City of Los Angeles
California

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MAYOR

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REF: TSB-056-13

Honorable Members of the City Council
City of Los Angeles
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attention: Information Technology and General Services Committee

Subject: **OPEN DATA INITIATIVE FEASIBILITY (CF NO. 13-0112)**

Dear Councilmembers:

Pursuant to City Council Motion (Garcetti/Englander/ Buscaino), Council File No. 13-0112, the Information Technology Agency (ITA) is submitting the following report on the feasibility of developing an open data website for the City of Los Angeles, similar to the City of New York, and the potential for partnering with other local governmental agencies.

Background
"Open Data" is a movement in government where various types of information ("datasets") are openly shared with the public and between City departments electronically through a central website. These datasets are typically provided by individual City departments or through data sharing with other local government agencies. Through standardized electronic formats, the dataset is openly shared online with individuals, companies, and non-profits.

The City of Los Angeles potentially has a large volume of datasets that would be useful to its stakeholders (e.g. recreation facilities, traffic data, crime statistics, budgetary information, City services, etc.) In addition, this data is often combined with GIS (Geographic Information System) maps to graphically show City information by geography (e.g. day care centers by zip code, libraries by neighborhood, etc.)

Common features of an Open Data website include:
- Ability to search for datasets by category or key word
- Ability to filter information within a dataset (e.g. 311 requests for graffiti)
- Ability to download public datasets for mobile applications
- Ability to share private datasets across City departments (not shared with the public, but promotes key information sharing across departments)

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What Other Large Cities Have Open Data Initiatives? And Why?

As summarized in Attachment A, there are many other large cities that already have Open Data Initiatives. This includes New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Baltimore, Denver, Kansas City, Philadelphia, and New Orleans. Each City's website has hundreds of datasets covering a wide variety of categories, including budgetary information, crime data, City services by geography, transportation, etc. These cities have cited a list of benefits:

- Reduces strain on government resources (decreased information requests to elected officials and City departments through self-service website).

- Increases government efficiency (improved internal data sharing between City departments, as well as, improved external data sharing with other agencies).

- Increases civic participation (allows contributions from private and non-profit without spending City funds, examples include creative alternatives the development of free mobile applications useful to City citizens)

- Increased government transparency to the public.

Furthermore, the Federal government (http://www.data.gov/) and the State of California (http://data.ca.gov/) also have mature Open Data Initiatives. In fact, the State of California was one of the first states to launch an Open Data Initiative in 2011. Data.CA.gov provides free datasets across all state agencies on the economy, public health, transportation, the environment, etc.

Data Sharing With Other Local Government Agencies
Currently, Southern California has few government open data initiatives and these are limited to specific topical areas (e.g. L.A. County Enterprise GIS for mapping, Regional Integration of Intelligent Transportation Systems {RIITS} for transportation information, etc). If the City of Los Angeles were to pursue an Open Data Initiative, there would be many opportunities for open data sharing with local government agencies, including:

- County of Los Angeles (health, housing, social services, etc.)
- Metropolitan Transportation Authority (timetables, trip planning, etc.)
- Los Angeles Unified School District (school facilities, adult learning, etc.)
- Other local cities and counties.

What Would It Take for the City of Los Angeles to Develop an Open Data Website?

1. **Develop Strategic Plan for City of L.A. Open Data Initiative** – A successful Open Data Initiative would require the coordination and participation of multiple City departments. ITA would partner with other City departments through the Information Technology Planning Committee (ITPC) to identify useful City datasets and confirm the City's strategic approach. This would be documented

in a basic City of Los Angeles Open Data Strategic Plan. *In addition, support from City Council and the Mayor's Office would be instrumental in active department participation.*

2. **Acquire City of Los Angeles Datasets** – After identifying the initial datasets, City Departments would need to develop standardized electronic interfaces from their departmental systems to the Open Data website. *ITA recommends an initial pilot using a limited number of departmental datasets. A prominent Open Data vendor has offered to provide a no-cost, four month trial period of a vendor hosted website.*

3. **Outreach To Other Local Government Agencies** – Establish data sharing with other local agencies and non-profits to provide a "one-stop shop" for information useful to City of Los Angeles constituents. This could also include local universities and non-profits.

4. **Release A Request for Proposal (RFP) for Open Data Website Hosting Services** – A vendor hosted solution is preferred due to the large volume of data involved and easy-to-use web tools. Based on ITA initial research, the vast majority of large Open Data websites are vendor hosted and would require a RFP to solicit competitive vendor bidding.

5. **Establish A Long-Term Maintenance Strategy** – The City would need to secure the necessary staffing (ITA and departmental) to ensure the Open Data website is properly updated, new datasets are published, and periodic outreach for public feedback occurs.

   For ITA, this would include a Technical Lead and a Chief Data Officer (like San Francisco) to ensure data is current, coordinate cross-department datasets, outreach to public for feedback, outreach to Computer Science Departments at local universities, establish "hackathons" for programmers to develop innovative mobile applications for the public, etc.

Fiscal Impact Statement
This project would involve costs associated with vendor website hosting services, programming of department interfaces by departmental staff, and long-term maintenance. Initial estimates are as follows:

- Vendor Website Hosting Services – Annual cost between $50,000 and $80,000.
- Programming of Departmental Interfaces – Varies. Depends on number of datasets and level of difficulty for each participating department to develop.
- Long-Term Maintenance – Estimated 2 FTE for ITA and ~1 FTE per participating department.

As previously stated, ITA recommends an initial pilot using a limited number of

departmental datasets and a no-cost, trial period usage of a vendor hosted website. If the initial pilot project confirms feasibility and City satisfaction, a funding allocation will be identified and requested for full project costs to implement.

Recommendations

ITA recommends developing an initial City of Los Angeles Open Data Initiative pilot program, as described in this report, with a limited number of departmental datasets and a no-cost, trial period vendor hosted website to verify feasibility. If feasible, additional funding and resources will be required to fully develop departmental interfaces and the enhancements required for the general public. Due to current workload, it is estimated that the pilot will begin in June 2013 and last for a duration of four months.

I trust that the information provided herein will provide a foundation for the development of an open data strategy for the City of Los Angeles. Please contact me or Mr. Ted Ross, Assistant General Manager, at (213) 978-3311, should you have any questions or require additional information.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Reneker
General Manager

Attachment

cc: Guy Lipa, CD 13
        Ryan Ferguson, CD 15
        Doug Tripp, CD 12
        Stephanie Magnien Rockwell, CD 9
        Monique Earl, Mayor's Office
        Mandana Khatibshahidi, CLA
        Melissa Fleming, CAO
        Mark Wolf, ITA
        Ted Ross, ITA
        Joyce Edson, ITA

What Other Large Cities Have Open Data Initiatives?

New York City (https://nycopendata.socrata.com/)	
Purpose:	"An initiative to improve the accessibility, transparency, and accountability of City government. City agencies routinely produce large amounts of data intended to better serve the public. Centralizing this data gives citizens a much more efficient way to find useful information. Developers can use the machine-readable data to create Web and mobile applications that supply the user with valuable information."
Data Available:	1,644 total datasets (including 311 Service Requests, civilian complaints, building perimeters, budget, etc.)

Chicago (https://data.cityofchicago.org/)	
Purpose:	"Dedicated to promoting access to government data and encouraging the development of creative tools to engage and serve Chicago's diverse community"
Data Available:	908 total datasets (including crime statistics, business licenses, inspections, parks, ethics, transit data, etc.)

San Francisco (https://data.sfgov.org/)	
Purpose:	"The SF Open Data Portal is provided by the City and County of San Francisco to enhance open government, transparency, and accountability by improving access to data. The Open Data Portal is a one-stop destination for all approved City data that will help constituents make better use of information.
Data Available:	521 total datasets (including campaign finance, restaurant grades, demographics, historic monuments, etc.)

Seattle (https://data.seattle.gov/)	
Purpose:	"To increase public access to high value, machine-readable datasets generated by various departments of Seattle City Government."
Data Available:	838 total datasets (including 911 incidents, building permits, utility permits, budgetary data, etc.)

Baltimore (https://data.baltimorecity.gov/)	
Purpose:	"The goal of OpenBaltimore is to provide, to the public, access to City data in an effort that supports government transparency, openness and innovative uses that will help improve the lives of Baltimore residents, visitors and businesses through use of technology. OpenBaltimore will enable the local developer community to develop applications that will hopefully help the city solve problems.
Data Available:	687 total datasets (including parking citations, property taxes, crime data, vacant buildings, liquor licenses, etc.)

- Other cities include Denver, Kansas City, Philadelphia, and New Orleans.