

PRESERVING THE SAKAUYE FARMHOUSE

FROM THE VALLEY OF HEART'S DELIGHT TO SILICON VALLEY

Coming together to preserve, enrich, and share an essential piece of San Jose history

Press Kit

April 30, 2026

Press Conference Scope:

- Announcing the achievement of Phase 1: securing the future of the Sakauye Farmhouse by moving it to History Park
- Kicking off Phase 2: Fundraising for the Restoration of the Farmhouse
- Highlighting the significance of the Sakauye Farmhouse
- Announcing a 50k fundraising match during during the Month of May for AAPI Heritage Month & Preservation Month

History San José



Preserving Our Heritage



PAC*SJ
PRESERVATION ACTION
COUNCIL OF **SAN JOSE**

COUNCILMEMBER 
**ROSEMARY
KAMEI**
 CITY of SAN JOSE

Speaker Biographies

Bill Schroh Jr., CEO & Executive Director, History San José



Bill has been President and CEO of History San José since 2019. His professional experience includes more than three decades of working in the museum and public history field. Bill earned his B.S. in Social Studies Education from State University College at Buffalo New York, and a Certificate of Historic Preservation from Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. He is an active member of the Rotary Club of San José and serves on the boards of the California Trolley and Railroad Corporation, the Sourisseau Academy, and the Art Deco Society of California.

Vanessa Hatakeyama, Executive Director, Japanese American Museum of San Jose



Vanessa Hatakeyama is the Executive Director of the Japanese American Museum of San Jose (JAMsj), a nonprofit museum dedicated to collecting, preserving, and sharing Japanese American history, culture, and art. A Bay Area native and longtime resident of San Jose's historic Japantown, she is deeply rooted in the community and has fostered collaborations that highlight the neighborhood's cultural diversity and creativity. She holds a B.A. in Anthropology with a minor in Japanese from the University of California, Berkeley, and is committed to advancing community-centered cultural initiatives and strengthening partnerships across arts, history, and education sectors.

Ben Leech, Executive Director, Preservation Action Council of San Jose



Ben Leech is executive director of the Preservation Action Council of San José (PAC* SJ), a member-supported nonprofit dedicated to preserving San José's unique and diverse architectural and cultural heritage through advocacy, education, and civic engagement. He holds a B.A. in Religion from Reed College and an M.S. in Historic Preservation from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Prior to joining PAC* SJ in 2020, Leech served as Director of Advocacy for the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia (2010-2015) and taught preservation planning and architectural history at several East Coast universities and colleges. He has authored more than three dozen historic resource reports documenting a wide variety of architectural and cultural landmarks, from 18th-century farmhouses to 19th-century socialhalls to 20th-century supermarkets.

Rosemary Kamei, San Jose City Councilmember



Rosemary Kamei was elected to the San José City Council in June 2022 and sworn into office on January 2023 to represent District 1. Soon after taking office, she was appointed Vice Mayor through 2024. She brings decades of public service experience, including 17 years as a director at the Santa Clara Valley Water District and seven years as a trustee on the Santa Clara County Board of Education. In addition to her government roles, she has been active in nonprofits, the business sector, and advisory committees. Before joining the City Council, she served as Chief Development and Innovation Officer at the Silicon Valley Education Foundation. She holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from San José State University.

Executive Summary

The Sakauye Farmhouse Project has successfully saved a vital piece of Japanese American and San Jose history by moving the Farmhouse to History Park. Preservation partners are now launching a new fundraising campaign to rehabilitate the home. By transforming this historic farmhouse into an educational and cultural resource, the project will honor the contributions of Japanese American farmers in the Santa Clara Valley and illuminate the broader historical context of their experiences on a local and national level through the story of Eiichi Sakauye and his family.

Introduction

The Sakauye Farmhouse, originally located at the crossroads of Seely Avenue and Montague Expressway, stands as a testament to the resilience, ingenuity, and contributions of Japanese American farmers in the South Bay region. Built in the early 20th century, this farmhouse is a rare example of a property purchased before the 1913 Alien Land Law which prohibited Japanese immigrants from purchasing land, thus representing not only a family's agricultural legacy, but also a pivotal era in local history. The property was slated for housing development on February 1, 2025, which prompted community partners to rally around History San José in a joint effort to relocate and preserve the farmhouse.



About Eiichi Edward Sakauye

The Sakauye Farmhouse was home to Eiichi Edward Sakauye (1912-2005), co-founder of the Japanese American Museum of San Jose and author of the book, "Heart Mountain", a photo essay that chronicles his experience at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center as one of the 120,000 Japanese Americans incarcerated during WWII, many of whom were, like Eiichi, born and raised in San Jose. Thanks to neighbor Edward Seely, who stewarded the farm in his absence, a rare instance of cross-racial solidarity during the time, Eiichi was able to return to his family farm post-WWII. Driven by his experience being unjustly incarcerated, Eiichi channelled his passion for history and cultural pride into civic engagement and local leadership, co-founding the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, holding office as a Trustee for the Santa Clara Unified School District, and serving on the Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission.

**For an
extended list of
Eiichi Sakauye's
numerous
contributions,
please visit:**



Advocacy Partners & Vision

Advocacy Partners

History San José

Bill Schroh
CEO & President

HSJ is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and celebrating the diverse history of the San Jose region. Through its collection of historic sites, artifacts, and educational programs, History San José connects people with the stories that shape our community.

Japanese American Museum of San Jose

Vanessa Hatakeyama
Executive Director

JAMsj collects, preserves and shares the history, art and culture of Japanese Americans in the Bay Area through unique exhibits, meaningful programs, and community engagement, fostering a greater understanding of Japanese American heritage and impact to the Bay Area.

Preservation Action Council of San Jose

Ben Leech
Executive Director

PAC*SJ advocates for the preservation and adaptive reuse of San Jose's architectural heritage. Through education, community engagement, and partnerships, PAC*SJ works to protect the city's historical and cultural resources and promotes sustainable development that honors its rich cultural history.

The Sakauye Family

Carolyn Sakauye and Jane May are the daughters of Eiichi Sakauye and members of the Advisory Board for the Japanese American Museum of San Jose.

Hanover Company

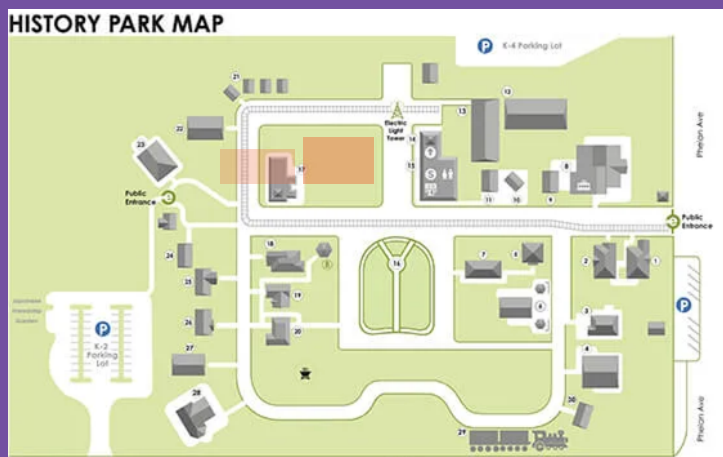
Scott Youdall
Regional Development Partner

The Hanover Company is a nationally recognized real estate development firm specializing in high-quality multifamily residential communities. With over four decades of experience, Hanover is the master developer of the 22 acre Seely Avenue project.

Councilmember Rosemary Kamei

Councilmember Rosemary Kamei and her staff has served as a bridge and facilitator between the advisory partners and the City of San Jose.

Vision



PARK DIRECTORY		
1 Nelson DeLuz House	11 Print Shop: San Jose Printers' Guild	21 Sakauye Orchard Migrant Cabins
2 Posetta House: Leonard and David McKay Gallery	12 Schmitt Science Workshops	22 Stevens Ranch Fruit Barn
3 Paulson House: California Pioneers of Santa Clara County	13 Ray Area Glass Institute (RAGI)	23 Gordon House: Rotary Club of San Jose
4 Dashiway Stables	14 Bank of Italy	24 Coyote Post Office
5 Doctor Warburton's Office	15 Pacific Hotel	25 Chinese House: La Raza Historical Society of Santa Clara Valley
6 Portuguese Historical Museum at the Império: Portuguese Heritage Society of California	• Artuckle Gallery	26 Barber House: African American Heritage House
7 Chinese American Historical Museum at the Ng Shing Cong: Chinese Historical and Cultural Project	• Rental Rooms	27 Santa Ana School House: Connie L. Lurie College of Education Alumni Association
8 Rod Dildon, Sr. Trolley Barn: California Trolley & Railroad Corporation	• O'Brien's Ice Cream Parlor and Candy Shop	28 Greenwall House: Viet Museum Immigrant Resettlement & Cultural Center
9 Blockman's Shed	• GSA Gift Shop	29 Southern Pacific Railroad Locomotive 1215 and Orchard Supply Hardware Boxcar
10 Associated Oil Company Gas Station	16 Elton Gong-Guy Plaza	30 Coyote Train Depot
	17 Empire Firehouse	
	18 Andrew P. Hill House	
	19 Edwin Mathison House: Poetry Center San Jose	
	20 Simbarger House	

At its new home at History Park, the Sakauye Farmhouse will become an enduring piece of San Jose history as part of History San José's immersive ecosystem of museums and exhibits dedicated to local history and storytelling.

Jointly curated and operated by History San Jose and advocacy partner, the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, the Sakauye Farmhouse will be transformed into exhibit and artifact collection space dedicated to engaging visitors around the agricultural legacy of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans, the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans, and the importance of cross-racial solidarity and allyship, drawing on the friendship between Eiichi Sakauye and his neighbor Edward Seely.

Interpretation & Programming

This vision will be fulfilled in 3 main areas: the visitor experience, educational programs and special events.



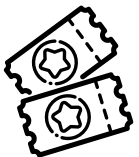
Visitor Experience

Of the many cultural partner museums at History Park, the Japanese Community is not represented. The Sakauye Farmhouse will correct this omission and add another cultural voice to History Park. Our plan for programming the Farmhouse will include a joint exhibit with the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, an exhibit highlighting Eiichi Sakauye, an exhibit on Japanese Internment, and an exhibit on the contribution of the Japanese-American Community to the agricultural story of the Santa Clara Valley.



Educational Programs

The Sakauye Farmhouse will enhance the school programs at History Park, especially the Valley of Heart's Delight program, which explores the agricultural history of the Valley from 1860 to 1960. As we look towards creating new programming, the Sakauye Farmhouse will be an excellent springboard for a sequel to our Immigration: What's Your Story program, which currently tells the story of four immigrants who came to the Santa Clara Valley, using cultural museums already located at History Park. The new program will add the stories of the children of Japanese immigrants and the lasting impact of first-generation Japanese-Americans to the story of the Santa Clara Valley.



Special Events

The addition of the Sakauye Farmhouse at History Park will provide a new versatile and historically rich venue for hosting large and small-scale special events. The farmhouse will become History San Jose's third indoor rental venue at History Park, greatly increasing our capacity for hosting events such as workshops, meetings, educational programs, and cultural celebrations.

Sakaue Farm Legacy Grove



Eiichi Sakaue is photographed with a pear tree following his return to his farm in San José from the Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming on July 9, 1945 via [KQED](#)/ [Calisphere](#)



The last harvest of the Sakaue's persimmon orchard, December 2024, via [KQED](#)

Honor a loved one with a tree dedication and plaque in the Sakaue Farm Legacy Grove

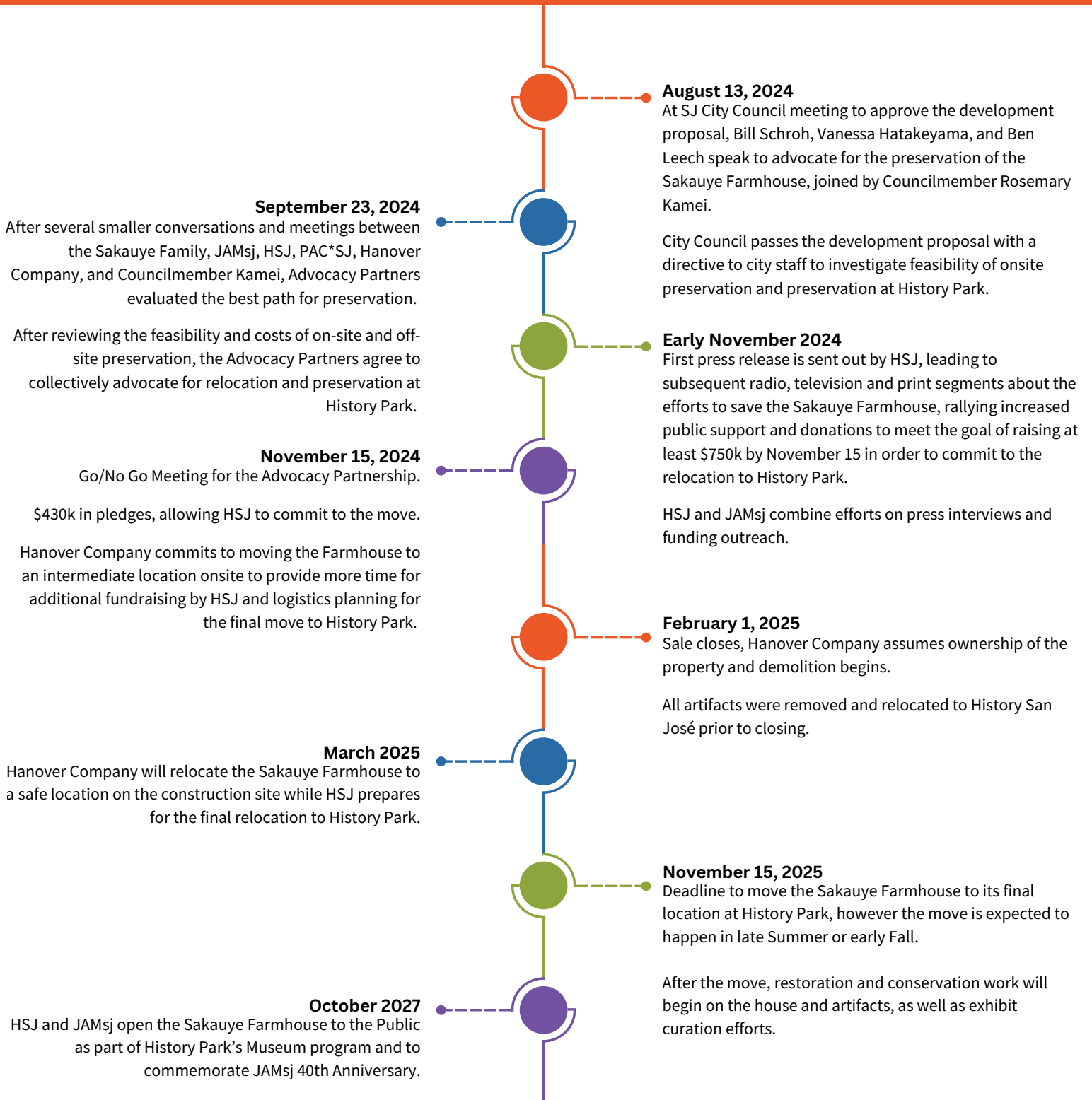
The Sakaue Farmhouse Project will also include a heritage fruit tree grove adjacent to the Sakaue Farmhouse at History Park. The grove will include seven fruit trees that were common to many Japanese American farmers such as Persimmon/ Kaki, Japanese Apricot/ Ume, and varieties of plum. These fruits were staples as crops or familiar fruits for Japanese households.

The Sakaue Farm Legacy Grove will not only honor the legacies of the Sakaue family and the contributions of Japanese American farmers, but will also be a space for community tributes. For all donations of \$50k or above, an honorary plaque will be inscribed with the message of the donor's choice. Combined funds among multiple people or organizations to meet the 50K level can be accommodated.

For more information about the Sakaue Legacy Grove, please contact Bill Schroh Jr., at bschroh@historysanjose.org

Project Timeline

Press coverage in the San Jose Mercury News and KQED, along with proactive outreach by PAC* SJ, brought critical attention to the plight of the Sakauye Farmhouse. Despite these efforts, the San Jose City Council approved a development proposal on August 13 that allows the demolition of this historic site. This decision would erase a vital piece of Japanese American heritage and agricultural legacy, as the farmhouse was one of the region's remain working farms.

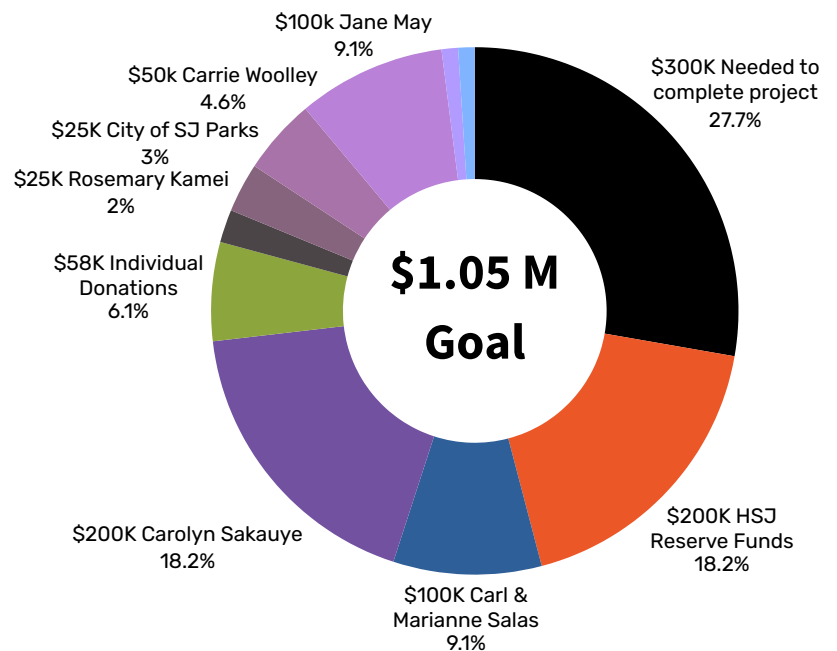


Funding & Press

Funding

To date, the majority of funding has been contributed by individual donors and reserve funds from History San José, totaling \$792,094 of the \$1m needed for the total project.

An additional \$300,000 is required to both relocate the house and complete the historic renovation and rehabilitation of the Sakauye Farmhouse, transforming the space fully into a fully operational public facing exhibit and educational program space at San José History Park.



Press Samples

August 9, 2024 KQED | <https://www.kqed.org/news/11999500/historic-japanese-american-family-farm-is-about-to-fade-into-much-needed-housing-in-san-jose>

November 18, 2024 San Jose Mercury News | <https://www.mercurynews.com/2024/11/14/urgent-deadline-looms-to-save-historic-sakauye-farmhouse-in-san-jose/>

December 2, 2024 SiliconValley.com | <https://www.siliconvalley.com/2024/11/30/historic-san-jose-farmhouse-saved-after-collaborative-effort/>

Thanks to the passion, partnership and commitment of HSJ, JAMsj and Advocacy Partners, the historic Sakauye Farmhouse has been relocated to History Park where it will educate and engage future generations on San Jose's agricultural history, the WWII Incarceration of Japanese Americans and the importance of allyship and solidarity during challenging times.

For more information on how to support this historic cause, please contact bschroh@historysanjose.org