

LA County Forward: Blueprint for Rebuilding

Preserve Community.
Rebuild Sustainably.
Return Equitably.

JULY 2025



Executive Summary

Context

The Eaton and Palisades Fires are one of California's most destructive disasters in recent history. The fires destroyed or damaged 18,000 homes and structures, displaced nearly 200,000 Los Angeles County residents, and tragically claimed the lives of 30 people.

Los Angeles County has worked with city, State and federal government leaders to support the fastest major cleanup in American history – clearing more than 2.5 million tons of debris from more than 10,000 properties about six months faster than similar past disasters. The success of this effort is due in large part to the unprecedented coordination among city, County, State and federal partners, including FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers.

As the debris-removal work comes to an end and communities set their sights on the next phase of recovery, Los Angeles County embraces its role to lead local rebuilding efforts in unincorporated areas and foster conditions for a successful and equitable reconstruction and recovery in both city and County areas.

Over the last six months, the County has provided direct financial relief to homeowners, renters, small businesses and nonprofits. We set up community-based recovery centers to connect residents with in-person support, services and resources. We have also partnered with government, business leaders, experts and community stakeholders to understand what residents need to rebuild their homes and businesses efficiently.

The transition from debris removal to reconstruction is a pivotal point in our communities' recovery journey.

The forthcoming *LA County Forward: Blueprint for Rebuilding* will set out the necessary conditions for a successful recovery effort and will provide a roadmap for how the County will work with its State and city partners, along with residents,

community stakeholders, and private industry to speed up construction timelines, reduce costs, and support the workforce we need to rebuild communities impacted by the fires.

The Road Ahead

The lessons learned from the first six months will continue to guide us as we rapidly move into the next phase. We will continue to be a conduit for residents who need services, helping community members navigate the rebuilding process, understand the services and assistance available to them, and get what they need during rebuilding.

Committed to saving time and leveraging economies of scale to bring down costs

Our objectives are straightforward:

- Support a feasible financial path to return
- Accelerate permitting and inspections
- Grow the pool of builders and materials to achieve scale and lower costs
- Ensure critical infrastructure is in place
- Mobilize the workforce and coordinate delivery
- Bring back everyday services and public assets

Delivering on these objectives requires ongoing coordinated efforts in the months ahead between the County and State and local governments, private-sector, community organizations, local residents and businesses.

Together, we have the responsibility and the opportunity to deliver with and for residents in their time of need – not just to rebuild the structures that were lost, but to build back stronger, safer and more resilient communities. By staying clear-eyed about the challenges and committed to practical, people-first solutions, we can help give residents a path to return home.

Together, we can Preserve Community. Rebuild Sustainably. Return Equitably.

Coordinating a Full-Scale, Community-Driven Reconstruction

In the months since the fires, LA County officials have been listening and responding to the needs of residents, business owners and communities impacted by the disasters, to help them stabilize and recover.

The County mobilized quickly to aid in recovery efforts and deliver meaningful early results for the communities impacted by the fires:

- **Supporting the fastest post-disaster debris removal operation** in California history, completing work nearly six months ahead of prior large-scale recovery efforts, thanks to unprecedented coordination across city, County, State and federal partners, including FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- **Cutting permitting costs** by deferring or refunding Department of Public Works and Department of Regional Planning permitting fees that can exceed \$20,000 per household
- **Deploying more than \$51 million in direct financial relief** to homeowners, renters, small businesses and nonprofits
- **Establishing multi-use recovery centers** to connect residents with in-person support, services and resources
- **Speeding up the review process** by creating resources for builders, including a library of pre-approved rebuild designs and self-inspection for licensed architects and engineers

As debris removal concludes and reconstruction accelerates, many more residents are facing a new set of challenges as they prepare to break ground. Every reconstruction project is unique—but many residents are confronting similar issues at the same time. For first-time rebuilders particularly, these include navigating a complex permitting process and evaluating the financial ability to rebuild, among others. For these shared challenges, the County is stepping in and working across government and the private sector to deliver large-scale solutions that help get homes and businesses rebuilt efficiently.

We have heard from residents that they want clarity on the path forward. The intent of the forthcoming *Blueprint for Rebuilding* is to provide the roadmap to organize stakeholders around common objectives and focus resources where they are needed most. Throughout this next phase, our guiding principle remains clear: use the collective power of Los Angeles County and its partners to deliver for its people. By leveraging the size, scale and scope of the recovery effort, we can create efficiencies that save residents time and money—from lower permitting fees and streamlined approvals to savings on materials and coordinated infrastructure upgrades.

With the right plan centered on community needs and a focus on taking action, we can deliver for impacted residents during this critical moment. This approach not only accelerates the path back home for individuals, it helps entire communities rebuild stronger, safer and more affordably.



Priorities for Reconstruction

To support efficient rebuilding, the County has identified six priority areas of focus that the County, with its State and local partners, must focus on to maximize the support for residents and businesses get so they can return to their communities.



Supporting a feasible financial path to return

Lower upfront costs to make it more affordable for residents to return

Help families and businesses **access needed financial support** to cover gaps



Accelerating permitting and inspections

Scale plan check and inspectors to stay ahead of demand

Streamline the process and provide support so people can start rebuilding sooner



Growing the pool of builders and materials to achieve scale

Support the scale up of builders to give residents options and drive down costs

Coordinate **materials supply** to reduce bottlenecks and surges



Ensuring critical infrastructure is in place

Make sure homes have timely **access to utility services** such as water, gas, power and internet

Work with utilities to build back **more modern, reliable and resilient infrastructure**



Mobilizing the workforce and coordinating delivery

Support the training and hiring of more workers to fill gaps for the rebuild

Help coordinate **logistics and delivery** to speed rebuilding and reduce bottlenecks



Bringing back everyday services and public assets

Accelerate return of essential services – like childcare, healthcare – to support resident return

Rebuild critical public infrastructure like parks and schools to make neighborhoods livable

Targeted Actions to Leverage Economies of Scale And Drive an Efficient Reconstruction

It is not enough to lay out a plan, or a list of priorities. We must take action. These below actions represent the latest set of many actions the County and its State and local partners must take in the weeks and months ahead to pave the path to an efficient reconstruction:



Supporting a feasible financial path

WAIVING REQUIREMENTS AND LOWERING REBUILDING COSTS – LA County has been working closely with the State since January, leading to multiple reforms cutting red tape, and is continuing to look for ways that the Newsom Administration can waive codes that do not impact life and safety, including requirements for rooftop solar and storage, electrification and other new efficiency standards, and is aligning local permitting rules to match. This will speed up the rebuilding process and save the average resident up to \$30,000 in costs during construction, while giving individual homeowners choices about how they want to proceed on their individual construction projects.

EXPEDITING PROPERTY TAX RELIEF – Residents whose property was significantly damaged or destroyed are entitled to have their property tax reduced. The County is taking extra steps to reach out and accelerate reassessments so that all property owners receive the tax relief they are entitled to. These reassessments can save homeowners \$3,000–\$10,000 per year, depending on property value – money they can put into reconstruction loans or to fill insurance gaps. The County Assessor has provided relief by reassessing and lowering tax bills for 17,100 parcels already – roughly 75% of those impacted by the fire. The County will continue efforts to process 2,900 submitted claims by Summer 2025 and support the roughly 3,000 property owners who have not yet filed claims.



Accelerating permitting & inspections

PREPARING FOR GROWING DEMAND – The County is contracting additional permitting and inspection support to further shorten turnaround times and speed approvals. We have created an expedited permit review process for like-for-like rebuilds and pre-approved plans, launched a public dashboard that tracks permit turnaround times for full transparency, piloted self-certification for licensed architects and engineers, and deferred Department of Public Works and Department of Regional Planning permitting fees that can exceed \$20,000 per household. The County is contracting additional permitting and inspection support to further shorten turnaround times and speed approvals.



Ensuring critical infrastructure is in place

UNDERGROUNDING OVERHEAD UTILITIES – As we build back our communities, the County, in partnership with the State, is directing the undergrounding of electric, gas and telecommunications infrastructure. Together with utility providers, we are aiming to build more modern, reliable and resilient infrastructure to meet the communities' needs, both today and in the future, by burying more than 150 miles of power lines and telecommunications equipment underground. This massive undertaking will increase public safety and reduce future fire risk.

