

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Mariam Moore (The CCI)

**Date Submitted:** 04/01/2025 09:21 AM

**Council File No:** 25-0006-S56

**Comments for Public Posting:** As a resident of Sun Valley, and the CEO of The CCI, on behalf of my community, I join Councilmember Padilla in her effort to address community needs and ensure equity in distribution of fire debris throughout the East San Fernando Valley. Sun Valley has long been a home to several landfills and waste and recycling facilities, junk yards and metal processing facilities that have negatively affected public health and environment for decades and counting. While the cleanup is essential for fire ravaged communities to recover, no single area, especially low income communities of color that are historically overburdened by environmental pollution should bear the brunt of yet new and equally hazardous environmental challenges, such as accepting and processing greater share of fire debris, especially toxic. It is no secret that much of the fire debris contains hazardous materials, such as lead, asbestos, mercury, and other toxins, posing significant risks to both health and the environment. It is imperative for our community that debris removal processes not only advance recovery but also protect the health and safety of all people, especially those in communities with deep legacies of environmental injustice. The East San Fernando Valley has always been home to numerous landfills and waste facilities, causing various environmental challenges, including but not limited to odor, noise, nuisance, dust, debris, harmful emissions from disposal operations and the frequent movement of dumpster and garbage trucks. These cumulative impacts disproportionately harm vulnerable communities and highlight the importance of ensuring that debris hauling and disposal efforts do not exacerbate existing inequities. The city must ensure that recovery efforts reflect our shared values of fairness, health, and environmental justice. We need to know about debris transport and destinations, distribution, haul routes, contractor oversight, debris composition and management, timeline, and we need to know about it NOT after the fact but BEFORE things start happening without notification and community involvement.

## Communication from Public

**Name:** LIONEL MARES

**Date Submitted:** 04/01/2025 10:46 PM

**Council File No:** 25-0006-S56

**Comments for Public Posting:** April 1, 2025 Public Comment RE: East San Fernando Valley / Disproportionate Burden / Debris Transport / Facilities and Landfills / Haul Routes / Hazardous Waste / Equitable Distribution / 2025 Wildfire Emergency Response and Recovery / Council File No. 25-0006-S56 As a resident of the East San Fernando Valley, I am deeply concerned about hazardous material coming into my neighborhood without the consent of the residents who live here. I am concerned about ash, asbestos and other toxic substances coming into my neighborhood that could contaminate groundwater and pollute the air. The East San Fernando Valley already suffers from poor air quality and contamination due to junkyards and landfills. We are already facing an Environmental Injustice. I attended the Sun Valley Landfills Community Meeting to express my concerns about hazardous material coming into my neighborhood. I witnessed many people from my neighborhood expressed their concerns about the lack of transparency and communication. I urge that the Los Angeles City Council work to prevent hazardous from entering into my neighborhood. Sun Valley and the East San Fernando Valley has been subjected to toxic pollution for years and we don't want more trash or pollution in our community. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. Respectfully, Lionel Mares, MPA Community Advocate

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## Sun Valley residents push back against fire debris plan, question transparency

More than 100 residents packed a community meeting to demand answers about a plan to bring wildfire debris to a local landfill



Over a 100+ local people attend during the town meeting community identified to receive post-fire materials at facilities in Sun Valley Thursday, Sun Valley CA. March 13, 2025. We believe a public meeting is critical for community members to hear directly from government agencies and local operators involved, and express their questions and concerns. (Photo by Gene Blevins, Contributing Photographer)



By **TERESA LIU** | [tliu@scng.com](mailto:tliu@scng.com)

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More than 100 residents packed a high school gym in Sun Valley, filling every seat and lining the walls as they waited for answers. They said their community—already burdened by environmental concerns—had been chosen as the site for fire debris disposal without their input.

The residents gathered Thursday night, March 13, at Polytechnic High School to hear from city, state and federal officials about plans to bring wildfire debris to Vulcan Materials Company's landfill in Sun Valley as part of phase two of the wildfire cleanup.

Frustration grew as residents questioned why they, and their Los Angeles City Council member, learned about the decision after it was made.

“We were under the impression—at least I was under the impression—that we were here for a town hall, because there was a proposition they were proposing to do this, not knowing that it's already happening,” said Maria Ziehler, who lives near the Vulcan landfill. “Our representatives just happened to find out and decided to get the community involved.”

That lack of communication is exactly what prompted the meeting.

L.A. City Councilmember Imelda Padilla, who represents Sun Valley, said she and her office were not directly informed by the Army Corps of Engineers or the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that the landfill had been chosen to receive wildfire debris.

Instead, they learned about it secondhand—after Vulcan Materials Company had already presented the plan to a community group.

Worried that residents had been excluded from the decision, Padilla asked the Los Angeles City Attorney to seek a temporary restraining order against Vulcan Materials Company.

The L.A. City Council approved the request on Feb. 26, pausing debris disposal to give the community a chance to hear from the agencies involved.

“The purpose of today's meeting is to figure out from some of the private haulers in this district, as well as some of the agencies related to cleaning up the Pacific Palisades debris, what the role is going to be here in the Sixth District, taking it in,” Padilla told this publication in an interview before the meeting.

“So, we're here to ask questions, get clarification and see what the community could do to make sure that as we clean up the Palisades, we don't clean up one area to mess up another,” Padilla said.

Jack Bonnikson, director of communications at Vulcan said the company is actively working with the Army Corps of Engineers, ECC, which is contracting with the Army Corps of Engineers, and other third parties to bring “clean-crush concrete that is non-hazardous.” He said the landfill started receiving debris on Monday, March 10.

“We’ve had a minimal amount of debris brought in to date, but we expect that number to grow over time,” Bonnikson said. “Keep in mind though that our permit caps us at 6,000 tons per day, and we anticipate staying well below that level, and we do not anticipate receiving any more than 3,000 tons a day of clean crushed concrete from the Palisade fire rebuild.”

The concrete that the facility is accepting will not have any toxic contaminants or asbestos and is truly cleaned and crushed “and ready for us to be able to put back into the market to help Los Angeles grow,” he said.

Elected officials representing the area acknowledged the complexity of the decision-making process and the jurisdictional challenges surrounding the selection of the site to accept wildfire debris.

In response to a resident who asked during public comment, “Who made this decision behind all of our backs?” state Senator Caroline Menjivar claimed the decision was made at the county level.

“I do want to say, at least for the landfill ... this was all county-related,” she said. “You have city (representatives) here and state (representatives) here. We invited county to be here, and they did not want to be here.”

Anish Saraiya, director of Altadena Recovery for L.A. County Supervisor Kathryn Barger, said Friday afternoon that county officials did not vote on or make any decisions involving choosing Vulcan landfill as a wildfire debris disposal site.

Saraiya said, “The County of Los Angeles did not take a vote or make a decision, nor did (it) direct the Army Corps in any way on where they’re taking the debris and recycled materials” from the Eaton and Palisades fires.

“That is really a decision that is being made by the Army Corps and their contractor as part of their mission on behalf of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the United States government,” he said, noting that a field deputy from Barger’s office, representing the San Fernando Valley, attended Thursday night’s meeting but organizers may not have been aware of her presence.

Officials reassured residents that only non-hazardous, clean concrete and debris will be brought to Sun Valley, with strict testing, air quality monitoring, and dust control measures in place.

“The things we’re talking about that’s coming to Sun Valley is clean concrete that will be recycled and will enter the supply chain,” said Col. Eric Swenson of the Army Corps of Engineers.

For residents, much of the anger comes from the fact that their neighborhood—already exposed to disproportionate pollution and environmental hazards—is once again being asked to take in fire debris, which they fear will only worsen existing conditions.

Ziehler, who attended the meeting with her husband, Larry, described Sun Valley as “the land of a thousand landfills.” They said the area has struggled for years with industrial pollution, poor air quality, and heavy truck traffic from waste facilities.

“We’ve been the dumping ground for years and years and years,” Maria Ziehler said.

Jorge Lopez, a teacher at Polytechnic High School, said schools like Polytechnic High and local middle schools are directly affected by air pollution from the landfills.

With thousands of students and staff in the area, he noted that the impact is significant, because many live nearby and spend most of their day exposed to the conditions.


Longtime Sun Valley resident Lionel Mares said he worries about the potential hazards of bringing wildfire debris into his community.

“I was concerned about hazardous waste, like ash, or asbestos and other hazardous material coming to my neighborhood, because I’m concerned about the groundwater, the air quality and the quality of life in general,” he said.

Sun Valley, a historically working-class community in the San Fernando Valley, has long cited environmental challenges due to industrial activity, landfill operations, and inadequate infrastructure.

Over the years, residents have dealt with air pollution from construction debris sites, methane leaks from the Valley Generating Station, and flooding due to poor drainage infrastructure.

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