



Rebuilding Together

A Collaborative Workshop for the Building Industry

Event Recap and Report



LA County Recovers



Wednesday, March 26, 2025



BACKGROUND	3
PARTICIPATION	3
EVENT FEEDBACK	4
LICENSED INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS.....	4
CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES	5
BREAKOUT SESSION FEEDBACK	6
PERMIT STREAMLINING	6
RESILIENT DESIGN AND MATERIALS	8
INNOVATIVE HOUSING CONSTRUCTION	9
PRIORITIES	11
GOVERNMENT	12
PRIVATE SECTOR	12
COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS	13
LEGISLATIVE.....	14

BACKGROUND

Three Rebuilding Together events were held on Thursday, February 13 and Friday, February 14 for industry professionals to share feedback and ideas on how government and private industry can work together to facilitate rebuilding. Stakeholders recognized the shared goal of supporting residents to ensure communities are rebuilt stronger, safer, and more resilient.

Registration was full for all three events – the initial response to the Thursday event was positive and reservation capacity was hit within an hour. Two Friday sessions were subsequently added to the calendar and reached capacity.

Following a series of introductory remarks and status updates, attendees broke into four smaller sessions to hear more information about contracting opportunities, and to collaborate and share feedback on innovative ideas and best practices to rebuild.

PARTICIPATION

In total, more than 1,000 attendees registered for the event and 784 people attended at least one of the three sessions. Breakout sessions were well-attended, and LA County collected more than 500 pieces of written feedback, ideas and best practices to inform the regional rebuilding effort.

Events featured inter-agency collaborative presentations and informational booths from:

- LA County Public Works
- LA County Fire
- LA County Regional Planning
- LA County Department of Economic Opportunity
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- California Department of Industrial Relations
- Southern California Gas Company

In addition to the presentations and break out discussions, many attendees used the events as a valuable networking opportunity to meet other professionals, with various expertise, who were also interested in working together to support residents.

EVENT FEEDBACK

The Rebuilding Together event survey revealed overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees. Participants rated Public Works as excellent or good across key areas, including knowledge of subject matter, courtesy in interactions, value of information discussed, and overall event experience.

The Rebuilding Together event provided valuable insights from industry professionals on improving the rebuilding process. Below are five key themes and takeaways from attendee feedback:

1. Communication and collaboration are critical. Clearer guidance and improved communication between agencies, industry professionals, and the public are needed.
2. Process improvements and streamlining permitting processes. Attendees expressed the need for predevelopment templates and streamlined permitting processes for wildfire rebuilding. Additionally, they highlighted the need for improved coordination between departments.
3. Emerging construction innovations, such as modular construction and fire-resistant materials. Strong support was given to develop a materials guide identifying lower fire-risk materials for the rebuild.
4. Attendees emphasized a need for more structured public-private partnerships and industry collaboration and requested more engagement from key agencies to clarify contractor qualification and permitting requirements.
5. In-person support and accessibility should be returned to pre-pandemic levels, with more in-person and telephone communication opportunities.

LICENSED INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS



State of California
Contractor Licenses

789



State of California
Professional Licenses

263

State of California Contractor License Types	Participating Contractors
General Building Contractor–Residential	283
General Building Contractor–Commercial	126
Building Moving & Demolition	65
Electrical	95
Heating & Air Conditioning	31
Landscaping	16
Masonry	15
Painting	17
Plumbing	34
Roofing	25
Solar	12
Swimming Pools	7
Ceramic Mosaic Tiles	11
Other	52
TOTAL PARTICIPATING CONTRACTORS	789

State of California Professional License Types	Licensees Participating
Architecture	149
Engineering	62
Geologist	2
Land Surveyor	15
Landscape Architecture	5
Other	30
TOTAL LICENSED PROFESSIONALS	263

CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES

US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), LA County Public Works and the Department of Industrial Relations presented information regarding contracting opportunities and labor laws related to fire response.

USACE presented on the Phase 2 wildfire debris removal, with details on the current prime contractor ECC Constructors, LLC. Local firms can reach out to ECC Constructors, LLC directly to become a subcontractor. The two current solicitations the USACE has are for debris removal and environmental remediation and environmental assessment services.

LA County Public Works shared information on how to locate contracting opportunities on the Public Works website and encouraged companies to register for notification of upcoming opportunities.

The Department of Industrial Relations highlighted California labor law and specifically emergency conditions and the Immigration Worker Protection Act. The presentation outlined what workers' rights are in emergencies and education for employers to not take or threaten adverse action against employees. The speaker also covered the Immigration Worker Protection Act (AB 450) which went into effect on January 1, 2018.

BREAKOUT SESSION FEEDBACK

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Breakout sessions were focused on soliciting creative ideas about how to inform the County's rebuild efforts directly from the builders, architects, contractors, consultants, and engineers who will be carrying out the work. Each breakout session provided attendees an opportunity to provide written feedback on specific questions and share best practices and lessons learned during group discussions. Specific feedback and key takeaways from each breakout session are provided below:

PERMIT STREAMLINING

Demand for a More Efficient Permitting Process: One of the consistent concerns raised was the need for a faster and more predictable permitting process, with timelines clearly defined so professionals can set expectations with their clients. Attendees expressed a history of frustration with long wait times, conflicting guidance, and lack of inter-agency coordination under normal circumstances, and concerns about these problems worsening given the scale of the emergency were raised repeatedly.

"We need to get ground broken and concrete poured—we can't afford delays."

"We need a more obvious permitting process. Provide clear and concise checklists from the start and pre-screen the plans for major issues before accepting them for review. "

"We're stuck in limbo because we can't get clear answers on requirements."

Simplify Plan Checking: Attendees expressed the need for an easier and more efficient way to review and approve plans, with many suggesting adding more staff dedicated solely to plan checks, holding plan check hours, and setting up a dedicated, in-person help desk where industry members can meet face-to-face with plan checkers to sort out issues in real time rather than waiting on telephone calls or e-mail responses. Attendees emphasized the

need to communicate with the same plan checker consistently (i.e., not a different reviewer each time) and increasing email response turnaround.

"There is too much busy work involved in getting individual projects approved. What is essential to the review process, and what is irrelevant to the actual success of any built project? "

"I think the biggest problem in the permitting process is miscommunication between the architect and the plan checker. I think it would be good to have Zoom calls with the plan checker before the resubmission to make sure the architect answered all corrections well and there will not be additional rounds of corrections needed. "

Agency Referral Coordination: Project applicants want to know which agencies they will need permits from at the beginning of the plan check process. If they were able to go through the necessary agency approval processes simultaneously, it would significantly cut down on the time the process takes. Attendees in every session repeatedly brought up this suggestion.

"Project applicants want to know which agencies they will need permits from at the beginning of the plan check process, rather than the end."

"The ideal agency referral process looks like all agencies working together in field offices, accountability to timelines and accessibility. "

"There's too much back and forth between agencies. A one-stop shop would make this so much easier."

Need for More Information: A simplified checklist of all the steps and requirements associated with getting a project plan approved and obtaining all necessary permits is needed. EPIC-LA does not provide enough information for the building industry to know exactly what is required, and reaching out to the County for additional information is inefficient and often extends project timelines.

"Streamline a clear process for home and business owners to navigate rebuilding efforts through the public program and with private insurance. Outline clear expectations for time and cost. "

"Instead of using the first submittal as a triage, provide a checklist so that the first submittal can be approved more quickly, and work can move forward. "

"Is it possible for the building departments to come together and give us a resource sheet with everything we need to do? "

Opportunities for Advocacy: Attendees voiced concerns about government policies and practices being implemented without private industry input, and expressed the desire to provide feedback on what would help them support their clients to rebuild. A couple specific examples are provided below.

1. Concerns regarding the current Temporary Housing regulation – in particular, the demand that ADUs built now must be removed in two years. Attendees shared feedback that investing money in constructing an ADU, only to tear it down in two years, will not make financial sense for most homeowners, and attendees strongly encouraged a policy change which would allow these ADUs to be permanent.

"A policy shift to allow ADUs to be permanent would provide much-needed relief for fire victims who are already facing enormous rebuilding costs. "

"Many can't afford adding ADUs on site just for temporary housing. Review and simplify the process for owners to get a temporary certificate of occupancy at an acceptable phase of primary construction. "

"If an ADU is allowed to be constructed before the main structure, can a temporary certificate of occupancy be issued for three to five years to allow for the main residence to be built out fully? "

2. Another concern was the need for surveys, and the possibility for the government to fund bulk surveys. There are not enough surveyors to individually survey each site in an expedited timeline, and if the government could fund block-by-block surveys, this would make a dramatic impact on the ability of homeowners to quickly rebuild, as surveys will be necessary before rebuilding.

RESILIENT DESIGN AND MATERIALS

Fire-Resilient Materials: Attendees expressed that ember intrusion remains the most significant concern. They also suggested that innovative materials may be beneficial in rebuilding a more fire-resilient Los Angeles. Rebuilding with a priority on fire-resilient materials, such as concrete and metal roofing, can help minimize fire risk and help better protect communities from the next major wildfire, however they do come at a great cost. Attendees noted Zone 0 defensible space regulations now require at least five feet of noncombustible material around homes and suggested an array of fire-resilient materials and methods. New regulations regarding fire hazard severity zones and Chapter 7A compliance will improve resilience through mandatory inspections and stronger building codes.

"The most fire-resistant materials are metal studs, stucco, concrete and alternative or composite roofs. "

"We should be looking into concrete, brick and other earthen materials like adobe, clay and rammed earth. "

Ember Intrusion: The most critical factor that can be addressed at a low cost in wildfire resilience is preventing buildings from ember intrusion. Wind-driven embers are a leading cause of home ignition during wildfires, often entering through vents, gaps or accumulating on combustible materials. Fire-resistant building materials, advanced ventilation systems and strategic home hardening techniques are essential to reducing the risk of ember-related ignitions.

"100% fireproofing is hard to obtain. Using ignition- and ember-resistant material is much easier to start."

"Well-placed trees help moves embers away from structures. "

"Fire spread can be alleviated. Fire embers propelled by high winds are and were a leading cause of fire spread. Most fires begin from embers on roofs. Metal roofing has better resilience and provides a better reinforcement/fire rating. "

Educating Homeowners on Landscape and Structural Design: Landscape management and planting vegetation with low flammability are vital in preventing fire spread and ember intrusion, particularly around homes. With current Zone 0 regulations, and to avoid catastrophic consequences, proximity to trees and the design of defensible spaces should be considered during the rebuild process. Attendees also expressed a desire to leverage the value of native vegetation and incorporate centuries-old indigenous landscape management practices to increase regional fire resilience.

"Landscapes should be designed to prevent the ladder effect, which ignites large trees. "

"The most important methods for fire resilience are management of defensible space, responsible vegetation management and dead wood/brush removal. "

INNOVATIVE HOUSING CONSTRUCTION

Unprecedented Scale Requires Innovation: Given that the Eaton and Palisades fires were some of the largest, most destructive natural disasters in Los Angeles history, the sheer scale of the rebuild effort seems daunting to many. Many innovative technologies and tools exist to help speed up the rebuild but the unprecedented scale of the disaster causes concerns about implementation. Because LA County is committed to not maintaining "business as usual" processes following the wildfires, innovations and atypical avenues, collaborations and ideas should be explored to meet the unprecedented levels of rebuilding required, such as neighborhood traffic control plans for trucks and machinery during the cleanup and rebuilding process.

"We can learn from the days of the Sears housing kits post World War to address the massive need to construct quickly. "

"Allowing and sharing solutions that can be applied to those that live within the same block or blocks can help speed up the process. Can we possibly assign a block or two to a private sector company so that the rebuild is more cost effective? "

"County can vet new materials with the insurance industry—insurance requirements for fire protective materials are more stringent than county requirements currently. "

Lack of Efficiency and Coordination: The permitting, plan check, and review processes are seen as cumbersome, inefficient, and poorly coordinated. Attendees expressed a lack of clear guidance on the various department requirements and often received conflicting or incorrect information from different agencies. Suggestions included making a Countywide checklist of what is needed and from whom for the entire rebuild process and increasing the number and availability of staff to respond to questions and clarifications in a timely manner.

"Inter-agency communication is the biggest bottleneck in the process. "

"Is it possible for the building departments to come together and give us a resource sheet with all the things we need to do? What are the big things that the building department really cares about in this process, and how can you get us additional information so that we can help the streamlining process on your end? "

"Why does it take weeks for departments to sign off on simple paperwork?"

Support for Prefabricated and Modular Housing: Modular and prefabricated homes were cited as an innovative solution to help rebuild Los Angeles quickly while avoiding many potential delays or timeline extensions that occur during the permitting process. Many emphasized the need to dispel misconceptions about prefabricated housing units, highlighting that modern prefabricated homes can be high-quality and aesthetically pleasing without all looking exactly the same.

"Prefab homes are not 'grandma's trailers'; they can be well-designed, high-quality homes."

"Speed and affordability should be top priorities—modular checks both boxes."

"Why reinvent the wheel? Other states already use prefab housing successfully."

Compliance/Regulatory Challenges: Attendees expressed that the main challenge for overseas manufacturers looking to help Los Angeles rebuild is meeting U.S. codes and standards. There are many innovative and efficient methods for rebuilding at scale that also offer fireproofing benefits, like 3D printed concrete or cold-form steel modular homes, but U.S. standards limit the ability to advance and deploy these technologies at scale.

"We need a pathway for modular housing approvals, so we're not stuck in red tape."

"Somehow the regulatory testing process needs to be accelerated for new fire resistive products to be used in construction. Can't take years... it must be fast tracked. ""

"The local building code should allow for more types of construction, like prefabricated houses or modular units, to help us recover from this. ""

Affordability Concerns: Using fire-resistant materials will cost more. Building industry folks want to know what products they can use, how much is available and what costs are associated with these materials, so that they can give their clients a more accurate idea of pricing and time needed at the upfront. Some suggested providing incentives for building with fire-resistant building materials, setting up materials warehouses to compile and store products specifically for Los Angeles rebuilds, developing material supplier portals so architects and designers can be aware of local material availability and lead times, and expanding private-public partnerships to explore how to bring down costs for individual homeowners.

"If people were to pre-purchase their long-term lead items in advance, could there be a partnership with the county to use warehouse space to store them until they are needed? "

"Bulk purchasing and access to materials can mitigate inflation. "

"Can prefabricated housing be employed as bridge housing until a new residence is constructed, then converted to an ADU to provide future income to complete the build out? "

PRIORITIES

Government agencies and private sector professionals acknowledge that rebuilding efforts will require an "all hands-on deck" approach. Stakeholders share a unified commitment to supporting residents in the rebuilding process, emphasizing the need for investment, cooperation, and cross-sector collaboration.

During the Rebuilding Together events, participants engaged in collaborative discussions to identify key priorities for government agencies, private industry, community organizers, and policymakers. These priorities, outlined below by stakeholder group, will help guide efforts to achieve shared goals and ensure a coordinated approach to supporting residents in their rebuilding journey.

GOVERNMENT

- Provide improved access to plan checkers by adding staff dedicated solely to plan checks, holding plan check hours, and setting up inter-agency "One-Stop" shops.
- Improve inter-agency coordination so permit applicants can go through the necessary agency approval processes simultaneously.
- Provide additional guidance and technical bulletins on requirements for getting a project plan approved and obtaining all necessary permits.
- Listen to feedback and advocacy from industry professionals on issues that affect their ability to support their clients to rebuild and adapt policies as appropriate.
- Provide example submittals that building industry can reference to ensure they are providing the correct information.
- Support preapproved plans and catalogs to simplify rebuilding processes and maintain uniqueness of local neighborhoods.
- Support prefabricated housing, modular housing and other innovative construction techniques, that can facilitate expeditious rebuilding.
- Develop and share a list of licensed contractors, engineers, architects, that residents can turn to when starting the rebuild process.
- Continue to facilitate networking opportunities for private industry professionals to meet other architects, engineers, consultants and contractors.
- Develop and share maps of the utility rebuild plans and progress so private industry can plan a path forward for clients.
- Consider instituting traffic control and one-way streets for trucks and machinery for efficiency during the cleanup and rebuilding process.

PRIVATE SECTOR

- Develop housing catalogs for residents and clients to simplify rebuilding processes and maintain uniqueness of local neighborhoods, such as the Foothill Catalog:
[The Foothill Catalog Foundation](#)
- Develop centralized online databases to track what rebuild materials are available nearby, how much they cost, and how to get them. There is a firm in Holland that does this, and it helps provide more accurate cost and time estimates to clients.
- Create lists of fireproof and fire-resistant materials that are accepted by insurances.

- Encourage clients to rebuild with a priority on fire-resilient materials, such as concrete and metal roofing.
- Continue to innovate water resource solutions, such as water curtains and emergency sprinkler systems that draw from pool water.
- Develop professional organization trainings and resources to ensure existing structures are designed adequately for fire safety, including the requirements for Zone 0 defensible spaces and updated guidelines for fire-resistant materials.
- Continue to explore economy of scale cost savings opportunities for multiple clients who are rebuilding at the same time.
- Compile lists of resources and contact information for industry professionals to encourage collaboration and idea-sharing.
- Continue to explore networking opportunities for private industry professionals to meet other architects, engineers, consultants and contractors.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS

- Continue to provide resources for residents who are looking to rebuild but have little to no experience with residential construction, such as the American Institute of Architects Pasadena Foothill's "Ask an Architect" program that pairs residents with architects for free consulting service: <https://www.aiapf.org/wildfiresupport>.
- Provide community outreach initiatives focused on educating homeowners about the need for defensible space, the role of landscape management, and how to maintain their properties to prevent fire risks.
- Create networking opportunities for residents to meet private industry professionals to meet other architects, engineers, consultants and contractors.
- Provide a virtual suite of resources to model what is offered at the One-Stop Shop locations for folks who are not able to travel or don't have time to attend in person.
- Share one-stop locations and any other resources available for the building industry to be able to talk to agencies and get their questions and issues answered.

LEGISLATIVE

- Advocate for tax relief for rebuilding costs that are not covered by insurance from the State and Federal government, such as income tax relief for out-of-pocket costs.
- Advocate for funding to support water companies to restore service and increase resilience of their systems.
- Advocate for funding to expand access to the public sewer system.
- Advocate for funding sources for community surveys to identify property lines.
- Advocate for funding sources for community resilience and shared firefighting infrastructure.
- Advocate for funding sources to offset battery storage costs that remain a barrier, making backup power inaccessible to some homeowners.
- Explore policy changes that allow direct solar use to enhance home independence.
- Develop new regulations for fire hazard severity zones and Chapter 7A compliance to improve resilience through mandatory inspections and stronger building codes.
- Mandate noncombustible materials for landscaping within a certain radius around structures and requirements for maintaining clear zones free of vegetation or combustible materials.



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