

Opinion

L.A. voters have spoken loudly and clearly: They want more housing, more affordability and more transit

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In the lead-up to Tuesday's election, there was a lot of hand-wringing over L.A.'s identity and whether voters would cling to the city's suburban past or charge into a more urban future. Turns out, Los Angeles voters really do want a city of mass transit, taller buildings and affordable apartment housing.

They overwhelmingly rejected Measure S, a slow-growth, anti-development ballot measure that would have imposed a two-year moratorium on building projects that required zone changes and other exemptions from existing, albeit outdated, land-use rules. Proponents of Measure S took aim at high-rises in Hollywood and dense apartment complexes in West Los Angeles — projects that opponents said were smart examples of concentrating growth next to transit lines.

Voters also reelected Mayor Eric Garcetti with a landslide 80% of the vote. Garcetti has talked about making the city more dense, affordable, transit-oriented and environmentally friendly. Garcetti's easy reelection is no surprise; he has avoided crisis and scandal in his first term and didn't face a serious threat from a challenger. But Measure S also was seen as a referendum on his vision of the city and his leadership in City Hall, so the failure of the measure is also a win for him.

Last November, county voters passed Measure M, which raised the sales tax to build more rail and bus lines. City voters also endorsed Measure HHH to build housing for the homeless and Measure JJJ to allow exemptions from land-use laws if the development projects include affordable housing and pay construction workers union-level wages.

Measure S was originally supposed to be on that ballot too, but proponents moved their initiative to the March election, which typically has lower turnout and a more conservative, older, homeowner electorate. Yet Measure S still failed by a large margin. November wasn't a fluke. Los Angeles voters have now sent a message about what kind of city they want: more housing, more affordable, more public transit.