

Communication from Public

Name: Sebastian Esau Carbajal

Date Submitted: 05/10/2026 10:45 PM

Council File No: 26-0047-S2

Comments for Public Posting: I first want to make it clear that the construction of more housing isn't a bad thing. We want more housing. But what we don't want are luxury developments that ignore the needs of the people who actually make up this community. If this project moves forward without community safeguards and ends up as another high-rent luxury project, it threatens small businesses like Aloha Cafe, the restaurant where I work at. This is a threat that is internal, through rising rent that could push us out, and external, through the displacement of the customers and workers who make Little Tokyo what it is. There is the argument that new luxury housing will bring a new customer base, but this isn't just about the profits, but rather the people who make our community. At Aloha Cafe, we serve the community: youth orgs having their gathering after a retreat, neighboring restaurants celebrating the holidays, workers grabbing lunch between shifts. These moments reflect the real heart of Little Tokyo, which is a community built by people who care for one another. When I say "community," I don't just mean the residents who live here. I mean the workers who keep it alive every day—many of whom aren't Japanese American, but are still a vital part of Little Tokyo. They're real people who shouldn't just have their humanity based on the value of the product they put out. These are real people that we laugh and cry with. Mishandled developments that prioritizes investors over people threatens all of that. It threatens not only our rent and livelihoods, but our local jobs, and even the kinds of food that reflect our cultural diversity. A people-first Little Tokyo means developments that ensures workers can afford to live near where they work, that supports small businesses, and that protects spaces serving the community—not just those who can pay the most. If something happens to Aloha Cafe, it's not just my coworkers and me who lose—it's the families we support, the community we serve, and the culture that makes this neighborhood special. That's why we're asking you: if you intend to move forward with this project, do it in a way that puts the people of Little Tokyo first.

Communication from Public

Name: Donna Maeda

Date Submitted: 05/10/2026 11:04 PM

Council File No: 26-0047-S2

Comments for Public Posting: I taught at Occidental college in the department of Critical Theory & Social Justice for many years and retired as Dean of the Kofi Annan Institute for Global Citizenship at Macalester College in St. Paul, MN, which was my hometown until I came to LA in the 80s to attend grad school at USC. While many people here can talk about family histories and memories of Little Tokyo, I can speak to its importance as someone who didn't know it existed until I moved here. One of the lasting impacts of the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans was the destruction and reduction of community. While the Twin Cities had a small Japanese American population that landed there because of the war, there was no actual place like Little Tokyo for community, with people and organizations committed to preserving our culture and history and working for the well-being of community, including the struggles for redress and broader civil rights. Little Tokyo has been reduced in size again and again over time. The huge proposed development at 4th and Central would continue that history, threatening the ability of Little Tokyo to remain a Japanese American community, with sustainable businesses, community and cultural organizations, and residents that are at its heart as one of only 3 remaining Japantowns in the US. Since retiring, I've been fortunate to work with community organizations, serving on the Board of Voices for Racial Justice in Minneapolis, and locally, working with orgs that have been fighting displacement and gentrification, like the El Sereno Community Land Trust and Coyotl wan Macehualli, in its struggle against luxury developments in working class, Latinx El Sereno. Many of us are seeing similar patterns and building support across communities, including struggles in Lincoln Heights as medical school development drives up prices and drives people out, and in Boyle Heights, as local business owners and renters struggled against a very big market-rate housing development on Cesar Chavez. As we watch what is happening in Minnesota and what we're experiencing here, it's clear that our communities are under attack in so many ways. Our elected representatives have a big role: to either support our communities' ability to survive and thrive or to contribute to the ongoing destruction by giving power to those who only look for large profits. I call on City Council to reject the proposed development

at 4th and Central.