

Draft letter:

Dear Mayor Garcetti and Planning Director Bertoni:

The city has since February been working on plans behind closed doors for the overall vision and dreams for Los Angeles, the General Plan, which is to be presented to the public and Neighborhood Councils later on.

Yet as you, Mayor Garcetti, said in response to Measure S and other criticisms of non-transparency and the broken planning system at City Hall, L.A. residents must have "a sense of ownership over the development of our communities," and as City Councilman Jose Huizar, chairman of PLUM, pledged, City Hall will now act to bring "accountability and transparency back into our General Plan and Community Plan processes."

We agree. That is why these closed meetings about our shared ideas and ideals for the Los Angeles General Plan must be fully transparent, more inclusive, and open to the public now.

It has come to our attention that some of those invited to the Work Group Meetings for Open Space, including environmental stakeholders, cannot regularly attend the four scheduled meetings because they are set for the convenience of city planners at 2 to 4 p.m. downtown.

Moreover, it has come to our attention that a developer consultant sits on the Work Group Meeting for the Open Space Element of the General Plan, and is being described by city officials as an "open space expert."

Moreover, the "chapters" now online at the city's OurLA2040.org website describing the Open Space Element and the Conservation Element are woefully inadequate and do not include crucial issues that should be innovative and forward-thinking new Elements. One glaring omission is an Urban Forest Element that pursues the need to recreate and save our fast-vanishing urban tree canopy, which is crucial to fighting GHG and creating livable communities.

These are the many kinds of problems that fan the widespread distrust of the city planning system and the citywide debate over how to fix it -- these problems are created when the city reverts to closed-door meetings and selective choosing of who the experts should be, as it has so far this year.

Second, and in the very same vein, the mayor's Planning Task Force and Transportation Infrastructure Steering Committee for the General Plan should also be open to the public now. Key strategies for planning, shaping and reshaping Los Angeles are unfolding in these closed meetings.

Best practices demand that you, Mayor Garcetti, adopt a ground-up process for your Task Force and your Steering Committee, open to the public just as the Measure HHH Citizens and Administrative Advisory Committees and the Measure H Work Group meetings were devised: open to the public from the very beginning and including independent experts and thinkers, warts and all.

Attached is a motion our Council has approved, urging the above actions.

Sincerely,