

Communication from Public

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Council File No: 25-0006-S38

Comments for Public Posting: Subject: Council File 25-0006-S38, Pacific Palisades Disaster Recovery District: SUPPORT Honorable Chair Park and Members of the Ad Hoc Committee on LA Recovery, I am a Pacific Palisades resident, Co-Chair of the Miramar Homeowners Association, and a member of the Palisades Recovery Coalition's advisory committee. I write in my individual capacity to ask you to establish the Pacific Palisades Disaster Recovery District now. This is not the Palisades asking for something special. When the Palisades recovers quickly, all of Los Angeles wins. Without a district, recovery will be piecemeal and slow, and it will remain a burden on all of Los Angeles for decades to come. One of the highest-value neighborhoods in the city is generating a fraction of the property tax it once did, and every year of delay is revenue the City, the County and the schools do not get back. With a district, we can rebuild quickly and resiliently. Infrastructure renewed properly now will not need to be fixed again for years to come. A rebuilt Palisades will generate property taxes sooner, and at higher values than before the fire. The district captures only growth above today's baseline, and the baseline keeps flowing to everyone. The Palisades is also doing the hard work first. The structure we establish here will be ready for the next community in Los Angeles that needs it. Altadena and the Santa Monica Mountains already have their district. The time available under state law to form ours is running. Please move this forward on Friday. The community stands ready to help shape how the district works once it exists. Attached is the Palisades Recovery Coalition's Community Recovery Lab report on recovery governance, prepared for Councilwoman Park. PaliTV's short explainer videos on how a Disaster Recovery District works are at palitv.org. Thank you, Kathrin Werner Co-Chair, Miramar Homeowners Association Advisory Committee, Palisades Recovery Coalition (titles for identification only)



Palisades Recovery Governance Snapshot

Community Recovery Lab (CRL) Findings | April 2026

Bottom Line:

The Palisades community will support the formation of a Disaster Recovery District (DRD)—**if it is structured to be accountable, inclusive, and transparent from the outset.**

What We Heard

- Residents accept the need for **formal, City-appointed authority** to manage recovery funding
- There is strong demand for **real accountability—not just public hearings**
- Community engagement is **high and informed**—the barrier is structural, not participatory
- Recovery today feels **fragmented and uncoordinated**

What We Found

- **Hybrid governance is essential**
A DRD must pair formal authority with structured community input
- **Existing institutions matter—but are not enough**
PPCC is valued, but must be complemented with broader representation
- **Accountability must be built in**
Not assumed—requires defined roles, processes, and feedback loops
- **Engagement must be continuous and multi-channel**
Surveys, advisory boards, and citizen assemblies work best **together**
- **Transparency is foundational**
Real-time communication and clear decision-making processes are critical
- **Speed vs. inclusion is the central design challenge**
The solution is to **leverage what exists while building what's missing**

Priority Investment Areas

1. **Rebuilding Support**
Financing, permitting, and grants for residents
2. **Infrastructure & Utilities**
Water, power, undergrounding, system upgrades
3. **Wildfire & Climate Resilience**
Prevention, mitigation, long-term risk reduction



PALISADES RECOVERY COALITION

4. **Economic Recovery**

Small business support and commercial revitalization

What We Advise

- Establish the DRD with **required community governance layers**
 - Formalize—but do not over-rely on—**PPCC's role**
 - Require a **Community Advisory Board with real authority**
 - Implement **multi-channel engagement** (surveys, assemblies, advisory groups)
 - Mandate **transparent communication systems** (real-time, accessible)
 - Consider a **coordinating body** to align recovery efforts
 - Expand focus to include **environmental and public health clarity**
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Councilwoman Briefing: Palisades Recovery Governance & DRD Strategy

Executive Assessment

Over the course of two Community Recovery Labs, the Palisades Recovery Coalition convened a representative, deliberative body of residents to engage deeply with the question of how recovery in the Palisades should be structured. What emerged from that work is not simply a set of recommendations, but a coherent and community-tested framework for recovery governance—one that is both practical and immediately useful to policymakers considering legislative action.

At the outset, participants understood the scale of what is at stake. A Disaster Recovery District would direct significant public resources and shape the trajectory of rebuilding for years to come. There was broad acceptance of the statutory framework that places decision-making authority in the hands of a five-member board appointed by the City. Residents recognized that elected officials must ultimately be responsible for the stewardship of public funds. But that acceptance came with a clear and consistent condition: authority must be paired with accountability, and that accountability must be visible, structured, and continuous.

What the Community Recovery Lab made clear is that the current baseline for public engagement—hearings and comment periods—is not sufficient to meet that standard. Participants were not asking for more opportunities to comment; they were asking for a system in which their input meaningfully shapes outcomes. This distinction is critical. The community is not seeking to slow recovery with process, but to ensure that the decisions being made reflect the lived realities and priorities of those most affected.

Perhaps the most important finding from this body of work is that engagement itself is not the challenge. Residents showed a high level of willingness and ability to engage with complex policy questions. They absorbed technical material, weighed tradeoffs, and reached alignment across diverse perspectives. The limitation, as participants saw it, is not a lack of participation, but the absence of a structure that captures and integrates that participation in a sustained and coherent way.

From that understanding, a clear model began to take shape. Participants consistently pointed toward a hybrid system—one that maintains the formal authority of a Disaster Recovery District board, while embedding within it a set of community-facing structures that make accountability real. Central to this is the creation of a community advisory body, composed in a way that reflects the full range of Palisades stakeholders. This body would not be symbolic. It would review investment plans, issue recommendations, and receive formal responses when those recommendations are not adopted. Around it, additional tools—citizen assemblies, surveys, focus groups, and expert advisory input—would operate not in isolation, but as part of an integrated system of engagement.

In working through these ideas, participants also grappled with the role of existing institutions. There was strong respect for the Pacific Palisades Community Council as a longstanding and credible civic body, particularly given its relationship with the City and its history of engagement on local issues. At the same time, there was equal clarity that no single institution, on its own, can represent the full breadth of the community at this moment. The path forward that emerged was not to replace existing structures, but to build from them—leveraging their



strengths while expanding participation to include renters, business owners, and those who have not traditionally been part of civic processes. In this framing, legitimacy comes not just from continuity, but from inclusion.

Participants were also clear-eyed about the constraints. They recognized that new structures take time to establish, and that recovery cannot afford unnecessary delay. This surfaced a central tension that any legislative approach will need to resolve: the balance between speed and inclusivity. Existing systems can move more quickly but risk narrowing participation. More representative systems take time but build broader trust. The recommendation that emerged is not to choose between these, but to design for both—using what already works while deliberately creating new pathways for engagement where gaps exist.

One area of particularly strong alignment was around transparency and communication. Participants were unequivocal that accountability depends on access—not just to decisions, but to information in real time. They emphasized the need for direct communication channels, clear and centralized sources of information, and mechanisms that allow residents to both receive updates and provide input easily. In a recovery of this scale, opacity is not simply a communications issue; it is a barrier to participation and, ultimately, to progress.

Underlying all of this was a broader concern about fragmentation. Participants described a recovery landscape that feels dispersed across agencies, organizations, and initiatives, with no single structure clearly aligning efforts or translating community input into coordinated action. In response, they pointed toward the need for a more unified framework—one that can serve as a point of coordination, bringing together institutional actors and community voices into a single, legible process.

Alongside these governance discussions, there was strong and consistent alignment on what recovery efforts should prioritize. Participants identified four primary areas of focus: direct support for rebuilding through financing and permitting assistance; investment in infrastructure and utilities; long-term wildfire and climate resilience; and economic recovery, particularly the revitalization of small businesses. These priorities are not abstract—they align directly with the authorities available to a Disaster Recovery District and provide a clear starting point for investment planning.

Taken together, this body of work offers a grounded and actionable path forward. It suggests that a Disaster Recovery District in the Palisades can be both effective and broadly supported—but only if it is designed in a way that reflects the expectations articulated through this process. That means pairing formal authority with structured community input, leveraging existing institutions while expanding participation, investing in communication and transparency, and addressing fragmentation through coordination.

For the Council, the implication is straightforward. The question is not whether to establish a recovery structure, but how deliberately to design it. A minimally structured approach may move quickly at the outset, but risks losing trust and encountering resistance over time. A more intentional design—one that incorporates the elements outlined here—has the potential to accelerate recovery by aligning decision-making with community support from the beginning.



Palisades Recovery Governance: Expanded Findings | Outline

Community Recovery Lab Findings & Legislative Guidance

Context

The Palisades Recovery Coalition convened a representative group of residents to evaluate the formation of a Disaster Recovery District (DRD). Participants engaged deeply with governance, funding priorities, and accountability structures.

What emerged is not theoretical. It is a **tested, community-informed framework for recovery governance**—ready to inform legislative design.

What We Learned

1. The Community Supports a DRD—With Conditions

Residents understand the need for a centralized authority to manage recovery funding and decision-making. There is broad acceptance of a City-appointed governing board.

However, that support is conditional:

Authority must be paired with visible, structured accountability.

The current statutory minimum—public hearings and comment periods—is viewed as insufficient to meet that standard.

2. Engagement is High. The System to Capture It Is Not.

Participants demonstrated:

- Strong willingness to engage
- Ability to understand complex recovery frameworks
- Capacity to deliberate and reach consensus



The problem is not participation—it is the absence of a system that integrates it.

This is a critical legislative insight:

You are not solving for engagement. You are solving for structure.

3. A Hybrid Governance Model is Required

No group supported a purely top-down or purely grassroots model.

The consensus points to a **governance ecosystem**, not a single body:

- A formal DRD board with decision-making authority
- A Community Advisory Board (CAB) with defined review power
- Supporting engagement mechanisms:
 - Citizen assemblies (representative deliberation)
 - Surveys and focus groups (broad input)
 - Expert advisory integration

This layered system is necessary to achieve both legitimacy and execution.

4. Existing Institutions Matter—But Are Not Sufficient

There is strong support for leveraging the Pacific Palisades Community Council (PPCC):

- As a trusted, established civic body
- As a bridge to City processes

But:

- It is not seen as fully representative of today's community
- It cannot carry the full burden of recovery governance

Legitimacy requires both continuity and expansion.

5. Transparency is a Structural Requirement

Participants were unequivocal:



Transparency is not a feature—it is infrastructure.

Required elements include:

- Real-time communication systems
- Centralized, accessible information
- Clear explanations when decisions diverge from community input

Without this, accountability—and trust—breaks down.

6. Fragmentation is a Major Barrier to Recovery

Participants consistently described recovery as:

- Disjointed across agencies
- Difficult to navigate
- Lacking a central coordinating structure

There is strong demand for:

A unified framework that aligns funding, decision-making, and community input.

7. Recovery Priorities Are Clear

There is strong alignment around four investment areas:

- **Rebuilding Support** — financing, permitting, grants
- **Infrastructure & Utilities** — water, power, undergrounding
- **Wildfire & Climate Resilience** — prevention and mitigation
- **Economic Recovery** — small business and commercial revitalization

These are **implementation-ready categories**, not conceptual goals.

What This Means for Policy

1. Design the DRD Beyond Statutory Minimums

A minimally compliant DRD will not meet community expectations.



Recommendation:

Condition DRD formation on:

- A Community Advisory Board with defined authority
 - Formal integration of community input into investment planning
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2. Codify Accountability Mechanisms

Accountability must be explicit and enforceable.

Recommendation:

Require:

- Advisory review of investment plans
 - Written justification when recommendations are not followed
 - Ongoing, structured engagement processes
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3. Build a Multi-Channel Engagement System

Public hearings alone are insufficient.

Recommendation:

Mandate:

- Surveys and broad outreach tools
- Deliberative mechanisms (e.g., citizen assemblies)
- Standing advisory engagement

Engagement must be continuous, not episodic.

4. Leverage—but Do Not Over-Rely on Existing Institutions

PPCC should play a role—but not be the sole conduit.

Recommendation:

- Allow PPCC to recommend at least one board member
- Integrate it into a broader advisory structure



- Expand representation beyond traditional civic participants
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5. Invest in Communication Infrastructure Early

This is a low-cost, high-impact intervention.

Recommendation:

Require:

- Real-time communication systems (e.g., text alerts)
- Public-facing dashboards
- Accessible feedback mechanisms

Visibility drives participation. Participation drives legitimacy.

6. Address Fragmentation Through Coordination

Recovery currently lacks a central organizing framework.

Recommendation:

Explore creation of a **Community Recovery Coordinating Council (CRCC)** or similar structure to:

- Align agencies and organizations
 - Translate community input into policy
 - Provide continuity across recovery efforts
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7. Expand Recovery to Include Environmental & Public Health

This is an emerging and urgent concern.

Recommendation:

Integrate:

- Environmental monitoring
 - Public health communication
 - Clear agency accountability
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Final Takeaway

This is not a community asking to be heard.
It is a community offering a **clear, structured path forward**.

The Palisades has demonstrated:

- Readiness to engage
- Capacity to deliberate
- Alignment around priorities
- Support for a formal recovery structure

But with a clear expectation:

Recovery governance must be designed to include them—not simply inform them.

Strategic Choice for Council

A well-designed DRD will:

- Accelerate recovery
- Improve capital deployment
- Build durable public trust
- Serve as a model for disaster recovery statewide

A minimally designed DRD risks:

- Community disengagement
 - Reduced legitimacy
 - Slower, more contested implementation
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The question is not whether to act.
It is how deliberately to design the system that will carry this recovery forward.