

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER

April 1, 2025

**Supporting Disaster Recovery by Supporting Small Business**

Helping Altadena recover from the disastrous effects of the Eaton Fire and the significant economic disruption affecting the community’s businesses, requires Los Angeles County to consider innovative approaches to existing regulations that cut red tape, including more flexible zoning regulations. Parking lot and vacant lot activation projects can create spaces for large community gatherings that benefit businesses formerly operated or currently operate in Altadena by providing a communal space for attracting consumers, increasing visibility, boosting brand image, enhancing the customer experience, and growing revenue. The County previously approved "Food Truck Fridays" in a parking lot on North Lake Avenue in Altadena that was well received by the community and local businesses, and also successfully partnered with the nonprofit Kounkuey Design Initiative to activate a vacant County-owned property at Vermont Avenue and Manchester Avenue into a community hub for people of all ages to gather and learn about the future Evermont project, which has since been developed through a public-private partnership.<sup>1</sup>

These parking lot and vacant lot activation projects are pop-up events. County Code Section 22.188.020 authorizes the Director of Regional Planning (“Director”) to approve pop-up events, pop-up restaurants and other eating establishments, and pop-up retail and commercial uses, including alcoholic beverage sales for on-site and/or off-site consumption, through a ministerial Type I Review, which is a staff-level process that does not require a public hearing. However, these events are limited to six weekends or seven consecutive days during any 12-month period. Although the Director can approve a longer duration, the process is much more costly and time-consuming. Given that it will take several years for Altadena to recover from the devastating Eaton Fire, it would be prudent and appropriate to help local Altadena businesses by giving the Director the authority to approve parking lot and vacant lot activation projects on designated lots for a period of up to five-years through the most efficient and cost effective process possible while providing safeguards to ensure these projects are operated in a responsible manner with minimal impacts.

<sup>1111</sup> [https://www.kounkuey.org/projects/vermont\\_and\\_manchester](https://www.kounkuey.org/projects/vermont_and_manchester)

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Additionally, small businesses that survived the Eaton Fire with minimal damage, find themselves in a difficult position. Although these business have survived, their community and neighborhoods have not, resulting in a reduced customer base that shops locally. As the County has promoted “Shop Local” campaigns during the COVID-19 pandemic and “Small Business Saturday” on Thanksgiving weekend, utilizing these types of campaigns can similarly help surviving businesses post fires and keep them from closing, positively affecting both their workforce and the local community. These small businesses have experienced a severe decrease in revenue leading to a level of financial instability that threatens their existence. Maximizing the number of impacted businesses that stay open is a critical outcome of interest for the County in its response and recovery efforts. It is therefore necessary to provide funding to support continued operations of these small businesses.

Approval of these actions and projects is exempt from the National Environmental Policy Act pursuant to Code of Federal Regulations, Part 58, Section 58.34(a)(10) because they involve assistance for temporary or permanent improvements that do not alter environmental conditions and are related to activities needed to address the effects of the Eaton Fire emergency.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Regional Planning to:

1. Find that the actions and projects encompassed by this motion and the enclosed resolution, including, but not limited to response, recovery, and construction activities, are critically needed to respond to and recover from the emergency related to the Eaton Fire, and are statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to Public Resources Code, Section 21080(b)(3), and (4) and Section 15269(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines, and the Executive Orders issued by the Governor related to the Eaton Fire. Additionally, the actions and projects encompassed by the motion are categorically exempt under Sections 15301(a), 15303(e), 15304, and 15311(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines and Classes 1, 3, 4, and 11 of the County's Environmental Document Procedures and Guidelines Appendix G since they consist of operation, permitting, or minor alteration of existing uses with negligible expansion of use, or the construction of new small facilities or accessory structures; and
2. Adopt the enclosed resolution, pursuant to Government Code Section 8634, authorizing the Director to approve applications for pop-up events, pop-up restaurants and other eating establishments, and pop-up retail and commercial uses, including alcoholic beverage sales for on-site and/or off-site consumption subject to any required approvals by the California Department of Alcohol and Beverage Control, with a ministerial Type I Review pursuant to County Code Chapter 22.226 in parking lots and vacant lots on properties that have been cleared of debris in Commercial and Industrial Zones in Altadena for a period of up to five-years, consisting of an initial period of three years with two possible one-year extensions, subject to the requirements and limitations set forth therein.

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**I, FURTHER MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) to:

1. Set aside 500 Youth@Work positions in FY25-26 for youth impacted by the Eaton Fire, working with school districts, community-based organizations, the LA County Workforce Development Board, and other partners to promote these opportunities;
2. Work with the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to provide a plan in 30 days to establish a satellite America's Job Centers of California (AJCC) in Altadena to ensure priority access of worker and employer resources including job training, employer hiring and incentive supports, upskilling, resume and interview skills training, and rapid re-employment services. Services available at the temporary AJCC should include, at a minimum:
  - a. Workforce programs needed to serve displaced workers, including those that address short-term surge capacity and address workforce needs for long-term recovery;
  - b. Related services and supports like a worker equity fund that provides financial help to individuals as they complete training and transition into employment; and
  - c. Programs for impacted businesses and employers, including access to qualified candidates to meet current hiring needs, layoff aversion support, subsidized wages, and other business services.
3. Work in coordination with local municipalities including the Cities of Pasadena, Santa Monica, Malibu, Sierra Madre, and Los Angeles, the Altadena community, as well as community business organizations such as Independent Hospitality Coalition, Latino Restaurant Association, and the California Restaurant Association to take immediate steps to establish a regional public awareness campaign, along with related programs and services, and resources that both encourages the idea of "Shop/Dine/Recover Local" and promotes the fact that many commercial businesses within the Eaton, Palisades, and other fire zones are still in business, thereby ensuring their short and long-term economic resiliency. This campaign should:
  - a. Focus on awareness of small business impact as a result of wildfires,
  - b. Establish and promote a listing of all small businesses that survived the Eaton Fire and are still open in their current or temporary space in the areas immediately within or in close proximity to the fire zone;
  - c. Consider ways to promote and support these small businesses, including marketing campaigns utilizing video testimonials and advertisements, financial incentives for businesses, affordable space sharing and commercial access opportunities, capacity building, and capital and contracting access during the rebuild and for other regional events such as the 2028 Summer Olympics hosted in Los Angeles; and
4. Engage with the Altadena community, holding community engagement forums, to best understand the unique needs of the small business community in a post-Eaton Fire landscape;
5. Authorize the Director of DEO, or her designee, in consultation with County Counsel, to negotiate, execute, and amend any agreements, and necessary amendments for assistance with administration or implementation of the directives listed. The Board shall waive the requirements of Board Policy No.5.100 for these agreements. The agreements and any amendments shall be approved as to form by County Counsel; and

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6. Transfer \$850,000 from the Manufacturing Revolving Loan Fund budget, \$637,639 from the SD5 allocation of Catalytic Development Funds, and up to \$3 million from the LA County Bioscience Investment Fund to the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA), for the creation of a small business loan program that would assist the small businesses in Altadena unscathed by the Eaton Fire in the unincorporated area of Altadena but surrounded by devastation and authorize DEO's Director, or designee, to execute a funding agreement, or amendment to an existing funding agreement, with the LACDA for the transfer of the funds to LACDA.

**I, FURTHER MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors, acting as the Commissioners of the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) to:

1. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of LACDA, or his designee, in consultation with County Counsel, to accept the \$4,487,639 from the County and to accept and incorporate up to \$4,487,639 into the LACDA's approved FY 2024-25 budget as needed;
2. Authorize the Executive Director of the LACDA, or designee, to utilize up to \$850,000 in Manufacturing Revolving Loan Funds (MRLF), \$637,639 in Catalytic Development Funds, up to \$3 million from the LA County Bioscience Investment Fund, and up to \$2 million from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) de-federalized revolving loan funds for economic development activities as allowed by EDA, which includes any LACDA administrative expenses, in support of disaster relief efforts associated with the Eaton Fire in the unincorporated area of Altadena, and in consultation with County Counsel, to execute any agreements, and necessary amendments for assistance with administration and implementation of the small business loan program;
3. Authorize the Executive Director, or his designee, to execute a funding agreement, or amendments to an existing funding agreement, with the County to accept the funds from the Manufacturing Revolving Loan Fund for the creation and implementation of a small business loan program for small businesses in Altadena; and
4. Authorize the Executive Director, or his designee, to execute agreements, including sole-source agreements, with nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, service providers and other consultants and to hire or contract for LACDA positions as appropriate and necessary to implement the directives contained herein.
5. Work with the Director of DEO to ensure that repaid loans that utilized funds from the LA County Bioscience Investment Fund be returned to DEO and be reinvested in the LA County Bioscience Investment Fund.

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