Dear Councilmember Park,

I wanted to share PRC's perspective on the AECOM reports in a constructive spirit. They provide a useful technical foundation for understanding the scope of the recovery challenge, but they also highlight where the rebuilding effort still lacks structure, modern tools, and clear implementation pathways.

I skimmed three of the four volumes — the recovery, resilience, and infrastructure reports. They are helpful in several respects. They provide a catalogue of options, a useful tutorial on the relevant laws, regulations, and departmental responsibilities from the City's perspective, and the graphics are clear and accessible. For someone trying to understand how the City's systems operate, they are a good orientation.

But that's not where we are as a community, and this feels like a missed opportunity.

First, the documents are not actually a plan, nor do they provide the information needed to craft one. *What they present is largely a list of options.* There are no meaningful cost estimates, little discussion of feasibility or timing, and very little analysis of how the different options interact with one another. Without that level of detail, it becomes difficult to compare tradeoffs, prioritize investments, or determine what could realistically be achieved within different budget scenarios. *In other words, the reports outline possibilities, but they do not yet translate those possibilities into an actionable recovery strategy.*

Second, the analysis largely stays within the boundaries of current departmental practice. *There is relatively little exploration of ideas that fall outside the box of existing City systems.* For example, I did not see an assessment of community-scale water strategies such as linking homeowner swimming pools or distributed water capture systems to supplement firefighting capacity in hillside neighborhoods. Whether those ideas ultimately prove viable or not, the absence of that type of exploration suggests *the analysis is constrained by current practice rather than pushing toward innovative resilience.*

Third, the work appears to be primarily a compilation of existing City data. That information is valuable, but it would be far more powerful if it were presented in a way that allows the public and outside experts to interact with it. It would be tremendously useful if the underlying GIS layers and datasets were available on a public platform where people could download, compare, and analyze them. *An open data environment could allow engineers, planners, and community members to contribute meaningfully to the planning process.*

More broadly, it feels as though we are approaching a *21st-century recovery with a 20th-century planning model.*

-- Today we have powerful tools that could dramatically improve both planning and public understanding. Three-dimensional modeling, digital twins of the community, and virtual-reality simulations could allow policymakers and residents to visualize how evacuation routes perform under stress, how fire behavior interacts with terrain and vegetation, and how different resilience strategies could change outcomes.

-- Those same modeling tools could also be used to simulate rebuilding logistics — mapping material storage yards, contractor staging areas, truck movements, and worker compounds to understand their impact on traffic, construction timelines, and neighborhood disruption. Instead of reacting to congestion and construction conflicts as they happen, we could anticipate and plan for them using 3-D modeling, virtual reality presentations of options, and a real exercise in the trade-offs that this community must engage to rebuild swiftly and resiliently.

-- Technology is also central to the insurability challenge we now face. Advanced modeling could help demonstrate how fire-resilient construction standards, defensible space measures, and community-scale mitigation strategies affect risk — not just for individual homes, but across streets, blocks, and entire neighborhoods. That kind of information could be invaluable in conversations with insurers and regulators about the long-term insurability of communities like the Palisades.

Yet these tools are largely absent from the framework we are currently working with. Instead, we continue to rely on traditional consulting reports that are expensive, visually polished, and often light on the substantive/analytical depth required to make transformative decisions.

To be fair, the reports do have strengths. They identify the agencies responsible for rebuilding — BOE, LADWP, StreetsLA, LADOT, LASAN, and others — and bring those roles together into a single planning framework. The phased rebuilding concept is logical: stabilize emergency conditions, restore essential services, and then rebuild long-term systems. The logistics analysis is also refreshingly candid about what residents already know — that Sunset, Temescal Canyon, and Chautauqua function as single-point failure corridors, and that overlapping closures could cripple mobility and emergency access (something we've addressed in our PRC Plan and been clear about in each conversation).

The wildfire resilience analysis is similarly accurate about the underlying vulnerabilities of the Palisades: steep terrain, heavy vegetation, Santa Ana winds, narrow roads, and housing stock that predates modern fire codes. It also correctly notes that vegetation fuel loads will return within five to ten years unless actively managed (though notably they are low now according to LAFD).

Where the reports fall short is in what they do *not* address.

There is no clear implementation authority. Suggested coordination bodies have no statutory power and depend on voluntary alignment among departments. Without a stronger structure, the rebuild risks becoming fragmented across agencies.

There is also no financial strategy. The infrastructure report explicitly notes that funding sources are not analyzed, yet many of the improvements discussed — undergrounding utilities, water system upgrades, resilience infrastructure — require substantial capital investment.

Finally, the logistics framework assumes that hundreds of independent private rebuilds will occur *simultaneously* and attempts to manage that scenario through scheduling tools and staging areas. Those tools may help, but they are reactive. As mentioned above, we could use 3-D modeling technology and VR demonstrations to show the timelines of how neighborhoods may

build back, and realistically show the impact on traffic and repopulating families in different scenarios – for which we can then plan and advocate. Again, a missed opportunity with money spent! This way, we prevent chaos, instead of managing it.

The most important takeaway is that the reports treat the rebuild primarily as a construction logistics problem. But the Palisades fire exposed something deeper: a community design and governance challenge involving evacuation redundancy, infrastructure modernization, resilience standards, and long-term insurability.

This is where the Palisades Recovery Coalition believes we can add meaningful value.

Over the past year, PRC has convened Neighborhood visioning sessions (charrettes) across the Palisades, bringing residents, architects, planners, and technical experts together to discuss rebuilding priorities. We have hosted Insurance Town Halls to understand the evolving challenges around coverage, affordability, and long-term insurability. And we are preparing to launch Community Recovery Labs — focused working groups that will examine governance, density, resilience, and insurance with the goal of producing actionable recommendations for policymakers. We've also engaged important partners like Rand, AIA and ASU.

Taken together, these efforts provide something the reports cannot: direct, structured input from the community that can translate into actionable mandates for recovery policy.

PRC can help bridge the gap between technical planning and community-driven implementation. We can bring forward the insight and experience of residents, the expertise of practitioners working on the ground, and the policy ideas emerging from these convenings. *That information can help shape the governance structures*, resilience standards, and financing strategies needed to move the recovery from concept to execution.

The AECOM reports provide a useful starting point. What they make clear is that the next phase requires something more: a coordinated recovery framework, modern planning tools, and a strong connection between technical analysis, community priorities and funding steams that can make the work of rebuilding more than 6000 structure possible within a decade – when an eight year old kid in elementary school is 18 and off to college without ever experiencing the stability of home.

Thank you for the opportunity to share out thoughts with you – and for allowing us to bring key community members to the table as well. This report highlights our takeaways, our concerns and our feedback. *It also lays out the role PRC hopes to play as we work alongside you and the City to move this recovery forward.*

Best,
Maryam Zar
Palisades Recovery Coalition