BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON

CLIMATE ACTION AND FIRE-SAFE RECOVERY

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS
AND DRAFT ACTION PLANS FOR

The Resilient and Sustainable Rebuilding of Los Angeles County

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May 1st, 2025

Introduction

The January 7 fires changed the face of Los Angeles, representing one of the worst US climate disasters since Hurricane Katrina in terms of cost, and serving as a harbinger of future risks facing the region in terms of extreme drought, weather, heat, and fire. Recovery of our region must go beyond rebuilding. Without bold, coordinated action, we risk further displacement, rising insurance costs, and deepening community vulnerability to future climate events.

That's why the Blue Ribbon Commission was formed.

Our initial recommendations and draft action plans are presented below for policymakers; yet we believe they will inform all stakeholders as we strive to embrace this once-in-a-generation challenge to rebuild fire-impacted communities and housing with greater resilience and sustainability. By acting decisively, Greater Los Angeles can become a model for climate-resilient recovery—protecting future generations from compounding climate threats, and serving as an example that will be seen by the world during the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Goal of Initial Recommendations and Draft Action Plans

The initial recommendations and draft action plans are intended to:

> Inform real time decisions being made in the halls of local government across Los Angeles and in the State Capitol, and better allow the Commission to engage policymakers as they deliberate the state budget, state and local legislation, and executive and regulatory action;

> Further engage with the affected communities as well as other key stakeholders (e.g., other rebuilding initiatives, lenders, insurance companies, philanthropic funders) to further refine, detail, and add to the final resilient rebuilding recommendations and action plans to be released in June.

Background

Established by Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath in February 2025, the Blue Ribbon Commission for Climate Action and Fire-Safe Recovery brings together a broad range of independent experts and community leaders. The Commission's goal: to deliver actionable and timely recommendations for how the City of Los Angeles, Cities of Pasadena, Malibu, and other affected municipalities, the County of LA, the State of California, the federal government, and key partners can lead a climate-resilient rebuilding effort.

The Commission's aim is to enable communities to rise out of the ashes stronger, including by helping:

- Residents, neighborhoods, and our region rebuild single family homes, multi-family housing, schools, places of worship, community buildings, commercial buildings, and infrastructure in a more resilient, sustainable manner to better ensure long-term survivability and insurability;
- Retrofit existing homes, businesses, and infrastructure in at-risk communities, while supporting the well-being of residents, workers, and community members; and
- Advance regionwide climate mitigation and resilience measures and investments to reduce risks from other climate shocks and disasters.

The Commission kicked off our work with a two-day retreat on February 28 and March 1, 2025 in collaboration with our research support partners at UCLA, forming six initial working groups on critical topics (i.e., energy, water, building codes, governance and finance, community resilience and wellness, and land use). A short release of early action recommendations was as issued March 18, 2025 to policymakers (see appendix).

Commission's Initial Recommendations and Draft Action Plans

In this release, the Commission offers a list of initial recommendations, presented in an executive summary drawn from the detailed draft action plans along with the early action recommendations. The draft action plans are organized by thematic working group.

These initial recommendations represent priority opportunities for policymakers to pursue sustainability, resilience, risk mitigation, and climate action in near-term decision making. The Commission will augment and deepen these recommendations in response to feedback, questions and ideas from the affected communities, policymakers, and key stakeholders as we continue this stage of our work over the next several weeks.

To draft these recommendations and action plan, the Commission has drawn on a wide range of expertise. Individual Commissioners brought their own knowledge and expertise, and deliberated with one another in working groups. The Commission reviewed work from other rebuilding focused organizations across the region, and consulted with subject matter experts, advocacy organizations, policymakers, and community members leading efforts in the fire-devastated neighborhoods. Our work has been further informed and strengthened by research support from UCLA, whose team prepared background materials and briefings, provided legal and policy expertise, and coordinated dialogues with experts in areas including fire mitigation and equitable disaster recovery.

In addition to direct engagement with affected community residents and leaders, the Commission and UCLA are also working with the Department of Angels to engage with community members around key topic areas (e.g., residents and block captains from the Palisades and Altadena neighborhoods shared their interest in, questions, and needs around all-electric homes). Continued community engagement is planned in the coming days and weeks.

Commission's Next Steps for Developing Final Recommendations and Action Plan

The Commission is committed to helping communities get the tools and solutions they need to advance resilient rebuilding and a sustainable recovery in the fire-ravaged areas, while enhancing future economic growth, better protecting communities from a variety of climate risks (e.g., extreme heat, drought, weather, fire), and ensuring the sustainability of the entire region.

Our mandate is clear as the only group established explicitly to focus on the resilient and sustainable rebuilding of Los Angeles: we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity and responsibility to rebuild communities in a way that reduces vulnerabilities to climate hazards while working toward a stronger, safer, and more resilient region. By doing so, we can help rebuild lives and communities while creating a national–and global–model for climate-resilient disaster recovery. (NOTE: several of the recommended actions will also help our region be more resilient in the face of ever present seismic risks).

Over the next several weeks, the Commission will continue to refine and finalize the recommendations and action plans by:

- Deepening our engagement with and obtaining feedback from representatives from the Palisades, Malibu, Altadena and other fire-affected communities;
- Presenting our recommendations to and engaging in dialogue with policymakers, other recovery and rebuilding initiatives and groups, stakeholders (e.g., insurance industry, lenders, housing organizations), utilities, and others; and
- Drawing upon UCLA's research to refine strategies for rebuilding neighborhoods and infrastructure in an equitable and resilient manner.

The Commission's Final Recommendations and Action Plans for Resilient and Sustainable Rebuilding will be released in June 2025, along with the research and findings from UCLA. Please visit the Commission's website to learn more and provide questions, feedback, and suggestions.

Note on Public Health: Soil Clean Up and Monitoring, Need for Clear Guidance

As the Commission's focus is on LA County's climate resilient and equitable rebuilding and recovery, we have only put forth select recommendations related to clean-up and monitoring requirements. We acknowledge the importance of soil testing and safety, which is key not only to public health and public trust but also to securing financing for home construction.

In the early action recommendations of March 18, the Commission highlighted the need to **provide clear public health guidance to returning residents and others** (e.g., insurers, property owners) with clear, consistent standards for evaluating and remediating airborne, water-borne, and soil risks in fire zones. We continue to emphasize the need for this clear guidance as an essential first step for any rebuilding.

Initial Recommendations and Draft Action Plans

Executive Summary

The Blue Ribbon Commission (Commission) was chartered as an independent commission of experts to develop and issue recommendations for climate action and fire safe recovery to all relevant policymakers across the County of Los Angeles. Based on the mandate for the Commission, the Commission developed the initial recommendations and draft action plans below. The initial recommendations in the executive summary are drawn and synthesized from across working group draft action plans and the early action recommendations.

Following the summary are the draft detailed action plans for each working group topic area, which are being issued and shared now to solicit feedback as the Commission's work continues. As noted above, the Commission will engage in direct conversations and also welcomes feedback and questions at our website. Based on feedback and further engagement, each working group will further detail and/or add to their recommendations and draft action plans (e.g., refining details, adding responsible parties, developing additional recommendations) in the coming weeks.

When rebuilt and newly constructed homes are constructed using the latest building and energy codes along with the best science related to wildfire home ignitions and conflagration, the neighborhood and individual property owners will increase their insurability. The recommendations on materials (e.g., Chapter 7A practices, fire-resistant and energy efficient high performance windows with tempered glass) and landscaping (e.g., Zone Zero) are the elements we have heard from experts that insurers want to see in the homes for which they choose to write policies. Other recommendations (e.g., distributed energy and water systems, buffer zones) enhance not only resiliency, but also survivability and defensibility of housing, other properties, and neighborhoods.

As part of our initial stage, the Commission recommends the following for consideration by local and state policymakers along with community members, philanthropic organizations, utilities, and other key stakeholders:

1 Establish Regional Entities for Coordinated Action

To streamline complex recovery efforts, prioritize and support the return of all residents and businesses, enable rebuilding by displaced homeowners, and implement proactive, large-scale fire mitigation, the Commission recommends the following to be established via state legislation:

A. Create a Resilient Rebuilding Authority/ies for affected areas with powers that include tax increment financing and use of federal, state, and philanthropic funds to: purchase lots at a fair price for land banking; select builders to reconstruct properties to resilient rebuilding standards and sell homes with first look provided to returning residents and their families; manage and/or coordinate rebuilding and related logistics and costs;seek to enhance financing options with aim to help those families that lack ability to cover costs of rebuilding on their own; create economies of scale for acquiring equipment and materials; and carry out other activities that enhance property insurability and promote a resilient and sustainable recovery.

B. Establish an LA County Fire Control District with dedicated funding for proactive, regional wildfire mitigation, including buffer zones and coordinated retrofits for vulnerable neighborhoods.

2 Mandate Enhanced Fire-Resilient Building Standards to Improve Safety and Property Insurability, Fast Track Review and Approval of High Performance Homes, Educate Stakeholders

To significantly reduce structural vulnerability to wildfire and enhance insurability of structures and homes, the Commission recommends that City, County, and state government:

A. Set policy to require all reconstruction to meet, at minimum, Chapter 7A building codes to maximize protection across burn areas and other vulnerable high-risk zones throughout LA County.

B. Implement Zone 0 defensible space requirements with provisions to enhance sustainable implementation and other higher defensible space standards.

C. Require permit review for landscape design in burn areas and other high-risk zones to ensure defensible space and appropriate native and drought tolerant plant palettes while supporting healthy tree canopy.

D. Create a County-level fast-track process for fire resistant, climate resistant rebuilding (e.g., distributed energy and water systems, all electric homes) of homes and structures through permitting and incentives for property owners. While it is recommended at least for those properties requiring variances and reviews beyond like-for-like, doing so for all reconstruction would parallel what the City established through Executive Order No.5 and encourage property owners and communities to access the related benefits (e.g., back up water and power during emergencies, $9,000 in estimated cost savings for all electric versus dual fuel).

E. Educate homeowners and provide training for architects, engineers, and contractors on the relevant California and local high performance building code requirements (e.g., Title 24 energy code, Chapter 7A, landscaping) and the benefits including increased resiliency (e.g., distributed energy and water sources for blackouts or future fire warnings, high performance windows and structures that improve efficiency and reduce fire risk), lower energy bills and enhanced fire protection.

3 Accelerate Transition to Clean, Resilient Energy and Modernize the Grid

To lower long-term energy costs, reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change, improve air quality, enhance grid stability and reliability, and increase resilience, the Commission recommends that City, County, and state governments:

A. Create a set of City- and County-level master permit and/or pre-approved designs for fire-resistant, all electric homes (e.g., passive homes) and building systems. This should include an

instant permit for electrical system designs (e.g., solar and battery storage) that are pre-approved by fire department and building officials. These resources can augment the existing rebuilding efforts (e.g., County-led process for architects to submit plans for pre-approval) by adding key resiliency, and/or energy requirements.

B. If self certification is allowed by the City and County for licensed professionals, require that architects, engineers and contractors have received training in resilient building design and construction including fire resistance, electrification, and the energy code.

C. Require electric utilities to provide electrical capacity and infrastructure that is sufficient to support high penetration of building decarbonization and transportation electrification, and to interconnect clean distributed energy resources (DERs) at the property and neighborhood level.

D. If regulators approve undergrounding, finance strategic undergrounding of electricity infrastructure in the burn areas in a manner that minimizes the cost burden for rate payers, and prioritizes other wildfire-vulnerable areas in planning for future undergrounding.

E. Prioritize investment in and integration of DERs in utility planning including utilizing virtual power plants (VPP) and vehicle-to-grid and -home (V2G, V2H) and provide incentives and support for DER installation during reconstruction.

F. Establish community-scale microgrids centered around key locations (e.g., schools, community centers) that support critical loads (e.g., pumps for cisterns to douse properties, refrigeration of medicine, cooling needs during extreme heat, device charging, communications systems) for future blackouts or power shutoff events.

G. Upgrade communication networks to be resilient alongside distribution grid improvements and ensure they can be operational during power shutoffs.

4 Strengthen Water System Resilience and Safety

To ensure reliable water supply for daily use and critical firefighting needs, especially during climate-driven and seismic events, the Commission recommends water utilities be supported in carrying out the following for burn areas, and where needed, County-wide:

A. Conduct comprehensive vulnerability assessments of water and sewer infrastructure, and upgrade systems to meet modern fire flow requirements.

B. Prioritize local water capture and storage along with non-fossil backup power sources at the structure and neighborhood level.

C. Ensure robust post-fire water quality testing and communication protocols along with updated fire protection standards.

D. Establish ways to charge customers who most benefit from greatly enhanced system resilience investments to cover the cost of those investments, rather than charging all customers within a system equally regardless of how they benefit from that investment.

E. Utilize vulnerability assessments to set prioritized lists of water resilient capital improvements with budgets and timeframes. Seek state funding/grants to construct resiliency improvements.

F. Protect water infrastructure and the environment through specific erosion control measures and nature-based solutions.

G. As needed, enhance firefighting water supply, such as deploying temporary water solutions and coordinating helicopter refill locations.

H. Evaluate, formalize and improve shared access to water resources between water districts for resilience and firefighting.

I. Encourage external sprinklers paired with on-site, non-potable, distributed water systems (i.e., cisterns) along with battery storage, including at parks and schools, for irrigation and dousing during high fire risk events as well as to augment fire fighting capacity.

J. Assess wastewater treatment and conveyance alternatives and make recommendations for building climate resilient infrastructure on the Pacific Coast Highway.

K. Protect system pressure via accessible shut-off valves.

L. Form partnerships to support smaller, resource-constrained utilities.

M. Evaluate progress on the multiple water resilience recommendations included in the 2018 Woolsey Fire report.

5 Bolster Community Health, Equity, and Preparedness

To address the immediate and near-term human impacts of the fires, the Commission recommends to relevant local agencies to:

A. Provide essential health/safety supplies (PPE) and multilingual education for cleanup workers.

B. Fund expanded and accessible mental health services for all affected residents by partnering with philanthropic organizations.

C. Support the physical health of organized groups of volunteer firefighters and recovery workers by providing free medical screenings and related services.

6 Enhance Insurability, Reimbursability, and Financial Tools

To help ensure resilient rebuilding efforts are financially viable for low and moderate-income residential and commercial property owners and address systemic insurance challenges including market instability and insurance affordability and availability, the Commission recommends:

A. Clarify coverage and timelines for insured survivors. The Governor, Insurance Commissioner, and state legislature need to ensure survivors can get clear information about coverage and payout timelines to make informed rebuilding decisions.

B. Ensure future insurability for rebuilt wildfire-resistant homes and structures. Policymakers must provide a framework for insurers to offer coverage for rebuilt homes–and as necessary, provide incentives for wildfire-resistant designs and wildfire risk mitigation–helping ensure homeowners, builders, and others will build homes that meet these standards and enhance insurability. When homes are reconstructed using the best science related to wildfire home ignitions and conflagration, the neighborhood and individual properties increase their insurability. The recommendations on building strategies and materials (e.g., Chapter 7A practices, fire-resistant and energy efficient high performance windows with tempered glass) and landscaping (e.g., Zone 0) are the elements insurers want to see in the homes for which they choose to underwrite policies.

C. Avoid waivers to mandatory building codes as “laws and ordinances” riders in standard insurance policies require insurers to pay out the costs of compliance and meeting code. Waiving code pushes costs to homeowners who will have to cover the costs of building to more resilient, high performance standards in newer building codes.

D. Provide income-based, stackable financial incentives for resilient rebuilding. The legislature and Governor should provide–via the state, local government, utilities and/or the proposed Resilient Rebuilding Authority/ies–cash incentives and/or tax credits that increase and/or are based on income for reconstruction per single-family home, and similar incentives for multi-family units, to support all electric, distributed water and energy systems, and fire-resistant building and landscaping. Such incentives and credits will complement local utility incentives and allow for stacking of other incentives for distributed water and energy (e.g., cisterns, solar, battery storage), and efficient electric appliances.

E. Establish a consortium–via the proposed Resilient Rebuilding Authority/ies and/or in collaboration with local governments–including community development financial institutions (CDFIs), philanthropic organizations, lenders, and other partners to raise catalytic capital for blended finance solutions to better help low to moderate income families return to their homes and neighborhoods, rebuild resilient multifamily rental and for sale housing, and drive investment into community assets for an equitable, sustainable recovery.

Initial Recommendations and Draft Action Plans

Introduction

Draft Action Plans are provided below to complement the Executive Summary of the Commission's Initial Recommendations for the Resilient and Sustainable Rebuilding of Los Angeles. The Commission Working Groups' Draft Action Plans offer further details about the topline recommendations. The detailed recommendations will be further refined over the coming weeks, based on additional engagement, research, and feedback.

Please visit the Commission's website to learn more as well as provide questions, feedback, and suggestions.

1. Regional Entities for Resilient Rebuilding and Long-Term Fire Protection

Overall Goal: Establish regional entities to sustain long-term support and focus on the effort. The entities, as described below, will help to reduce the cost and time of rebuilding resilient housing, businesses, landscapes, and communities in a resilient manner and of protecting the Palisades and Eaton burn areas and other communities from fire risk.

A. Establish Resilient Rebuilding Authority/ies[1] for the Eaton and Palisades Burn Areas

What: Establish a Resilient Rebuilding Authority, or two separate Authorities, for the two major burn areas. The Authority/ies will be established by state legislation. Start-up funding could be provided via a combination of philanthropic, local, and State (e.g., Prop 4) resources. Through the resale of land and the collection/administration of Tax Increment Financing and/or Transfer of Development Rights, the Authorities could be revenue-neutral when they eventually sunset and disband. NOTE: achieving revenue neutrality would be dependent on purchase and sale pricing, timing, interest rates, market conditions, administrative costs of the Authority/ies, the use of purchased land for public purposes, and other public activities taken on by the Authorities.

The Authority/ies would be empowered to do the following:

- **Facilitate large-scale land banking, rebuilding,** planning, logistics management, and contracting to reduce costs, increase efficiency, and ensure compliance with resilience and sustainability requirements and best practices.
    - Authorize the ability to use tax increment financing and other financing tools that may include but not be limited to special financing districts (e.g., Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts and/or Climate Resilience Districts) to fund resilient reconstruction of structures and infrastructure.
    - Coordinate and administer bulk purchase of building materials (e.g., fire-resistant products), efficient electrical components (e.g., appliances, HVAC, solar, batteries), native plants and landscaping material, water systems (e.g., cisterns), and other items to provide lower costs for rebuilding while providing increased access to lower embodied carbon materials in compliance with BuyCleanCA.
    - Purchase available land at fair prices from homeowners and property owners in affected areas to bank land for reconstruction and other identified community needs. The Authority would then work with selected builders to build homes with resilient standards and make them available for 'first look' to former residents–or their families-- who wish to return.
    - Manage logistics for rebuilding, including transportation infrastructure for construction workers, material delivery, and street improvement sequencing.
    - Promote modular and manufactured building solutions so ADUs, homes, and major home components, such as wall or roof framing, can be pre-built with an emphasis on regional manufacturing.

[1] California's Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction Act of 1986 allows for the creation of Reconstruction Authorities "with powers parallel to those of a community redevelopment agency, except that the reconstruction authority would be authorized to operate beyond the confines of designated redevelopment areas and would have financing sources other than tax increment sources."

[2] It is estimated that between 20,000 and 30,000 construction workers per day will need to come in and out of each of the burn areas to complete rebuilding within a 6-year period.

[3] Local, collector, and arterial roads within and approaching the burn areas will be subjected to thousands of heavy-duty truck trips over the next several years, likely necessitating complete road reconstruction in many places *after* most homebuilding is complete.

- Work with energy and water utilities to maximize opportunities for bulk purchasing of needed distribution system and property level equipment, and to facilitate inter-utility coordination.
- Coordinate with other public agencies to implement landscape-scale fire mitigation practices
- Identify opportunities to enhance evacuation routes when restoring commercial corridors and rebuilding housing supply.
- Other potential roles and functions to be determined based on need and feedback.

- **Aggregate and leverage funding and finance mechanisms to benefit community**
  - Work with community-oriented financing institutions (e.g., Community Development Finance Institutions, credit unions, community banks) to enhance opportunities to offer affordable financing option(s) for residents lacking the resources to fully fund their individual home rebuilding needs by working with community development finance institutions (CDFIs), banks, and foundations to ensure that there is patient, flexible capital available to all ranges of community stakeholders.
  - Collaborate with philanthropy, land banks/trusts, and other aligned entities to leverage capital, ensure community benefit, and maximize resilience and sustainability outcomes. Establish easements and/or purchase lots as available–when original family owners want to sell–to help avoid land speculation and facilitate a coordinated and consistent approach to rebuilding.
  - Use the above tools to offer "first look" priority to returning residents and/or their family members to repurchase properties at fair pricing and to encourage accessibility to low and moderate income community members. This may include coordinating incentives from the state and other sources for high performance, resilient housing.
  - Issue RFP(s) that both are informed by community input, align with existing community and area plan, and require climate-resilient standards that result in contracting with experienced homebuilders to build higher quality and more affordable homes.

Why: Rebuilding neighborhoods at the scale of the burn areas caused by the Eaton and Palisades burn areas typically takes a decade, if not longer. Building on infill sites one by one will take considerable time and cost, be more expensive, and require substantial government agency staffing to support. A more coordinated, centralized approach can help better promote and leverage opportunities for shared–versus just individual–neighborhood scale resilience measures and ensure vulnerable populations–including the uninsured, underinsured, seniors, renters, and people with access and functional needs–are protected. The authority/ies would help address these challenges and many others in the need to rebuild resilient homes, structures, and communities that can thrive in the future including by aggregating and leveraging funding sources and other financial tools.

B. Establish an LA County Fire Control District

What: Establish a LA County Fire Control District, with a sustained dedicated funding stream. An ongoing funding stream is essential to the Fire Control District's success in mitigating fire risk. A parcel tax or fee on properties, approved by voters, would be the most reliable source of funding to establish the District and maintain mitigation strategies. The newly established tax or fee could be assessed just on properties in the highest-risk fire zones, or on all property within the County with risk-adjusted fees assigned by severity of fire risk zones–using existing maps, potentially using AI tools and models that can help model risk–recognizing that large fires have a County-wide economic and social impact.

The District would lead the coordination with public land owners to establish, develop, and implement context-sensitive fire risk mitigation strategies, possibly including construction and maintenance of a "defensive" fire vegetated buffer zone between open space and private development, much in the way that the LA County Flood Control District keeps drainage channels and other parts of the flood control system well-maintained and operational. The Fire Control District would implement landscape- and community-scale mitigation practices according to principles of adaptive management, adjust mitigation activities in an ongoing way to incorporate advances in fire science, and address interactions

between the natural and built environments, including retrofitting nearby structures. These actions would also help enhance and increase the likelihood of insurability of homes and neighborhoods. NOTE: This is separate and distinct from the Consolidated Fire Protection District of Los Angeles County (CFPD)

Why: In Los Angeles County, a large proportion of the open space that abuts urban development is publicly owned. This dividing line is generally not managed by public agencies to prevent fire spreading from the open space to the urbanized areas. While relying on individual property owners–be they public or private–to maintain defensible, fire safe conditions is important, it is not adequate to protect lives and property. For example, continuously maintaining a fire-safe buffer–via maintained natural systems that have proven effective elsewhere–at the dividing line between urban and open space areas could reduce the risk of fire transmission, along with retrofitting nearby homes, structures, and private properties–via homeowners association fees–to be more fire-resilient. This would ideally be planted with native, ecologically-appropriate, fire-resistant vegetation.

The District will help protect lives and property by investing in regional wildfire mitigation strategies, such as creating natural fire buffers to prevent and/or slow the transmission of embers from where fires usually start (open spaces) to where they cause the most physical, economic and social damage (existing urbanized areas). Retrofitting of the nearby built environment will also increase resilience to wildfires as well as urban conflagration risk, including post-earthquake fire risk. For example, retrofitting older, dense wood-frame structures that lack fire-resistant measures (e.g., ember-resistant vent screens, defensible spaces) will help decrease urban conflagration risk.

2. Building Codes and Resilience Standards

Overall Goal: Develop and apply codes and standards to ensure that rebuilt and existing structures in fire-prone areas are significantly more resistant to wildfire ignition and damage. Updated codes, standards, and practices, will enhance survivability and insurability while concurrently maintaining a focus on sustainability.

A. Extend Chapter 7A Applicability (Altadena)

What: Extend the applicability of California Building Code Chapter 7A requirements to the entirety of the Eaton Fire burn area while adopting local ordinances and amending building code applicability within the specified area.

Why: To ensure consistent, baseline fire-resistant construction standards apply to all homes rebuilt in the Eaton Fire burn area, as current state mapping excludes many affected areas.

B. Develop and Apply Zone 0 Standard (All Burn Areas)

What:

- Develop a local Zone 0 defensible space standard and apply it to the entirety of both the Eaton Fire burn area (County action) and the Palisades Fire burn area (City action).
- Incorporate detailed requirements for elements listed under "Critical Mitigation Actions for Defensible Space"), such as prohibiting ember-ignitable landscaping/mulch/items, managing trees, requiring non-combustible gates/fences near structures, and restricting outbuildings unless built to Chapter 7A standards.
- Emphasize non-combustible permeable surfaces that will minimize heat impacts.

Why: To ensure consistent, baseline fire-resistant construction standards apply to all homes rebuilt in the Eaton Fire burn area, as current state mapping excludes many affected and vulnerable areas.

C. Enhance Chapter 7A with the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) Standards

What: The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and Los Angeles City Council should:

- Adopt local ordinances amending building codes to incorporate specified IBHS standards for new construction and major renovations in high-risk areas.
- Enhance local Chapter 7A requirements with the additional mitigation actions and stricter material choices specified by the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) Wildfire Prepared Home Plus standard (e.g., metal gutters/guards, noncombustible eaves/walls, dual-pane tempered windows, limits on accessory structures).

Why: To achieve a higher level of wildfire resistance preferred by insurers and recognized for significantly increasing survivability, going beyond minimum code requirements.

D. Enact Stringent Local Defensible Space (Zone 0)

What: The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Los Angeles City Council should develop and adopt comprehensive local defensible space ordinances applicable to those rebuilding and all designated at-risk communities, including:

- Enact local defensible space ordinances specifically addressing Zone 0 (0-5 feet from structures), incorporating detailed requirements such as prohibiting ember-ignitable landscaping/mulch/items and managing trees.
- Require non-combustible gates/fences near structures.

- Restrict outbuildings unless built to Chapter 7A standards.

- Emphasize non-combustible permeable surfaces.

Why: Combustible fuel sources immediately adjacent to homes can act as fuel for ember-driven wildfire ignition. Eliminating combustible materials can reduce fire risk.

E. Require Landscape Plan Review for Defensible Space

What: The City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles should:

- Require submission and review of landscape plans as part of the building permit process or third party certification process to demonstrate compliance with local defensible space ordinances (including Zone 0), use of ignition-resistant materials, and reduced water use while supporting healthy tree canopy. If self certification is allowed for landscaping, ensure adequate training.

- Integrate landscape plan review into standard City and County permitting procedures for new construction and significant landscaping projects in designated zones.

Why: To ensure compliance with defensible space and ignition-resistant material requirements as well as native and drought tolerant plants as well as strategic tree canopy are being considered early in the design and permitting process.

F. Maximize Structural Spacing

What:

- Utilize setback requirements during planning and permitting to maximize spacing between structures to the greatest extent feasible (aiming for no less than 10 feet separation).

- Enforcement and potential strengthening of zoning regulations regarding setbacks in high-risk areas during rebuilding.

Why: To reduce the potential for fire spread from one structure to another.

G. Establish and Maintain Community Fuel Breaks

What: Coordinating through the above proposed Fire Control District along with using City, County planning processes and financial resources to:

- Establish and maintain 'fuel breaks' and buffer zones along the periphery of communities in highest hazard zones.

- Identify strategic locations through planning processes.

- Allocate local funds or Fire Control District resources for creation and ongoing maintenance.

- Prohibit connective fuels between parcels and maintain fuel reduction in open spaces within communities.

Why: *To create strategic barriers that can slow or stop the spread of wildfire flames and reduce radiant heat exposure to neighborhoods.*

H. Implement Wildfire Protection Retrofit Program

What:

- In high fire risk and adjacent areas (e.g., within 1 mile), develop plans to retrofit surviving homes and high risk communities with baseline wildfire protections (e.g., Class A roof, metal gutters/guards, ember-resistant vents, noncombustible base-of-wall material, defensible space/Zone 0 compliance).

- Develop a comprehensive retrofit program combining requirements (e.g., potentially modeled on seismic retrofit ordinances), incentives, education and financial support for homeowners, renters, and contractors to complete necessary retrofits.

Why: To reduce the overall wildfire risk within communities by addressing vulnerabilities in existing homes that survived the fires but remain susceptible. NOTE: In the proposed Phase Two of the Commission's work, an additional focus will be on retrofits and bringing lessons out to other communities at risk from wildfire, with specific implementation recommendations to follow.

I. Require Training if Third Party and/or Self Certification are Allowed

What: If the City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles building and planning departments utilize self-certification and/or third party verification programs for licensed architects and contractors, local governments should require mandatory completion of specialized training covering resilience/sustainability best practices (including Chapter 7A, Zone 0, fire-resistant and sustainable materials/design) and local building/zoning codes. The building departments should develop and administer training programs with existing organizations who provide accreditation for respective professionals, along with establishing procedures and oversight for the 3rd party approval process.

Why: To expedite the permitting process and enable faster rebuilding, it is key that local permitting authorities ensure that resilience and safety standards are met through qualified professionals with training required through existing organizations who provide accreditation for respective professionals.

J. Promote Water-Efficient and Resilient Landscaping/Water Capture

What:

- Utilize the Model Water Efficiency Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) as a compliance strategy for new construction, encouraging climate-appropriate, fire-resistant native plants.

- Incentivize stormwater capture systems (e.g., cisterns, pools designed for fire suppression) for landscaping and dousing of rebuilt homes during high fire risk events–as well as all homes in the high fire severity zones and adjacent areas–potentially via Low Impact Development (LID) ordinances.

Why: To conserve water in a drought-prone region while simultaneously enhancing fire resilience through hydrated plants and on-site water storage for suppression.

3. Energy System Resilience and Modernization

Overall Goal: Prioritize efficient, clean, and resilient energy systems for all rebuilding and community members through integrated policies for efficiency, electrification, renewables, storage, and grid modernization.

A. Provide Energy Code Certainty, Accelerate Resilient and All-Electric Construction, and Educate Stakeholders

What:

- **State:** Provide clarity and certainty on State of California energy codes from the Governor and California Energy Commission (CEC) through actions that:
    - Avoid waivers to State of California energy codes and requirements.
    - Confirm that all buildings permitted before 1/1/2026 are required to comply with or exceed the 2022 Title 24, Part 6 energy code and that buildings permitted after 1/1/2026 are required to comply with the 2025 code.
    - Affirm current requirements for solar, battery-ready, and all electric-ready building standards, and commit to future code updates.
    - Direct CEC to develop an AI agent to help architects, engineers, and homeowners educate themselves and navigate electric ready, solar, battery storage and other all electric home elements.
- **County:** Create a County-level fast-track process for high performance resilient rebuilding (e.g., distributed energy resources, high performance windows, all electric, and/or overall designs like Passive House) through streamlined permitting, pre-approved designs, and other incentives thereby creating a parallel option as the City has established through executive order. This can be for all buildings to help provide additional prioritization and support for like for like that integrate enhanced resiliency and/or for those structures that require variances. Doing so will encourage property owners and communities to access the related benefits (e.g., back up water and power, cost savings for all electric versus dual fuel homes).
- **City of LA:** Follow up on the Mayor's Executive Order for fast-tracking voluntary all-electric rebuilding by directing LADWP to providing additional assistance, education, and incentives to architects, engineers, contractors, and homeowners to help build all electric and other high performance homes that provide resilience benefits (e.g., DERs, Passive House).
- **All Jurisdictions:**
    - Prioritize schools for solar + battery storage installations to meet critical load in blackout events, and serve as Community Resilience Centers.
    - Ensure modular/factory-built homes meet local sustainability, resilience and workforce standards through pre approved designs and standards.
    - Develop and fund local incentive and education programs, working through state appropriations and utility programs.
    - Foster regional partnerships across utilities, community groups, building contractors, and labor to reduce costs and simplify implementation for contractors and homeowners.
    - Expand access and financial incentives, prioritizing low-income households including by collaborating with utilities and nonprofits to leverage standardized plans/discounts.
    - Improve access to training and incentives with contractors and the trades.

Why: Energy efficient, solar powered, and all-electric buildings show multiple benefits including reduced emissions, improved air quality, resiliency when paired

with battery storage, lower construction costs versus dual fuel homes (i.e., a recent UC Berkeley study estimated a $9,000 in cost savings), and reducing utility bills. Integrating an all-electric approach into the design equips rebuilt homes to use the full-spectrum of electric technologies - HVAC, water heating, solar, batteries, and vehicle charging. While these systems and technologies are proven and available, they are less familiar to designers, installers, and consumers. A "fast track" permitting and review process" will accelerate the adoption of these highly efficient electric building systems and appliances during the critical rebuilding phase. Finally, less gas infrastructure also provides seismic co-benefits (e.g., eliminating gas infrastructure-related fire risks during earthquakes).

B. Develop Pre-Approved Designs and Streamline Permitting and Interconnection

What:

- **Local (LA County/City of LA + utilities):**
    - Add to existing and/or create new pre-approved, standard designs for solar, battery storage, and other related systems for instant on-line permitting by working with fire and building departments along with utilities.
    - Work with American Institute of Architects (AIA) and others to develop and publish a library of pre-approved, all-electric, solar, battery-ready, fire-resistant designs including super-efficient, healthy, and fire-resistant Passive House-style designs.
    - Mandate adoption of automated solar/battery permitting (e.g., SolarAPP+).
    - Offer expedited, fee-waived, bundled permits for rebuilds with clean energy systems.
    - Create a master permit for all electric whole home and component (e.g., solar and battery storage) design and engineering.
    - Provide interconnection transparency dashboards
- **State:**
    - The Governor should direct CPUC and CEC to confirm state incentive program eligibility (SGIP, TECH Clean CA) for the pre-approved designs.
    - The legislature and the Governor should support statewide standardization of heat pump permitting through executive action and legislation (e.g., SB 282).
    - Adopt emergency policy to expedite interconnection for rebuilds (CPUC)

Why: Permit review and approval time is a factor in the decision about whether to rebuild. These times can be extended when less familiar design approaches, buildings systems, or materials are included. Designers may charge a premium to meet new resilient guidelines or standards. Providing pre-approved designs, either for complete buildings or for specific system or construction details that meet code standards can speed up permitting, reduce cost increases, and ensure rebuilds consistently meet high resilience and energy performance standards. Alignments of these plans with rebates and tax credits can mitigate additional costs related to achieving increased resilience. Streamlined and increased coordination is needed to remove administrative or logistical bottlenecks.

C. Provide Dedicated “Resilient Rebuild” Incentives

What:

- **State (Governor/Legislature):**
    - Appropriate substantial state funding for "resilient rebuild" incentives (e.g., distributed energy resources, backup water systems, all-electric buildings, and fire-safe materials) for new construction and retrofits, including by bolstering and accelerating Wildfire and Natural Disaster Resiliency Rebuild (WNDRR) Program or similar programs with dedicated funding for Altadena (up to $54M via RISE) and Palisades up to $56M+ via LADWP) to those residents who need additional financial support.
    - Allow stacking of other local and utility incentives for rebuilding in fire-torn areas.
    - Work with the state legislature to explore how a tax credit or income

qualified cash incentive can be provided, including via the above proposed Rebuilding Authority to sell rebuilt homes with a price reduction.

  - Approve permanent solar/storage property tax exclusion (SB710).

- **Local (SCE/CPA/LA County & City of LA/LADWP):** Establish local rebate and incentive programs that complement and leverage state funds for qualifying systems (i.e., portion of Chapter 7A costs, heat pumps, batteries, etc.)

Why: Design strategies that increase resilience and prepare buildings to be all-electric can require an up-front investment, which is paid back by the energy efficiency, health, and safety benefits. Incentives are needed to make resilient rebuilding and clean energy systems financially accessible to all rebuilding residents, particularly those underinsured or facing resource constraints.

D. Require and Fund Professional Training; Support Homeowner Education

What:

- Utilities and/or the state should provide funding and or subsidize professional training of architects, engineers, and contractors for resilient design through relevant organizations (e.g., AIA-LA, USGBC California), community colleges.

- For any 3rd party verification or self certification, local governments should require recent and relevant professional training from related accredited organizations.

- Utilities should work in partnership with existing organizations (e.g., USGBC, AIA) to provide education to homeowners and encourage the use of related information sources (e.g., the Build Show, This Old House, the Property Brothers).

Why: Rebuilding will require a substantial increase in the number of licensed professionals across the building design and construction trades. It is essential to quickly train the professionals needed for resilient design and construction, especially if third party and/or self certification is allowed. Barriers including the cost of and access to course materials need to be removed. Finally, educating the residents on the benefits of high performance, resilient rebuilding is important to complement professional training.

E. Strengthen and Modernize the Electrical Grid with Distributed and/or Bidirectional Energy Resources, Virtual Power Plants

What:

Utilities should integrate high distributed energy resources (DER) scenario planning in upgrades and undergrounding of distribution infrastructure in fire zones, and prioritize rebuild zones for hosting capacity improvements. Additional related recommendations include to:

- Promote smart controls/panels for load management.

- Advance planning for vehicle to grid (V2G) and vehicle to home (V2H) integration.

- Ensure zero emissions backup power for critical water infrastructure.

- Utilize virtual power plants by encouraging and aggregating behind the meter DERs, including potentially across utility jurisdictions.

- Identify and deploy microgrids at critical facilities (schools, community centers).

The State should expand state grants (EPIC, SGIP) and incentives for fire-zone microgrids, DERs, and VPPs.

Why: The electrical grid must evolve to become more flexible, responsive, and integrated into the network of resilience measures. There is the potential to install a large amount of solar and battery storage in front of and behind the meter. It is also imperative that the electrical grid is robust enough to meet increased demand from all-electric buildings and EV charging. Electric grid equipment and technology also needs to support advanced functions such as the integration of distributed energy resources (solar and batteries), microgrids, and utilization of DERs via VPPs to enhance load management and demand response. Microgrids are a way to provide power to parts of a community, often at public or civic facilities, when there is a grid disruption. Microgrids use energy stored in batteries to provide reliable backup power to critical facilities, cooling centers, or resilience hubs (e.g., California's Community Resilience Centers) to enhance community safety by

providing safe shelter, cooling, power for home medical devices, medicine refrigeration, and cell phone charging.

F. Prioritize Strategic Undergrounding & Fire-Safe Infrastructure in Equitable Manner

What:

- **State & Local:** If regulators approve undergrounding the distribution grid and the utilities implement this approach, homes that remain intact may be expected to cover the related costs which initial estimates range from $5,000 to $15,000 to trench and connect into the home. To the extent possible, these costs should be borne by utilities, and/or via funding provided via state budget (i.e., legislature and Governor) and federal reimbursements.

- Other recommendations are:

    - For undergrounding in fire zones (Altadena, Palisades), explore financing mechanisms beyond having ratepayers cover the costs.

- Co-locate fiber/broadband conduit when trenching and undergrounding.

- Integrate needs for future electrification capacity when planning for undergrounding.

- Implement safety measures (e.g., auto shut-off valves) where gas remains.

Why: To significantly reduce wildfire ignition risk from power lines in high-hazard areas and improve grid reliability during extreme weather.

G. Ensure Resilient Communications for Public Safety Power Shutoffs

What: Coordinate with telecommunication providers to ensure system resilience during Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events and disasters.

Why: Maintaining the function of communication networks is vitally important for issuing emergency alerts, evacuation orders, and general coordination during power shutoffs and disaster events. Communications lines and equipment should be secured to a similar degree as the electrical system, including strategic undergrounding and fire resistant infrastructure.

4. Water System Resilience and Safety

Overall Goal: Build climate resilience through upgrading and improving water infrastructure and best management practices. The Palisades and Altadena fires demonstrated that the Los Angeles region does not have adequate water infrastructure to withstand climate driven urban wildfires of unprecedented scope and scale. The loss of life and property was unequaled for an urban wildfire in Los Angeles County. The Blue Ribbon Commission proposes a combination of bold, far-reaching recommendations to build wildfire and climate resilience. The Commission's top priorities are building climate resilience through upgrading and improving water infrastructure and best management practices for the burn areas, but county-wide recommendations are also provided.

Most of the recommendations should be completed in the next three years if not sooner, but there are some with longer term timelines. Recommendations on deadlines and responsible agencies to complete each action will be included in the final report. Considering the Commission's focus is on LA County's rapid, climate resilient and equitable recovery, few recommendations on clean-up and monitoring requirements are provided. The recommendations are intended to be consistent with the LA County Water Plan's comprehensive goals and targets. In addition, the effort to build water systems and community climate resilience should be consistent with essential efforts to improve seismic resilience regionally.

A. Assess Existing Conditions and Needs Before Rebuilding

What:

- **Inventory wildfire-related damage to water infrastructure** – All water utilities should quickly assess or compile cost estimates of direct and indirect fire-related damage to water infrastructure. Also, additional capital infrastructure needs identified by at risk water system managers that will enhance climate resilience should be prioritized for construction. Then submit a funding request for damaged and needed water infrastructure to the state legislature and for consideration in federal disaster relief allocations. This would be aligned with actions LA City and LA County have already done in positioning for financial support. Fundamentally, recovery can't happen without state and/or federal assistance because the impacted area includes small water utilities with modest revenue streams and historic cash flow issues.

- **Evaluate progress on post-Woolsey utility resilience recommendations** - LA County should assess and report on the progress on the dozens of recommendations developed in response to the 2018 Woolsey Fire. The report should include how many have been implemented, how many are in progress with their target completion dates, and which have not yet started. Understanding what has been completed—and what remains outstanding—helps avoid duplication, identify gaps and obstacles, focus resources effectively, accelerate stalled efforts, and improve coordination across agencies.

- **Conduct climate vulnerability assessment to identify high-risk infrastructure and prioritize hardening** – Los Angeles Department of Water and Power(LADWP), Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (LACDPW) and other agencies as appropriate should promptly lead a water infrastructure vulnerability assessment in the burn areas and areas adjacent to the wildland-urban interface, focusing first on areas identified in CalFire's updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps. The assessment should cover at least 10 community water systems, 2 sewer systems, an estimated number of private onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS), and an unknown number of private wells.

- Assess the technical, management and financial capacity of small water districts in vulnerable areas to build and maintain water system climate resilience - The responsibility of upgrading water systems to provide strong firefighting capacity and guarantee safe, reliable water to all customers during and after climate

driven disasters is tremendous and may beyond the financial, technical, or management capacity of some water agencies. A comprehensive assessment of these small water districts is necessary to develop further recommendations on what actions are needed to enhance water system and community climate resilience.

- **Test flow rates and system capacity under emergency and peak demand conditions** - As part of the water infrastructure assessment, perform flow tests to determine actual system flow capacity. Fire flow requirements have evolved over time and older systems may have been built to a standard lower than would be currently required. Update/upgrade system and flow requirements as needed as new development occurs. An example is Waterworks District 29 and the need to fund and implement their Infrastructure/Capital plan to enhance flows and improve resilience.

- **Reassess equipment and water supply needs if aircraft support is unavailable** - Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) and City of Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) should re-evaluate the equipment and water supply needed to fight wildfires without relying on firefighting aircraft, which may be grounded during high-wind events like Santa Anas. Defining this demand is a critical first step toward coordinating with water agencies on how to meet any revised water supply needs.

Why: Rebuilding for resilience requires an understanding of current conditions, points of failure, the extent of damage and future needs and opportunities. Begin with a comprehensive evaluation to understand current system damage, ongoing vulnerabilities, and opportunities for improvement. This diagnostic phase is essential to establish a strong foundation for climate-resilient investments—one that addresses both the immediate impacts of wildfire and the long-term demands of reliable, day-to-day water system performance.

B. Reduce exposure of neighborhoods, region and water system to wildfires and other hazards

What:

- **Limit the exposure of water infrastructure by siting new systems and facilities outside of high-risk areas** – LA County Fire and LAFD should work with water utilities to plan the locations of critical infrastructure like reservoirs, large cisterns, booster stations, treatment facilities and wells such that they are outside of harm's way as much as possible. Where relocating isn't feasible, this planning can help identify which components should be prioritized for protection during future firestorms to maintain overall system performance.

- **Clear testing and communication of water quality** - In 2025, revise AB 541 to provide clear guidance, requirements, and funding for water suppliers to test for wildfire-related contaminants in drinking water systems, especially where structures have burned. The law should include timelines for public reporting and communication tools that clarify the limits of parcel-level testing. By year-end, the State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water should launch a user-friendly online portal with up-to-date water quality information across affected systems. Additionally, water suppliers should be encouraged to share real-time updates through platforms like Watch Duty, with clearly organized and accessible data to support public awareness and safety.

- **Establish buffer zones to help protect communities:** The Governance work group is finalizing plans for regional buffer zones on public lands at the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). These buffer zones, at least 100 feet wide, will be located on publicly owned wildlands adjacent to the WUI and ideally planted with native, ecotope-appropriate, drought tolerant, fire-resistant vegetation. Maintenance funding will come from a new fire resilience parcel tax, covering at least 2 miles of urban development inland and adjacent to the WUI.

- **Protect water infrastructure and watersheds through erosion control and nature-based solutions** - Strengthen hillside protection and erosion control to safeguard water infrastructure and watersheds from post-fire sedimentation and runoff from flooding and debris flows.. In the short term, prioritize structural best management practices (BMPs) such as jute netting, silt fencing, mulching, straw wattles, hydroseeding, check dams, and inlet protection. Use compost filter socks in areas where runoff may carry toxic substances to prevent contamination. Sediment buildup can severely impact the capacity of LA County Flood Control District's regional stormwater capture systems and local groundwater recharge projects—adequate funding is essential to maintain these facilities at full functionality. Long-term strategies should be informed by vulnerability assessments and include targeted hillside replanting, installation of debris flow barriers or basins, and geotextiles to reduce erosion. Integrate nature-based solutions like reforestation and soil stabilization to enhance runoff infiltration, especially in the rebuilding of fire-damaged parks. Stream restoration efforts should also be sustained to protect habitat and maintain long-term watershed health.

- **Implement localized back-up power for energy and water distribution to safeguard services during Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events** - Local and regional infrastructure should be equipped with reliable backup energy sources (like solar and storage) to ensure water can be pumped, treated, and distributed even when utility power is intentionally shut off as part of fire spread mitigation. For example, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD)'s water treatment plant in Malibu Canyon uses large solar energy backups during outages. This approach of bolstering energy resilience through distributed energy resources could also apply to homes and businesses in high-risk fire areas.

Why: Neighborhoods, the region and even water infrastructure itself is at risk from fire, which can impact water supply, water quality and availability of water for firefighting.

C. Enhance regional and local firefighting capabilities

What:

- **Update and align fire protection standards of water infrastructure design to enhance firefighting readiness** - Request collaboration from LACoFD, LAFD, and other local fire agencies to revise fire protection standards in high fire risk zones. This includes fire flow volumes, residual pressure, hydrant design and spacing, and other design factors to ensure water infrastructure can meet the demands of wildfire response, especially as fires become more intense and fast-moving.

- **Explore temporary water solutions to support firefighting** - LACoFD and LAFD, with advice from LACoDPW, LADWP, and other agencies, should explore the use and deployment of temporary firefighting water infrastructure—such as portable high-pressure hoses, water tanks, and pumps—that can be quickly set up to deliver water where it's most needed. These commercially available tools can be stored in the greater Los Angeles area for rapid deployment during emergencies.

- **Coordinate refill locations for firefighting helicopters** - Request LACoFD and LAFD to evaluate and improve existing refill sites and work with water supply agencies to establish new helispots as needed.

- **Bolster adaptive capacity through shared access to portable, recycled, and other water resources** - LADWP and other water districts should evaluate connections with adjacent districts to share access to potable, recycled, and other water sources. Local access to water is essential for extra drivable water tankers. Additionally, fire departments need early and frequent coordination with water utilities to ensure water-dropping helicopters can easily access water from out-of-service, non-potable reservoirs. LADWP's Encino, Stone, and Hollywood reservoirs are excellent examples of successful efforts.

- **Increase distributed water reserves for firefighting** – Support the development of distributed, on-site water reserves for firefighting by requiring or incentivizing private properties—particularly those on private wells or small water systems—to maintain accessible water supplies

for emergency use. For example, this could align with the 2,500 gallon tank requirement some counties impose in State Responsibility Areas or other at-risk areas. Expand this approach by integrating stormwater capture systems separate from the potable water system, such as cisterns and pools, into home rebuild requirements under ordinances like the City of LA's Low Impact Development program. These systems, along with pools, should be designed to retain water on-site for multiple uses—autonomous roof and vegetation dousing, backup fire suppression during power outages (via battery-operated pumps), and as a resource for firefighters. Incentivize property owners to install clearly marked draft lines (hose or pipe connection) from these water sources to the street to enable quick access by fire trucks.

- **Encourage the use of external residential fire sprinklers paired with on-site water storage to help slow wildfire spread** - Develop standards for these systems to ensure they are properly designed, built, maintained, and powered independently (e.g., with off-grid energy sources), preventing strain on community water systems or reliance on utility power during fire events.

- **Rebuild parks and schools with large cisterns and direct release systems** - These should be equipped with battery backup to serve as a water source for firefighters during emergencies. As a co-benefit, the cisterns can help manage stormwater on-site and provide a sustainable irrigation source during regular, non-fire conditions.

- **Protect water pressure through strategically shutting down service** - New structures should have easy-to-shut-off water valves located outside in areas easily accessible by firefighters. This could include an additional shut off on the customer side of a water service meter that can be operated without special tools or equipment. Consider automatic options like requiring subsurface thermal sensors on customer service lines that automatically shut off water flow when extreme temperatures are reached.

Why: Protecting water supply and pressure for firefighting will require a coordinated regional approach, collaboration across agencies and flexible access to alternative sources.

D. Protect building-scale and property-level infrastructure

What:

- **Implement defensible space requirements at each site that integrate fire and water resilience** - Expand defensible space, including a "Zone 0" around homes and infrastructure, while prioritizing permeable surfaces and drought-tolerant, fire-resistant landscaping. These choices reduce irrigation demands on local water utilities and improve on-site stormwater absorption, helping to manage both drought and flood risks. Requirements should be aligned across city, county, and state levels, with the most protective standards applied as a baseline. Use an adaptive framework that reflects the unique landscapes of the LA region and incorporates the latest fire science and climate data.

- **Protect public health through new systems and testing at burned properties** - Remove water meters from properties affected by structure fires. Install new water meters in insulated, composite vaults. Do not replace water meters until the property service line is replaced, fire-related Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) testing shows no chemical contamination, or a backflow prevention device is installed by the public water system. Conduct VOC testing at nearby fire hydrants, service lines, water meters, and other infrastructure when safe. Analyze VOCs using EPA Method 524.2 or 534.4, with a detection limit of 0.5 ppb or more sensitive. Test for VOCs such as trihalomethanes, dichlorobenzenes, dichloroethanes, dichloropropane, MTBE, TCP, EDB, ethyl benzene, trimethyl benzenes, vinyl chloride, xylenes, styrene, and naphthalene. Make water testing results public within seven days. Do not lift water advisories until all tests confirm contaminant levels are below drinking water standards or equivalent. Where possible and affordable, **r**educe potential drinking water contamination from melted plastic pipes by requiring copper piping in high fire risk areas. On all residential properties, require proven, state of the art, backflow prevention devices on residential water services to prevent backflow and contamination of the system post pressure loss.

Why: Damage to buildings and water systems have led to contamination that extends beyond the burn scar, leading to further displacement.

E. Leverage recovery to expand resilience of the wastewater system in places currently on septic systems

What:

- **Complete an evaluation of the existing septic/OWTS** and pipes on the burned properties and the impacts of these systems on Santa Monica Bay and adjacent beaches. Ensure that the damaged septic systems are not discharging to Santa Monica Bay beaches and the Bay. Malibu, with the assistance of others as needed, should assess how many of those systems currently are below the mean high tide line, and/or vulnerable to sea level rise, extreme wave height, king tides, and storms. Assessing the feasibility and cost of the alternative of upgrading burned homes and degraded and destroyed systems with OWTS that meet Malibu's building codes, Regional Water Quality Control Board requirements, and comply with the Coastal Act is an important step in determining assessing the future wastewater management, and power, drinking water and communications infrastructure along PCH.

- **Consider various wastewater management and conveyance alternatives. Malibu, with the assistance of others as needed, should develop and evaluate a**lternatives including extending the City of LA's Coastal Interceptor Sewer (that currently goes to Coastline Drive at PCH/Sunset Mesa) to the western region of burned structures on PCH, building a sewer that connects the burned areas and PCH development to the Civic Center Treatment Facility and increase capacity at that facility as needed, or developing a working partnership with the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District that would include new sewers and pumping stations. The latter alternative could include potable water supply management that could increase supply security and measures to enhance fire resilience. All alternatives should consider which burned properties and other properties should be connected to the sewer systems. The fourth alternative would be to build new advanced onsite wastewater treatment systems at the burned coastal properties that are resilient to sea level rise and other climate impacts. The alternatives analysis with recommendations should be completed in 60 days.

- **If Malibu decides to go forward with a sewer system alternative, then build the sewer system in a coordinated manner that minimizes disruptions on PCH that will occur in conjunction with undergrounding power lines**, upgrading communication cables, and ensuring that water distribution infrastructure is strengthened where needed. Complete an assessment on the vulnerability of all of this infrastructure to sea level rise, king tides, large waves, and storms.

- **Consider opportunistically funding the extension of sewer service** to currently septic-reliant households in the Altadena and Pacific Palisades areas.

Why: Numerous properties with septic systems were lost along PCH in areas vulnerable to sea level rise and related climate impacts. Also, recovery in the Palisades and Altadena provides an opportunity to more affordably connect septic systems to sewers in areas of greatest vulnerability.

F. Leverage partnerships and financing to enable rapid implementation

Why: Ownership and responsibility for water resources are distributed across a complex set of jurisdictions and authorities that limit strategic investment in resilience. Local and regional systems are on their own financially to pay for the costs of being more resilient in the future and thus the options for greater resilience in the current system generally are enhanced direct user charges and property tax levies. Partnerships and support could provide regional benefits.

What:

- **Form partnerships to support smaller, more cost-constrained water utilities recovery** - LACDPW, Pasadena Water and Power, MWD and LADWP should consider providing greater short-term direct technical assistance and/or long term opportunities for regional partnerships to systems in the Altadena area and to small water districts located in or adjacent to all Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Actions should be aligned with the County Water Plan and the County's Small Water Systems Task Force.

- **Develop clear mutual aid agreements amongst water systems to enable clear roles, responsibilities, and staff planning** - The County should clarify and help support the

codification of existing and new mutual aid agreements between systems (such as the Public Water Agencies Group, California Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (CalWARN)), and intertie reliance which are currently not a requirement. Clarify and communicate operation and maintenance roles and intervals between water systems and fire departments for key pieces of this infrastructure and ensure sufficient staff support.

- **Temporary & Permanent Funding Assistance:** By early 2026, the state (State Water Resources Control Board Division of Financial Assistance) should consider both temporary and permanent financing assistance to systems with downgraded bond ratings (and thus financing abilities for new capital infrastructure) as a result of fire damage or risk.

- **Fire Insurance & Pooled Insurance Affordability:** By the end of the 2026 State legislative session, the State or County should evaluate the cost of fire insurance for water utilities and ways to ameliorate the affordability impact of this growing cost on ratepayers. This may include promoting existing or supporting new types of pooled insurance models, similar to those already employed by some systems (i.e., mutual water companies, Public Water Agencies Group).

- **Cost-Differentiated New Charges for Water Utility Users:** Outside of the above, and most importantly, Proposition 218 and similar California laws suggests that for all new costs borne by local agencies for enhanced fire resilience, they should be levied on customers based on a cost-of-service logic, not spread evenly across all customers unless all customers share a benefit equally.

    - Therefore, local agencies should not recover revenues for fire resilience for a subset of their customers based on variable or especially fixed charges applied uniformly to all customers

    - They should rather pursue flat fee or per usage surcharges based on the degree of enhanced protection provided by fire resiliency infrastructure to certain customers,

    - Alternatively, systems in conjunction with the county or city can consider special assessments or utility User Tax type charges rather than actual rate structure changes

    - In the event that utilities cannot differentiate new charges as suggested above, as a second best measure, they must provide rate assistance to low and moderate income customers

- **No Resilience Mandates for Unfunded System Updates:** The State Legislature or agencies should not impose new resilience mandates on local water utilities that are unfunded or unvetted with respect to cost as these will have a null if not negative effect, as has been done in the past.

Local Financing & Rebuilding Authority: The proposed authority should coordinate with existing local agency water infrastructure funding and financing needs in order to fill existing and projected future gaps.

5. Community Resilience, Equity & Health

Overall Goal: Address the immediate health, safety, and psychological needs of affected workers and residents. This includes ensuring equitable access to resources, and building long-term community capacity for preparedness and recovery. NOTE: Additional long-term recommendations for increased social cohesion and building community capacity for future events are under development by the working group.

A. Ensure Worker Health & Safety During Cleanup

What:

- Provide additional, detailed health and safety guidance (multi-lingual) for property owners managing debris removal and their contractors.
- Include specific PPE information and ensure PPE is readily available at accessible locations.
- Develop and disseminate clear guidance materials (posted online and physically); establish PPE distribution points.

Why: To protect often vulnerable cleanup workers (especially those hired privately) and residents from exposure to hazardous materials and toxicants in fire debris, addressing potential environmental justice concerns.

B. Provide Health Screening for Organized Groups of Volunteer Responders

What:

- Identify volunteer organizations institutionally supported by fire departments during the response/recovery whose members may need medical screening.
- Identify/establish a location offering free medical services/screening sign-ups for these volunteers.
- Create a formal program or pursue legislation for ongoing access to such services for institutionally supported disaster volunteers in the future.
- Who: California Fire Chiefs Association, LACoFD, LAFD, Philanthropic Organizations (funding support), State Legislature (potential future program).
- How: Inter-agency coordination to identify volunteers; secure philanthropic funding and location for initial screening; develop a proposal for sustained program/legislation.

Why: To address potential toxicant exposure and health risks for volunteer firefighters and recovery workers who may lack the medical resources available to professional responders.

C. Expand Accessible Mental Health Services

What: The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, Philanthropic Organizations, Community-Based Organizations (Churches, etc.), LA County Parks and Recreation, Community Clinics, and healthcare providers should collaborate DMH to:

- Support and scale efforts promoting social connectedness/cohesion (e.g., programs by faith-based groups, Parks Dept) including integrated mental health support.
- Address access barriers by supporting mental health services specifically for uninsured workers/residents.
- Ensure culturally competent outreach and services are available to undocumented workers and residents, potentially via community clinics.
- Coordinate services and ensure targeted outreach to underserved communities; and scale existing successful community programs.

Why: To address the significant worsening of mental health reported by a large majority of fire survivors and provide support during a challenging period of uncertainty and recovery.

6. Land Use and Community Restoration

Overall Goal: To guide land use decisions and restoration efforts during rebuilding to enhance community resilience, incorporate nature-based solutions, and potentially improve upon pre-fire conditions. NOTE: The Land Use and Community Restoration working group will be developing additional recommendations in the coming weeks including around multifamily rental housing.

A. Adopt Nature-Based Solutions for Restoration

What:

- Adopt nature-based solutions like reforestation, soil stabilization, and healthy soils.
- Utilize approaches to maximize runoff infiltration when rebuilding damaged parks.
- Integrate nature-based solution principles and techniques into park restoration plans and potentially broader landscape recovery efforts.

Why: To utilize natural processes for ecological benefits such as erosion control, soil stabilization, and improved water infiltration, particularly in damaged public spaces that provide flood control benefits and more fire-resilient native plants.

Appendix

Blue Ribbon Commission Members

Commission Leadership

Matt Petersen—Chair
CEO, Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator; Former Chief Sustainability Officer, City of Los Angeles

Fran Pavley—Vice Chair
State Senator (Ret.), Environmental Policy Director, USC Schwarzenegger Center

Commission Members

Marty Adams—*General Manager (Ret.), Los Angeles Department of Water and Power*

Marissa Aho—*Former Chief Resilience, Officer for Los Angeles and Houston; Director Executive Climate Office King County, WA.*

Ted Bardacke—*CEO, Clean Power Alliance*

Cecilia V. Estolano—*CEO and Founder, Estolano Advisors*

Ron Frierson—*Director of Economic Development, Amazon; Board Chair, LA Economic Development Corporation*

Mark Gold—*Former California Deputy Secretary for Oceans and Coastal Policy; Director for Water Scarcity Solutions, NRDC*

Russell Goldsmith—*Former Chairman, City National Bank; Chairman, Forest Management Company*

Laurie Johnson—*Former Chief Catastrophe Response and Resiliency Officer, California Earthquake Authority*

Mary Leslie—*President, Los Angeles Business Council*

Rudy Ortega—*Tribal President, Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians*

Jonathan Parfrey—CEO, Climate Resolve

Tracy Quinn—*CEO, Heal the Bay*

Laurie Schoeman—*Chief Impact Officer, Partners for the Common Good, Former White House Senior Housing Advisor*

Donna Shen Tripp—*Partner, Craig Lawson & Co.*

Ben Stapleton—*Executive Director, US Green Building Council, California*

David Wilson—*City Manager, City of West Hollywood*

Roy Wright—*CEO, Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety*

Blue Ribbon Commission for Climate Action and Fire-Safe Recovery
Urgent Early Action Recommendations
March 18, 2025

Background

The Blue Ribbon Commission for Climate Action and Fire-Safe Recovery (Commission) was formed by Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath as an independent body. The Commission aims to provide recommendations and suggest actions to local and state policymakers—and other relevant decision makers—to help residents, communities, and our region rebuild homes, multi-family structures, commercial buildings, and infrastructure in a resilient and sustainably to ensure long-term survivability and insurability of housing, infrastructure, and the local economy.

Please see here for background and details on the purpose and composition of the Commission, including the partnership with UCLA.

Progress to Date

The Commission and our partners at UCLA kicked off our work with a two-day retreat on February 28 and March 1. While our mandate was to produce a first set of findings and recommendations within 90 days, we have determined there are several drivers that necessitate a set of early urgent actions through the recommendations below.

Therefore, the Commission has identified the following urgent actions in the form of findings and recommendations for local and state policymakers, as well as other targeted audiences (e.g., insurers, philanthropic organizations, the private sector, community leaders) working to help communities with rebuilding and recovery in the fire-ravaged areas.

The Commission's Work Ahead

Over the coming weeks, the Commission will continue developing additional recommendations to support the resilient rebuilding in the burned areas and enhance the future economic growth, resiliency, and sustainability of the entire region. The Commission will seek to coordinate and collaborate with policymakers and rebuilding initiatives along with affected communities–homeowners, contractors, small business owners, religious institutions, community service providers, schools, utilities, and others impacted by the fires–to ensure we can rebuild neighborhoods and infrastructure in a resilient manner.

Los Angeles has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebuild fire-ravaged communities that are exposed to increasing climate risks, into a stronger, safer, and more resilient region. The Commission urges policymakers to act immediately by implementing fast-track permitting, financial incentives, requests for consumer insurance transparency, and resilient building and infrastructure standards. By doing so, we can set a national model for climate-resilient disaster recovery.

Commission Urgent Actions: Early Action Recommendations

1. **Building Codes and Incentives for Resilient Rebuilding, Survivability, and Insurability**
    1. **Exemptions shift costs to insured property owners:** We want to ensure policymakers and regulators are aware that if they exempt, suspend, or "make voluntary" existing mandatory legal requirements (e.g., all-electric homes, solar on new homes) that otherwise would apply to a developer or rebuilding homeowner, insurance policyholders/homeowners will likely become personally responsible for the full costs if they choose to voluntarily pursue such upgrades. Under standard

home property insurance coverage (HO-3), insurers will cover the increased costs to meet standards that are currently adopted and universally enforced under the Law and Ordinance provision. Any waivers make these funds unavailable to insureds. *Therefore, we caution policymakers to consider the unintended consequences of waivers that may make it harder for homeowners to rebuild resiliently and sustainably.*

2. **Take executive action to create fast-track pathways for high-performance buildings and pre-approved designs for self-certification:** To help support lower energy costs, resiliency, survivability, and insurability, local governments should create fast-track pathways for the approval and permitting of high-performance energy efficient, all-electric buildings built to the most recent energy codes, along with fire-resistant standards. Policymakers should also seek to: provide incentives (e.g., fee reductions) for more resilient rebuilding and site scaping; and work with communities, neighborhood organizations, architects and engineers, code officials, and insurance companies to review and certify pre-approved designs for high-performance (e.g., all-electric) and fire-resistant homes that can allow for fast-track approvals and provide increased certainty for coverage. These pre-approved home designs and component systems (e.g., solar installations under a certain size) could be eligible for online instant permits. While we understand policymakers want to use self-certification to help expedite permits, those envisioned to certify--licensed architects and contractors--should first be required to complete specialized training to ensure compliance with resilience, safety, and energy standards.

3. **Waivers, exemptions to zoning, codes, or standards should only benefit the owner of record and family members of impacted properties as of January 8, 2025.** To provide shared and enhanced benefits to the devastated communities and support returning residents and their family members, policymakers should explore ways that properties that are sold to non-returning residents and developers meet current building standards and codes as of the date of pulling permits from the local jurisdiction.

4. **Fire-safe rebuilding requirements must be mandatory for all reconstruction:** To ensure insurability and maximize protections from future fires, all structures being rebuilt must be subject to Zone 0 Defensible Space requirements and meet Chapter 7A requirements of the California Building Code. Regardless of CalFire Hazard maps, jurisdictions should examine extending all or select priority Chapter 7A requirements for homes and accessory structures in neighborhoods that are adjacent to or within a certain distance of very high and high fire hazard severity zones to incorporate areas at risk from wind-blown embers.

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2. **Financing and Land Use** *The Commission will be developing these ideas further in the coming weeks, but we put forth these recommendations now as local and state policies are rapidly evolving and community financing needs for rebuilding are paramount.*
    1. **Create an authority for resilient disaster recovery and financing:** To reduce risk, cost, and rebuilding timelines while increasing adaptation, resiliency, survivability, and insurability, the Commission recommends establishing rebuilding authorities for each affected community—or a singular entity to serve all—that could provide multiple benefits, including:

- Purchasing lots to avoid land speculation in fire-impacted areas (first priority given to returning residents and/or their family members);
- Facilitating large-scale rebuilding contracts to “pool” and “reduce” costs and offer an affordable option for residents lacking the resources to fully fund their rebuilds;
- Coordinating bulk purchasing of materials to lower costs;
- Managing logistics for rebuilding, including transportation infrastructure for construction workers and material delivery;
- Overseeing special financing districts (e.g., Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts, Climate Resilience Districts) to fund resilient reconstruction.

Such an entity could be initially funded for startup costs from Proposition 4 proceeds.

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3. **Health and Community.** *While our mandate does not explicitly include cleanup, testing, and immediate related needs, the Commission felt the following concerns should be raised to decision-makers.*
    1. **Provide clear public health guidance:** Returning residents, insurers, and property owners need clear, consistent standards for evaluating and remediating airborne, water-borne, and soil risks in fire zones. The County should provide a single point of accountability and coordinated metrics for the Department of Public Health to implement systematic studies and set assessment and monitoring standards.

    2. **Maintain existing FEMA disaster sites:** To provide long-term recovery support on a variety of issues such as housing, social services, healthcare and financial support we recommend that the City and County of Los Angeles continue operating FEMA disaster sites, potentially in partnership with an existing NGO or agency (e.g., Red Cross, California Department of Housing and Community Development) or as part of a long-term rebuilding authority. Recommended locations:
        - **UCLA Research Park West** – 10850 West Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90064
        - **Pasadena City College Community Education Center** – 3035 East Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91106

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4. **Insurance**
    1. **Clarify coverage and timelines for insured survivors:** Policymakers need to ensure survivors can get clear information about coverage and payout timelines to make informed rebuilding decisions.
    2. **Ensure future insurability for rebuilt wildfire-resistant homes and structures:** Policymakers must provide a framework for insurers to offer coverage for rebuilt homes and provide incentives for wildfire-resistant designs and wildfire risk mitigation. Builders should be designing and constructing homes that will meet these insurability standards.
    3. **Convene insurers, lenders, and policymakers with community groups:** The Commission will work with the Department of Angels to organize a convening in Q2 2025 with insurers, lenders, policymakers, and affected community members.