

NORC Business Plan Proposal

LA Wildfire Recovery and Rebuilding: Pacific Palisades Resident Preferences and Priorities

Presented to

The Pacific Palisades Community
Council

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NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) is pleased to present this proposal to conduct research on behalf of the Pacific Palisades Community Council (PPCC) to measure the preferences of Pacific Palisades residents for rebuilding and reimagining the future of the community after the fire. The research will provide rigorous evidence for PPCC to inform policymakers and stakeholders about the wishes of the community and to help shape the debate and planning to reflect residents' preferences.

NORC is an independent, not-for-profit research organization that partners with government, corporate, and community organizations around the world to inform critical decisions facing society. NORC has extensive experience conducting high impact research specifically for communities to prepare for, manage, and recover after disasters like the LA wildfires. NORC brings all the necessary subject matter, methodological, and research experience to partner with PPCC for a successful project.

Below we outline our research expertise, the proposed research approach, and the project schedule and pricing. If you have any questions or would like different specifications than those proposed here, we welcome a discussion about the details of the proposal.

NORC's Research Expertise

The project will be spearheaded by Jennifer Benz, Ph.D. and Joy Moini, M.P.P., with support from NORC's research and operations departments.

[Benz](#) is Vice President of Public Affairs and Media Research and Deputy Director of The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Benz has expertise in measuring awareness, understanding, and perceptions of public policy issues and her research frequently focuses on citizen confidence in democratic and political institutions. Benz directed NORC's research, described below, on community resilience and recovery after Superstorm Sandy.

[Moini](#) brings over 20 years of experience as a senior policy analyst and a director of research department operations. Her research expertise spans organizational design and management, strategic planning, governance, and program evaluation, with a strong focus on translating research into actionable insights for policy and implementation. Moini spent 20 years at the RAND Corporation prior to joining NORC and is based in Santa Monica.

Our Capabilities

NORC has significant experience conducting research that informs policymakers and community stakeholders as they plan for, manage, or recover from disasters, both in California and nationwide. These include:

[Mapping and understanding audiences in California's neighborhoods at risk for disaster events to improve community resilience.](#) This project, conducted on behalf of California Volunteers and the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, gathered and mapped public data sources to identify and engage neighborhoods at risk for disaster events. Researchers conducted a survey in more than 100 of the most vulnerable communities identified through the mapping process to learn about the social cohesion and connectedness of residents and improve community responsiveness. NORC provided findings to partners to deploy

communication strategies that increase community relationships, resilience and volunteerism. Our analysis included an audience segmentation for tailored materials and messaging.

The diversity of California’s neighborhoods creates the need to not only use a range of data sources to identify the areas of greatest need, but also to develop communications strategies that are not “one size fits all.” NORC can bring our expertise in GIS mapping, surveys with harder-to-reach populations, public health communication, and community engagement to assist targeted LA fire recovery efforts and help decisionmakers plan for a more resilient future.

Community resilience in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. The AP-NORC Center conducted a national survey of Americans about disaster preparation and recovery after the 2012 disaster and found that as a result of Superstorm Sandy, many affected Americans said that they turned to family and friends, both near and far, as well as neighbors, for support or assistance. About a third of the affected region reached out to nearby friends, family, and neighbors for help in the aftermath of the storm. Far fewer affected Americans turned to the government for support or assistance. The survey provided an in-depth look at the effects of the disaster on American’s everyday lives, including the level of disruption to school attendance, work, basic necessities such as access to water, power, heat, and communication methods, as well as progress toward recovery.

Home fire-preparedness evaluations. NORC conducted annual surveys to inform the Red Cross’ evolving fire preparedness efforts. Beginning in 2015, NORC evaluated the efficacy of the Red Cross Home Fire Campaign by surveying and comparing two groups—households that participated in the program and those that didn’t. In 2023, we also assessed the efficacy of the relatively new Wildlife Preparedness Program using a similar approach. Each year, we work closely with the Red Cross to update our methodologies, determine the most salient survey questions, and provide additional insights through special projects. Our close, multi-year partnership allows us to better understand how the program is evolving over time and to adapt our evaluations to best meet the Red Cross’s needs. Our evaluations have documented how the Red Cross’s efforts save lives. Notably, we found in-home visits to be particularly effective at preparing households for a fire. Our initial evaluation of the Wildfire Preparedness Program in 2023 also showed that households which agreed to an in-home visit were more likely to be signed up for local emergency alert systems, have packed a “Go Bag”, and have a plan in the event of an evacuation order.

Overview of Research Goals and Approach

NORC will work in close collaboration with PPCC to define the precise research aims and outcome objectives for the study. Based on preliminary discussions, the research is designed to uncover a set of informed preferences of Pacific Palisades residents that can guide decisionmakers in community organizations, private sector investment, and government institutions on the residents’ wishes for the community and shape the debate over the recovery strategies and policies.

To meet those objectives, the research will require a thoughtful and rigorous approach that captures not only residents’ immediate preferences and outlook, but also uncovers their preferences under different conditions or trade-offs. For example, residents may have an

overwhelming preference for an “ideal” rebuilding scenario, but when faced with the potential trade-offs, may actually prefer a “next best” scenario. To reveal these detailed preferences, NORC will focus on research tactics that enumerate residents’ priorities, their values, and their sensitivity to different constraints including time to rebuild, costs, local traffic and property access, and availability (or lack thereof) of community and public services such as schools, libraries, community centers, or healthcare.

The post-wildfire situation is both dynamic and complex, which poses challenges for the research. The information and policy landscape are rapidly evolving, which impacts residents’ understanding of their options and their preferences. And the long-time horizon for the recovery may also impact preferences as residents become fatigued or as their priorities for the recovery effort change. NORC is proposing a three-phase approach to the research to mitigate these challenges. These phases, described in detail below, include formative focus group research as a means of discovery to inform a Phase 2 baseline survey. Phase 3 includes follow-up surveys, conducted as needed, throughout the recovery phase.

Phase 1: Focus Groups to Discover Resident Understanding

To inform the survey instrument development, NORC proposes to conduct four 60-minute focus groups each with six to eight residents of the Pacific Palisades community. Given the varying experiences and outlooks of residents depending on the degree of devastation in their specific neighborhoods, we recommend segmenting the groups by whether a resident’s home was destroyed or otherwise deemed permanently inhabitable or not. Conducting at least two focus groups with each segment will provide a broader and more nuanced understanding of the themes that emerge. Multiple sessions allow for variability in group dynamics, ensuring that different perspectives, experiences, and conversational flows are captured. This approach also helps identify recurring themes across groups while allowing space for unique insights that may not surface in a single discussion. Additionally, it mitigates the influence of dominant voices in any one group and increases the likelihood of hearing diverse viewpoints, leading to a more comprehensive analysis of residents’ experiences.

NORC will collaborate with PPCC to develop and finalize the focus group protocols and discussion guides to ensure they meet the research goals. Topics may include but are not limited to:

- Experiences after the fire and their current living situation.
- Awareness and understanding of the different options and timelines for rebuilding, selling, or resettling.
- Resident priorities and primary factors influencing their decisions.
- Organizations, institutions, and individuals that residents are aware of and relying on for assistance.
- Citizen confidence in the ability of federal, state, and local governments to address the planning and implementation of recovery and rebuilding.

- Residents' general outlooks, emotional states, and tolerance for different rebuilding scenarios and timelines.

NORC will recruit and conduct each focus group following review and approval of the protocol from NORC's Human Research Institutional Review Board. NORC will work with PPCC and the community's HOAs to recruit participant volunteers through notices on social media pages, communication lists, or targeted outreach. NORC will work with PPCC to assess the situation and determine the best format to convene the focus groups. NORC can convene all or some of the groups in-person at a community, corporate, or research focus group facility in west Los Angeles or another area that will be convenient for the displaced residents of Pacific Palisades. Alternatively, we can convene all or some of the groups online using Zoom. For online focus groups, NORC would substitute two smaller groups of three to four residents in place of a larger in-person group with six to eight residents.

Each focus group will be moderated by Moini with support from a NORC Research Associate. Each discussion will be recorded and transcribed. Participants will be provided with light refreshments and compensated with a \$100 cash incentive for their time.

Deliverables from the focus groups include focus group transcripts and a research findings memo that highlights key themes and findings across sessions along with their implications for the survey development.

Phase 2: Survey to Generate High Quality Evidence of Resident Preferences

Questionnaire Development

NORC designs surveys that generate actionable data and inform critical policy decisions. Given the complexity of the resident survey, our design will begin with the findings from the focus group research. That work will help us understand residents' perspectives and inform the language we use, the questions we ask, and the response options we provide. We will also conduct a brief scan of existing research, from the LA wildfires and other disasters, to leverage and adapt existing survey strategies.

Given the competing priorities residents face, we recommend limiting the length of the survey. NORC is budgeting for a survey that is no longer than 15 minutes or approximately 50 question items.

Sample Locating Effort

Another significant challenge for the survey is developing a robust listing of all Pacific Palisades addresses and contact information. NORC will take a multi-pronged approach to building the full population frame of approximately 10,000-11,000 addresses in collaboration with PPCC. This will allow NORC to invite all Pacific Palisades households to participate in the survey.

PPCC will leverage its relationships with HOAs in the community to procure their mailing and contact lists. Though we expect these lists will be outdated and include inaccuracies, they will be critical to the approach. NORC will also use its geographic information systems and access to the

USPS Delivery Sequence File to enumerate the household addresses in the defined area. Finally, our trained locating and tracing specialists will investigate public and paid databases including tax, real estate, voter, and proprietary commercial and marketing databases to locate respondents and acquire contact information with a focus on email and mobile phone contact methods.

The privacy of our research participants' data is of paramount importance to NORC. We meticulously safeguard respondents' information during the entire research process including locating, data collection, and reporting to protect every participant's identifiable information and their confidentiality.

Data Collection

NORC will conduct a probability-based survey where every Pacific Palisades household for whom email and/or mobile telephone numbers are available is invited to participate and has an opportunity to respond. This will maximize the response and improve the chances for NORC to generate findings based on sub-geographies or demographics. NORC will program the survey to be completed online and optimized for desktop, tablet, and mobile devices. Based on what we learn from focus groups about willingness to respond to a survey, NORC may offer residents a \$5 incentive, or cash equivalent charitable donation, for completing the survey.

Because of the widespread displacement of the resident population, we recommend using an email and text message outreach strategy. NORC will work with PPCC to develop compelling branding and recruitment messaging that stands-out from other information requests and highlights the value of participation for residents. The professional recruitment materials will provide messaging on the legitimacy of the survey and include a study website link on www.norc.org with research team contact information to provide opportunities for residents to verify the study and to overcome concerns about scams.

NORC recommends a contact strategy that includes up to five emails and one text message over the course of six to eight weeks. The recruitment messages will include a unique identifier for that household representative to take the survey. This prevents households from completing more than once and prevents non-residents from fraudulently entering the survey.

In the event that responses are lower than needed for analysis, NORC will work with PPCC to identify an early intervention strategy that might include outreach through the HOAs or other community organizations or additional costed options such as NORC using its telephone centers to conduct outbound dialing.

NORC will use statistical weighting techniques to adjust the responding sample to match the demographic and geographic characteristics of the community. This will include weighting to variables that we can obtain through Census data or other auxiliary data sources like gender, race, ethnicity, education or income, age, home ownership, household composition, status of the home after the fire, and Pacific Palisades division. We will make an evidence based decision on the necessary weighting factors once we have the response data and compare the sample characteristics to the population benchmarks.

Analysis and Research Reporting

NORC creates analytical reports that tackle complex subjects, data, and analytic techniques which can be used easily and immediately by stakeholders and policymakers. As an independent and non-partisan research organization, NORC delivers evidence-based insights and analysis that decisionmakers trust. NORC does not advocate for policies, positions, or programs, and our objective reporting of the data ensures credibility of the findings.

Once the survey data are collected, cleaned, and weighted, the NORC team will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the survey data that focuses on synthesizing the data around the core research objectives. From these analyses, we will compile the findings into a research report that is highly accessible for the target audiences. NORC recognizes the value of, and invests in, the tools and staff to communicate data and research effectively. NORC reports, which target non-technical audiences, include several elements:

- Clear and concise executive summaries that present the key findings and implications of the research.
- Narrative description of the data and findings written in plain language and presented with additional context to improve comprehension and understanding.
- Visual representations of the data that emphasize and provide a quick-glance snapshot of key findings. In addition to adding visual interest and improving reader comprehension, these visualizations can also enhance digital uptake and social sharing of the report's key findings.
- The questionnaire and final weighted survey frequencies are provided in a single, easy to read document.
- Professional copy editing and report production for different formats from hardcopy layouts to digital-first reports.

The reporting process starts with NORC assessing the data and providing an annotated outline of the most impactful and actionable results for feedback from PPCC on what you would like to see included. We will then provide a draft report for PPCC's input. We will then incorporate feedback into a final version of the report. We have budgeted for a summary report that can be presented either as a narrative report or as a PowerPoint deck.

Phase 3: Ongoing Measurement to Capture the Dynamic Situation

NORC strongly recommends updating and repeating the survey at least one time and preferably on a more regular interval that aligns with the dynamic situation on the ground. NORC will work with PPCC to update the survey questionnaire to ensure it is aligned with the current situation and policy landscape. We would then re-field the survey to all Pacific Palisades households

following the same protocol as the baseline survey. For each wave, NORC will generate an updated report that articulates what perspectives are changing and what is remaining constant.

These surveys can be fielded on a cadence that makes sense for the situation on the ground. For example, it may be sensible to field the survey the first time after 3 months and then less frequently as the recovery effort and situation stabilizes.

If NORC detects the quality of residents' contact information to be deteriorating over time, we can provide an update of the sample locating process.

Schedule and Pricing

Schedule

The proposed timeline for the study is shown below. In all, we expect this project to take four to five months to complete. We recommend starting the project April 1st. However, if this timeline or schedule does not fit your needs, we welcome a discussion about how to adjust it. Any subsequent survey waves would require two to three months to deploy – including the questionnaire redesign, the data collection, and the analysis and reporting.

Task	Timeline
Focus Groups	4-6 weeks
Questionnaire Development & Sample Locating	3-4 weeks
Survey Data Collection	6-8 weeks
Analysis & Report Writing	3-4 weeks

Pricing

The fixed pricing for the study is \$172,750 and reflects the scope of work as described in the business plan including formative focus group research, questionnaire design, sample cleaning and locating, baseline survey data collection, one future wave of the survey, analysis, and reporting. Beyond that, additional waves of the survey can be added for \$35,500 each and additional locating services to update the sample frame if needed will be \$11,250.

Research Phase	Price
Formative Focus Groups	\$54,750
Sample Locating	\$25,000
Baseline Survey	\$57,500*
Each Follow-up Survey (as needed)	\$35,500 per wave*
Each Follow-up Sample Locating (as needed)	+ \$11,250 per update

**The \$5 incentive, or cash equivalent charitable donation, for completing the survey will be billed on a per unit basis of \$5.91 which includes the incentive and the processing fee.*

Conclusion

We hope that this proposal meets your expectations but ask that you invite us further into a conversation about your goals and how we might be able to help you achieve them. We look forward to serving as a trusted research partner for PPCC. We stand-by to clarify, amplify, and discuss how we can be part of the Council's mission to help restore the community after the fires. Thank you for contacting us regarding your research study.