Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage: Asian (Japanese), Education, and Social History

Japanese Immigration to the U.S., 1869-1924

Emigration out of Japan began in the late 1860s with the end of the country’s isolation policy.⁵ Emigrants were initially male students who desired to attend American universities and find work. When Japan loosened their emigration restrictions in the mid-1880s, the demographics of immigrants to the U.S. shifted to young male laborers, and later to women and children. Japanese immigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be divided into two waves: the first occurred between 1885 and 1907, defined by younger men who sought work as laborers with the intention to return to Japan, while the second is characterized by women and children who arrived in the U.S. between 1908 to 1925.⁶

The first group of laborer immigrants were largely employed in the agricultural industry. From Japan, some brought a selection of plants, such as tea and mulberry, while others went to work on the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm in El Dorado County, California. In 1880, the Census reflects 148 Japanese people in California. This number was still relatively small number due to the immigration treaty between Japan and Hawaii prohibiting laborers until after 1884. A larger influx of immigration from Japan to the U.S. was prompted by the lift on this ban of laborers. Between 1885 and 1907 the population of Japanese immigrants grew, particularly in Hawaii where they went to work on sugar or pineapple plantations. Soon after, many moved to the contiguous U.S. Over half the 2,038 count for the Japanese population resided in California, according to the 1890 census. The Japanese community centered their livelihoods in various areas related to the agricultural industry, such as wholesale or distribution.⁷

⁵ D.E. McNabb, “Tokugawa Isolation, Commerce, and Industry, 1603-1868” in *A Comparative History of Commerce and Industry, Volume I* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 181.

⁶ Donna Graves and Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement* (San Francisco: San Francisco Planning Department, Revised 2011), 24-26.

⁷ Isami Arifuku Waugh and Alex Yamato, “A History of Japanese Americans in California,” in *Five Views: An Ethnic Sites Survey for California*, (Sacramento: State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, December 1988), 161-162; San Francisco Planning, *San Francisco Planning, The Kinmon Gakuen Building, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, (Historic Preservation Commission, February 6, 2019), 11; Graves and Page & Turnbull, 25.

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The second surge of migration of Japanese people to the U.S. occurred between 1908 to 1925. Through a push from white supremacist organizations and labor unions, a Gentlemen's Agreement was established in 1907-1908, limiting the number of Japanese immigrant laborers admitted into the U.S. Since laborers were mostly male, the second wave of migration was characterized by women and children of laborers who were born in Japan. From the Gentlemen's Agreement, many women moved to the U.S. as "picture brides."⁸ While this agreement was meant to curtail the number of Japanese immigrants, the population of Japanese people increased through a new generation of children born in the U.S.⁹

In 1924, an aggressive effort to prevent all Japanese people from entering the country took the form of the Immigration Act.¹⁰ This act restricted the immigration of Japanese people completely until 1952 when an allowance of 100 Japanese people immigrants were admitted into the U.S. per year. These waves of migration and restrictions in immigration affected the patterns in which the Japanese community developed in the U.S. Generational divides are pronounced within the Japanese population since many children of the first and second group of immigrants were born in the period between 1908 and 1924. This differs from the typical curve of births seen in an established population.¹¹

Settlement of Japanese Americans in San Francisco

The earliest record of Japanese immigrants to San Francisco was in 1869. San Francisco was home to one of the main ports of entry for Japanese people during first and second waves of immigration.¹² Due to this, the city held a large population and became one of the hubs of Japanese settlement in California. Japanese immigrants lived in the already established Chinatown and took jobs where they were exploited for cheap labor in the general labor, railroad, or domestic service industries. The Japanese Consulate was established in 1870, and businesses and local organization were created to support the growing community, including churches and other religious groups, Japanese language schools, political groups, boarding houses, restaurants, and pool halls.¹³

Members of the Japanese community began leaving Chinatown in the late nineteenth century, and by the early twentieth century, many had moved to areas south of Market Street. This neighborhood had been home to working class and other immigrants since the 1870s. Japanese businesses, social, political, and religious groups, and residences formed in a concentrated area in this neighborhood, which was referred to by its residents as the *Nihonjin-Machi*, or Japanese people's town.¹⁴ The area was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fire, forcing some to locate

⁸ Waugh and Yamato, "A History of Japanese Americans in California," 162.

⁹ Ibid., 161-165; San Francisco Planning, *2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 11-12.

¹⁰ Waugh and Yamato, "A History of Japanese Americans in California," 161-163; San Francisco Planning, *2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 11-12.

¹¹ Waugh and Yamato, "A History of Japanese Americans in California," 161-165; San Francisco Planning, *2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 11-12.

¹² Waugh and Yamato, "A History of Japanese Americans in California," 163.

¹³ Graves and Page & Turnbull, 25-27; San Francisco Planning, *2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 11-13.

¹⁴ San Francisco Planning, *2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 13-14.

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to the South Park neighborhood and many to relocate to the Western Addition neighborhood of San Francisco. The South Park location had a railroad station that functioned, in part, as an entry point for many Japanese immigrants. Although the community grew roots in the South Park neighborhood, in the establishment of businesses catering to Japanese people, it did not last. The implementation of the 1924 Immigration Act marked the beginning of the decline of the Japanese community in South Park because the Japanese shipping companies were relocated.¹⁵

Emergence of Japantown in the Western Addition

Prior to the arrival of Japanese residents to the Western Addition after 1906, the demographic consisted of European immigrants, and the built environment was characterized by mid-nineteenth century single-family Victorian houses. Japanese people moved in large numbers after 1906, primarily to the approximate area bound by Bush, Geary, Webster, and Laguna streets. Reflected in the 1910 census, fifty Japanese-owned businesses and nearly 5,000 Japanese people were in the Western Addition, however no Japanese people are listed to have owned any property. Early businesses included restaurants, clothing stores, and laundries. As the Japanese community grew, so did social, cultural, religious, and educational organizations, contributing to the foundations of the new *Nihonjin-Machi*.¹⁶

The residential development of the Western Addition increased after the signing of the Van Ness Ordinance in the 1850s and the introduction of the cable car in the 1870s. Single-family Victorian houses were typical of the area and were built by the Real Estate Associates from pattern books and constructed using mass production techniques. In the early decades of the residential neighborhood, the demographics were generally upper-middle class professionals of European immigrants. The Western Addition held the second largest Jewish population in an urban area during the 1870s; the first was New York City.¹⁷

After the 1906 earthquake and fire, the Western Addition provided temporary refuge to various ethnic communities who were displaced from their original neighborhoods, such as Japanese, African American, Filipino, and Korean peoples. The temporary settlement became permanent for some, who began to build their communities and rebuild their lives in the Western Addition. The population influx caused a housing shortage, which was addressed by a subdivision of pre-disaster houses into flats. By 1910, the neighborhood contained over fifty Japanese-owned commercial buildings, which included restaurants, laundries, art stores, and shoe stores. Social, cultural, religious, and educational organization were established at this time. and nearly 5,000 Japanese residents. The Western Addition Japantown, or *Nihonmachi*, as it became to be known, was the first and oldest urban community in the U.S., second only in size to Little Tokyo in Los Angeles.¹⁸

¹⁵ Graves and Page & Turnbull, 27-28.

¹⁶ Ibid., 28-30; San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft, 14-15.

¹⁷ San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft, 14.

¹⁸ Ibid., 14-15.

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Japanese Exclusion and Restriction

Tensions between white Americans in the U.S., and people of Japanese ancestry rose following Japan's success in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War. Existing issues between laborer unions and Japanese laborers only developed further. The effects of the war were two-fold, where the U.S. perceived the Japanese military as a threat and anti-Japanese sentiment deepened as laborers were viewed with disdain.¹⁹

With a sizeable Japanese population, Japanese people experienced much discrimination in San Francisco. Negative opinions of them spread and circulated through local news outlets. In 1905, the Asiatic Exclusion League was formed in the City, and together with the San Francisco Board of Education, a policy was adopted restricting Japanese and Korean children from attending public schools. For nearly five decades, Chinese children were banned from public schools in San Francisco, segregating them to their own *Oriental School*.²⁰

Asian discrimination and bias only continued, and through public pressure, the legislature passed the Henry-Webb Alien Land Act in 1913, which dictated property could only be owned by American citizens and forbade the ownership of land by aliens ineligible for citizenship. The act specified the prohibition of owning agricultural or farmland, in an attempt to curtail the number of laborers immigrating from Japan. The act was also the result of fear from white farmers who were concerned about the overtaking of the industry by foreign people. The act included Chinese, Korean, and Indians, among other Asian people, and specifically targeted Japanese immigrants, since at the time, any immigrant from Asia was prohibited from obtaining citizenship through naturalization. While Japanese people assumed a variety of jobs in the service industry, many still worked as laborers on farms, orchards, or ranches. This act was enforced until 1952.²¹

Although the Alien Land Act of 1913 restricted Japanese immigrants from purchasing land, many were able to circumvent the law in one of two ways. The law forbade individual Japanese people and companies, which had a majority of stockholders who were Japanese, from purchasing land. Additionally, since many Japanese people already owned land, the law prevented them from transferring their properties to another Japanese immigrant, kin or otherwise. Immigrant Japanese landowners, then, formed land companies, which were not prohibited under the 1913 law.²²

The second way Japanese immigrants skirted the law was undertaken primarily during and after World War I. The war gave way to an economic boom causing the agricultural industry to grow.

¹⁹ Graves and Page & Turnbull, 27; San Francisco Planning, *2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 15-16.

²⁰ Graves and Page & Turnbull, 27; San Francisco Planning, *San Francisco Planning, The Kinmon Gakuen Building, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, (Historic Preservation Commission, February 6, 2019), 15-16.

²¹ Ibid., 27; San Francisco Planning, *San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 15-16.

²² Yuji Ichioka, "Japanese Immigrant Response to the 1920 California Alien Land Law," *Agricultural History Society*, Vol. 58, No.2, (April 1984): pp. 157-178.

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The Japanese farming community partook in this prosperity and purchased land through land companies or by way of putting their American-born Nisei children on land titles. Since the law prohibited immigrant-born people from owning land, not people of birthright citizenship, some Japanese farmers were able to retain and grown their properties.²³

Japanese Language Schools in California

Japanese language schools were important in preserving the language and culture for Japanese communities living abroad. Many Issei, or first-generation Japanese, were unable to speak English at a high level of communication, and the *Nisei* were learning English in school. While Japanese may have been spoken in the home, language schools facilitated the education of reading and writing.²⁴ Japanese language schools emerged soon after the second wave of immigration. The first known schools were established in Hawaii and California, through Buddhist temples or Christian churches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Hawaii, these schools served as childcare for laborers who worked on American-owned sugar plantations.

The earliest language school in California was established in 1902 in San Francisco.²⁵ After the ban on Japanese children from public school in San Francisco, language schools undertook a larger role for a short period, educating the children of the Japanese community full time. The ban was repealed in 1907 when Japan and the U.S. entered into the Gentlemen's Agreement.²⁶ The value of Japanese language schools only increased, when in 1912, the Japanese Association of America organized all Japanese language schools and created centralized guiding goals. These goals ranged from a general acknowledgement of the importance of language schools preserving Japanese language and culture, to more defined goals that sought to enrich Japanese people's lives and also described a moral education that followed the Emperor's decree.²⁷

By 1941, over forty Japanese churches and religious institutions, and seventeen schools and kindergartens existed in the Western Addition.²⁸ Since many language schools were typically associated with Buddhist temples or Christian churches, the schools functioned as gathering places where the community could meet and form social, cultural, and political groups.²⁹

Kinmon Gakuen/The Golden Gate Institute

The first Japanese language schools in San Francisco opened in 1902 and 1903, by 1906, they disrupted or destroyed by the earthquake and fire. In 1910, activists that were part of the Japanese American Association, decided to fill this void. What resulted was Kinmon Gakuen, one of the largest Japanese language schools established in California at the time. In 1911, the school occupied a rented space at 2031 Bush Street and was headed by Masayoshi Kamada, as

²³ Ichioka, "Japanese Immigrant Response to the 1920 California Alien Land Law," 157-178.

²⁴ *San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 15-16.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁸ Graves and Page & Turnbull, 35.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

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the school's first principal.³⁰ Japanese American advocates met with the Japanese Consulate in 1918 to propose a permanent building for Kinmon Gakuen. Japanese residents raised money for the construction of a new purpose-built educational facility at 2031 Bush Street. The planning process for the new building's construction took years, with the school being legally recognized by the State of California in 1924. Designed by William C. Hays, construction began on November 29, 1925, and was completed in 1926. The first classes were held on April 26, 1926. The new three-story-over-basement building held administrative offices, classrooms, and an auditorium.³¹

Kinmon Gakuen offered classes at different times of the day for school students of every level. The six classrooms were occupied by different grades who attended after their primary instruction school ended. Primary school children were enrolled at Emerson and Raphael Weill Schools; middle school students attended Roosevelt and John Swet Schools; and high school students generally attended Lowell, Commerce, and Girls' High Schools. Primary school students started at 3pm and ended at 4pm, after which the middle and high school students would arrive and stay until 6pm. The kindergarten classes were held in the auditorium.³²

Along with teaching writing, reading, and speaking Japanese, Kinmon Gakuen offered a variety of disciplines that related to the culture of Japan. This included Japanese history, ethics, etiquette, singing traditional Japanese songs, playing traditional Japanese instruments, and *Ikebana*, the art of flower arrangements. Married women of the community comprised much of the faculty. The fundamental goal of the school was to instill high proficiency of Japanese in their *Nisei* students, while keeping their culture preserved through the variety of classes offered. The *Nisei* themselves strove to master both English and Japanese, as a way to "create a bridge of understanding between the United States and Japan."³³

Outside of traditional schoolwork, Kinmon Gakuen offered social activities for the students and the Japanese community. For a period of time in the 1920s, the school offered a Russian River Summer Camp. Records show that the building at 2031 Bush Street was used as an art and cultural gallery for Japanese artists. In the 1930s, a *manga* exhibit was displayed and focused on the Japanese American experience through immigrant artists. At this exhibition, Henry Kiyama displayed *The Four Students Manga*, an autobiography that touched on, among other situations, his experience with the Gentlemen's Agreement. During the early decades, the school maintained a strong relationship with Japan and was visited in 1931 by Japan's Prince and Princess Takamatsu, and in 1933 by Prince and Princess Kaya. In the 1950s, Kinmon Gakuen offered American citizenship and adult English classes. Once the school reopened in the 2031

³⁰ *San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 19.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 18-20; Carey & Co., *Kinmon Gakuen 2031 Bush Street, San Francisco, CA 94115 Building Evaluation/Feasibility Study Draft Report*, (June 11, 2018), 3-4.

³² *San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 20-21.

³³ *Ibid.*; Graves and Page & Turnbull, 39.

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Bush Street building after World War II, the Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko visited in 1960.³⁴

Property Ownership History of 2031 Bush Street

In 1924, the ownership of the parcel was transferred from Minnie Tsukamoto to the Golden Gate Institute.³⁵ The parcel comprised a square footage less than the parcel on which the 1926 school was built. An L-shaped parcel appears at 2031 Bush Street in the 1919 Sanborn map, which was impeded on by buildings to the east and west at the north end.³⁶ The 1935 block book map shows an L-shaped parcel, labeled parcel 27, with its owner listed as the Golden Gate Institute.³⁷ In 1944, the parcel size increased. Per the 1944 block book map, lot 28 was merged with lot 27.³⁸ Subsequent block book maps of 1946, 1960-1965, and 1990 show the parcel was maintained at that size.³⁹ The Sanborn map dating to the mid-1990s shows the L-shaped parcel and a building labeled as a community center with a basement.⁴⁰

Outbreak of World War II

Anti-Japanese attitudes only escalated from acts of violence and discrimination to the scrutinization of the Japanese community by the U.S. government in the 1940s. Suspicions were documented in the 1942 Investigation of Un-American Propaganda held by the House of Representatives. The “Report on Japanese Activities” was written from this investigation, which questioned the use of symbols and activities they deemed as un-American, such as the use of the Japanese flag, pictures of royalty, and singing Japan’s national anthem. The strong relationship between Japanese language schools and Japan, coupled with the tensions of World War II, coalesced into fear of Japanese American students and their families.⁴¹

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, bringing the previously neutral U.S. into the war. This act was detrimental for Japanese communities living in the U.S., because the government ordered the detainment of Japanese “enemy aliens” under Executive Order 9066. Initially, enemy aliens consisted of community leaders, such as business owners, clergy, and schoolteachers, who were assembled during FBI sweeps and detained in jails. The mass incarceration in U.S. concentration camps soon encompassed every person of Japanese ancestry living within the military exclusion zone.⁴²

³⁴ *San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 20-22; San Francisco Office of Small Business. *Legacy Business Registry, Application Review Sheet*, application no. LBR-2018-19-065. May 17, 2019.

³⁵ City of San Francisco. *Minnie Tsukamoto to Golden Gate Institute Grant*. June 27, 1924.

³⁶ 1919 Sanborn Map via San Francisco Property Information Map.

³⁷ San Francisco Department of City Planning, *Block Book Vol. 4 Blocks 542-697*, (1935), 676.

³⁸ Block book maps via San Francisco Property Information Map.

³⁹ San Francisco Department of City Planning, *Block Book Vol. 4 Blocks 542-697*, (1946), 676.

⁴⁰ “Property Information Map,” *San Francisco Planning* <https://sfplanninggis.org/pim/Sanborn.html?sanborn=V3P253.PDF> (accessed September 18, 2025).

⁴¹ *San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 23.

⁴² *Ibid.*; Graves and Page & Turnbull, 41-42.

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Kinmon Gakuen and Japanese Incarceration

As determined in Executive Order 9066, all persons deemed a threat to national security were forcibly removed to incarceration camps. The majority of incarcerated people were of Japanese descent. In nearly four months, beginning in March 1942, over 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry were forcibly removed from their homes and incarcerated in U.S. concentration camps located in desolate parts of the country. Kinmon Gakuen was seized by the U.S. Government. Since the building was a community space for Japanese people and was centrally located in a Japanese neighborhood, it was taken over by the U.S. military who used it as a processing center sometime in the first half of 1942. Japanese people reported to the building and were forced to undergo registration and vaccinations before being sent to temporary assembly centers. Many residents from San Francisco's Japantown were sent to one of the ten camps that were created for Japanese incarceration. They were first sent to the Tanforan Assembly Center in San Bruno then were transported by rail. Many individuals from San Francisco were incarcerated at the Topaz Concentration Camp in Delta, Utah and Heart Mountain Concentration Camp in Powell Wyoming.⁴³

Life in incarceration camps was difficult since there was no running water and the incarcerated people were constantly monitored.⁴⁴ Meals were given in large halls where all incarcerated people ate collectively, and people slept in barracks or small compartments. Schools were established for school-age children through high school that had to abide by a curriculum that upheld "American values" and did not teach anything related to Japanese culture or history. The War Relocation Authority was responsible for the course of study and hired teachers through state departments. Roughly half of the teachers in the camps were former teachers, of Japanese ancestry, who were forbidden to teach in Japanese. Few exceptions existed for the Japanese to leave the camps, e.g., university-aged people were allowed to continue school and leave the camp through an application process. When the war ended in 1945, the people who were incarcerated were released, and many returned to the West Coast.⁴⁵

Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage (Black)

A Growing African American Population in the Western Addition

The Western Addition neighborhood saw an influx of African Americans during the same time the Japanese community arrived, after the 1906 earthquake and fire. They moved to areas where racial covenants and deeds restrictions were not practiced, such as Chinatown, South of Market, and the Western Addition. By the 1920s, over half of the Black population of San Francisco lived in the Western Addition, and the Fillmore neighborhood, located in the Western Addition, emerged as the residential, cultural, and economic center of the Black community.

⁴³ *San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 24; Graves, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, 42.

⁴⁴ Terms referring to the Japanese who were incarcerated align with the National Park Service article: "Terminology and the Mass Incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II." *National Park Service*, updated November 30, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/terminology-and-the-mass-incarceration-of-japanese-americans-during-world-war-ii.htm> (accessed July 31, 2025).

⁴⁵ *San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 24-25.

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The development of San Francisco's shipbuilding complex occurred during World War II, which spurred a population increase in the city. During this time, thousands of workers moved to the Bay Area to support the shipyard operation. Much of this new population found available housing in the Fillmore neighborhood as the Japanese residents had been forced out to incarceration camps. The incarceration of Japanese people and the arrival of African Americans drastically shifted the city's demographics, and African Americans quickly became the largest minority group. The population growth contributed to a housing shortage in the neighborhood that was ongoing prior to the war. African American shipyard workers began to occupy the housing stock in Japantown, previously occupied by the Japanese population, who were forcibly removed under EO 9066. Living conditions were substandard and housing was overcrowded. In 1943, the neighborhood that had previously housed less than 5,000 Japanese Americans accommodated approximately 9,000 African Americans in their place.⁴⁶

Booker T. Washington Community Service Center

Established in 1919, the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center (BTWCSC) is an organization that provides recreational and social services programs for African Americans, specifically families and youth. The BTWCSC was created by a group of women organizers who sought to make opportunities available to the Black community when they were previously denied access to opportunities offered and used by the white community. The center occupied several locations throughout the years, including the basement of a building on Geary Boulevard and 1433 Divisadero Street, before moving to the vacated Kinmon Gakuen building at 2031 Bush Street in 1942. Throughout the 1940s the center grew and developed programs that responded to the needs of its community. These programs addressed housing, health, and living conditions, while the physical space at 2031 Bush Street served as community meeting and organizing grounds. Additionally, in 1942, the officer elections were held in the building for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).⁴⁷

During the organization's residence at 2031 Bush Street, Robert B. Flippin, a community activist, was the executive director. He was involved in many community and civic organizations, including the NAACP in San Francisco, and also sponsored the first Alcoholics Anonymous programs ever held in a correctional facility. One of Flippin's notable achievements was his role in improving the housing conditions for the Black community living in the Western Addition. In 1943, he was appointed by the San Francisco Housing Authority to manage a public housing project in the Western Addition, known as Westside Courts. His appointment to the San Francisco Housing Authority represented a pinnacle moment; prior to this, no other Black San Franciscan held such a high level of political prominence.⁴⁸

The BTWCSC served as space where quality of life services were delivered to the public. On January 10, 1943, the New Negro Red Cross Center opened in the building, offering the community public health services, such as chest x-rays during a tuberculosis outbreak. Since the

⁴⁶ *San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 26.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

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center was oriented toward serving the youth, child development programs were created including a nursery school and summer programs. The building's rear yard was one of the only places children could play outdoors away from busy streets.⁴⁹

Nikkei Return to Japantown

When the nearly 110,000 Japanese people were forcibly removed during World War II, they left behind approximately \$200,000,000 in real, commercial, and personal property across the country. The Japanese community's return to San Francisco in 1945 was met with their former residences occupied, mostly by African Americans. Since the people who were incarcerated were released at the end of the war, the reclaiming of their property coincided with the mass unemployment of shipyard workers. Some Black residents moved out, so the Japanese could move back in; however this was not the case for every returning incarcerated person. While many Japanese people moved into their former residences, others lived in hostels, established by church and civic and social groups such as the BTWCSC. In some cases, property and possessions were returned to the Japanese, having been securely kept by sympathetic African Americans and other people.⁵⁰

Anti-Asian discrimination was still prevalent in San Francisco after World War II, causing difficulty for Japanese people to find employment. Business owners who previously ran commercial establishments could not readily restart their businesses upon their return. Through the challenges, the Japanese people worked diligently to rebuild their lives, community, and businesses. When the Japanese moved back to San Francisco, the other minority groups comprising Japantown outnumbered the Japanese population. By the 1950 census, the Japanese population was back to its pre-World War II size.⁵¹

The transition of Kinmon Gakuen back to the building at 2031 Bush Street took many years, since the BTWCSC continued to occupy the space until 1952. Until then, the Black and Japanese communities existed alongside each other in the space. Flippin created multicultural programs, as part of the BTWCSC, to aid Japanese people in reestablishing their community in San Francisco. Japanese clubs were formed, and events took place that were Japanese-centered, such as movie nights featuring Japanese films imported from Hawaii.⁵² In 1948, Kinmon Gakuen board members met to plan the reopening of the school, which ultimately led to a space being rented outside of 2031 Bush Street. The Kinmon Gakuen school reopened in 1949, and Koshi Suzuki, who had been the principal since 1918, resumed his position. The school occupied this new space just down the block at 2013 Bush Street until 1952, when the BTWCSC moved to its new building. Both the Black and Japanese communities fundraised for the center's new purpose-built community facility at 800 Presidio Avenue.⁵³

⁴⁹ *San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 26-27.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 28-29; Carey & Co., Kinmon Gakuen Building Evaluation/Feasibility Study Draft Report, 4.

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Kinmon Gakuen Returns to 2031 Bush Street

In May 1952, Kinmon Gakuen moved back into the building at 2031 Bush Street. The reopening saw less enrollment than its pre-World War II years, with only eighty-eight students. Suzuki and the staff expanded the courses offered by the school and introduced an American citizenship class and English classes for adults. When Suzuki passed in 1958, he was given a posthumous award by the Emperor of Japan. A monument was created and is on display in Saitama, Japan. Tomi Osaki succeeded Suzuki as principal and continued the efforts to develop the student body population and the curriculum.⁵⁴ The school continued its academic, as well as cultural teachings, and was one of the few places in San Francisco where children of Japanese descent could connect with peers of a similar background to learn about Japanese culture. The curriculum presented a holistic approach to Japanese culture, and offered traditional teachings such as calligraphy, music, and judo.

The school was also a pillar of the community and hosted community and cultural events, one of the most popular being film screenings. The building was a center where Japanese people of different ages, and religious, educational, and economic backgrounds could meet and socialize. Dance and vocal performances were often held in the auditorium, community events not directly attached to the school. During the 1950s and 1960s, Kinmon Gakuen held movie nights in the auditorium on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings, of Japanese films. Commonly shown at these screenings were *jidaigeki* films, or dramas set in the period of Feudal Japan. The film nights were important in bringing together *Issei*, *Nisei*, and *Sansei*, while the films themselves provided an aspect of connection to Japan and Japanese culture, since no Japanese-language shows or films were available on U.S. television. The school was an important part of the Japanese community in San Francisco, and Japanese dignitaries and royalty, such as Emperor Akihito and his wife who made it a goal to visit when in the city while he was still the Crown Prince.⁵⁵

Between 1977 and 2018, the auditorium space was leased to the Nihonmachi Little Friends (NLF), a childcare organization that offers a bilingual, Japanese and English, curriculum. NLF began in Japantown as a preschool and evolved over the years to provide services for preschool to elementary-aged students. Since 2018, NLF has occupied the National Register-listed Japanese YWCA at 1830 Sutter Street (#MP100004868).⁵⁶

Conclusion

Constructed with funds raised by the Kinmon Gakuen Foundation, the building represents the rooting of the Japanese community in the Western Addition and the development of Japanese language schools in San Francisco. Upon its construction in 1926, the school held classes for preschool, primary, middle, and high school students in the subjects of Japanese writing, reading, speech, history, ethics, etiquette, singing, and *Ikebana*, among other culturally important disciplines. The building served as a community space, in which art, created by local Japanese

⁵⁴ *San Francisco Planning, 2031 Bush Street, Landmark Designation Report Draft*, 29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 30-34.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 34; “Our History,” Nihonmachi Little Friends, Japanese Bilingual and Multicultural Childcare <https://nlfchildcare.org/ourhistory/> (accessed July 16, 2024).

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artists, was exhibited; dances and talent shows were held; and film screenings were hosted. During World War II, when the Japanese people were forcibly sent to incarceration camps following Executive Order No. 9066, the school was taken over by the U.S. military and was used as a processing center. The building is also significant for its association with the Black community in San Francisco. The Booker T. Washington Community Service Center (BTWCSC) moved into the building at 2031 Bush Street in 1942, the same year members of the Japanese community were sent to incarceration camps and the Kinmon Gakuen school was forced to close. Established in 1919, the BTWCSC provided recreational and social services to the Black community of San Francisco, specifically those living in the Western Addition. During its period in the building at 2031 Bush Street, the center was active in addressing issues of housing, living conditions, and health in the Black Community. The organization created multicultural programs that assisted the Japanese transition back to the City. In 1952, the Kinmon Gakuen School returned to its original location and has held classes and offered community services since.

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<https://nlfchildcare.org/ourhistory/>. Accessed July 16, 2024.

San Francisco Department of City Planning. Property Information Map.

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Kinmon Gakuen
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Wong, Diane Yen-Mei, ed. *Generations: A Japanese American Community Portrait. San Francisco: Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California, 2000.*

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☒ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: City and County of San Francisco, Landmark Designation

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): Landmark Number: 288

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.787097 Longitude: -122.430596

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Block 0676, Lot 027; APN: 06760270

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The building stands on Lot 028, which was merged with Lot 027 in 1944. The lots were the original boundaries of the property as defined in 1944.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kim Butt, Elizabeth Graux, Ana Borlas-Ivern
organization: Treanor
street & number: 351 California Street, Suite 800,
city or town: San Francisco state: CA zip code: 94104
e-mail: kbutt@treanor.design
telephone: (510) 220-7145
date: November 2024; Submitted July 2025; Revised August 2025, November 2025

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Kinmon Gakuen Building
City or Vicinity: San Francisco
County: San Francisco
State: California
Photographer: Hisashi Sugaya
Date Photographed: August 7, 2024 and August 15, 2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 10 Bush Street, camera facing southwest toward Webster Street

2 of 10 North elevation, camera facing south

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- 3 of 10 Auditorium, camera facing northwest
- 4 of 10 East elevation, camera facing south
- 5 of 10 Entry gate to alleyway on east elevation, camera facing north
- 6 of 10 Main entrance on north façade, camera facing south
- 7 of 10 Second floor corridor, camera facing south
- 8 of 10 Third floor classroom, camera facing southeast
- 9 of 10 South elevation, camera facing northeast
- 10 of 10 South stairs, between second and third floors

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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Location Map

USGS, San Francisco North Quadrangle



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Boundary Map

Source: Google Earth, Imagery Date March 2023, accessed April 2025



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San Francisco Assessor's Block Map

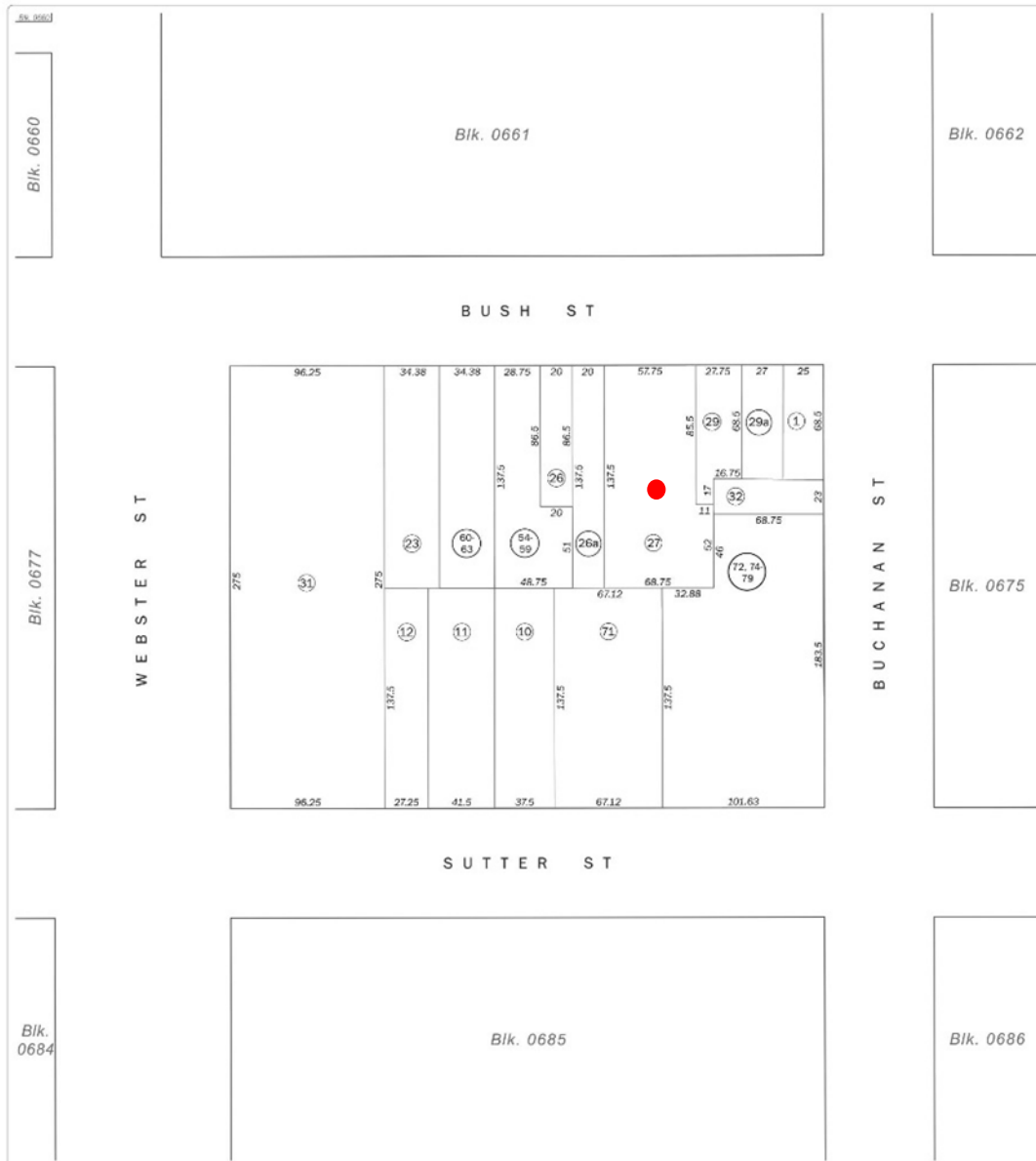
Source: San Francisco Property Information Map

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W A BLK. 274

Block 0676

SHEET 1 OF 2



SAN FRANCISCO CITY & COUNTY ASSESSOR'S BLOCK MAP

DISCLAIMER: THIS MAP WAS PREPARED FOR ASSESSMENT
PURPOSES ONLY. ASSESSOR'S PARCELS MAY NOT COMPLY
WITH LOCAL LOT-SPLIT OR BUILDING SITE ORDINANCES.



REVISED 2022

0 30 60 120 Feet

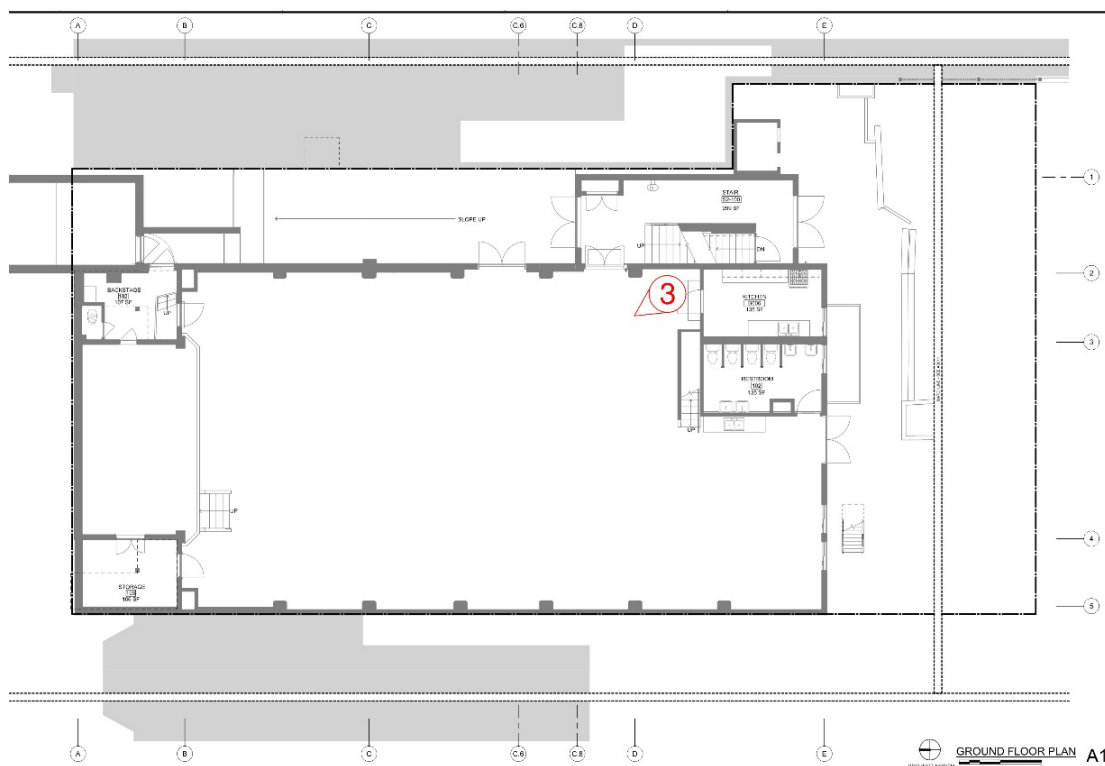
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Photo Key 1 of 5



Photo Key 2 of 5



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Figure 2 Prince Kaya Tsunenori and Princess Kujo Toshiko in front of the main entrance at Kinmon Gakuen, September 4, 1934; Source: Kinmon Gakuen



Figure 3 Assembly of students in the auditorium, date unknown; Source: Kinmon Gakuen



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Figure 4 People with Japanese ancestry lining up to register at a control station set up in the Kinmon Gakuen building, following Executive Order No. 9066, 1942; the building's gate on the east end of the north façade is visible; Source: Library of Congress



Figure 5 Japanese residents of San Francisco wait in line at 2031 Bush Street alley (looking north toward Bush Street) for inoculation against typhoid prior to their incarceration, 1942; Source: National Archives at College Park, Identifier 536460



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Figure 6 People of Japanese descent were inoculated as they registered for incarceration, upstairs in the multipurpose room, 1942; Source National Archives at College Park, Identifier 536393



Figure 7 Residents of Japanese descent registering for incarceration, Auditorium, looking east; Source: National Archives at College Park, 1942, Identifier 536215



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Photo 1 Bush Street, camera facing southwest toward Webster Street



Photo 2 North elevation, camera facing south



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Photo 3 Auditorium, camera facing northwest



Photo 4 East elevation, camera facing south



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Photo 5 Entry gate to alleyway on east elevation, camera facing north



Photo 6 Main entrance on north façade, camera facing south



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Photo 7 Second floor corridor, camera facing south



Photo 8 Third floor classroom, camera facing southeast



Kinmon Gakuen
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Photo 9 South elevation, camera facing northeast

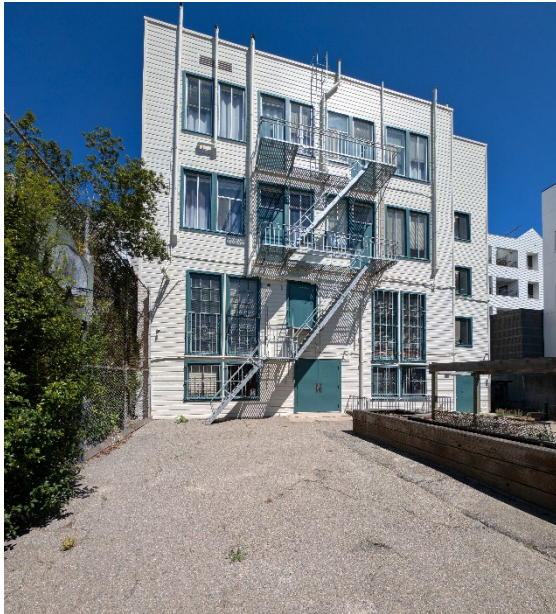


Photo 10 South stairs, between second and third floors

