

Communication from Public

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Date Submitted: 05/02/2026 10:53 PM

Council File No: 26-0047

Comments for Public Posting: To members of the Planning and Land Use Management Committee, My name is Karen Umemoto and I am a UCLA Professor of Urban Planning and Asian American Studies. I am also a member of the board of the Little Tokyo Service Center and several other Little Tokyo based organizations. As an urban planning scholar, I have been documenting the history of Little Tokyo, where my mother and her family settled after being released from the Tule Lake concentration camp during World War II. From a comparative perspective, Little Tokyo has long stood out as a unique community in several ways that is of import to planning. First, it represents the most significant center for Japanese Americans nationally, undergoing "the paradox of dispersal" in that it becomes increasingly important as a gathering place as the population becomes more dispersed. There is no other place in the country where Japanese Americans can see themselves visibly integrated in the landscape of the built environment. Second, Japanese Americans have, for over 60 years since the start of urban renewal as a Community Redevelopment Agency project area, fought for Little Tokyo as an affordable community that a diverse population of working people and Japanese American small businesses can call home. There have been years of community-based planning, including the vision articulated in Sustainable Little Tokyo, that should be honored in a city administration that values participatory planning. Third, the impact of a development of this scale and size must be vetted in light of the fact that Little Tokyo was named by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of 11 Most Endangered Places in America in 2024. The role of professional planners and those appointed to serve in decision-making roles is to carefully consider these and other impacts of development, particular those of this proposed size and scale. In this context, planning a massive mixed use development without greater thought about its integration with and impact on Little Tokyo can have irreversibly tragic consequences. Who will be able to live in Little Tokyo and its surrounds? What types of businesses will this new development bring and who will it displace? Why is there not a greater commitment to deeply affordable housing and deeper consideration of requirements for a higher share of affordable housing units? There have been many concerns raised by

members of the Little Tokyo and DTLA community, but to no avail. Your committee has an important responsibility to ensure that community concerns such as these are addressed in the development process. Due to the lack of responsiveness to community concerns, I strongly urge the Planning and Land Use Management Committee to grant LTCC's appeal and overturn the City Planning Commission's approval of Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 82974-CN-HCA, including the denial of all other related entitlements and approvals. It is important that the Planning and Land Use Management Committee to require that the Project is developed consistent with DTLA 2040 and to ensure that the project aligns with and addresses the needs of the community members who will potentially be most negatively impacted by the Project. Respectfully, Professor Karen Umemoto, Ph.D.