

**Reimagining Recovery: A Comprehensive Policy Blueprint for
Los Angeles County's Wildfire Resilience**

"Where others see crisis, we see a mandate to innovate, rebuild, and lead." - Zachary & Kevin

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Lastly, at the core of this proposal are those most impacted by the fires that ignited on January 7th and devastated many Southern California communities. We see you. We are here to work alongside you. And we will not just recover, we will innovate.

Executive Summary

Los Angeles County is currently facing an unprecedented wildfire crisis, exposing not only the physical vulnerability of the region's infrastructure but also the institutional and regulatory fragilities that hinder equitable and timely recovery. The January 2025 Eaton and Palisades Fires have already displaced over 200,000 residents and destroyed more than 18,000 structures. As communities begin to navigate the immediate aftermath, they encounter a fragmented recovery system marked by procedural delays, opaque governance, and systemic inequities. This policy blueprint articulates a comprehensive response, grounded in equity, resilience, and structural reform. Structured around five strategic pillars, 1) Infrastructure Recovery, 2) Equitable Housing, 3) Wildfire Mitigation, 4) Economic Revitalization, and 5) Community Health and Engagement, this proposal addresses the full scope of post-wildfire recovery and resilience-building. Each component offers immediate interventions and scalable policy models inspired by established case studies from Japan, Sonoma California, Routt County, and the Philadelphia bridge reconstruction.

The proposal calls for the immediate establishment of a Climate Resilience Rebuilding Commission, modeled after the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, to expedite approvals for essential infrastructure projects such as underground utility lines, hardened homes, and decentralized microgrid systems. A pull-funding mechanism ensures outcome-driven disbursement of recovery resources, rewarding timely and effective execution. To prevent long-term displacement, the housing strategy prioritizes rapid deployment of modular units, simplified permitting processes through pre-approved wildfire-resilient design templates, and robust support for Community Land Trusts to safeguard affordability. The proposal incorporates anti-displacement measures such as flexible income thresholds, first-right-of-return provisions, and emergency rent stabilization to support low- and middle-income residents.

Mitigation efforts emphasize a proactive fire prevention strategy through controlled burns, home hardening, enforcement of defensible space ordinances, and reforestation with native species. These are complemented by decentralized energy systems and early detection networks. Tribal stewardship and Indigenous fire knowledge are integrated as central components of the landscape management strategy. Economic revitalization efforts include the immediate activation of a Local Business Recovery Fund, prioritization of local hire and procurement in all publicly funded projects, and the re-establishment of in-house public sector capacity to manage rebuilding. This reverses the trend of outsourcing and ensures that recovery efforts create long-term employment and institutional knowledge retention within the County.

A central feature of this blueprint is the prioritization of community health and social recovery. The plan includes deployment of a Resilience Health Corps to provide trauma-informed care and psychological first aid, alongside formal partnerships with faith-based organizations and cultural institutions to serve as resilience hubs. These relational infrastructures are critical to social cohesion and long-term stability. The wildfire crisis that has unfolded in Los Angeles County marks a pivotal moment. This proposal positions the County and the community to lead in transforming disaster response into a model of equity-centered, climate-adaptive recovery. By choosing systemic reform over administrative inertia, and abundance over austerity, Los Angeles has the opportunity to establish a national standard for how communities rebuild—not just what they restore, but what they reimagine.

Introduction

Let's be clear: Los Angeles County, situated in California - which is now the 4th largest economy in the world - cannot afford another disaster recovery built on delay, fragmentation, or privilege¹. The fires of January 2025 may have lit our hills, but what they revealed is far more combustible—a public system that, in its current form, cannot deliver recovery with speed, equity, or integrity. This is not just a policy failure. It is a moral one. And it demands leadership prepared to act accordingly. Over the last several months, we have worked relentlessly to develop this blueprint—not just as a thought exercise, but as a plan of action. We come from public health, academia, county administration, equity research, frontline service, and the non-profit space. We know the systems we are working within, and we know the structural limitations they impose. This proposal is the product of listening to displaced families, studying implementation bottlenecks, and translating real-world case studies into a pilot-ready, justice-forward policy framework for Los Angeles County.

We don't romanticize the past. We understand the purpose and power of systems like CEQA, zoning frameworks, and environmental protections ecosystems². These policies were built in response to real harm to protect our air, water, and communities from extraction and exploitation. But, systems built for an era of singular threats are now crumbling under the weight of compounding, concurrent, and climate-driven disasters. What once protected now paralyzes. What once ensured safety now delays healing during a time when healing is cross generational.

Wildfire recovery in Los Angeles County currently takes years. CEQA reviews alone can stretch 18 to 24 months. Permitting processes involve over a dozen agencies that do not speak to one another, each operating with different timelines, requirements, and levels of transparency. The families who navigate this maze are not those with the most need, they are those with the most lawyers. And that's the problem. Recovery has become an administrative privilege, not a public right. Reimagining Recovery is our answer to this failure. And it is not a white paper—it is a working model, grounded in case studies, ready-to-launch partnerships, and platform-level policy implementation. It is both a call to act and a plan to execute.

Our framework is structured around five interdependent pillars:

1. Infrastructure Recovery

We propose the creation of a Climate Resilience Rebuilding Commission (a centralized, cross-jurisdictional body modeled after BRAC) that holds delegated authority to streamline approvals and facilitate coordinated permitting in fire-affected zones. This body would manage pre-approved climate-adapted templates for utilities, roads, and community facilities, fast-tracking shovel-ready projects and eliminating duplicative regulatory delays. Pull-funding incentives will be tied directly to outcomes: miles of undergrounded lines, homes rebuilt to occupancy, and time-to-power-restoration benchmarks.

2. Equitable Housing

We do not rebuild only for those who owned homes, we rebuild for the entire community. Our housing strategy

¹ <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.businessinsider.com/>

² <https://calmatters.org/politics/2024/07/ceqa-california-energy-grid-state-parks/>

activates modular surge deployment, wildfire-resilient design templates, and Community Land Trusts to prevent speculative displacement. We propose flexible income thresholds, first-right-of-return policies, and rent stabilization in fire-impacted areas to protect renters and mobile home residents, many of whom lost everything and are now invisible in policy frameworks. Housing recovery is not only a supply issue. It is a justice issue.

3. Wildfire Mitigation and Environmental Restoration

We don't wait for the next fire to act. Our plan scales prescribed burns in partnership with Indigenous fire practitioners, launches defensible space equity programs with subsidized compliance tools, and builds out microgrid infrastructure in high-risk corridors. Our environmental restoration strategy is not cosmetic. It reforests with native species, restores wildlife corridors, and hardens landscapes with community-based fire adaptation models. Mitigation is not a budget line, it is a cyclical survival plan.

4. Economic Recovery

Recovery must generate wealth, not extract it. We propose a local hire mandate for all disaster recovery contracts, a small business relief fund tied to continuity benchmarks, and a public-sector rehiring plan to reestablish in-house capacity for project oversight and planning. Los Angeles County must stop outsourcing resilience and start growing it locally. Disaster recovery funding should circulate through the communities it's meant to support—not be siphoned off by national contractors.

5. Community Health and Belonging

We propose the creation of a Resilience Health Corps, modeled after successful post-disaster mobile care units, to provide trauma-informed services, medical triage, and mental health navigation in fire zones. We also formalize a Faith and Cultural Partnership Network, enlisting churches, mosques, temples, art centers, and community anchors as integral recovery hubs, not afterthoughts. These organizations already hold the trust institutions have lost. Let's fund them to carry the weight they've always shouldered.

At the center of all five pillars is our proposed public recovery portal, which would be a one-stop digital interface where residents can apply for assistance, track recovery timelines, access public data, and receive multilingual, plain-language updates. This portal will feature real-time dashboards, project benchmarks, and community reporting tools. It is not a communications platform. It is governance infrastructure—a foundation for transparency, public accountability, and civic trust. And it is ready to build now.

This proposal is evidence-built, not anecdote-driven. Over the past few months, we conducted a rigorous review of national and global case studies, systems literature, and policy critiques. We studied Japan's tsunami recovery villages, the 12-day I-95 rebuild in Philadelphia, Routt County's disaster playbook, Santa Rosa's trauma-informed school reopenings, and modular housing programs that have reduced construction timelines by 40 percent. We drew from the pages of *The Color of Law* to understand how housing recovery too often reproduces structural exclusion. We leaned on Ezra Klein's "abundance agenda" to reimagine what government can look like when it is aligned with people, purpose, and possibility. Our work is further grounded in trauma-responsive governance literature, implementation science, one-on-one advising meetings with our PBH coaches, and stakeholder interviews across Los Angeles County.

We have done the reading, the listening, and the design. Now we are ready to deliver. This is not just a policy proposal. It is a generational declaration. Millennials and Gen Z are inheriting a system that does not work fast enough, equitably enough, or transparently enough to meet the scale of our overlapping crises. We are not asking for permission. We are offering a plan. We are not demanding perfection. We are demanding function.

Too many recovery processes in this country are designed for institutions, not for people. Our proposal reverses that. We democratize permitting. We de-silo communication. We empower frontline leaders. And we believe that civic muscle (when invested in and properly engaged) is the most resilient infrastructure we have. This moment is not about restoring what we lost. It is about building what we never had: a recovery system worthy of our communities, capable of meeting this century's challenges, and grounded in abundance, not austerity.

Let Los Angeles County become the proving ground; not for incrementalism, but for bold, principled, people-first governance. Let this be the moment where clarity replaces caution, and where leadership means action—not intention. Let this be the moment recovery becomes the beginning of something greater.

Detailed Policy Solutions

1. Infrastructure Recovery

Goal: Rebuild and upgrade critical infrastructure faster than ever after wildfires, while “building back better” to reduce future hazard risk. Remember though, faster does not mean careless. Wildfire-resilient infrastructure is the literal foundation of a resilient community; homes, roads, bridges, power, and water systems must be restored quickly to enable all other recovery efforts.

Challenges: Under current processes, rebuilding infrastructure (homes, roads, utility lines, water systems, etc.) after a wildfire can take years. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) reviews can delay projects 1–2 years. Multiple agencies have overlapping permitting authority (County public works, city departments, Caltrans, utilities, etc.), creating a bureaucratic maze. Meanwhile, communities remain vulnerable - for example, downed power lines cannot be replaced with safer underground lines promptly, prolonging fire risk and power outages. Costs escalate with each month of delay, and public frustration grows. We must also overcome the status quo bias: simply replacing what was lost, instead of seizing the chance to improve infrastructure (e.g. undergrounding lines, widening evacuation routes, reinforcing bridges, etc.).

Policy Proposals:

1.1 Establish a “Climate Resilience Reconstruction Commission” (Fast-Track Permitting Body): Modeled after the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commissions used by the U.S. Congress, this independent commission will have authority to bundle and expedite permits for critical infrastructure projects post-disaster. Environmental, safety, and community experts are embedded in the commission to ensure due diligence and center community voice and need, but the emphasis is on speed, interagency coordination, and coordinating public, private, and community players. All decisions of the commission would be subject to a single up-or-down vote (or automatic enactment) by the Commission Board, streamlining political oversight. *Precedent:* The BRAC process in the 1990s closed excess military bases swiftly by bypassing piecemeal approvals³. In our context, this approach can cut multi-year rebuild timelines to mere months. *Case Study:*

³ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/nsiad-95-133.pdf>

After the I-95 bridge collapse in 2023, Pennsylvania’s rapid reopening in 12 days was attributed to a unified command structure and emergency procurement waivers – our commission would institutionalize that agility for L.A. County⁴. We will lobby for state legislation enabling this special commission authority in declared disaster zones.

1.2 Streamlined Environmental Review for Recovery Projects: We propose a targeted CEQA Emergency Exemption for wildfire recovery infrastructure, with strict conditions. If a project is restoring essential infrastructure or implementing a preventative measure in a documented high-risk zone, and if delays pose a clear risk to public safety or significant economic harm, then a truncated 100-day environmental assessment is allowed (instead of a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR)). This assessment focuses on mitigation measures rather than rejustifying the project’s needs. To compensate, we require robust post-project monitoring. Any significant environmental impact that does occur triggers additional restoration funds by the project proponent. This is a “fast, but not reckless” approach. *Case:* Governor Newsom’s temporary suspension of some regulations after recent fires hinted at this approach and our policy formalizes it, learning from other states’ disaster exemptions. For example, after Colorado’s 2013 floods, emergency highway rebuilds were exempted from full NEPA review under federal waiver, enabling roads to reopen in weeks⁵. Our exemption would similarly shave potentially 18+ months off rebuilding critical roads and utilities.

1.3 Underground Utilities and Hardened Grid Initiative: Power lines have ignited some of California’s worst fires⁶. We commit to an ambitious program to underground power lines in the most fire-prone circuits of L.A.⁷. In areas like Altadena that have already been devastated by wildfires (leaving a bare landscape), utilities should be immediately required to underground power lines as a top priority. In 5 years we would like all lines underground, and where not possible due to the voltage of the line, harden those areas. (insulated lines, advanced fuses, targeted microgrids). *Financing Innovation:* We will use an Advance Market Commitment (AMC) model – the County pledges to pay a set reward per mile of lines safely undergrounded and operational (a “pull” funding)⁸. This incentivizes utilities and contractors to deliver results rather than just incur costs. If estimates are ~\$3–4 million per mile to underground in rugged areas, we will negotiate the AMC to cover part of that, with state/federal grants and utility contributions covering the balance. The AMC also can stipulate bonuses for early completion or penalties for missed wildfire seasons. This outcome-driven funding ensures public dollars buy risk reduction (measurable by reduced fire ignitions), not just construction. We anticipate initial costs to be high, but as scale increases, per-mile costs will drop (utilities gain experience, new tech like directional drilling improves). We also support microgrid deployment for remote communities – if they can operate independently during fire weather power shutoffs, lives and businesses are safer. Our plan subsidizes solar + battery installations (and brings in key public private partnerships) for critical facilities (fire stations, shelters) through performance-based grants (e.g., a grant that pays once a microgrid system runs successfully for one year, proving its resilience).

1.4 Resilient Rebuilding Standards (“Build Back Better”): All reconstructed infrastructure will adhere to

⁴ <https://www.pa.gov/governor/newsroom/press-releases>

⁵ <https://routtwildfire.org/recovery-playbook/>

⁶ <https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/fires/>

⁷ <https://www.cpr.org/2025/04/25/xcel-energy-wildfire-mitigation-plan-denver-boulder/>

⁸ <https://fas.org/publication/pull-finance-climate-resilience/>

updated resilience standards. In California, homes built after 2008, following updated building codes (including Chapter 7A), experienced significantly higher survival rates during wildfires compared to those built before 2008. Analysis of the Camp Fire, for instance, showed that approximately 51% of post-2008 homes survived, while only 18% of pre-2008 homes remained standing⁹. Bridges and roads will be built to withstand higher temperatures and flash floods (common after fire denudes slopes). Power infrastructure will be relocated underground or use fireproof materials. Water infrastructure (tanks, pumping stations) will have backup power and defensible space. Regulatory streamlining is paired with higher standards for example, if a city building is rebuilt via the fast-track process, it must be rebuilt to the latest seismic and wildfire design codes, not simply to the old specification. We will adopt international best practices: studying, for instance, how Australia's fire-prone regions use fire-resistant road design (clear signage and refuge areas for evacuations) or how Japan rapidly rebuilds infrastructure after earthquakes with improved specs¹⁰. To ensure feasibility, the County will pre-design and pre-approve prototypes for common infrastructure elements (like a modular bridge design that meets all codes). These “shovel-ready” designs expedite work and guarantee quality.

1.5 Public-Private Partnerships for Big Swings: Some infrastructure projects are so large or novel that harnessing private capital and innovation is advantageous. High-speed rail is a prime example. We support creating a Public-Private Investment Consortium for resilience infrastructure – bringing together government, private investors, and technology firms to fund projects like a Southern California Evacuation Rail Corridor (a high-speed rail that not only serves economic development but provides redundancy if highways are unusable due to fire). The Texas high-speed rail attempt (Dallas to Houston) was an exclusively private venture that made significant progress in planning and securing Shinkansen train technology, though it struggled with land acquisition. Now, Brightline West – a private company – is pursuing the Victorville to Las Vegas high-speed line, showing that private initiative can push projects forward¹¹. We propose partnering with such companies to extend service truly into L.A. (e.g., exploring use of Metrolink corridors for a one-seat ride from Los Angeles Union Station to Las Vegas). By resolving “last-mile” regulatory issues and potentially providing rights-of-way or tax exempt financing, the County can catalyze completion of this transformative project. The potential benefits are huge: thousands of construction jobs, reduced traffic (less wildfire ignition risk from car accidents on I-15), and a modern transportation option to mobilize mass evacuations if needed in future disasters. This strategy shows how we can align recovery, resilience, and economic growth in one package.

Implementation Strategy: The Infrastructure Recovery initiatives will be overseen by a Deputy County Chief Executive for Resilience, a new position coordinating across Public Works, community groups, Emergency Management, and utility regulators. We will start by mapping all critical infrastructure in high-risk wildfire zones and triaging which projects are most urgent. In the first 100 days after policy adoption, we - alongside critical community stakeholders - will draft the Climate Resilience Commission charter and secure state approval for its extraordinary powers in disaster events. Simultaneously, we will identify pilot projects – e.g., select a few miles of overhead lines in the Santa Monica Mountains and a few miles in Altadena to underground as a demonstration of the AMC model¹². By Year 2, the Commission should be operational (hopefully not needed until a disaster strikes, but ready), and at least 50 miles of critical lines undergrounded.

⁹ <https://wildfiretoday.com/2022/01/30/data-shows>

¹⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Japan-earthquake-and-tsunami-of-2011/Aftermath-of-the-disaster>

¹¹ <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.gobrightline.com/press-room/2024>

¹² <https://santacruzlocal.org/2023/>

We will also establish monitoring: metrics like “time to restore power to X% of customers” and “number of high-risk road segments upgraded” will be tracked publicly. A dashboard will display progress to build public trust and continued buy in.

Innovations & Dreams for the Future: We imagine a future where wildfire-proof infrastructure is a given. Power outages and downed lines causing fires become a rarity. Sensors on bridges and roads immediately report fire damage and crews fix them within days. Perhaps even self-healing infrastructure (new concrete that repairs cracks) could be deployed, reducing maintenance¹³. We also see technological leaps: for example, using drones and AI to instantly assess infrastructure damage after a fire and generate repair plans within hours (feeding into our fast-track approvals). Our “dream big” scenario is that rebuilding after a fire is no longer a painful, years-long ordeal, but an opportunity to leap 50 years ahead in infrastructure quality. Los Angeles County’s bold approach would prove that even in the face of disaster, we can build a better future faster than anyone thought possible. We draw on numerous precedents: Pennsylvania’s I-95 rebuild (2023) proved accelerated timelines are achievable. BRAC showed how independent commissions can depoliticize and speed decisions. Japan’s quick reconstruction after earthquakes (e.g., the Great Hanshin quake of 1995) informs our improved standards. California’s own Caltrans has “Emergency Opening” processes after quakes and landslides – we expand that concept. The use of in-house expertise echoes BART’s cost-saving project management where internal engineers delivered a rail fleet under budget. By blending these best practices, keeping community and equity centered, our Infrastructure Recovery plan stands on firm ground.

2. Equitable Housing Solutions

Goal: Rapidly provide safe, affordable housing for all displaced residents after wildfires, and turn recovery into an opportunity to shrink the widening and inequitable housing deficit. Ensure rebuilt communities are equitable, inclusive, and more resilient than before.

Challenges: Wildfires in L.A. County often destroy hundreds of homes at a time. In a region already facing a housing affordability crisis, this sudden loss exacerbates homelessness and displacement. After the 2018 Woolsey Fire, for instance, many working-class residents could not afford to rebuild in Malibu and had to move away¹⁴. Insurance payouts and FEMA aid rarely cover full reconstruction costs, especially with skyrocketing construction prices. Moreover, the permitting quagmire and stringent codes mean even those who have resources wait years to rebuild – the average rebuild permit in a fire zone can involve dozens of inspections and take 2+ years to occupancy¹⁵. Renters, who make up a large share of L.A. residents, face even more precarity: if their homes burn, they rely on the market to find new housing, often at higher rents or far from their community. This can tear the social fabric of neighborhoods and schools. Another issue is NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) resistance – rebuilding housing (especially denser or affordable units) may face local opposition under normal processes. Lastly, post-fire rebuilding often replicates the same vulnerabilities (wooden houses in chaparral hills) unless we deliberately change course.

¹³ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-025-97174-1>

¹⁴ <https://laist.com/news/climate-environment/5-years->

¹⁵ <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2025-01-23>

Policy Proposals:

2.1 Wildfire Recovery Housing Permitting Reform (“Rebuild Right” Act): We will create a unified, expedited permitting process for replacement housing after disasters. *Key elements:* pre-approved plans and one-stop permitting. The County will develop a library of pre-approved housing designs for common needs – e.g., a 3-bed/2-bath single-family home, a duplex, an accessory dwelling unit (ADU), all with the most advanced wildfire-resistant specifications (hardened roofs, ember-proof vents, sprinkled interiors). These plans will be ready to go, meaning a homeowner who lost a house can pick a design and get a construction permit in weeks, not months¹⁶. Local governments often add extra layers to building codes; we will encourage a uniform code for rebuilds based on advanced state standards to eliminate redundant reviews. A special “Code Waiver Board” can grant case-by-case flexibility if strict code compliance is infeasible but the rebuild improves safety overall (for example, allowing a slightly narrower setback if it enables adding a fire-resistant exterior)¹⁷. Every disaster-affected homeowner will be assigned a permitting case manager to shepherd their application through. For multi-family buildings (apartments) destroyed, we similarly streamline environmental review – categorical exemptions if rebuilding does not expand footprint beyond, say, 20%. This does not mean cutting corners on safety; rather it cuts duplicative paperwork. Permitting processes must be reformed to ensure that any dwelling someone was living in—whether a house, apartment, or mobile home—is eligible for immediate rebuilding and supported by emergency recovery dollars, as excluding communities like those in mobile home parks, as seen in the Eaton Fire, deepens inequity. *The result:* a process that currently can take 2-3 years (and dissuades many from even attempting to rebuild) could be shortened to 4-6 months, getting families back in their homes faster and in a more equitable way. We also commit that all rebuilt housing will be to higher resilience standards – fire-resistant materials, solar + battery included, and water efficient landscaping. It’s rebuilding right, not just rebuilding fast.

2.2 Emergency Modular Housing Deployment: In the immediate aftermath of large fires, we will not wait for traditional construction. The County will invest in a reserve of modular housing units – both temporary (FEMA-style trailers or tiny homes) and permanent modular components. Within weeks of a disaster, we will set up transitional housing villages on safe sites (e.g., county-owned land, fairgrounds, church parking lots by agreement). These are not tent camps, but planned communities of small homes with power, water, and services, where displaced families can live for 6–24 months while permanent housing is built. Simultaneously, we jump-start permanent housing construction using modular methods. Modular construction means much of the building is done off-site in factories while site work happens in parallel, cutting build time by up to 50%. We will fast track permitting for developers who use modular or panelized systems to rebuild clusters of homes. To incentivize this, the County could offer rebates or expedited inspections for modular projects. *Best practice:* After the 2017 Sonoma fires, Santa Rosa approved factory-built accessory dwelling units to house survivors quickly. And as noted, San Francisco’s recent modular affordable projects showed significant time and cost savings – one project delivered units 40% cheaper and in far less time than conventional builds¹⁸. By embracing this approach, L.A. County can become a leader in modular housing, potentially attracting manufacturers to set up locally (creating jobs). We will coordinate with state programs (like California’s Homekey, if applicable) to fund these efforts.

¹⁶ [The Catalog — The Foothill Catalog Foundation](#)

¹⁷ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-04-05/the-suburbs-that-fear-california-s-housing-bill>

¹⁸ <https://www.sfchronicle.com/realestate/article/>

2.3 Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Measures: Recovery must be equitable. We propose a robust package to ensure low-income and vulnerable residents can return and remain in their communities post-fire. First, the County will establish a Wildfire

Housing Rebuilding Fund that provides grants or forgivable loans to uninsured or underinsured households for reconstruction – with priority to those below certain income levels (set by the community). Second, support the formation or expansion of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) in affected areas. A CLT can purchase land (possibly at post-disaster lower prices), and partner with nonprofits to rebuild affordable homes or rentals, keeping the land in trust to maintain permanent affordability¹⁹. This prevents land in burnt areas from being scooped up by outside speculators or luxury developers. We will seed the CLT fund with public and philanthropic money. Third, inclusionary housing requirements or incentives: any new development (for instance, if a large mobile home park is redeveloped) must include a share of affordable units or offer them to displaced locals first. We also advocate for a state-level policy that if a rental building is destroyed, surviving tenants have first right of return to any rebuilt units and possibly rental assistance in the interim. These measures address the injustice that those with the fewest resources suffer the longest after disasters.

2.4 Reuse and Land-Use Innovation: Post-wildfire recovery is an opportunity to rethink land use for safety and community benefit. In some very high-risk locations, rebuilding homes one-for-one might be unwise (for example, homes deep in remote canyons with single road access). In such cases, we will explore land swaps or buyouts (with full compensation) so residents can relocate to safer zones nearby, and the risky land can be turned into communal open space or fire buffer zones²⁰. We'll use state hazard mitigation grants to fund voluntary buyouts and resettle communities in a planned way (learning from Paradise, CA's experience). Additionally, we identify underutilized parcels in urbanized parts of L.A. County that could host new housing for displaced people – “Resilience Housing Sites.” These might include old commercial lots or even partnering with school districts to use excess land. To illustrate, a closed school campus could be converted into a small neighborhood of housing for fire survivors, with minimal NIMBY issues since it's public land. We also heavily involve faith-based organizations here: many churches or synagogues have large properties. We will invite them to lease a portion for temporary housing or even permanent affordable housing development (several churches in L.A. have already started building affordable housing on their parking lots – we'll expand on those models with streamlined approvals and financing support). This ties into the “infrastructure reuse” concept: using existing land and infrastructure creatively to serve current needs. Such partnerships can tap into moral commitments of faith communities to help those in need, fostering belonging and support for the new housing in neighborhoods.

2.5 Clear, Focused Rebuilding Projects (“One Neighborhood at a Time”): A lesson from big projects is to avoid trying to do everything in one go (the “everything bagel” problem). For housing, this means setting clear priorities and scopes. Instead of launching a massive, unwieldy redevelopment that mixes too many goals (and risks community opposition), focus on targeted projects that can be completed on schedule. For example, designate a particularly hard-hit street or mobile home park as a “demonstration rebuild” – gather public/private partners to rebuild that micro-community with a cohesive plan (perhaps modern manufactured homes, heavy solar investment, underground utilities, with a shared community center). Keep the scope

¹⁹ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-a-new-orleans-community-land-trust>

²⁰ <https://recovery.hawaiicounty.gov/resources/>

contained so it finishes in, 12 months. Then move to the next site. This builds momentum and trust. It's better to have a series of successful small victories than an overambitious plan that stalls. The County recovery task force (with key community and cross-sector stakeholders) will prioritize and sequence projects in manageable chunks, using a "surge" approach (concentrating resources to finish one area, then moving on). Each finished neighborhood boosts morale and provides a model (along with vital lessons learned) for the next.

2.6 Income Threshold Flexibility for Rebuilding Support: Traditional income eligibility cutoffs often fail to account for the real cost of living in L.A. County, especially after disaster strikes. A household earning just above 100% or even 120% of Area Median Income (AMI) may not qualify for aid—yet still cannot afford to rebuild, particularly if supporting multigenerational family members or coping with lost wages post-disaster. In wildfire-affected communities, this creates a cruel gap: residents "earn too much" for assistance, but not enough to make ends meet. To address this, we will adopt a more nuanced approach. For all housing recovery programs—whether modular housing access, rebuild grants, or rent support—we will set an expanded eligibility band of up to 150% of AMI. Within this band, we will allow case-by-case exemptions for families who are caring for dependents such as an elderly parent or a working-age child still living at home. These exemptions reflect lived reality, not just paperwork. This mirrors the logic used in the Affordable Care Act, which recognized the "coverage cliff" and adjusted eligibility to 2.6x the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to better serve middle-income households facing hardship. We apply the same principle here: recovery must reflect the actual burdens families face, not arbitrary lines on an income chart. This policy ensures that support reaches those who need it most, including middle-income homeowners and renters who are frequently excluded. In post-fire L.A. County, rebuilding must include the working class, the caregiving sandwich generation, and everyone doing their best to stay rooted in community.

Implementation Strategy: Immediately after a disaster, activate a Housing Recovery Task Force with sub-teams for homeowner rebuild support, rental housing, temporary housing, and finance. *Day 1-30:* Deploy temporary housing (coordinate with state/FEMA for trailers, plus set up our modular units if available). Open a "Housing Recovery Center" for survivors to get information and apply for aid and permit assistance in one place. *Day 30-90:* Roll out the expedited permitting program – hold community workshops to help homeowners choose pre-approved designs or submit their plans. Concurrently, initiate environmental review streamlining for larger projects like apartment rebuilds. *By 3-6 months,* construction on many individual lots should begin (with priority given to debris cleared quickly). The County will also pass an emergency ordinance capping rents in surrounding areas to prevent gouging (state law allows for anti-price-gouging measures in disasters). Within a year, aim to have the first permanent homes ready for occupancy. Meanwhile, start the process of any needed land swaps or acquisitions for safety – sensitive handling is key (ensure those asked to relocate get equal or better housing options). For financing, aggressively pursue all available funds: FEMA, state disaster housing grants, philanthropic donations (like the Hilton-led fund that raised \$7.7 million for small businesses— similar could be done for housing assistance), and our own bond measures if needed. Regular public meetings will be held to update progress, and a special Rebuilding Ombudsperson will troubleshoot issues residents have with insurers or contractors.

Innovations & Dreams for the Future: We envision wildfire-resilient communities that are also thriving, inclusive neighborhoods. Imagine if a mobile home park wiped out by fire is rebuilt not as it was, but as a beautiful community of manufactured homes with greenbelts and communal gardens – the residents mostly the same people, but now living in an up-to-date comfortable community they can afford. Our dream is that

disaster recovery becomes a pathway to ending homelessness and housing insecurity, by investing in enough new housing that we not only rehouse those who lost homes, but also create additional units for others in need. If Los Angeles can perfect rapid housing deployment (e.g., proving we can build hundreds of units in a year with modular construction), we can apply that to our broader housing shortage. In the future, we might maintain a standing “Housing Corps” that can swing into action and construct homes quickly after any disaster in California – a combination of public works, non-profit, and private partners cutting typical construction timelines in half. Another dream: leveraging technology, such as 3D printing of homes. Companies have begun 3D-printing concrete homes in days. If regulatory barriers are eased, perhaps an area like the Antelope Valley (with cheap land) could host a factory printing modular components to be shipped to fire sites. *Bold idea:* “Resilience Neighborhoods” – pre-planned replacement neighborhoods that anyone in a high-fire-risk, isolated location can opt into before a fire occurs. Essentially, offer people living in the most dangerous WUI (wildland urban interface) areas a trade: move into a new master-planned, safe community (perhaps nearer to city centers) and relinquish the high-risk land to open space. This voluntary program could be a game-changer in reducing life risk and concentrating resources, while also addressing sprawl and commuting (tying into climate goals). It’s a long-term vision that requires significant investment and persuasion, but planting the seed now could pay off over decades.

We draw from proven models to guide our housing recovery approach. In San Francisco, Mercy Housing’s streamlined construction process cut time and costs through integrated design-build strategies²¹. Japan’s rapid deployment of 50,000 prefab units after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami shows the power of modular housing in crisis response²². Paradise, CA offered standard plans and fee reductions post-Camp Fire, but still faced rebuilding delays—our model builds on this with direct support to residents²³. The Vine Hill Community Land Trust in Sonoma County, created after the 2017 wildfires, inspired our land trust strategy for long-term affordability²⁴. Studies show modular building can cut time by 20–50% and costs by 20%²⁵. We also follow community-driven models like Santa Rosa’s Rebuilding Coalition that involved residents in home design²⁶.

3. Wildfire Mitigation & Environmental Restoration

Goal: Drastically reduce wildfire risk through proactive mitigation and prepare the natural environment to better withstand fire, while restoring ecosystems and protecting environmental services (clean air, water, carbon sequestration). Essentially, stop the next fire before it starts, and soften the blow of fires we can’t prevent.

Challenges: Los Angeles County’s geography and climate make wildfires a perpetual threat. We face a convergence of factors: fuel build-up from decades of fire suppression, invasive grasses that act as kindling, expanding development into the wildland-urban interface (WUI), and of course, hotter temperatures and drier years from climate change. It’s estimated that Southern California now has a year-round fire season²⁷.

²¹ <https://sfyimby.com/2024/12/construction-underway-at-1633-valencia-street-san-francisco.html>

²² <https://www.britannica.com/event/Japan-earthquake-and-tsunami-of-2011/>

²³ <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents>

²⁴ <https://sonomavegmap.org/firestory/index.html>

²⁵ https://iaeme.com/Home/article_id/JCIET_10_02_001

²⁶ <https://www.srcity.org/3018/Rebuilding>

²⁷ <https://calmatters.org/explainers/california-wildfire-season-worsening-explained/>

Traditional approaches – primarily reactive firefighting and defensible space ordinances – are no longer sufficient. Enforcement of defensible space (clearing brush 100 feet from structures) is spotty, and many homeowners don't or can't comply (due to age, cost, or lack of awareness). Large-scale fuel reduction projects (like forest thinning or prescribed burns) often face regulatory hurdles (environmental reviews, air quality regulations) and public opposition due to smoke or fears of escape. CEQA has even been used at times to block vegetation management over concerns of habitat impact – a well-meaning stance that can backfire if a catastrophic fire then destroys the entire habitat. Another challenge is coordination: fires cross jurisdictions (federal, state, local lands), yet mitigation efforts are not always aligned. And when a big fire hits, the aftermath – charred hills vulnerable to erosion – poses secondary hazards like mudslides (as seen after the 2018 Thomas Fire, when deadly debris flows struck Montecito). Restoring burned areas quickly is crucial but funding often lags and permitting for environmental projects (like stream restorations) can be slow.

Policy Proposals:

3.1 Countywide Defensible Space & Home Hardening Campaign (“Ready, Set, Go – 2.0”): We will implement the most aggressive defensible space enforcement in state history, coupled with support to help residents comply. Within one year, every property in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) in L.A.²⁸. County should meet strict vegetation clearance rules. To achieve this, we create Wildfire Mitigation Strike Teams under the Fire Department to inspect properties and directly clear hazards if owners don't. We will levy fines for non-compliance but also offer services to ensure equity: a county-funded crew will clear brush for seniors, disabled residents, or low-income households at no charge (cheaper than firefighting later). Technology can aid enforcement: use satellite imagery and AI to identify overgrown parcels. We'll send notices with a clear deadline (e.g., 60 days), then send crews. To avoid legal barriers, we'll work with state legislators to strengthen the government's right to enter private land for hazard abatement after reasonable notice²⁹. Additionally, home hardening (installing fire-resistant roofs, vents, windows) significantly increases a home's chance of surviving a wildfire. California now requires sellers to disclose home hardening needs in high fire zones; we take it further by establishing a Home Hardening Rebate Program – homeowners can get up to, \$5,000 reimbursed for retrofits (funded by a mix of state grants and a possible surcharge on property sales in fire zones). This is an equity issue too: wealthy homeowners may already upgrade, but lower-income residents need help to afford ember-resistant vents or dual-pane windows. Our target: Harden 50,000 homes in L.A. County in the next five years (start in low-income and high risk communities first). *Outcome:* Immediately reduced ignitions and structure losses – studies show maintaining defensible space greatly improves a house's survival odds, and simple building modifications can cut the chance of ignition by 40-80%³⁰. We will prioritize entire neighborhoods on the urban fringe to create community-wide buffers (fire doesn't stop at one property line; a collective approach is needed).

3.2 Strategic Prescribed Burning and Forest Management: Embrace controlled burns and fuel treatments at scale, treating them as essential preventative medicine for our wildlands³¹. L.A. County will collaborate with CalFire and the U.S. Forest Service to dramatically increase the acres of prescribed fire in and around the

²⁸ <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/>

²⁹ <https://www.el-cerrito.org/DocumentCenter/View/1510/cc120717-6?bidId=>

³⁰ <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4457>

³¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/billfrist/2024/07/01>

county (particularly in the Angeles National Forest and Santa Monica Mountains). Current bureaucratic processes make it hard – so we propose a form of CEQA Streamlining for Prescribed Burns: if burns are conducted by certified experts under a published burn plan, they get a categorical CEQA exemption (or a “programmatically EIR” covering many burns at once). Similarly, work with air quality regulators to ensure burn permits are not overly restrictive on timing; wildfire smoke is far worse than controlled burn smoke³². *We also integrate Indigenous expertise:* partner with tribal authorities and cultural fire practitioners to lead burns in a traditional way (this also ties into cultural preservation). *The example from Northern Australia is instructive:* Indigenous-led early-season burns reduced late-season mega-fires and earned carbon credits for emissions avoided³³. We seek to replicate that in California: the state is exploring a carbon credit program for wildfire prevention – L.A. County can be a pilot region, where companies sponsor prescribed burns and thinning and get carbon offsets (since reducing the likelihood of a devastating fire prevents huge CO₂ emissions). Beyond burning, fuel management will include mechanical thinning (removing excess brush and small trees) and creating shaded fuel breaks near communities. We will form local “Fire Safe Councils” and pay crews (including Conservation Corps crews and CAL FIRE’s new wildfire resilience crews) to do this work. One innovative concept: use goats or livestock grazing strategically to reduce grasses – some cities already hire goat herds for brush clearance as an eco-friendly method. Expand that countywide where suitable³⁴. Our aim is to create a mosaic of treated areas so fires that do ignite can be more easily controlled. This requires sustained funding, so we plan to use a portion of a proposed state Climate Resilience Bond and explore a county parcel tax in high-risk zones dedicated to wildfire prevention³⁵.

3.3 “Green Infrastructure” for Fire Resilience: Hard infrastructure isn’t the only priority – natural infrastructure can buffer fire impacts. We will launch a mass reforestation and restoration initiative after fires. Burn scars like those from the Eaton Fire should be re-planted with native species (oak woodlands, chaparral) that hold soil and recover naturally, rather than left to invasive weeds. The County will coordinate with non-profits and community groups for tree planting drives (learning from programs like Million Trees LA but focusing on appropriate species for fire areas). By replanting quickly, we reduce erosion and mudslide risk and help the ecosystem heal. We’ll also restore riparian areas (streams) with fire-resilient vegetation to act as natural fire breaks and improve water quality. In urban areas, “green firebreaks” could be created – for instance, maintaining irrigated green belts (eco friendly parks) at community edges to stop fires. This ties with water management: we can use recycled water for irrigating such green belts without tapping potable supplies. Additionally, protecting open space is key – areas that haven’t been built should perhaps remain that way if they serve as buffers. We might accelerate land acquisition in certain corridors to prevent future risky development. Environmental restoration also includes dealing with post-fire hazards like toxic debris in streams – the County will have environmental crews to remove debris and prevent contamination. A forward-looking idea: seed banks and drone reseeded. Immediately after a fire, deploy drones to disperse native seed mix on hillsides before rains, ensuring quick regrowth³⁶.

3.4 Decentralized Energy and Infrastructure: Many wildfires in California have been sparked by utility lines;

³² <https://www.lung.org/getmedia>

³³ <https://www.natureaustralia.org.au/what-we-do/our-priorities>

³⁴ https://www.placer.ca.gov/9767/Goats-reduce-wildfire-risk?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³⁵ <https://civicwell.org/civic-news/currents-proposition-4/>

³⁶ <https://www.serraventures.com/news/>

beyond undergrounding (in the Infrastructure section), we also want to shrink the footprint of the centralized grid in high-risk areas. Encourage solar panels plus battery storage on homes and community centers, so that during fire weather power shutoffs (PSPS) or infrastructure failure, communities still have electricity (for pumps, communications, etc.). The County can subsidize these systems heavily in remote or high fire communities – possibly as part of a “Resilient Homes Program” where homeowners get a package: home hardening + solar + battery, at low or no upfront cost, recouped by energy savings and grid benefits. Pull funding model: provide rebates only after the system is installed and proven to operate (this ensures vendors actually deliver quality). Over time, a network of microgrids could allow sections of the community to island from the main grid, reducing the number of dangerous lines needed. This dovetails with climate goals by reducing reliance on diesel generators and cutting emissions.

3.5 Early Detection and Rapid Response Systems: Prevention also means catching ignitions early. We will invest in a Next-Generation Wildfire Detection network – automated mountaintop cameras (already used by Alert Wildfire), satellite heat detection, and even emerging tech like infrared drone patrols on high-risk days. These feed into AI algorithms that alert firefighting crews at the first sign of smoke. L.A. County will ensure 24/7 monitoring of these feeds during fire season and pre-position firefighting resources in red flag conditions. This isn’t a policy change per se, but a resource and coordination priority; however, we might need policy to enable, for example, private drones to be integrated (we could allow utilities or even neighborhood groups to operate fire-watch drones under an authorized program). Also, expand the use of cell phone emergency alerts and evacuation tech – ensure every community has an evacuation plan and that alerts (like Wireless Emergency Alerts) go out rapidly and in multiple languages. This saves lives and is part of mitigation in the sense of reducing harm.

Implementation Strategy: Many of these efforts involve multiple agencies – Fire Department (for defensible space, burns), Public Works (for environmental restoration), Parks and Natural Resources, community/tribal groups, and state/federal partners. We propose establishing a Wildfire Mitigation Task Force made up of the aforementioned critical stakeholders who will meet monthly to coordinate. They will create a Master Fuels Management Plan mapping priority zones for burns and thinning in a 5-year schedule. Year 1: Pilot expanded prescribed burns in a few areas (e.g., 500 acres in Angeles Forest under moderate conditions) to demonstrate safety and effectiveness to the public. Scale up to thousands of acres per year by Year 5. Simultaneously, ramp up defensible space enforcement starting with the most vulnerable neighborhoods (perhaps those like Topanga Canyon, Altadena interface, etc.). Conduct a media blitz on the new rules and assistance available – community meetings, mailers, even door-to-door outreach in high-risk areas. We will measure progress: % of properties in compliance, acres of fuels treated, etc., and publicly share it. For restoration, within weeks after a wildfire, deploy teams (including volunteers) for erosion control (laying straw wattles, etc.) and within the first year, start replanting programs – these will be ongoing but should begin ideally in the first winter after a fire to catch the rainy season. Our implementation also crucially involves community engagement: train and support local volunteer brigades and Fire Safe Councils. For instance, residents can help maintain fuel breaks or serve as community wildfire scouts. This fosters ownership and also lessens burden on agencies. We will incorporate traditional ecological knowledge by consistently consulting tribal experts (this has started in NorCal, we bring it to SoCal). We will focus on the full cycle management from the burn through the following year and always thinking about how each individual element plays a role in this entire system.

Innovations & Dreams for the Future: We dare to imagine a Los Angeles County that coexists with fire in a

much healthier way. In 20 years, maybe we will routinely have small, low-intensity fires burning as planned in the spring – clearing debris, returning nutrients to soil – so that come autumn, there’s simply not as much to burn in an uncontrolled way. We will look to develop (in partnership with our universities) fireproof materials for landscaping and structures that make homes virtually ignition-proof (some researchers are working on fire-retardant coatings for wood, etc.)³⁷. Or even robotics: fleets of autonomous machines that clear brush or cut fire lines when weather conditions signal extreme risk. Another vision: using satellite and weather data to predict where fires are likely each season and treating those areas proactively (almost like targeted immunization). We can also dream of more creative land management – like “Fire Farms” where entrepreneurs can harvest brush biomass and turn it into energy or products (creating an economic incentive to remove it). On the restoration side, we see the possibility of fully restoring urban-adjacent wildlands to a mosaic akin to pre-development times, guided by indigenous practices – landscapes that burn periodically but without catastrophe, and support biodiversity (like oak woodlands that are fire-adapted). If we do these things, the very character of our environment will shift: from fear of the next inferno to confidence that fires can be faced without devastation.

We draw on a range of successful models. Australia’s “firestick” farming revival—where Indigenous-led early burns reduce mega-fires and generate carbon credits—has informed California’s growing cultural burning efforts³⁸. In L.A. County, Montebello Fire piloted goat grazing for brush clearance, and OC Fire Authority runs controlled burns in Limestone Canyon³⁹ ⁴⁰. The Karuk Tribe’s eco-cultural fire program is a leading model of tribal partnership in land stewardship⁴¹. Research from CAL FIRE and the Forest Service confirms that fuel treatments, like prescribed burns, helped slow the 2020 North Complex Fire⁴². A UCLA study on the Eaton and Palisades fires shows how wealthier areas recover faster—underscoring the need for equitable mitigation in under-resourced communities⁴³.

4. Economic Recovery

Goal: Jump-start local economies after wildfire disasters and use recovery efforts to create a more robust, inclusive economy. Ensure that businesses large and small can reopen or reinvent quickly, workers don’t face prolonged unemployment, and recovery dollars stay in the community to multiply economic benefits.

Challenges: Major wildfires can decimate local economies. Businesses burn down or shut due to evacuation and lack of customers; workers lose jobs or wages; agriculture and tourism are hit by smoke and damage. After the initial shock, communities often struggle to retain businesses – some never reopen or relocate elsewhere. There’s also the issue of bureaucratic obstacles in aid distribution: Small businesses may not navigate SBA loans easily, and insurance payouts for business interruption can be slow or inadequate. Without intervention, a

³⁷ <https://time.com/7094850/nanotech-materials-insulative-ceramic-particle/>

³⁸ <https://www.southpole.com/sustainability-solutions/carbon-credits-frequently-asked-questions>

³⁹ <https://fire.lacounty.gov/goat-grazing/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.ocfa.org/AboutUs/CurrentFireMaps.aspx>

⁴¹ <https://www.karuk.us/index.php/departments/natural-resources>

⁴² https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/ixell1ezw/emc_2019_2_plumas_fsc_12312021_submitted.pdf

⁴³ <https://www.its.ucla.edu/publication>

disaster can widen economic inequality: larger firms or wealthy homeowners rebuild, while small family-run businesses or lower-income workers might not recover. Additionally, public procurement for rebuilding (contracts for construction, debris removal, etc.) often goes to big outside companies, meaning local workforce and businesses miss out on the boom of recovery spending. We want to invert that: make recovery an economic stimulus for locals. Finally, planning for long-term economic resilience is needed: areas heavily dependent on one industry may need diversification to bounce back better.

Policy Proposals:

4.1 Immediate Relief Grants and Micro-loans for Affected Small Businesses: Within days of a wildfire event, establish a Local Business Recovery Fund to inject cash into small businesses (the lifeblood of community economies). We propose grants of \$10,000-\$25,000 for impacted businesses to cover payroll, rent, inventory replacement, etc. This mirrors the successful approach taken after the Eaton Fire, where a GoFundMe based Wildfire Relief Fund (supported by Paris Hilton and others) provided \$25,000 grants to 50 women-owned businesses in Pasadena/Altadena⁴⁴. We will scale that model countywide and institutionalize it: pre-arrange agreements with philanthropic partners (celebrity philanthropists, community foundations) to activate a fund when disaster strikes. The County can contribute seed money or matching funds (even \$5 million from general funds post-disaster could support hundreds of small community businesses). Additionally, partner with credit unions to offer zero-interest micro-loans (up to \$50k) for businesses and community members, with flexible repayment and forgiveness if certain conditions (like staying in community for X years) are met⁴⁵. The key is speed and minimal bureaucracy – a simple one-page application and quick verification of business status, then get the money out. We saw how critical timely help is: after Eaton Fire, within weeks grants were given, and this helped businesses like childcare centers and bookshops to start to recover. We will prioritize businesses that serve community needs (groceries, healthcare, etc.), as their revival aids overall recovery. This also signals that someone cares, preventing the despair that might cause an owner to give up.

4.2 Local Hire and Training Requirements (“Recovery Workforce” Initiative): Recovery will bring a surge of jobs – in construction, debris removal, forestry, infrastructure repair – we must harness that for local workforce development. We propose that any publicly funded recovery project in the county include a Local Hire mandate (e.g., 30-50% of work hours by local residents or those displaced by the disaster) and a focus on hiring from disadvantaged worker groups (unemployed, low-income, etc.). For private projects, we can provide incentives: contractors that meet local hire goals could get expedited permitting or bid preference on county contracts. Additionally, create a Wildfire Recovery Jobs Program akin to a New Deal-style approach: the County, with state/federal support, directly employs local workers in temporary jobs such as debris clean-up, rebuilding public facilities, planting trees, or assisting with humanitarian efforts. This keeps people earning and gaining skills instead of waiting for jobs to return. We will collaborate with trade unions, community colleges, and workforce boards to set up short term training so that someone who lost their previous job can quickly be certified to work, say, on a home rebuilding crew or in solar panel installation, etc. Case in point: After the Paradise fire, programs trained locals to become certified in construction trades to help rebuild their town. We also recall the success of FDR’s CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) which combined land management and

⁴⁴ <https://pasadenanow.com/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.wtxl.com/news/local-news>

job creation – we can have a modern CCC in our hills for fire mitigation and employ youth from affected communities. Green job initiatives are especially promising: training people in fields like solar installation, forestry, environmental monitoring, which not only helps recovery but builds a workforce for the future low-carbon economy. These programs double as psycho-social support – giving people a mission and income helps the community heal.

4.3 “Buy Local, Rebuild Local” Procurement Policies: When the government (county or city) spends money on recovery – be it contracting a company to rebuild a bridge or purchasing supplies – we will implement policies to maximize local economic impact. For example, add a significant local business preference in contracting: if a qualified local firm’s bid is within say 5% of the lowest bid, they get the contract. Or break up large contracts into smaller pieces that local small businesses can bid on (unbundling). Encourage use of local suppliers for materials (like sourcing lumber or goods from California vendors). This keeps money circulating in the region. One innovation is community benefit agreements with large contractors: if an outside firm is hired (for expertise or capacity reasons), require them to subcontract a portion to local businesses and perhaps donate to the local recovery fund. We can also set up a Recovery Marketplace – an online portal where local vendors can advertise services for recovery (contractors, equipment rental, etc.) and government or private rebuilders can find them easily, boosting local matches. In tandem, support events like local job fairs specifically for recovery projects to connect contractors with local tradespeople. The goal: an economy humming with local enterprise, not just a flood of out-of-town workers who leave after taking profits.

4.4 Revitalize and Diversify the Economic Base: In planning the long-term recovery, identify economic opportunities unique to the region and support them. Provide technical assistance and small grants for businesses to adapt – like a restaurant that burned could reopen as a catering business while rebuilding, with our help for equipment. Also consider economic diversification: use recovery funds to build infrastructure that encourages new industries. For example, after a fire, there’s often interest in preventing the next – could we establish a Resilience Technology Hub in the area, inviting startups and researchers to use it as a base for innovation in firefighting drones, or fire-resistant materials? We could repurpose an intact building or vacant land to create a business incubator, offering cheap leases to companies in the resilience or sustainability sector. This would attract investment and high quality jobs, turning a site of devastation into one of innovation. Additionally, leverage the “Build Back Better” federal initiatives or EDA (Economic Development Administration) grants that often come post-disaster to fund infrastructure that supports business (like broadband internet expansions, improved roads, etc., which help all industries).

4.5 Government Capacity Building and Fiscal Resilience: Often overlooked is the economic health of the local governments themselves after a disaster – tax revenues fall when businesses close and properties are devalued, just as costs for services rise. We propose an Emergency Fiscal Stabilization Fund that can float affected cities or unincorporated areas so they don’t have to cut essential services (laying off city workers or reducing school funding would only worsen the economic pain). This fund could be a state-managed pot that local entities can draw low-interest loans from. On the County side, we must invest in our own capacity to manage the influx of funds and projects – as mentioned earlier, bringing expertise in-house. In line with that, we want to reverse over-sourcing of government functions where feasible. Keeping management of projects internal means our staff gain skills and the salary dollars stay local rather than going to outside consultants. BART’s internal project management saved hundreds of millions; similarly, if L.A. County hires local project managers, engineers,

grant administrators, etc., we create public sector jobs and avoid sending money to high-priced external firms⁴⁶. Over the long term, building a Resilience Corps within the county government (analysts, planners, engineers dedicated to climate and disaster resilience) not only helps implement these projects effectively but also ensures institutional knowledge for future events. Strong local government is crucial for a strong local economy, especially in guiding recovery.

Implementation Strategy: Phase 1 (0-3 months after fire): Activate the Business Recovery Fund. Stand up an emergency economic recovery center (potentially co-located with the FEMA Disaster Recovery Center) where businesses can come for assistance. Deploy economic development staff to do on-the-ground outreach, literally visiting the commercial strips or town centers to check on businesses and help with grant applications. Launch local job hiring by coordinating with contractors who come for cleanup (we can attach county workforce liaisons to debris removal crews, for example, to ensure they're picking up local laborers). Host community meetings specifically about economic recovery, brainstorming with locals about what they need – this fosters the civic engagement piece and could surface new ideas (e.g., maybe the community wants a weekly “recovery market” event to draw visitors back – we could support that).

Phase 2 (3-12 months): As rebuilding ramps up, enforce local hiring and track it. Work closely with chambers of commerce and merchant associations to monitor how many businesses have reopened; identify stragglers and personally reach out to see what barriers exist (insurance fight, permit holdups, etc.) and troubleshoot for them. Use the Recovery Marketplace to link them with resources (maybe a business needs a temporary location – find a vacant storefront they can share). At 6 months, evaluate the need for more economic stimulus – perhaps a second round of grants or a shift to low-interest loans for those who decide later to rebuild business. Begin implementing diversification projects: for example, if tourism needs a boost, start marketing campaigns (“Come see our community’s recovery progress!” events). Also begin any construction of public facilities that are part of economic development (like replacing a burned visitor center or farmers market site).

Phase 3 (1-5 years): Ensure that as permanent reconstruction takes hold, workforce development continues – e.g., apprentices hired at the start of rebuilding can transition into long-term construction careers. Evaluate which of the recovery programs can become permanent economic development programs for the region. For example, if the business grants worked well, maybe maintain a small ongoing grant program for any business improvements (which essentially becomes a local economic stimulus beyond disaster needs). Seek to institutionalize the partnerships formed, such as continuing collaboration with philanthropic organizations on community investment.

Innovations & Dreams for the Future: We want to turn the narrative from “Wildfire destroyed this town” to “Wildfire gave this town a chance to reinvent itself for the 21st century.” Imagine an Altadena/Pasadena “Resilience Innovation Zone” – leveraging the aftermath of the Eaton Fire to attract green industries, maybe anchored by Caltech or JPL expertise to develop new tech (since JPL sits just west of Eaton Canyon, there’s potential synergy in making that area a testing ground for environmental tech). We dream of “Recovery Bonds” that residents can invest in to have a stake (literally buying bonds to fund rebuild and then benefiting from the interest, keeping wealth local). Another dream: Universal insurance/pooling – perhaps establishing a County-level insurance pool that makes it affordable for everyone to insure their property and business, thus

⁴⁶ https://www.bart.gov/news/articles/2024/news20240110-1?utm_source=chatgpt.com

speeding payouts and eliminating the problem of underinsurance that cripples recovery. And on a community level, fostering a sense of local pride – maybe an annual festival commemorating recovery milestones which draws tourists and commerce.

At a grand scale, we'd love to see Los Angeles County become known as the Center of Excellence in Disaster Recovery– where our strategies are so successful that other places hire our people as consultants (a revenue stream) or our local companies export their expertise (for instance, a local prefab housing manufacturer grown during our recovery starts getting contracts to supply other disaster-hit areas, creating a new export industry). Economically, the county could emerge stronger: lower unemployment, reduced inequality (because our equity focus lifts up marginalized workers and businesses), and new infrastructure that supports growth (broadband, transportation improvements, etc., implemented during recovery).

We draw from proven models that show how disaster recovery can spark long-term economic renewal. After the 2007 tornado, Greensburg, Kansas rebuilt as a national hub for sustainable design, turning crisis into opportunity⁴⁷. Post-2017 Napa/Sonoma fires, tourism rebounded within a year thanks to strategic marketing and community events⁴⁸. In Pasadena, the Hilton/GoFundMe Wildfire Relief Fund gave \$25,000 grants to women-owned businesses hit by the Eaton Fire—an example of rapid philanthropic support. After San Diego's 2003 Cedar Fire, areas with stronger small business networks recovered income faster, showing the value of supporting local enterprise. We also look to local hire programs: Los Angeles mandates public projects, like Metro rail, hire from economically disadvantaged ZIP codes⁴⁹. Finally, BART's insourcing strategy saved hundreds of millions and created skilled jobs, affirming the value of building internal government capacity.

5. Community Health and Support

Goal: Heal the human impacts of wildfires by addressing health in all dimensions – physical, mental, and social. Ensure that every person affected by wildfire is cared for, that communities maintain social cohesion and cultural vitality through the recovery, and that special populations (children, elderly, disabled, etc.) are not left behind. Build “civic muscle” by empowering community leadership in the recovery process, fostering a sense of meaning and belonging even amid trauma.

Challenges: Wildfires devastate lives, not just properties. The immediate disaster puts lives at risk from flames and smoke, and the aftermath brings a host of health issues: respiratory illnesses from smoke inhalation (which can linger for those exposed), injuries, and long-term mental health challenges (PTSD, anxiety, depression) from the trauma of evacuation, loss, and instability. A study after California fires showed significant increases in emergency department visits for depression and anxiety in the months following major wildfire smoke events. The healthcare system itself can be disrupted – clinics may burn or be closed, and healthcare workers are themselves disaster victims at times. Another issue is displacement – people scatter to live with relatives or in hotels, interrupting continuity of care (e.g., someone's prescription management gets lost in the shuffle). The stress can exacerbate chronic illnesses. Community support networks (schools, churches, clubs) might be

⁴⁷ <https://www.greensburgks.org/community/pages/sustainable-rebuilding>

⁴⁸ <https://www.businessinsider.com/napa-sonoma->

⁴⁹ <https://slidetodoc.com/city-of-los-angeles-targeted-local-hire-program/>

disrupted, exactly when people need them. Marginalized populations – such as undocumented immigrants – may fear seeking government help or be ineligible for some aid, leading to unmet needs. Additionally, administrative red tape often adds to stress: imagine losing your home and then being faced with complex forms for aid or insurance; the “paperwork trauma” can compound the actual trauma.

Policy Proposals:

5.1 Mobile Health and Social Service Units (“Recovery Health Corps”): Immediately deploy mobile units to disaster-affected areas to provide medical care, mental health counseling, and social services. These can be RVs or trailers outfitted as clinics (some counties have mobile clinics for rural areas or homeless outreach – we’d maintain a fleet for emergency response). Within 48-72 hours of a fire, these units should be on-site at evacuation centers or in neighborhoods safe to enter, offering free services: first aid, prescription refills, inhalers for smoke exposure, etc., plus mental health first aid (psychological triage). We will staff them with a mix of county public health staff, volunteer clinicians (through something like the Medical Reserve Corps), and trusted community health workers from the area. Mental health support is crucial early – even as people are in shock, having a counselor explain normal stress reactions can plant seeds of resilience. We will provide materials in multiple languages about coping strategies and where to get help. Over the first weeks, these mobile teams can rotate through affected zones daily. The idea is to bring care to people so that lack of transportation or disorientation doesn’t prevent access. *Case example:* After the Paradise fire, some healthcare providers set up mobile clinics in Chico for displaced residents; similarly, after the Woolsey Fire, Malibu organized health fairs for residents. We’ll formalize and upscale this approach. This also includes deploying mobile recovery centers for services like applying for assistance (like a DMV-on-wheels for disaster aid), ensuring people can navigate bureaucracy with personal help.

5.2 Long-Term Mental Health Infrastructure: We recognize that trauma from wildfires can manifest over months and even years. Our plan establishes a continuum of mental health care. First, ensure that culturally competent counseling is available: partner with community organizations (faith-based groups, culturally specific nonprofits) to host support groups and workshops in the months after the fire. These might be talking circles facilitated by trained counselors or peers, and can be tailored – e.g., groups for parents, for firefighters/first responders, for those who lost homes, etc. We will fund these via mini grants to the organizations or directly through the Department of Mental Health Services. Second, bolster our clinical mental health services: create fast-track referrals from primary care or the mobile units to ongoing therapy or psychiatric care, with the County covering costs for uninsured individuals (expand the eligibility requirements for Medi-Cal to cover those impacted by a natural disaster). Possibly bring in additional therapists via mutual aid from other counties if needed to meet demand. We could also use modern approaches like tele-mental health – set up a system for people to have video therapy sessions if in-person is difficult. Another key aspect is school-based mental health: children often are deeply affected (nightmares, regression, anxiety). We will coordinate with school districts (recall that school board members are a target audience of this proposal) to deploy counselors at all schools affected, screen kids for trauma, and provide services (FEMA Crisis Counseling grants for this). Studies show 20-30% of wildfire survivors have PTSD, but also that having a strong support network greatly reduces that likelihood⁵⁰. So, our strategy invests in building those networks: maybe a buddy system pairing families, or neighborhood “recovery potlucks” facilitated by volunteers to

⁵⁰ <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/4/1487>

rebuild social ties. It may sound soft, but belonging and mutual support are powerful healers. Over the longer term (years), ensure follow-up – for instance, an annual mental health check-in around the anniversary of the fire, when people might re-experience grief.

5.3 Inclusive Community Engagement and Leadership Development: We will put community voice at the center of recovery (which itself is healing). Establish Community Recovery Committees in each affected community, composed of residents, local leaders (faith leaders, nonprofit heads, youth representatives, etc.), and give them a formal role in decision-making. This might mean monthly meetings with government recovery officials to provide input and feedback on plans, or even a budget to allocate for community projects (a bit of participatory budgeting to build civic muscle). We also incorporate cultural practices into recovery – e.g., community gatherings, memorials for what was lost (trees or lives), and rituals like tree planting days or commemorative art installations. These create meaning out of chaos and allow people to process collective trauma together. We should support local artists to lead mural projects or performances that tell the community’s story of the fire and renewal. For example, a community in Ventura after the Thomas Fire created a mural from tiles painted by residents depicting their emotions – a therapeutic and unifying project. Similarly, in our case, if a town lost its historic hall, we might gather everyone to design a memorial or time capsule for it while planning its rebuild. Faith-based partnerships come in strongly here: houses of worship often become anchors of emotional support. We’ll integrate them into the official recovery structure – e.g., regular interfaith meetings to coordinate aid, share info, and enlist their help in outreach (they can disseminate accurate information to congregants, combating rumors). Pastors, priests, rabbis, imams, etc., can be invaluable in counseling and giving hope. They often know who the most vulnerable members are (the shut-in senior, the undocumented family, etc.) and can help connect them to resources. We must ensure equity and inclusion – meaning translators, translated materials, and outreach in multiple languages (Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, etc. as needed) so no one is left out due to language. And paying attention to accessibility: for people with disabilities, ensure shelters and aid centers are accessible, provide sign language interpreters for public meetings, etc. Community health is not just clinics; it’s the overall wellbeing and connectivity of people.

5.4 Streamlined Social Services (“No Wrong Door” approach): Simplify and expedite all bureaucratic processes that survivors encounter – from applying for FEMA aid, state relief grants, unemployment benefits, to getting replacement documents (deeds, driver’s licenses). This is crucial for mental health, because each piece of red tape avoided is one less stress. We propose an Administrative Streamlining Pilot where we take a few processes and waive or compress requirements for those in the disaster. For instance, allow self-attestation of income for aid programs to avoid people digging up lost paperwork, or extend deadlines and waive fees for anything like permit applications or late property taxes. Also, implement a case management system: assign every household a single case manager (from a trained team of social workers or disaster case managers) who will guide them through all needs – housing, financial, health, etc. This person coordinates across agencies, so the survivor isn’t doing the legwork. The case manager approach was used after many disasters (like 2017 CA fires, Katrina, etc.) with success when done well. We want to formalize it in county operations. Additionally, ensure that relief centers are one stop shops: multi-agency support under one roof (the concept of a joint Local Assistance Center). If possible, bring state and federal reps there so even SBA loans or DMV document replacement can be done in one visit. On the tech side, unify information systems so survivors don’t have to give the same information repeatedly – we would like to create a secure “recovery ID” where their data is entered once, and all relevant agencies can access (with consent and secure). We’ll pilot such data-sharing in this disaster and, if successful, it could be a model for general service delivery in the future (thus tying to

innovation). The pilots will be evaluated on outcomes (e.g., time to get benefits, user satisfaction) and if they prove effective, we'll push to institutionalize them countywide, cutting red tape for all residents, disaster or not.

5.5 Strengthen Physical Health Resilience: While mental health and community are a big focus, we also take steps to protect physical health now and in future events. This includes: distributing N95 masks to residents during smoky conditions (with special efforts for outdoor workers and vulnerable people) – essentially making sure we always have stockpiles and plans for smoke events as we do for earthquakes. Also, monitoring air and water quality closely post-fire – and communicating clearly if any contamination (like advising on safe cleanup of ash, providing air purifiers to households at risk). We saw during recent fires how smoke can travel and cause spikes in ER visits; by giving out masks and opening clean air shelters (places with HEPA filters, maybe libraries or malls), we mitigate that⁵¹. We should also address long-term public health issues: for example, if a fire burns toxic materials (older buildings with asbestos, etc.), we run screening programs or awareness for potential health effects and cleanup protocols. Ensure access to medications: a simple but vital service is coordinating with pharmacies to provide emergency refills (waiving usual refill-too-soon restrictions) – our policy is to automatically activate that with local pharmacies when an area is under evacuation. Finally, consider health insurance continuity: some might lose employer-based insurance if their job goes; the County can assist with quick enrollment in Medi-Cal or Covered California plans so gaps in coverage are minimized. Health is holistic, so we tie these together under a coordinated plan called something like “Community Care Recovery Plan”, which the Department of Public Health and Department of Mental Health jointly lead.

Implementation Strategy: Immediate (Days 0-30): Set up mobile units and one-stop centers as described. Use existing emergency response frameworks (the County’s Emergency Operations Center will have a Mass Care branch) to integrate these health actions. Deploy mental health professionals to evacuation shelters immediately (L.A. County DMH has PsySTART, a crisis response program, we’ll utilize that). Identify community leaders and begin daily briefings with them to understand needs. Activate the case management program by training available social workers or even volunteers and pairing them with families (the Red Cross often does something similar; coordinate with them too).

Short Term (1-6 months): Transition from mobile units to more stable arrangements: e.g., if a clinic was destroyed, maybe set up a temporary modular clinic building or use a neighboring clinic for expanded hours to serve the area. Keep mental health services going: possibly open a Recovery Counseling Center in a central spot for drop-ins and scheduled therapy. Continue community meetings and involve residents in recovery planning (some might join the official recovery task force or subcommittees). Also around 3-6 months, hold events that mark recovery progress – this can help psychologically (like a community BBQ on the 6-month anniversary to thank everyone and note what’s been achieved).

Longer Term (6 months - 5 years): Monitor health outcomes – possibly partner with local universities to study the community’s recovery (e.g., track mental health over time, or economic recovery as tied to health). Use that data to adjust services. Some services, like support groups, might wind down as people move on, but keep at least a skeleton of ongoing support because some issues (like PTSD triggers) show up much later. By one year, hopefully, most displaced people have housing and routine, so focus may shift to normalizing services back to

⁵¹ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2832210>

local providers (ensuring local clinics, churches, etc., are strengthened to continue the support). Also, capture the lessons: produce a report or “after action” on the human recovery aspect to feed into future planning, and advocate for any needed state law changes (for example, if we found regulations hindering our ability to share data or provide certain care, push to change those laws).

Innovations & Dreams for the Future: We aspire to a model of “whole community resilience” that others will emulate. Imagine if every neighborhood had a trained network of Community Resilience Volunteers (like CERT but for psychosocial support) – people who check on neighbors, help evacuate those with mobility issues, and then lead local healing activities. Perhaps we institutionalize Neighbor-to-Neighbor programs where those unaffected “adopt” a family who lost their home, providing practical help and friendship throughout the rebuild; that kind of social innovation could dramatically improve emotional outcomes. In the future, we might use technology for mental health, like apps that guide users through coping exercises or VR experiences to reduce anxiety (some research is exploring VR for treating trauma). Or utilize social media in positive ways: for instance, a “storytelling portal” where community members share their recovery stories – cathartic for the teller and inspiring for others, building a shared narrative of hope.

Civic muscle means communities capable of collectively solving problems. We want our communities, post-disaster, to come out with stronger civic organizations than before. Perhaps new leaders emerge – a PTA president becomes a key voice in recovery and then runs for office, continuing to serve. Perhaps youth, who often feel helpless, are engaged through special programs (like a youth conservation corps for restoration) and gain a lifelong sense of agency. The dream scenario: the experience of overcoming the wildfire brings the community closer, increases trust in each other and in local institutions, and leaves a legacy of empowerment. People realize their voices mattered in rebuilding their town – that’s “belonging” at its best, when everyone feels this is our home and we made it what it is.

Our community health strategy draws from a blend of data and lived recovery efforts. After the 2017 fires, Santa Rosa’s Community Health Initiative expanded mental health outreach and trauma-informed school programs, showing that timely counseling—especially for children—makes a difference⁵². In San Diego County, Cajon Valley Union School District created a family engagement model to track displaced students and connect families with services—an approach we can replicate with school partners⁵³. The California Department of Public Health reinforces that emotional recovery is just as critical as physical rebuilding and encourages community events as healing tools⁵⁴. During the January 2025 fires, the 988 Disaster Distress Helpline saw a surge in calls, confirming the importance of visible, accessible crisis services⁵⁵. St. Monica’s Church offering shelter during the Palisades fire illustrates how faith-based spaces can become lifelines in times of crisis⁵⁶. And a UCLA study showed stark differences in recovery resources between Altadena and Palisades, reinforcing why equitable outreach must guide our planning⁵⁷. Together, these lessons shape our commitment to tending to the body, mind, and spirit of wildfire-impacted communities.

⁵² <https://srhealth.org/service/mental-health/>

⁵³ <https://www.cajonvalley.net/face>

⁵⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK316541>

⁵⁵ <https://time.com/7207912/los-angeles-california-wildfires-mental-health-support/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.ncregister.com/cna/>

⁵⁷ <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/los-angeles-wildfire-recovery-ucla-research-community-efforts>

Cross-Cutting Initiatives: Faith, Culture, Equity, and Civic Engagement

While each focus area above contains specific proposals, certain themes interweave through all our strategies – acting as guiding principles and additional initiatives that ensure the recovery is holistic and just. These cross-cutting components are crucial to meet equity, innovation, and civic engagement needs. We highlight them here:

A. Faith-Based Partnerships & Infrastructure Reuse: We recognize the immense capacity of faith based and community organizations as force-multipliers in recovery. Churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and community centers are often first responders of compassion – offering shelter, food, and comfort even before official services arrive. Our plan formally incorporates these partners by establishing a Faith & Community Partnership Network under the County recovery structure. This network will coordinate distribution of resources to these organizations so they can serve their communities (e.g., providing generators or supplies to a church sheltering evacuees). It will also identify opportunities to reuse infrastructure for recovery purposes: for example, a church hall becomes a daycare center if schools are closed, or a large parking lot hosts temporary housing units. In the Eaton Fire, local parishes like St. Monica’s opened their doors to evacuees overnight, offering a place to rest, clean up, and recharge— such stories underscore that these are trusted spaces for people in crisis. We will support them with training (like disaster chaplaincy, psychological first aid for faith volunteers) and small grants to cover their extra costs during an emergency. Longer-term, we envision partnerships where these organizations help with rebuilding lives – a coalition of congregations might, for instance, volunteer to furnish rebuilt homes or organize community meals every month to sustain morale. This leverages civic society’s power and also ensures cultural and spiritual needs are respected in recovery. When government and faith groups collaborate, reach into communities deepens, especially for marginalized groups who might be more likely to seek help from a church or cultural center than a government office. This is a win for equity and efficacy.

B. Culture, Meaning, and Belonging (Building Civic Muscle): Recovery is not just a technical process, it’s a profoundly human one. We embed arts, culture, and storytelling into our recovery because they provide meaning and help people process what’s happened. For example, we will support the creation of public art memorials co-designed by residents to honor what was lost and symbolize renewal. We might commission a local artist collective to work with school children to paint a mural titled “Rising from the Ashes” on the wall of a rebuilt school. These acts help transform pain into purpose. We also champion community gatherings – whether it’s holiday festivals, high school sports games, or interfaith prayer services – anything that rekindles community spirit after the isolating disaster experience. The County can provide mini-grants to neighborhood groups to put on block parties or cultural events as soon as it’s safe, to reconnect neighbors. This is not frivolous; research in disaster recovery shows that communities with strong social ties recover faster because people share resources and information and have better mental health(time.com). By consciously reinforcing belonging (making everyone feel they are part of the recovery, not passive victims), we strengthen what some call the “civic immunity” against despair and division.

Additionally, civic engagement opportunities – like involving residents in decision-making (through the Community Recovery Committees, town hall meetings, and participatory budgeting mentioned earlier) – give

people a sense of agency when so much is out of control. It's therapeutic and practical: residents often come up with the best solutions for local problems. We plan to launch a Civic Volunteer Corps where anyone in the county can sign up to help with recovery tasks big or small (distributing info, mentoring a survivor family, etc.), channeling the goodwill that disasters often generate into constructive action. This builds a reservoir of "civic muscle" that lasts beyond the disaster, enhancing community capacity to face future challenges collectively.

C. Equity and Inclusion for Marginalized Populations: At the heart of our plan is a drive to ensure no one is left behind. We apply an equity lens to each initiative, meaning we consider who might be disadvantaged or harder to reach and tailor solutions. For instance, in Infrastructure recovery, when prioritizing which power lines to underground first, we factor not just fire risk but also social vulnerability – lines serving remote mobile home communities might leap to priority because those residents have fewer resources to evacuate or rebuild if a fire occurs. In housing, as described, we devote resources to low-income and historically marginalized residents to rebuild and return. In economic recovery, we target small, local, and or women/minority owned businesses for grants, acknowledging they face systemic disparities. For health and community support, we deliver services in multiple languages and through trusted messengers (with cultural humility at the center)..

We also emphasize inclusive leadership: our community committees and decision bodies should reflect the diversity of the community – renters and homeowners, different ethnic groups, youth and elders. Traditionally underrepresented voices (like undocumented immigrants, or formerly homeless individuals) will be intentionally included, perhaps via partnerships with advocacy groups that can represent their interests. Recognizing that wildfires disproportionately affect vulnerable populations– low-income, elderly, disabled, rural residents often have higher risk and harder recoveries – we design programs to mitigate those inequities. For example, transportation assistance for those without cars during evacuation and recovery (vouchers, shuttles to recovery centers) ensures access to help. Or legal aid services for renters to navigate tenant rights after a fire (landlords sometimes misuse disasters to evict or price gouge).

We propose developing an Equity Impact Dashboard for the recovery, tracking metrics like who is getting grants, who has rebuilt, health outcomes by demographic, etc., to visibly ensure equity goals are being met and to adjust if disparities appear. This level of accountability is innovative and will keep everyone honest about helping those who need it most.

D. Community Voice & Leadership: Finally, we reinforce that the community is not just a beneficiary of these plans – it's the driving force. As mentioned, all our strategies call for community input and leadership roles (from volunteer brigades to planning committees). We will provide leadership training if needed – for example, the County could run workshops for community members on how to effectively participate in recovery planning, interpret technical information, or manage collaborative projects. We want to empower residents to eventually take over many of these recovery initiatives, making them community-led. The civic infrastructure built – networks of engaged citizens, stronger local nonprofits, and collaboration channels with government – will remain as a legacy, making the community more resilient for any future challenge, be it another disaster or even non-disaster issues (like tackling local poverty or improving schools). This resilience dividend is hard to quantify but extremely valuable.

In summary, these cross-cutting initiatives around faith, culture, equity, and community leadership ensure the

recovery is humane and just. They recognize that rebuilding buildings is not enough – we must rebuild the social fabric and even improve upon it. With these elements, we transform recovery from a top-down administrative process to a bottom-up community renaissance.

Conclusion: Our Generation’s Moonshot for Los Angeles County

Los Angeles County stands on the brink of a historic transformation. In confronting the wildfire crisis, we have chosen not to accept paralysis and decline, but to embrace ambition and innovation at scale. This comprehensive policy blueprint reimagines what recovery can be – not a slow return to the status quo, but a leap forward to a stronger, safer, more vibrant future. We face a pivotal question: Will we continue to be shackled by the unintended consequences of old policies, or will we have the courage to break free and build boldly? We choose the latter.

We have put forth bold proposals: from creating new fast-track institutions, to cutting project timelines from years to months, to empowering communities as co-authors of their destiny. We do so with clear eyes on the challenges – legal hurdles, funding needs, the inertia of bureaucracies, and the real difficulty to get things done – but with confidence that these can be overcome by the human spirit and political will that emerge in times of crisis. Our plan is both visionary and pragmatic. It calls for moonshot-level thinking (like fundamentally rewriting how we govern rebuilding and environmental protection) and pairs it with on-the-ground, detailed tactics (like exactly how to clear brush or finance a modular home). It dreams of a future where wildfires are tamed and communities thrive and sets in motion the steps to get there.

The impact of fully implementing this blueprint will be monumental. Los Angeles County will become a model of resilience with equity, proving that streamlining and deregulating can go hand-in-hand with safeguarding the vulnerable and the environment. Instead of tragedies that exacerbate inequality, our recoveries will uplift those most affected. Instead of public cynicism in the face of government fumbling, we will restore trust by delivering results that people can see and live in: the bridge that reopened early, the homes rebuilt better, the jobs created, the park replanted, the community coming back to life. Each success will build the “abundance mentality” – a sense that we are not victims of scarcity and bureaucracy, but creators of plenty and progress. By implementing these policies, Los Angeles County can lead the state and the nation. Wildfires and climate disasters are not unique to us; what we pioneer here can inform how the entire American West (and beyond) confronts the new reality of climate extremes. The world is watching for solutions. We will show that it’s possible to cut through red tape without sacrificing our values, to ignite innovation in the public sector that rivals Silicon Valley, and to center people – their health, their voices, their futures – in every aspect of resilience. When we bring “the bold line west” – evoking the image of Brightline’s high-speed rail and also a bold line of action drawn here on the coast – we signal that California is once again trailblazing.

In the spirit of JFK’s moonshot, this is our generation’s moonshot moment. Hard does not mean impossible. We choose to do these hard things because they are hard – because tackling them will unleash the best of our creativity and determination, and because the cost of inaction is unacceptable stagnation and suffering. We commit to turn disaster into opportunity, fear into focus, and risk into resilience.

Los Angeles County will show what it means to truly build back better. We will build from the Eaton Fire not just to rebuild what was, but to build what should be. A county where infrastructure is climate-resilient,

housing is abundant and safe, economies are vibrant and inclusive, and communities are healthier and more connected than ever. A county that doesn't just survive wildfires, but thrives in spite of them – forging unity and purpose from the shared experience.

This comprehensive blueprint is our bold promise and actionable plan to achieve that vision. It aligns resources, reforms, and the human spirit in a way that has not been done before. With it, we fill the current narrative vacuum with hope and clarity. No longer will we be paralyzed by the complexity of our own rules; we will be liberated by the clarity of our mission.

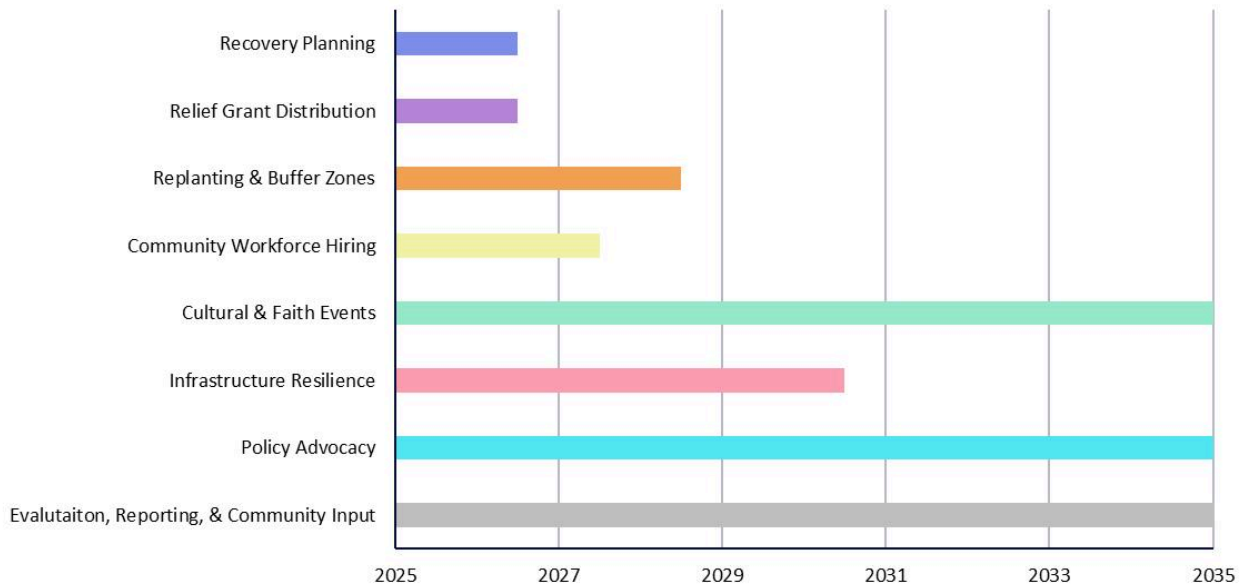
Let us seize this moment to act fast, dream big, and lead courageously. Together with community, government, and partners, Los Angeles County will reimagine recovery and set a new standard for wildfire resilience. The lessons of history guide us, the urgency of the present compels us, and the promise of the future inspires us. It's time to bring this bold line west, time to turn vision into reality on our home ground. With unity, innovation, and unwavering resolve, we will safeguard our communities and build the future we deserve – a future of safety, prosperity, opportunity, and equity, shining bright on the horizon beyond the flames.

Appendices

Appendix: Gantt Timeline

Pillar	0–3 Months	3–6 Months	6–12 Months
Infrastructure Recovery	Commission launch, portal pilot, permitting integration	Begin resilient rebuild projects	Launch regional dashboards, embed ombudspersons
Equitable Housing	Deploy modular surge units, renter outreach	Expand CLTs, adopt flexible zoning adjustments	Operationalize renter return guarantees, build housing templates
Wildfire Mitigation	Begin prescribed burns, launch defensible space pilots	Scale microgrids, Indigenous co-management MOUs	Expand restoration crews, monitor air/water recovery
Economic Recovery	Rehire planners, initiate local vendor registry	Disburse small biz grants, evaluate job pipelines	Public sector capacity rebuild, workforce investment board
Community Health & Belonging	Mobilize Health Corps, launch trusted messenger campaign	Deploy mobile clinics, build cultural hubs	Evaluate impact, fund long-term mental health supports

10-Year Gantt Timeline: Fire Recovery & Community Replanting Plan



Appendix: Budget

*Budgetary references are available upon request

Pillar	Estimated Cost (Year 1)	Scope Highlights
1. Infrastructure Recovery	\$10–15 billion	Fast-track permitting, underground utilities, rebuild roads and key infrastructure, deploy microgrids
2. Equitable Housing Solutions	\$6–8 billion	Modular housing, wildfire-resilient designs, Community Land Trusts, rent stabilization
3. Wildfire Mitigation & Restoration	\$3–5 billion/year	Defensible space enforcement, brush clearing, Indigenous-led burns, post-fire environmental restoration
4. Economic Recovery	\$1.5–2.5 billion	Small business grants, zero-interest loans, local hiring requirements, workforce development
5. Community Health and Support	\$0.5–1 billion	Mobile health teams, trauma-informed care, community leadership programs, long-term counseling
TOTAL	\$21–31.5 billion	

Appendix: One-Pager

Reimagining Recovery: A Strategic Blueprint for Wildfire Resilience and Innovation in Los Angeles County

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“Where others see crisis, we see a mandate to innovate, rebuild, and lead.” -Zachary & Kevin

Executive Summary: The 2025 Eaton Fire revealed the profound risks Los Angeles County faces under a regulatory framework that was not designed for the speed and scale of today’s climate emergencies. Recovery efforts must be reimagined not only to rebuild, but to build smarter, faster, and more equitably. Drawing lessons from successful models such as Governor Josh Shapiro’s rapid reconstruction of I-95 in Pennsylvania in just 12 days, we know that transformational outcomes are possible when urgency, innovation, and leadership align. We have a choice: to allow disasters to deepen inequities and bureaucratic inertia, or to seize them as catalysts for innovation, growth, and resilience. This blueprint commits to the latter, rejecting scarcity thinking in favor of an abundance model where bold action meets community needs without delay.

Strategic Pillars:

1. **Infrastructure Recovery:** Establish a Climate Resilience Reconstruction Commission to fast-track rebuilding of critical infrastructure, including undergrounding utilities and climate-proofing public assets.
2. **Equitable Housing Solutions:** Expedite wildfire-resilient housing construction through modular methods, pre-approved designs, and community land trust models that safeguard affordability.
3. **Wildfire Mitigation and Environmental Restoration:** Aggressively enforce defensible space, expand prescribed burns in partnership with Indigenous leaders, and restore native ecosystems to reduce fire risks.
4. **Economic Recovery:** Provide immediate relief grants to small businesses, require local workforce hiring on all recovery projects, and invest in long-term economic revitalization through green industries.
5. **Community Health and Support:** Deploy mobile health and trauma response teams immediately post-disaster, embed mental health and resilience services long-term, and ensure communities lead their own recovery.

Commitments to Equity and Civic Leadership: This blueprint is grounded in a deep commitment to equity, faith and cultural partnerships, and inclusive governance. It ensures that historically underserved populations and community are prioritized in every phase of recovery, rebuilding stronger and more resilient communities for all.

A Vision for the Future: By choosing bold reform over procedural stagnation, Los Angeles County can emerge as a national model for wildfire resilience. Within five years, we can cut rebuilding timelines by half, dramatically expand affordable housing, revitalize local economies, and restore ecosystems with no community left behind. Disasters need not define our limits. They can define our leadership. This is our generation’s moonshot.

Appendix: Community Facing Document

Reimagining Recovery Together: A Call to Action for Our Schools, Families, Faith Leaders, and Communities

The 2025 Eaton Fire devastated our communities destroying homes, businesses, and beloved landmarks. It exposed not just physical vulnerability, but a deeper truth: our recovery systems are too slow, too fragmented, and too unequal. Now, we have a choice. We can either rebuild the old way slowly, painfully or we can seize this moment to build faster, smarter, and more equitably than ever before. The Reimagining Recovery Blueprint is a bold new plan for Los Angeles County to meet this challenge head-on. But it cannot succeed without you, our schools, our families, our faith-based leaders, our neighbors. We invite you to rise to this moment with us.

Governor Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania showed that when urgency and leadership align, a collapsed I-95 bridge can be rebuilt in just 12 days. That same spirit lives in us. We choose abundance over fear, innovation over stagnation, action over delay. Disasters do not have to break us. They can become the moments where we rise, rebuild, and create a better future for everyone.

The Blueprint we are proposing focuses on five major pillars to guide how we rebuild after wildfires and future disasters:

1. **Infrastructure Recovery:** We will rebuild critical infrastructure (roads, shopping centers, utilities) faster, after and future oriented. A new Climate Resilience Reconstruction Commission will fast-track rebuilding approvals, cutting years off project timelines. We will underground power lines in fire-prone areas, modernize roads and bridges to withstand fire and flood, and deploy decentralized microgrids for clean, local, and affordable energy.
2. **Equitable Housing Solutions:** We will rapidly rebuild homes using pre-approved wildfire-resilient designs and modular construction. Families who lost their homes will be able to rebuild in months, not years. We will also create Community Land Trusts to preserve affordable housing and prevent disaster-driven displacement, ensuring that working families can stay and thrive.
3. **Wildfire Mitigation & Environmental Restoration:** We will prevent future fires by enforcing defensible space, clearing dangerous brush, restoring native plants, and scaling up Indigenous-led prescribed burns. We will also restore hillsides, streams, and parks after fires to protect water, soil, and air quality.
4. **Economic Recovery:** We will support small businesses with rapid recovery grants and zero-interest loans. We will require local hiring for all recovery projects and train community members for jobs in rebuilding, forestry, renewable energy, and more. Disaster recovery will become an engine of local opportunity, not a roadblock.
5. **Community Health and Support:** We will deploy mobile health teams within days after disasters to provide urgent care and mental health services. Long-term, we will expand culturally competent counseling, community leadership opportunities, and trauma-informed recovery programs, ensuring no one is left to struggle alone.

We need you! Recovery must not be top-down. It must be community-driven, led by those who live, work, teach, worship, and raise families here.

We are launching a Community Advisory Board that will be composed of:

- Parents, families, and youth
- School leaders, teachers, and counselors
- Faith-based leaders and congregations

- Healthcare workers, mental health counselors
- Small business owners
- Nonprofit and community organization leaders
- Neighborhood and civic leaders

This Board will work directly with policymakers and project leaders to:

- Set priorities for rebuilding
- Provide feedback on proposed projects
- Ensure equity and inclusion are upheld
- Communicate community needs
- Help design solutions that work for real people

Join the Community Advisory Board: Nominate yourself, a neighbor, a colleague, or a student leader. We want the people closest to the community to help guide decisions.

Partner with Us:

- Schools: Engage students and families in resilience education.
- Faith-based organizations: Offer space, volunteers, and spiritual leadership.
- Families: Stay informed, advocate, and lift your voices.
- Local groups: Bring your expertise to outreach and recovery.

Spread the Word:

Help ensure every family, every congregation, every neighborhood knows about the recovery plan and knows their voice matters.

Kickoff meetings for the Community Advisory Board will be forthcoming. We will offer both virtual and in-person options to ensure accessibility for all.

Appendix: Case Studies

The following case studies provide real-world examples that informed and inspired our policy proposals. They illustrate successes and lessons from past disasters and innovative projects, demonstrating the feasibility of our recommendations and offering guidance on implementation. We want to note that we are well aware of the fact that not all policies are applicable to all areas. We see that our proposals are not theoretical. They are drawn from real experiences where people solved similar problems. By learning from these examples, we increase our chances of success and can avoid pitfalls. Each case study's lessons (summarized in italics in the text above) have been directly incorporated into the design of our policies.

- Case Study 1 – Rapid Infrastructure Rebuild: I-95 Philadelphia Bridge (2023): In June 2023, a tanker fire caused a section of the I-95 freeway in Philadelphia to collapse, severing a vital transportation artery. Under Governor Josh Shapiro’s leadership, Pennsylvania implemented an accelerated reconstruction plan that became a national exemplar. Through 24/7 construction, emergency procurement, and regulatory flexibility, a temporary bridge was opened to traffic in just *12 days* – a process that normally could have taken months. Key tactics included hiring contractors within days, using an innovative backfill material (recycled glass aggregate) to speed up rebuilding, and providing constant public communication (even a live-stream of the construction). Gov. Shapiro stated, “We showed the nation what Philadelphia and Pennsylvania are all about,” referring to this achievement. Relevance to L.A.: This case inspires our Infrastructure Recovery pillar. It proves that with political will and smart planning, critical infrastructure can be rebuilt far faster than usual. We mirrored these lessons by proposing a Climate Resilience Reconstruction Commission and streamlined environmental reviews so that L.A. can similarly shave off time in rebuilding roads, bridges, and utilities. The public confidence and economic benefit from the quick reopening in Philly were immense. Our plan to fast-track infrastructure (borrowing from the “all hands on deck” approach) shows stakeholders what is possible – and sets a high bar for our own performance.
- Case Study 2 – High-Speed Rail and Private Innovation: Texas Central & Brightline West: Texas Central Railway was a private venture aiming to build a high-speed train between Dallas and Houston using Japanese Shinkansen technology. Throughout the 2010s it made significant planning progress and navigated various regulatory hurdles as a *fully private infrastructure project* – a rarity in the U.S. While it faced delays and as of the mid-2020s had not broken ground (due to land acquisition lawsuits and financing challenges), it showcased new models of funding and technology transfer for rail. In parallel, Brightline West (backed by Fortress Investment Group, which operates Brightline in Florida) has been developing a high-speed rail line from Las Vegas to Southern California. As of 2025, Brightline West is in advanced stages, planning a line along I-15 to a station in Rancho Cucamonga, with a mix of private and public financing. Relevance: This case is slightly outside wildfire recovery, but it informs our thinking on infrastructure and economic recovery. It shows that private capital can be mobilized for big projects if the value proposition is strong. In our plan, we include ideas like public-private partnerships and “pull funding” incentives to spur innovation. The high-speed rail efforts

also taught lessons about permitting and community engagement – Texas Central engaged in extensive outreach and even legal battles over eminent domain. For L.A., while we rebuild after fires, we can also invite private sector innovation (for instance, in building solar microgrids or other utilities more efficiently). The patience required in these rail projects is cautionary; we know our recovery must move faster, but their experiences push us to streamline permitting and build public support early to avoid multi-year lawsuits or opposition that bog down progress.

- Case Study 3 – Faith-Based Community Relief: St. Monica’s Church & Sacred Heart Church (2025 Wildfires): During the January 2025 fires in Los Angeles, two local churches demonstrated the power of faith-based organizations in disaster response. St. Monica Catholic Church in Santa Monica opened its halls on the night of January 7, 2025, to welcome evacuees from the fast-moving Palisades Fire. Dozens of families – of all faiths or no faith – found refuge. Evacuees could rest, get a hot meal, charge devices, and spend the night. The next day, even as conditions shifted, the church kept its doors open until they themselves had to evacuate due to smoke encroachment. Meanwhile, in Lincoln Heights, Sacred Heart Church opened its auditorium as a relief center for those affected by the Eaton Fire and for families of firefighters. They distributed water, food, N95 masks, and basic supplies (even arranging donated children’s clothing and diapers) to fire victims and evacuees. These efforts were coordinated with city officials – for example, the City of Los Angeles operated an official shelter, but Sacred Heart served as an overflow and community hub, with the St. Vincent de Paul Society and parish volunteers efficiently creating a pop-up distribution system. Relevance: These instances exemplify how houses of worship act as trusted, hyper-local relief providers who can often mobilize faster than bureaucracy. In our proposal, we harness this capacity via formal Faith-Based Partnership Networks (see Cross-Cutting and Section 5.2). The success of St. Monica’s and Sacred Heart in meeting immediate needs (they assisted dozens of families on short notice) shows that integrating such organizations into official strategy – and giving them resources and information – can greatly expand our reach. It also highlights an equity aspect: churches aided anyone who came through their doors, including immigrants and those who might be uncomfortable at government shelters. Our plan to reuse existing community infrastructure (like church halls) as relief centers is validated by this case. In sum, the 2025 fires demonstrated that faith organizations are indispensable “hubs of belonging” and aid in disasters – a fact our blueprint builds upon for both response and long-term recovery.

- Case Study 4 – Modular Affordable Housing in San Francisco (“Tahanan” project, 2021): The chronic housing shortage in California is well-known, and disasters exacerbate it. San Francisco recently piloted an innovative approach to accelerate and reduce the cost of affordable housing development, which we look to replicate. The 833 Bryant Street project (branded “Tahanan”), completed in 2021, used modular construction and a streamlined design-build process to create 145 units of supportive housing for formerly homeless individuals. By using an identical design from a prior project and involving the contractor, architect, and city in a highly collaborative process from the start, they achieved remarkable savings – roughly 40% cheaper and faster than comparable projects. The cost was about \$423k per unit (including land and all costs) versus \$700k+ typical for San Francisco, and it was built in ~12 months, about half the normal timeline. However, there were lessons: the project faced pushback from labor unions because modules were built off-site (some unions felt it

threatened local jobs), and there were a few quality control issues (e.g. minor leaks) after assembly. For a follow-up project at 1230 Mission St., the team adjusted by using prefabricated components (pre-made wall panels, etc.) rather than full modules, to appease labor concerns while still speeding construction. That second project was on track for a 19-month build for 160 units – still 30% faster than usual and with similar cost efficiency. Relevance: This case directly informs our Housing pillar. It provides proof that standardization and modular building can dramatically speed up housing delivery. We cite it to justify why Los Angeles County should adopt modular and pre-approved designs for rebuilding homes (especially affordable units) quickly after wildfires. The case also teaches us to navigate the politics – involving labor groups early to find a balance that achieves speed but also supports local jobs (hence our inclusion of local hire requirements alongside modular construction). The success of Tahanan in housing vulnerable people faster aligns with our equity mission as well – it tackled homelessness, showing disaster recovery housing can also serve broader social needs. In short, modular construction is a proven game-changer when done thoughtfully, and we intend to leverage that in our recovery.

- Case Study 5 – Indigenous-Led Fire Management in Australia (“Savanna Burning”): In Northern Australia, Aboriginal communities have applied traditional fire management practices to the vast tropical savannas with outstanding success. These programs intentionally set *small, low-intensity fires in the early dry season* (when moisture is higher) to burn off grasses and create a patchwork of burned and unburned areas. This practice reduces the fuel available for late-season wildfires. According to a study in the *International Journal of Wildland Fire*, such Indigenous fire management has cut the area of destructive wildfires by half in the regions that practice it. Additionally, it’s become a source of economic benefit through the generation of carbon credits: since these controlled burns result in lower greenhouse gas emissions than unchecked mega-fires, the projects can quantify emissions reduced and sell carbon credits to companies seeking offsets. One flagship example is the Western Arnhem Land Fire Abatement (WALFA) project, operational since the mid-2000s, which is often cited for preventing over 100,000 tons of CO₂ emissions annually and providing jobs for Indigenous rangers. Inspired by WALFA’s success, more than 20 Indigenous-led fire projects now exist across Northern Australia, blending traditional knowledge with modern science. They not only reduced fire impacts and emissions but also revitalized cultural practice and brought income to remote communities. Relevance: We reference this case in our Wildfire Mitigation & Climate Adaptation section to support scaling up prescribed burning and including Indigenous practices in California. It offers a powerful best-practice example that controlled burning, done wisely and with local knowledge, is effective at landscape scale and can even pay for itself via carbon finance. It also underscores the value of Indigenous knowledge – which we plan to integrate by partnering with local tribes in our region for cultural burn programs. Notably, the Australian experience has started to influence policy elsewhere; in fact, California agencies are now exploring similar approaches (the case helped inspire a recent partnership between the Yurok Tribe and state officials for cultural burns in Northern California). By citing this, we bolster our argument that aggressive controlled burning is grounded in proven results, not a reckless gamble. Moreover, it illustrates an innovative funding mechanism: carbon credits. If Northern Australian communities can get paid for burning smarter, perhaps L.A. County can too – this gives credibility to our idea of seeking carbon credit revenue to fund our wildfire prevention work. Ultimately, the Australian

Indigenous burning case reassures stakeholders that returning to a regime of frequent, low-intensity fire – in partnership with those who have done it for millennia – can protect communities and ecosystems far better than the status quo of fire suppression.

Appendix: Additional References and Data

**Additional references are available upon request*

- Wildfire Hazard Increase Data: Los Angeles Times, March 24, 2025 – reported that with CalFire’s new hazard maps, California now has more high-risk fire acres than ever; “very high” fire hazard zones grew 35% since 2011 (from 860k to ~1.16 million acres in local responsibility areas. An additional 1.2 million acres are now classified as “High” hazard and 4.5 million as “Moderate.” This underscores the urgency – vast areas of L.A. County, especially unincorporated foothills and areas like Altadena, face newly recognized risk. (Our proposal cited this to justify aggressive mitigation).
- Impact of Wildfires on Vulnerable Groups: UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies Policy Brief, Feb 28, 2025 – notes wildfires “disproportionately impact vulnerable communities, such as low-income families, older adults, people with disabilities, and rural residents,” and exacerbate existing social inequities. It highlights challenges like lack of transportation for evacuation and inequitable recovery resource distribution. We used this evidence to shape our equity measures (e.g., evacuation planning inclusive of those without cars, fair resource allocation).
- Mental Health Statistics: TIME Magazine, Jan 31, 2025 – reports experts say *20–30% of people who experience a major trauma like wildfire may develop PTSD, though a strong support network makes one less likely to develop it. This reinforced our focus on immediate and long-term mental health support and building community networks. Additionally, USC Study (2024) found a 6% increase in anxiety-related ER visits for every 10 µg/m³ increase in wildfire PM2.5 pollution, informing our smoke mitigation efforts (mask distribution, clean air centers).
- BART Cost Saving via In-House Staff: BART News , Jan 10, 2024 – announced their new railcar project would come in \$394 million under budget. A major factor: “BART’s decision to have its own highly experienced staff do more of the engineering work in house” saved over \$100 million. We cited this as real-world proof that investing in internal government capacity (engineers, project managers) can cut costs and improve efficiency. It lent credibility to our recommendation for L.A. County to build internal expertise rather than over-relying on consultants.
- Paris Hilton Wildfire Small Business Grants: Pasadena Now, April 1, 2025 – article “Paris Hilton Helps Local Women-Owned Businesses Rebuild After Eaton Fire” details how 50 women-owned small businesses received \$25k grants each to recover, through a \$300k fund seeded by Hilton and GoFundMe donor. It quoted Paris Hilton on investing in these women as “the backbone of their communities. We included this example to show the impact of direct grants on economic recovery and to illustrate successful private-public-philanthropic partnership. Those grants totaled ~\$1.25 million and aided childcare centers, bookstores, salons, etc., demonstrating the feasibility and impact of our proposed Business Recovery Fund.
- Prescribed Burn Emissions Reduction: PRI/The World, Oct 2020 – referenced in South Pole’s blog: Northern Australian Indigenous burns led to 1/2 reduction in area burned by late dry season fires, significantly cutting emissions. One program reported preventing 100,000+ tons of CO₂ emissions annually compared to no-burning scenarios. This data supports both the effectiveness of fuel management and the viability of carbon credit funding (Australia’s programs have generated millions in credits). It gives a quantitative backbone to our environmental mitigation section.
- Local Recovery Leadership Example: City of Santa Rosa 2017 Tubbs Fire Recovery – (Reported in multiple sources, summarized): After the Tubbs Fire, Santa Rosa formed a public-private Rebuild Advocacy group that included residents, architects, and officials to streamline permitting, resulting in over 1,500 homes

permitted in two years. They adopted standardized plans and held “permit fairs.” This success story provided a template for our expedited rebuild process (showing that thousands of permits can be handled quickly if process is simplified). It also showed the value of community involvement – Santa Rosa’s Coffey Park neighborhood formed their own committees which helped shape policy (e.g., on debris removal). We mirror that with our Community Recovery Committees.

- Economic Diversification Note: Greensburg, KS case (2007) – After a tornado leveled Greensburg, the town rebuilt as a green city, attracting eco-tourism and new industry (wind farm, sustainable building research). Within 5 years they had replaced most infrastructure with energy-efficient versions and saw an uptick in visitors and grants. We mention it here as an inspiration for turning recovery into an economic renewal opportunity, akin to what we propose for communities like Malibu or others to possibly shift towards resilience tourism or innovation hubs.