

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Cristian Ahumada  
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**Council File No:** 19-0603  
**Comments for Public Posting:** Public Comment submitted by Clifford Beers Housing, Inc.



August 5, 2021

Los Angeles City Council  
Planning and Land Use Management Committee  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**RE: Letter Opposing Council File 19-0603: Expansion of Fire District 1**

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of Clifford Beers Housing, Inc. (CBH) I am writing in opposition of the motion to expand Fire District 1 to include all areas within the City covered by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Very High Severity Zone and the City's High Wind Velocity Zone, including high density population centers.

**Expanding Fire District 1 would reduce the future production of affordable housing by significantly increasing construction costs and forcing developers and contractors to use material harmful to the environment. The ultimate loss is to our planet and therefore human life.**

The report ('City Report') submitted to the committee from the Fire Department (LAFD) and Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) details the harm such an expansion for Fire District 1 would have on affordable housing production. A survey of 84 HCIDLA funded projects showed that the majority were constructed in building types disallowed by Fire District 1: 'there are very few HCIDLA-financed projects located in Fire District 1 areas...an expansion of Fire District 1 would likely reduce the financial feasibility of affordable housing projects,' (City Report). The expansion, in disallowing current construction typologies typically used, would increase construction costs 15-47% rendering many projects infeasible and exacerbating already high per unit costs and straying further away from the public outcry for 'better, cheaper, faster.'

California Building Code, along with Los Angeles' own fire code, provide ample protection for our City's residents as is. To this point, other jurisdictions (including San Diego, San Francisco, and cities in Los Angeles and Orange county) do not use fire districts in addition to the state building code. The expansion will limit access to land and increase building costs for the developers of affordable housing in our region. We implore the committee members to send a 'no' recommendation to Council regarding this motion and explore other options for increasing fire safety in our City without exacerbating our housing crisis.

Beyond the detriment to affordable housing production is the environmental costs of effectively banning wood-frame construction in the areas Fire District 1 would expand. A move away from wood-framing is a move towards concrete and steel, two of the most polluting industries in the US. Steel and concrete industry activities make up 22.7% of all CO2 emissions in the country. Los Angeles, as an example for the world and the leading city of C40, should be in direct opposition to policy that would allow emissions to rise. There are other ways to create fire-resistance on a property and

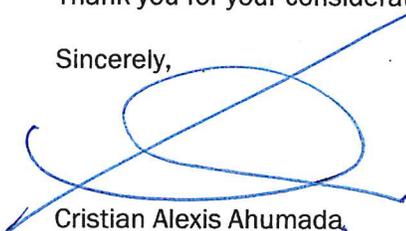
throughout a neighborhood that we urge the City Council to explore and provide cost feasible alternatives such as fire resilient landscape alternatives that proved effective to protecting structures during the Getty fire in 2019 and benefits the natural environment. The City must find the nexus between fire resiliency and construction typologies that is cost and time efficient and prioritizes solving the homeless and housing crisis.

Of all the possible natural disasters that could impact our livelihoods, wildfires are the most ever-present to the residents of California. We acknowledge and do not take lightly the destruction wildfires in California have caused throughout the last decade and will continue to do so as the climate crisis continues. CBH stands with the need for public safety but believes that the report submitted to the Committee clearly demonstrates that the expansion of Fire District 1 is not the best way to keep Angelinos safe. According to an article published by the LA Times in May 2021, more than half of fires in 2021 are related to homelessness. If the City is looking to protect the City, including all its people and structures, the more impactful place to start is with housing those unhoused. The expansion of Fire District 1 is in direct opposition to that goal.

More than 60,000 people are experiencing homelessness throughout Los Angeles County and the world is boiling beyond data-driven models. The passage of this expansion would decrease housing development in Los Angeles, provide no concrete reason how Los Angeles is 'more safe,' nor advance climate goals for the City. **On behalf of my organization I implore you to vote against this motion in the Planning and Land Use Management Committee hearing when this motion is brought for discussion.**

Thank you for your consideration and for your dedication to end this city's housing crisis.

Sincerely,



Cristian Alexis Ahumada,  
Executive Director & CEO