

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: SUPPORT - Testimony of Larry Williams, Steel Framing Industry Association, in its entirety, before the LA City Council Public Safety Meeting on June 2nd, 2021, in support of Building A Safer Los Angeles to expand Fire District 1.

Transcribed Testimony of Larry Williams,
Steel Framing Industry Association
LA City Council Public Safety Meeting – June 2, 2021

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Rodriguez and members of the Public Safety Committee. My name is Larry Williams. I am Executive Director of the Steel Framing Industry Association.

We strongly support the Building a Safer Los Angeles motion because it will do exactly that: result in a safer Los Angeles for all the families of my member companies and all Angelenos Speaking on behalf of the thousands of workers and companies that I represent in Los Angeles, we believe the amended motion brought forward today by Councilmember's Rodriguez and Blumenfield is necessary and critical as we enter what may be the most destructive fire season this state has ever seen. So perhaps the Time magazine article that just came out today asks the right question: "Wildfires are getting worse ... so why is the US still building with wood???"

Now, no one is really talking about banning wood. What this motion is really about is helping to ensure fire life safety precautions are present in all new high density construction projects in an expanded Fire District 1; And it protects communities of color, and those that cannot afford to live in lower density areas - those that have traditionally been marginalized by city regulations is critical – this motion does that;

We appreciate the voluminous report issued by the Department of Building and Safety on May 27. However, there is a serious flaw in the analysis used to estimate cost impact. And in fact, the department itself in its review acknowledges that the information is not completely appropriate. Their analysis does not focus on the cost of construction but the cost of permit fees. And it does not take into account the cost of raw materials like lumber which has skyrocketed over 200% the last 18 months with no end in sight.

This problem with high lumber prices is not a transient event. In fact, the national association of home builders (NAHB) has told me directly that they anticipate a housing deficit of 200,000 units in the next several years.

There is one important point that the Department of Building and Safety report does get right. It clearly indicates that the council has the authority to amend and update Fire District #1, it also clearly indicates that the council CAN develop a Fire Protection Plan. But it is up to you to act.

Before we enter a new fire season, I'm urging the members of the Public Safety Committee to approve this motion without delay.

Thank you.