

Little Tokyo Service Center

Los Angeles, CA
www.ltsc.org



ABOUT

Since 1979, the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) has worked to meet the needs of Asians and Pacific Islanders throughout Los Angeles County, especially those facing language or cultural gaps, financial need or physical disabilities. Building community also is an important part of the organization's mission to "improve the lives of individuals and families through culturally sensitive social services, strengthen neighborhoods through housing and community development, and promote the rich heritage of the ethnic community."

As a neighborhood-based social service agency, LTSC serves clients daily through housing and real estate development, counseling, community actions groups, free child care and other social services that are conducted in at least seven languages.



Directly above: Preschoolers excited to read at Angelina Preschool. Right column top: Community members in Little Tokyo take advantage of computer classes at the DISKovery Center. Bottom: Young Japanese Americans learn about the Japanese culture at Camp Musubi.

ECONOMY'S EFFECT

In addition to the problems felt nationwide, California is facing severe economic difficulties, with a budget deficit of \$26.3 billion and an unemployment rate of 11.2 percent. Government grants are low at the state and federal levels, donors are cutting back and endowment funds have dropped. "We've always seen ups and downs over the past 30 years, but in the past few years, maybe because our income is so diverse, it was fairly steady that if one or two funding streams were going down or priorities were changing, that there were other programs and revenues that were coming up so everything balanced out. This is the first year in which I've seen everything going down," said LTSC executive director Bill Watanabe in an interview with *Responsive Philanthropy*.

The state's economy is especially upsetting LTSC's affordable housing project. Several of their housing projects in the pipeline have affected the organization's credit lines and ability to draw funds. Watanabe explained, "These things would normally be okay because projects would be moving along, but now they've all stalled or stopped. Those financial institutions that had been doing affordable housing, financing and loans are either not doing it, becoming much stricter or they're totally out of the picture."

MOVING FORWARD

The future holds a "big question mark" and Watanabe is concerned about the impact on his organization. For now, he is exploring different funding scenarios and relying on hope. Although finances look bleak and LTSC no longer can depend on income from its development projects, all of the organization's programs will continue. "I'm being optimistic to say we think we can do all of them; we may just have to stretch our timeframe a year or two," he said.

Shifts in policy are needed to end the stalemate between Democrats and Republicans in California and to do what's best for the state's citizens, according to Watanabe. He also believes that foundations' general operating support grants are a "tremendous aid" and said, "I'm hoping that more foundations will move toward helping agencies with core support just so they can keep their shops open and going."

Meredith Brodbeck, communications assistant at NCRP, wrote this member profile.

