



CALLING ALL CALIFORNIA PLANNERS!

The Elephant in the Room Imperative: Defending Ethical Planning, Democracy and the Public Interest

*Workshop co-sponsored by the Planner Emeritus Network and the California Planning Roundtable
at the upcoming 2026 APA California Conference in Los Angeles*



While the conference is several months away, we are reaching out now to ask planners throughout California to help us shape this important workshop so that it will be as meaningful and useful as possible. To facilitate your involvement, we are setting up online ***Listening Sessions*** prior to the conference. Read below for details.

The WHY

We named this workshop ***The Elephant in the Room*** because we are witnessing changes in the governance and the social fabric of our nation as consequential as anything in our 250-year history. And yet, as monumental and disruptive as these changes are, the planning community is struggling to find its voice and to respond in a way that truly matches the moment. For many of us, the question is existential: ***How can we continue to do ethical, community-based planning in these times?***

The WHAT

The conference workshop will start with presentations to set the stage, from talking about the Big Picture – the threats to democracy, diversity and the rule of law, the gutting of institutions – to the tangible impacts of federal changes on topical areas like climate and environment, transportation, DEI, and state/local control. From there, the session will transition into breakout groups to focus on the "how-to" and finding an ethical way forward in these challenging times.

Five learning objectives:

- Analyze how to ***apply the AICP Code of Ethics*** when facing threats to democracy, civil rights, and the rule of law. (The session will be eligible for CM Ethics credit).
- ***Examine accountability in planning*** at both the individual and institutional levels; how to promote confidence in governance and the integrity of the planning profession.
- Develop planning strategies to ***protect communities and colleagues*** at risk from harmful policies or abuses of power.
- Identify tangible actions to ***advance key planning issues*** now under attack, including: diversity, equity, and inclusion; climate change; housing, safe and inclusive public engagement; and support for marginalized populations and underrepresented communities.
- Explore how the American Planning Association, the California Chapter, and its members can effectively ***exercise our collective voice***.



The ASK



To prepare for the conference workshop and make it relevant and useful for attendees, we are organizing a series of online ***Listening Sessions*** this summer to hear from you about your challenges and where you need support. Your input from these sessions will help shape the scope and format of the conference workshop. We are hoping for participation that is both deep and broad, covering both the “Big Picture” and specific impact areas. These will be listening sessions as opposed to problem solving; we are expecting more questions than answers!

Four 60-minute ***Listening Sessions*** are planned on the below dates. Please choose to participate in one or more sessions. Each session will start with a brief overview by a member of our planning team and will move quickly to the listening portion. Depending on attendance, we may use online break-out rooms to facilitate the discussion.

Friday, July 10 | 12 – 1 pm

Wednesday, July 15 | 6 – 7 pm

Friday, August 7 | 12 – 1 pm

Wednesday, August 12 | 6 – 7 pm

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

As part of your registration, you may attend any or all of the four scheduled Listening Sessions.

Thank you for your engagement and we look forward to hearing from you!

SESSION PLANNING TEAM

Hanson Hom, FAICP - PEN Board, Vice President - North

Andrea Ouse, FAICP - APA California President 2023–24, APA Board Member, Region VI

Haydee Urita-Lopez – Deputy Director, City of Los Angeles;

APA California Vice-President for Diversity and Equity

Miguel Angel Vazquez, FAICP - Immediate Past-President, California Planning Roundtable

Pete Parkinson, AICP - APA California Chapter President 2017–18

David Early, FAICP - Senior Advisor at Placeworks

Shawnika Johnson, PhD, MA, MURP – Asst. Professor of Environmental Analysis, Pitzer College

Julia Lave Johnston – Past Chair, APA Chapter Presidents Council