

## Takeda, Michi

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**From:** Arthur and Sandra Hsieh [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 22, 2022 12:30 AM  
**To:** Takeda, Michi; Sissi, Edwar  
**Subject:** Opposition to the Langham Huntington tennis courts demolition proposal

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To Whom It May Concern,

On March 22, 2022, the Pasadena Design Commission will be evaluating the proposal for the historic and classic Langham Huntington to demolish two of the remaining three tennis courts in order to build another swimming pool. Currently, only the two upper tennis courts are in use at the Langham, as the hotel has converted the lower third court into a family play area, with pool table, foosball, ping pong, mini-golf, amongst other family games. The Langham's proposal is to tear down the two upper tennis courts in favor of converting the land into another, more modern, swimming pool, with the idea that doing so will generate more revenue by making it more attractive to a certain demographic. The hotel believes that converting the lower third court back into a tennis court will suffice servicing its hotel guests, as well as its many spa/fitness members that have made a significant non-refundable lump sum investment into the membership, and who are paying a significant ongoing monthly membership fee, and who constitute a source of recurring revenue for the hotel.

Besides having my financial planning practice located in Pasadena since 1997, I have also been the Head Tennis Coach of Maranatha High School boys and girls teams for the last decade. We have done our share of bringing attention to Pasadena as city that values having a healthy diversity of physical activities available to its residents, including tennis. As a member of the CIF-SS Tennis Advisory Committee and having coached Maranatha tennis to two CIF-SS tennis championships, two appearances in the finals, four semi-finals appearances, etc., and winning league championships nearly every season, I believe keeping the beloved international sport of tennis alive in Pasadena is important for the overall health and balance of Pasadena's residents, as well as how Pasadena is viewed by the outside world. The last couple of decades has already seen the reduction in tennis courts in Pasadena, resulting in forcing residents and visiting guests to go to neighboring cities to play tennis on decent courts.

The type of clientele at the Langham, as well as its spa members, are not the type to drive around the city to see if any of the public courts are free, and wait on them. Time is valuable, which is a reason that many of us value and pay monthly memberships, not only for the use of the tennis courts at the Langham, but also to appreciate and take in the relaxing and refreshing setting while we're there. I raised and taught each of my five children how to play tennis on these courts. Members since 1994, we raised them there. 4 of them went on to play #1 singles at Maranatha. We still play there on both courts a few times a week. One court alone cannot fit my family, nor any other family or group of

more than four players. Having only one court for hotel guests and members to fight over is not a pleasant thought for either. Only having one court will also result in the elimination of singles tennis for families like mine, and groups of four or more.

With respect to the lower tennis court, its placement isn't even facing the proper direction. It is facing east and west. Proper tennis court placement should face north and south, so players are not directly facing the sun in the morning and afternoon. Having played on that court prior to it being turned into a play area, it was extremely difficult for the player on one side of the court to see, as he would be facing directly into the sun. To have that as the one tennis court available would readily bring scorn from tennis playing hotel guests (domestically and internationally), and would lower the quality of the experience, demonstrating that both the Langham (and the hotels' next owners) and the City were not really on the ball or on their game when that tennis court was approved (pun intended).

Couple that with the fact that the area where the upper tennis courts currently are is not a good fit for another pool and all its trappings, with respect to the private residences right across the back driveway, with the increased noise-levels, odors, and commotion.

The hotel has long been a featured destination of business travelers, vacationers, and visitors from across the globe, each with a diversity of interests and enjoyments. The Langham is the only hotel in Pasadena that I know of that can attract those who want a full array of physical activities, including tennis. There is an ample fitness center, and the hotel already boasts the first "Olympic-sized" pool in California (in a stunning setting). Though the hotel claims the pool isn't sufficient, it's the largest hotel pool in Pasadena. The hotel has visions of having a pool like those in resort cities, with lots more acreage, and in much more conducive settings. That's not Pasadena. Those hotels that they are comparing themselves to also have multiple tennis courts to keep their activity offerings in balance. And while this may not speak directly to Environmental Quality, as officially defined, when imbalance is present, it definitely takes its toll on its environment.

The proposed plan to over-weight the Langham recreation facilities towards water betrays the historic, classic style and ethos of the well-rounded, well-balanced visitor and resident of Pasadena. The attempt to fit everything - pool, food and beverage pavilion, cabanas, restroom - into that small area would just render that as a pool to get wet in, relax at, and play around. It's trying to stuff too much in too little. It doesn't fit. The hotel already has a stunningly classic and classy centerpiece pool area that has cabanas, pool chairs, adjacent eating area with bar service and food service, full restrooms, showers, etc.

In reading through various reviews from across the nation and world, over the years, they highlight the balance of the hotel and its access to an array of healthy activities. The reviews will no longer accurately be able to do so, should the proposal be passed. The current ownership group, Great Eagle Holdings, is a Hong Kong real estate company that owns many hotels and wants Pasadena's one-of-a-kind classic Huntington Hotel to be similar to their other hotels around the world. The Huntington is not another hotel in a portfolio of hotels. It's Pasadena's jewel hotel. As a classic hotel, patrons expect it not

to fully check all the boxes that would be present when building a new hotel. That's part of its charm. Having "impractical" "wasted" space dedicated to serene and scenic tennis courts is also part of the hotel's old-world charm. It's a refuge and a tonic against the pragmatic, revenue-generating, fill-all-spaces-with-more-people-and-therefore-more-revenue ethos that seems to plague us today.

While Great Eagle is the "ownership" group, I believe they should consider themselves the "stewardship" group. The Huntington is so rich in history that it is Pasadena's. Great Eagle isn't steeped in Pasadena's culture, vibe, and history. Pasadena is California. Great Eagle is Hong Kong. Both are beautiful and exciting in their own right; but having lived in Hong Kong for 4 years, I can tell you, that I would not want that vibe or space-stuffing, claustrophobic ethos at the Huntington. When I want that mindset, I'll go to Hong Kong. What I want at the Huntington is Pasadena. In its early history, the Huntington Hotel used to have eight tennis courts, and was a destination venue for the tennis playing community. That was reduced in favor of building, reducing the number of courts down to three. Please don't let the Huntington be left with one after-thought misplaced tennis court, in favor of a misfit pool and its accessories.

Thank you for your indulgence in reading and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Arthur Hsieh

P.S. Because of Pasadena's shortage of tennis courts, and the competition for them, I have to drive both my boys team and girls team 40 minutes each way down to South El Monte everyday, to practice at the Whittier Narrows Tennis Center. Many of our away matches are much closer than our home matches are. We get no student fans at our matches because it is too far. Please do not further the sports decline by making it more inaccessible.