



2025 ANNUAL MEETING

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

A Frank Discussion about the Palisades Fire

MONDAY, MARCH 17 ★ 7:00PM

Special Guests

Mayor Karen Bass

Councilwoman Traci Park

LAFD Assistant Chief Joe Everett

LAPD Deputy Chief Gerald Woodyard

Food and beverages served 6:00pm – 7:00pm

Brentwood School East Campus

Middle School Auditorium

Go to **www.brentwoodhomeowners.org** to register

President's Letter

A Message from Thelma Waxman

On January 7, we watched in horror as the Palisades Fire destroyed a beloved neighboring community and came dangerously close to swallowing up Brentwood. We grieved with our friends who lost everything and thought, there but for the grace of God (and our firefighters) goes Brentwood.



Devastation along PCH.

While experts conduct after incident investigations and prepare reports, Brentwood residents (as well as Palisades residents) have questions about what happened before and during the fire and what steps the city is taking to prevent another catastrophic fire. We are looking forward to having Mayor Bass and Councilwoman Park as well as LAPD and LAFD staff that were on the ground with the incident command answer these questions at our annual meeting.

Unfortunately, Brentwood residents are familiar with evacuations and wind driven wildfires, that is why BHA took steps last year to become a California recognized Fire Safe Council that includes Crestwood Hills. The mission of **FireSafe Brentwood** (the council's name) is to prepare the Brentwood community for the next wildfire by educating its residents on how to minimize risk to their homes, providing access to experts and resources to assist in fire prevention, and building a strong community partnership with each other as well as the first responders so everyone is ready for the next wildfire.

The test of our mission came during the Palisades Fire. Thanks to our fire safe council work, we had established relationships with first responders and government officials that allowed us to get accurate, real-time information and assistance when needed. BHA was then able to communicate that information to its members through daily (sometimes twice daily!) emails that provided invaluable information.

You will find important information on **hardening your home**, **fire smart landscaping** and **creating defensible space** within this newsletter. I hope you will save it and refer to it as you prepare to minimize your property's risk to wildfire. You will also find articles on the threat to zoning for single family homes and our efforts to create more neighborhood watch groups. While seemingly not fire-related, both these topics are relevant to wildfire and the community's response to it. High-density housing significantly increases fire risk, as fires can easily spread between closely spaced structures. Having neighborhoods and streets connected with WhatsApp groups enables quick dissemination of time sensitive information that can save lives.

Piggybacking on our fire safe council activities, **FireSafe Brentwood** is currently working with MySpace:LA to establish multiple Firewise Community Sites within BHA boundaries and Crestwood Hills that will help ALL Brentwood residents implement the fire mitigation strategies mentioned in this newsletter. If nothing else, January 7 taught us that it is not enough to have one house hardened to fire, ALL houses need to do it. That is why 2025's **Brentwood Strong** theme will be

It Starts with Us

Preserving Our Neighborhood

Single Family Zones Saved in LA Housing Element...

There are times when BHA sends out a call to action, asking you to send emails or letters to elected officials about some issue. The hot topic of 2024 was the Housing Element. A shout out to BHA members! You responded big time, helping to keep out further development in our single-family neighborhoods.

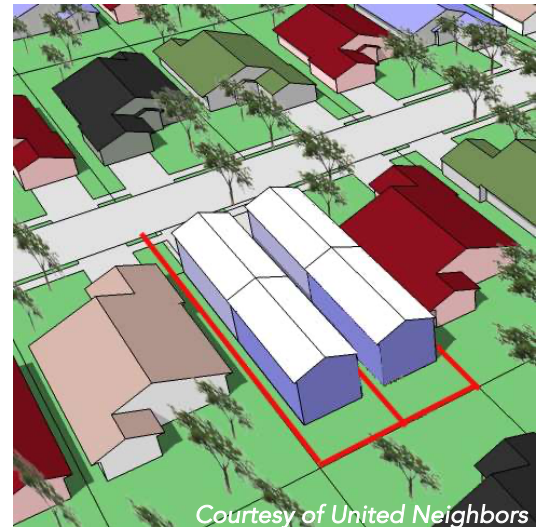
The details can be pretty boring, but the bottom line is the Los Angeles City Council approved the rezoning plan to build almost 490,000 housing units required by the state through 2029. BUT the measure exempts single-family zones along with Historic Districts and Rent Stabilized Housing zones. This is a huge turnaround from where the process started two years ago.

United Neighbors, a grassroots organization of neighborhood councils, homeowners' associations and many other organizations, came together over two years to prove that enough housing could be built on commercial corridors. A 165-page document of maps with overlays that showed how unnecessary it was to add density to residential neighborhoods was compiled and presented to the Planning Department. It revised the original rezoning plan, and the City Council approved it unanimously on December 10, 2024. BHA attended and spoke at zoom meetings and hearings, registered our position with a myriad of officials and received your help. Thank you for answering our call to action. We will need your help again.

...But Still Under Threat from State

State Senator Scott Weiner has just introduced a new bill, SB677, that *"strengthens SB 9... a landmark accomplishment that sought to legalize duplexes across the state and functionally end single family zoning."* Passed in 2022, SB9 allows one single family zoned lot to be split into two and have four homes built on the lot (two homes and two ADUs).

SB 677 makes several changes that would "address land use decisions designed to impede the law's applicability, regarding setbacks, upzonings, height limits, lot coverage limitations, access requirements, and other objective design standards and permitting requirements." As the Palisades begins to rebuild this new law would force LA to approve more housing and increase density in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. This goes against what fire science experts have concluded, based on their research of major fires: **High-density housing significantly increases fire risk, as fires can easily spread between closely spaced structures.** We will need your help again as we follow this new bill and its potential to put our community at risk.



Fire Smart Landscaping

Trees and Fire Safety

Analysis of the Palisades and Eaton Fires has shown that the primary fuel was structures. Homes burned because embers ignited buildings, fences, and other flammable materials—not because of trees. Yet trees are often scapegoated, leading to unnecessary destruction of mature canopy that could help prevent fire spread.

Proper maintenance is the key to fire safety. According to a University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR) guidance document, fire-safe landscaping does not mean removing all vegetation but rather ensuring that plants are well-maintained, hydrated, and properly pruned. Similarly, the U.S. Geological Survey has found that lightly irrigated native shrubs can actually reduce fire hazard around homes.



California Bay Tree



Oak Tree



Southern California Black Walnut Tree

When properly maintained, trees play a crucial role in fire mitigation:

1. Moisture retention – Large trees increase humidity and reduce overall dryness, making landscapes less flammable.
2. Soil stability – Trees have deep roots that prevent erosion and mudslides, which are major post-fire hazards.
3. Wind and ember control – Tree canopies can catch and slow flying embers, preventing them from reaching homes.

Aerial images of burn areas consistently show that mature trees, especially native species, often survive fires while homes and other structures are destroyed. In the Eaton Fire, a row of deodar cedars survived intact, providing a natural ember barrier. Similarly, oaks—widely recognized as fire-resistant due to their thick bark and moisture-retaining leaves—have been shown to catch flying embers in their canopy. One of Southern California’s top fire experts, Alexandra Syphard, who has analyzed 10 years of Southern California fire data, found that homes surrounded by grass were more likely to burn than homes with trees.

There are many resources available to help homeowners landscape for wildfire protection, these websites are just a few: **Sustainable Defensible Space**, **Thomas Payne Foundation**, **UC Agriculture and Natural Resources** and **CalFire**.

Let’s carefully maintain the trees we have and recognize their immense value—not just for fire safety, but for climate resilience, habitat, health, and our overall quality of life.

Hardening Your Home

Or How to Keep Embers Out

Dr. Jon Keeley, a senior research scientist with the U.S. Geological Survey and expert on fire ecology, recently spoke at a BHA meeting to Brentwood and Palisades community members about the Eaton and Palisades fires. He observed that the Palisades and Eaton fires were not unusual, but they were unique in their destruction. The destructive nature of these fires was due to extreme wind speeds and the ability of embers to spread the fire across multiple blocks.

Most homes burn due to embers rather than direct flames, so focusing on preventing ember entry is crucial. That is why, the most important thing you can do is to not only create defensible space, but to harden your home. According to Dr. Keeley, the most important features of a home that prevent wind-born ember penetration are

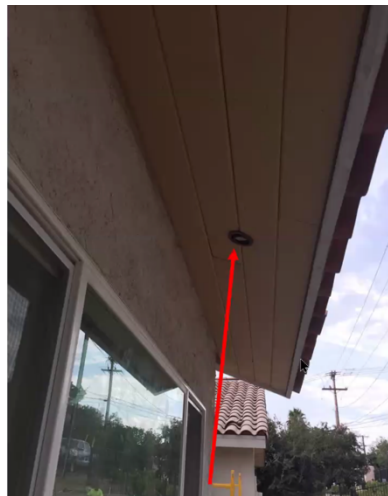
- Enclosed eaves
- Fine mesh vent screen covers
- Multi-paned windows
- Removal of all dry leaves or branches on roofs or in gutters
- Removal of wooden fences near home in Zone 0

While Dr. Keeley recommends keeping vegetation and wood fences and other items directly away from your home that can act as fuel in the fire, he does not believe you should have total clearance of vegetation within 100 feet of your home. The downside to having total clearance is that the laminar flow of winds carries embers right into the house. Trees may help protect homes by catching embers, contrary to some conventional wisdom (see page 4 for more on this).

Open Eaves



Closed Eaves



Screened Vents



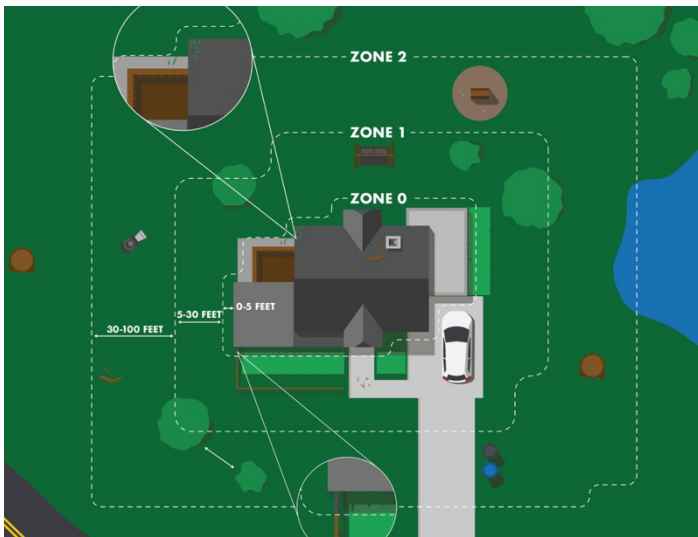
For more information on how to retrofit your home visit Cal Fire's website readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/hardening-your-home/ or the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety ibhs.org/wildfireready/.

Understanding Zone 0 & Defensible Space

What You Need to Know

Defensible space is the buffer between your house and the surrounding area. Adequate defensible space acts as a barrier to slow or halt the progress of fire that would otherwise engulf your property. It also helps ensure the safety of firefighters defending your home. **The first five feet from your home is the most important.** Keeping the area closest to buildings, structures, and decks clear will prevent embers from igniting materials that can spread the fire to your home. The majority of homes lost to wildfire are ignited by flying embers, which can travel miles ahead of the active front of wildfires. In the Palisades Fire, it was reported that embers traveled two to three miles.

On February 6, 2025, the Governor directed the State Board of Forestry to advance implementation of regulations known as "Zone 0," which requires an **ember-resistant zone within five feet of structures located in the highest fire severity zone in the state's Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps.** Although the state law regarding Zone 0 was adopted in August 2020 and slated to take effect 2023, the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection has yet to issue the regulations governing Zone 0. The agency is still in the process of making the rules, which they state are complex because of the cost of retrofitting homes to meet the ember-free standard. This lack of clarification has led to confusion over what is allowed in Zone 0. Until the rules are issued by the Board of Forestry, Cal Fire recommends taking the following steps (readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/defensible-space/):



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- **Use hardscape** like gravel, pavers, or concrete. No combustible bark or mulch.
- **Remove all dead and dying plants**, weeds, and debris (leaves, needles, etc.) from your roof, gutter, deck, porch, stairways, and under any areas of your home.
- **Remove all branches within 10 feet of any chimney** or stovepipe outlet.
- **Limit combustible items** (like outdoor furniture and planters) on top of decks.
- **Relocate firewood and lumber** to Zone 2.
- **Replace combustible fencing, gates, and arbors** attached to the home with noncombustible alternatives.
- **Consider relocating garbage and recycling containers** outside this zone.

It is important to note that Insurance companies may require the removal of ALL vegetation. The Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety, under its Wildfire Ready guidelines, recommends removing all vegetation, grass, weeds, shrubs, plants, and trees from Zone 0 (more info at ibhs.org/wildfireready/). BHA will update our members on the latest rules as they are published.

Protecting Our Neighborhood

Neighborhood Watch

One of the best ways Brentwood residents can improve public safety and prevent crime is by establishing a Neighborhood Watch. In 2024, BHA worked with our members to establish a number of Neighborhood Watch groups, where members learn how to make their homes more secure, watch out for each other and stay connected during emergencies, as we recently experienced with the Palisades fire and the ensuing evacuations. Watch groups are not made up of vigilantes. We are people committed to being the extra eyes and ears for preventing and reporting crime and assisting neighbors.



Neighborhood Watch Block Captains represent their respective blocks or neighborhoods, coordinate community meetings to facilitate communication between neighbors, and work with BHA to pass along critical information from government agencies specific to those neighborhoods. BHA member Rick Lugash successfully created a group for his Kenter neighborhood within the past year, which now totals about 30 residents, who have joined a “What’s App” community to stay informed and immediately alert one another of important news. According to Rick, the greatest benefit is the connection between neighbors. As a result of Neighborhood Watch and the app, “We have never been more connected as a community than we are now.”

If you are interested in establishing Neighborhood Watch, contact BHA for help on getting started. If you have already established a community group, we ask the Block Captains to email BHA at info@brentwoodhomeowners.org and let us know 1. The streets covered by your group, and 2. The number of homes participating.

We are stronger together when we’re connected!

please let us know about any name or address corrections

Your Membership Matters

Join over 1,500 of your neighbors and become a member of the largest homeowners association in Brentwood—BHA. Your membership is vital to protecting our quality of life and preserving our neighborhoods, which are being increasingly threatened by crime, fire danger, excessive traffic and unreasonable development.

Membership in Brentwood Homeowners Association (BHA) provides you with valuable benefits:

- Up-to-date information regarding City services and regulations that govern your neighborhood.
- Communication of reliable and important information during crises like the Palisades Fire.
- Opportunity to hear about proposed developments in our community and changes in our city's ordinances before they happen.
- Gives you a voice in City Hall to communicate your concerns and help protect our community

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO JOIN NOW
AND REGISTER FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING**

www.brentwoodhomeowners.org