



## PACIFIC PALISADES COMMUNITY COUNCIL

July 28, 2025

Hon. Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California

*via his Deputy Regional Director, Vishesh Anand*

Hon. Ben Allen, State Senator

Hon. Jacqui Irwin, State Assemblymember

Hon. Karen Bass, Mayor, City of Los Angeles

Hon. Hydee Feldstein Soto, Los Angeles City Attorney

Hon. Traci Park, City Councilwoman, CD 11

Vince P. Bertoni, AICP, Director, Los Angeles Dept. of City Planning (DCP)

Osama Younan, General Manager, Los Angeles Dept. of Building & Safety (DBS)

*Via email to all addressees*

**Re: URGENT Request for Government Assistance and Protection: Grave Risk to Public Safety and Essential Community Character Resulting from Implementation of SB 9 in Pacific Palisades**

Dear Governor Newsom, Senator Allen, Assemblymember Irwin, Mayor Bass, City Attorney Feldstein Soto, Councilwoman Park, DCP Director Bertoni and DBS General Manager Younan:

Pacific Palisades Community Council (PPCC) has for 52 years been the voice of Pacific Palisades – the community that was devastated by, and is still reeling from, the unprecedented Palisades Fire.

It is the mission of PPCC to “protect and improve the quality of life in Pacific Palisades” (Bylaws, Art. II.1). We write now to urgently request that our government officials take immediate steps to protect the community from forced additional density that will result from opportunistic developers seeking to take advantage of the widespread destruction of single-family homes caused by the Palisades Fire to build multi-family housing under the streamlined procedures of SB 9. These efforts, if unchecked, pose a **grave risk to public safety, and ultimately, to preservation of the essential character of Pacific Palisades.**<sup>i</sup>

SB 9 permits the construction of dense housing (lot splits with up to 2 duplexes and potentially 2 or more ADUs/JADUs per former single-family lot, i.e., possibly up to 6 or more family units with *dozens more people and cars where one home with one family once stood on the lot*) – sought here to be placed on multiple, narrow Palisades streets where passage for fire trucks and emergency vehicles is already severely limited, even without additional density. In some cases, we are informed that *more than one SB 9 project is now proposed for the same block on one street!* We expect this trend to continue if measures are not taken soon to curb the spread of these projects.

SB 9 does not contain a full exemption for the VHFHSZ. Under current law, all these projects must be permitted ministerially, essentially “by right,” *without any projects reviewed for their impact on public safety, nor for whether*

mitigation measures can or should be imposed before the permits are issued. This raises at least two grave concerns for the community:

- 1) Palisades residents will be placed at extreme public safety risk from increased congestion in the event of predictable future wildfires or other emergencies requiring rapid evacuation.
- 2) The essential, distinctive character of Pacific Palisades – a quiet, low-density community of predominantly single-family homes – will be irrevocably destroyed as more and more of these streamlined SB 9 projects are permitted and built.<sup>ii</sup> **These dramatic changes could not occur but for the historic and tragic Palisades Fire.**

We are grateful that Mayor Bass and our other public officials have repeatedly assured us that they support *swift rebuilding and restoration of the community to what it was before the Fire*. We appreciate the Mayor's statement on the 6-month anniversary of the Fire:

"The City is committed to helping the Palisades rebuild even stronger than before by streamlining permitting, cutting unnecessary red tape, and encouraging smart, innovative approaches to rebuilding. At the same time, **the City will work to preserve and enhance the character and essential community elements that define Pacific Palisades.**" (Emphasis added.)<sup>iii</sup>

Many residents post-Fire are proceeding in reliance on these assurances. Allowing these dense SB 9 projects to proceed as we work to restore the Palisades would undermine these assurances and constitute a community betrayal. Palisadians overwhelmingly believe that we were left unprotected from the Fire by government agencies in January; almost 7 months later, we are facing government action that creates exponentially greater public safety risks and potential destruction of the Palisades' essential character. In light of these alarming conditions, it is reasonable to assume that more residents will consider selling their lots rather than rebuilding their homes, which in turn may lead to even more SB 9 projects and the consequent destruction of "the essential community elements that define Pacific Palisades."

For these compelling reasons, PPCC respectfully requests that you immediately take the following steps to remedy this dangerous situation that may permanently alter Pacific Palisades:

- 1) Initiating a process to put an **immediate pause or freeze on all SB 9 permit applications for the Palisades**, as appropriate using your emergency powers, until (a) all relevant after-action reports by city and/or state agencies addressing evacuation issues, concerns and remedies (including routes, plans, street widths, parking, density impacts and the like) are completed and analyzed; (b) the city makes public the required evacuation route analysis per AB 747; and (c) a regulatory or other solution can be determined and laws drafted and enacted to protect the Palisades community from these types of streamlined dense projects for which there is no review as to impacts on public safety.
- 2) Working with LAFD and our City Attorney to **codify objective, effective "fire hazard mitigation measures"** applicable to SB 9 projects in Los Angeles VHFHSZ areas, as have been enacted in other cities: for example, a requirement that such projects *be located on a street that is no less than 20 ft. wide and with direct, unimpeded access to a designated emergency evacuation route* (Town of Fairfax, CA).

- 3) Directing DBS to **deny all SB 9 permit applications** currently in process for Pacific Palisades, on the grounds that there are “specific adverse impacts” of such projects, meaning a “significant, quantifiable, direct and unavoidable impact, based on objective, identified written public health or safety standards, policies or conditions as they existed on the date the application was deemed complete” – which in this case consist of the **unsafe conditions outlined in the 7/27/25 LAT article** (see *End Note i, following*) and the **city’s failure to date to comply with AB 747** (required evacuation route analysis). Such permit denials should continue to occur unless and until the required analysis is completed and the public is assured that (a) adequate evacuation plans and routes are in fact in place which address increased density from SB 9 projects, and (b) public safety will not be compromised by increased density in Pacific Palisades via SB 9 projects.<sup>iv</sup>
- 4) Promptly determining, with city and state legal counsel and/or other experts, the feasibility of implementing other **permanent remedies** to effectively address this situation, including using emergency, executive or legislative powers to direct an immediate **exemption or carve-out for Pacific Palisades from the requirements and effects of SB 9**.

It is fundamental that: “Public safety is a core responsibility of government entities, ensuring the well-being and security of communities . . . The role of government in ensuring public safety remains crucial in building resilient communities and fostering a sense of security for all citizens.”<sup>v</sup>

Our community has suffered enough from the singular, devastating conditions caused by the Palisades Fire – a unique catastrophe in a dense urban environment that was unprecedented in Los Angeles history and, along with the huge Camp/Paradise Fire (albeit in a different environment), one of the worst disasters in California’s history.

*We implore you to act now to fulfill your core responsibility to protect public safety, prevent even further suffering and guard against the irrevocable loss of the character of Pacific Palisades.*

**Time is of the essence**, as we are informed that multiple applications for lot splits and/or SB 9 projects in Pacific Palisades are in process, with **DBS action on the applications expected in the coming days**.

PPCC stands ready to work with all our public officials to achieve this much-needed protection for, and restoration of, our beloved Palisades community.

Thank you for your ongoing assistance and anticipated immediate attention to this crucial request.

Sincerely,

Pacific Palisades Community Council,  
Executive Committee (acting pursuant to PPCC Bylaws, Art. V.3):  
Sue Kohl, President, Quentin Fleming, Vice-President, Jenny Li, Treasurer, Beth Holden-Garland,  
Secretary, Maryam Zar, Chair Emeritus, Christina Spitz, Elected Representative (At-large),  
John Padden, Organizational Representative (P.R.I.D.E.)

*End Notes on p. 4, following*

<sup>i</sup> As you know, the Palisades is entirely located within the designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). For many years, we have repeatedly explained in numerous communications and policy statements that the Palisades community is at *extreme risk to lives and public safety from increased housing density*, due to our limited routes of ingress and egress and our many narrow, winding streets – a risk that became a vivid and deadly reality during the Palisades Fire, when evacuating residents were forced to abandon their cars and narrowly escaped encroaching flames on foot, at *existing density levels*. See our 2/17/25 Statement: <https://pacpalicc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/PPCC-Policy-Statement-Density-Public-Safety.pdf>.

See also the 7/27/25 front page article in the *Los Angeles Times*, which details the “**dire evacuation scenarios**” during the Palisades Fire and reports that despite the requirements of AB 747 (enacted after the horrific Camp/Paradise Fire), Los Angeles has inexplicably **failed to publicly report a required evacuation route analysis**: <https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2025-07-25/l-a-fire-evacuation-plans-remain-untested>.

<sup>ii</sup> While single-family housing characterizes Pacific Palisades, our community also includes multi-family housing such as apartment buildings, condominiums, town homes and mobile homes, several of which provided affordable housing pre-Fire. PPCC recognizes the need for affordable housing and **supports rebuilding and protection of existing affordable housing**, including the longstanding mobile home villages, in Pacific Palisades.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://mayor.lacity.gov/news/6-months-start-wildfires-mayor-bass-highlights-recovery-progress-outlines-priorities-continued>

<sup>iv</sup> It is clear from the documented, life-threatening evacuation experiences on January 7, under *then-existing density conditions*, that increasing density will only exacerbate already dangerous circumstances. At a minimum, it is imperative that before any SB 9 projects are permitted, AB 747 must be complied with, and **verifiably adequate evacuation plans and routes must be in place**.

<sup>v</sup> Gov. Business Review: <https://www.govbusinessreview.com/news/ensuring-public-safety-the-role-of-government-in-protecting-communities-nwid-220.html>.