

ESTABLISHING A UNIFIED PERMITTING AUTHORITY FOR THE ALTADENA ONE-STOP RECOVERY PERMITTING CENTER

Los Angeles County (County) has been impacted by severe and life-threatening windstorms and resulting wind-driven destructive fires which include the Palisades Fire, Eaton Fire, Hurst Fire, Kenneth Fire, among other fires (collectively, LA County Fires).

The estimated total damage and economic loss from the Eaton and Palisades Fires is in the range of \$250 to \$275 billion. Cumulatively, the two fires led to the loss of more than 16,000 structures, 57,000 acres burned, 29 fatalities, and 1,900 businesses damaged or destroyed, with more than 125,000 jobs impacted.

The Eaton Fire, which impacted the unincorporated community of Altadena, along with the cities of Pasadena and Sierra Madre, saw the destruction of 9,413 structures, of which 6,889 were residential, with the overwhelming majority being single-family residential. Most of those structures were located in the community of Altadena, where the County is the land use authority and the building official. Accordingly, the work ahead for the County to help the community of Altadena rebuild will be significant.

Post-fire response, the County entered into the recovery transition phase, with a focus on debris removal. To date the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has moved at an unprecedented pace and is well ahead of schedule to complete their debris removal mission, with more than 1,000 lots cleared and turned back over to the County. USACE continues to increase the number of contractors in the community and increase the pace of debris removal. As more and more lots are cleared, the desire of property owners and the community to rebuild will increase with significant pace.

On January 28, 2025, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) took significant steps to provide delegated authority to the County permitting departments, including the Departments of Regional Planning, Public Works, Fire, and Public Health to fully utilize existing resources, and apply increased resources, as necessary, to assist property owners in the reconstruction of structures damaged or destroyed by the LA County Fires.

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This assistance was to include streamlined coordination for plan review and permit issuance, development of a comprehensive permit resource guide, enhanced community outreach to impacted property owners through local information workshops, hosting one-stop workshops, development of a Concierge Fire Rebuild Coordination Team along with the development of staffing models to address a need for additional resources.

In early March 2025, the County established a One-Stop Recovery Permitting Center (One-Stop) in Altadena to assist impacted residents with rebuilding their homes in unincorporated areas. This coordinated hub brings together the key permitting Departments into a single location for a single point of interaction with the County for those who are looking to move forward with rebuilding.

While the One-Stop Center has improved accessibility and coordination, challenges remain in reconciling cross-departmental differences, interpreting overlapping regulations, and resolving code conflicts that delay the permit approval process. In addition, staffing levels for each Department vary, which creates a disjointed timeline for permit approval if a lack of resources creates disparity in the timeline for response by one of the Departments in the permitting process. These delays significantly impact residents who are already coping with the trauma of displacement and property loss.

To further streamline and accelerate the recovery process, the County must establish a single point of accountability empowered to make final permitting decisions across departmental boundaries. By formally delegating limited emergency decision-making authority to a designated Unified Permitting Authority, the County can eliminate bottlenecks and ensure consistent, timely approvals—without compromising health and safety or code compliance.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in coordination with County Counsel and the Directors of the Departments of Public Works, Regional Planning, Fire, and Public Health to designate and establish a **Unified Permitting Authority** who shall have the authority to make final determinations on residential rebuilding permit applications processed through the Altadena One-Stop Recovery Permitting Center for properties impacted by the Eaton Fire.
2. Instruct the CEO to execute Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the departments of Public Works, Regional Planning, Public Health, and Fire, outlining the scope of delegated authority to the Unified Permitting Authority, including:
 - a. Authority to resolve interdepartmental permitting conflicts in real time;
 - b. Authority to make binding decisions on permit conditions, code interpretations, and regulatory discrepancies; and
 - c. Procedures for internal consultation, documentation, and appeal, if needed.
 - d. Duration of delegation of authority will be tied to the County's emergency declaration or recovery timeline.
3. Instruct the CEO to report back in writing in 30 days with:
 - a. The name and qualifications of the appointed Unified Permitting Authority;
 - b. A summary of completed MOUs; and
 - c. Operational protocols and performance metrics for real-time decision-making, accountability, and coordination with department staff, including public facing

dashboards that provide transparency on the permitting process.

4. Direct all participating departments to assign senior-level liaisons to the One-Stop Recovery Permitting Center, to support the Unified Permitting Authority and ensure decisions are implemented without delay.

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