

Communication from Public

Name: Richard O. Kato
Date Submitted: 04/25/2026 06:08 PM
Council File No: 26-0047-S2

Comments for Public Posting: My name is Richard O. Kato. I am a licensed educational psychologist and credentialed school psychologist with the Los Angeles County Office of Education and a member of the LACOE Asian Pacific Heritage Group Leadership Team. However, I am speaking here as a Sansei third generation individual whose family has had a direct personal and cultural connection with Little Tokyo since the 1950s and as a licensed psychologist who can surmise the social emotional harm the proposed Mega Mall will cause to the Japanese American community. Japanese Americans have previously experienced the trauma of being forcibly evicted and displaced from our communities. Yet here we are again where Little Tokyo legacy businesses such as Suehiro Café and many others are being evicted and displaced. The trauma of the eviction and displacement now is really no different than the trauma of the eviction and displacement then. Because my parents did not want us to forget our roots, on many weekends, my dad would take us for an outing in Little Tokyo and visit the shops and restaurants. As a child as far back as I can remember, I saw cable cars on overhead wire hooks that traversed First Street way before the RTD and MTA buses. Practically every year, our family also went to Nisei Week parade and carnival. At one time, my dad had driven a taxicab taking Japanese businessmen from Little Tokyo to various points of interest in Los Angeles county. We were filled with pride knowing that hard-working Niseis and Sanseis helped build this community with mom and pop shops, churches, and gathering places. Accordingly, I want this corporate greed to reverse course, maintain and preserve Little Tokyo for the cultural and social center that it is, maintain and preserve its legacy businesses and way of life. I also therefore oppose profits over people when it comes to the potential Mega-Mall at 4th & Central. It will also cause irreversible harm with rising rents, traffic, and pollution. Keep housing and spaces affordable, maintain green spaces and zero emissions. Stop the erasure of our historic center. Stop the ethnic cleansing of Little Tokyo. Say no to big corporations who only put profits over people. Thank you for listening.

Communication from Public

Name: Richard O. Kato
Date Submitted: 04/25/2026 06:10 PM
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Communication from Public

Name: Michael Vu Le

Date Submitted: 04/25/2026 09:49 PM

Council File No: 26-0047-S2

Comments for Public Posting: The 4th & Central project with its 1589 units will alleviate housing demand in downtown Los Angeles. It would do so though at the price of displacing a significant part of the Little Tokyo community. The current 1000+ mid-market and luxury units would bring an influx of significantly wealthier residents that can drastically change Little Tokyo by having existing property owners tailor more towards them. We need to address that tailoring to wealthier residents when it causes displacement with increased rents for existing residents and businesses. Having more affordable units would minimize excess tailoring to wealthier residents. My ask then is for the city to use tax increment financing (TIF) from enhanced infrastructure financing districts (EIFD) on this 4th & Central project to negotiate more affordable units and to focus on broad incremental development to address the housing issue. Little Tokyo has ~50% of individuals below the federal poverty line (2014) according to the USC community assessment of Little Tokyo. At the same time, we want to add new people to Little Tokyo while maintaining the existing community. That means having more affordable units – both residential and business – in the 4th & Central project. And the city actually has a bargaining chip to leverage, which is funds from TIF. Using increased property taxes from TIF, the city can negotiate with the 4th & Central owner to add more affordable housing. This private-public partnership could also be a development financing model that we use to increase affordability percentages across the city. Besides this project, I would like to evaluate TIF as a tool to help all other Little Tokyo properties to incrementally develop. During my sister's birthday, we visited Suehiro Cafe in Little Tokyo. It was delicious Japanese food that is very difficult to find anywhere else. However, Suehiro was evicted because the property owner wanted another business that brought more revenue. This tension exists in all of Little Tokyo between new and existing property owners and legacy businesses. Addressing this tension is important to add housing and businesses without displacing existing communities. With TIF, we can sustainably and systemically provide the financing to add more affordable units without relying on external funding since TIF by definition uses funds only from increased property tax revenue. If we can get the math of TIF to work, we can add affordable units to any

additions while allowing existing properties to increase profits. This allows the community to build wealth and be part of the development change, minimizing displacement. I know we have existing affordable housing programs from non-profits like First Street North and public housing projects like Metro joint developments. These projects though are too few to meet the demand since they rely on external funding (e.g. federal). With the low-income residents having a more fragile existence, proposals to limit height exist to limit the influx of wealthier residents. That alone will not fix Little Tokyo's affordability issue. That is why I want Los Angeles to focus on TIF so more of the community can incrementally develop. Supporting more of the community (e.g., other property owners) in developing more housing and businesses prevents a single mega developer from having too much influence on a community like causing potential displacement. And having broader development allows more of the community to build wealth (ex: taller buildings) vs mainly from a single owner/developer. And incremental development itself does not necessarily mean slow to add housing. But, we the city need to support policies and ecosystems that are essential for broader incremental development to fix the housing shortage. That's why the 4th & Central project should be re-evaluated and the city should consider TIF and incremental development so Little Tokyo can grow without significantly losing its identity.