Think Big and Act Boldly!
Implementing Proven Solutions on Urban Fire

How Philanthropy Can Speed Recovery from the Eaton and Palisades Fires and Prepare Los Angeles for the Next Disaster

A report by Climate Resolve & Resilient Cities Catalyst

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April 1964. Photo courtesy of the Valley Times Collection at the Los Angeles Public Library.

Note on photographs. The photographs employed in this study come from the Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection, used with permission. The photos demonstrate that the region has been battling wildfires for well over a century. After each major event there were "lessons learned" – but despite over one hundred years of experience, the problem of wildfires destroying homes persists.

PREFACE

Given the complexity of political and governance challenges in the region, philanthropic actors need a clearer understanding of where they can best put funding to have impact. This report, *Think Big and Act Boldly: Implementing Proven Solutions on Urban Fire; How Philanthropy Can Speed Recovery from the Eaton and Palisades Fires and Prepare Los Angeles for the Next Disaster*, details many valuable resources for informing a more resilient wildfire recovery in Los Angeles, but ultimately lay the foundation for four primary recommendations that represent the most viable and appropriate for Los Angeles.

The core recommendations are supported by:

- Extensive interviews – engaging with key thought leaders on wildfire recovery and resilience.
- Mapping key actors and their potential influence, examining who might support the endeavors and who might oppose;
- Performing an exhaustive review of international case studies examining past disasters to derive helpful lessons and persistent challenges to guide the response in present-day Los Angeles;
- Surveying fourteen recently published studies related to the January fires that collectively contain 465 specific recommendations – written by government commissions, academic institutions, consultancies, and community organizations.[1]

The four proposed strategies particularly represent where philanthropy can have the biggest impact to improve people's lives today, while also ensuring a more resilient future for the region. Taken as a whole, this report can be used as a kit to guide philanthropic investment in a more resilient recovery for Los Angeles. These priority recommendations are presented in a prospectus format to purposefully engage with broader philanthropic audiences in an impactful way – to facilitate quicker, targeted action by the philanthropic sector. In order to de-risk philanthropic funding and maximize its impact, the identified and vetted opportunities ensure all recommendations have a) a pathway for support b) community demand and public backing, and c) a high probability of impact to build resilience to future events.

Of special note – Climate Resolve and RCC received peer review comments from SoCal Grantmakers, Resilient LA Delta Fund, Moore Charitable Foundation, California Community Foundation, Department of Angels, GER3, and other actors versed in various aspects of both local landscape and the recovery process. Their review, feedback, and approval of the recommendations, provides additional validation of the recommendations and demonstrates committed philanthropic and non-profit partners who will be interested in subsequent phases of this work. In addition, public agencies and affected communities may also find this report supportive in guiding future policy initiatives.

Climate Resolve and RCC also wish to acknowledge and thank the dozens of colleagues who freely shared their insights on how to best recover from the devastating Eaton and Palisades fires, and especially acknowledge The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation for their ongoing leadership and critical support underpinning in this endeavor.

[1] See Appendix A.

Climate Resolve. Founded in 2010, the Los Angeles-based 501(c)3 nonprofit, Climate Resolve, champions equitable climate solutions via building and managing projects in California communities, as well as via performing research and advocacy. In 2015, Climate Resolve helped establish a suite of laws (SB 246, SB 379 and AB 1482) that currently govern California's approach to climate adaptation. In 2018, Climate Resolve published a groundbreaking study of the Woolsey Fire.

Resilient Cities Catalyst. Resilient Cities Catalyst (RCC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, founded in 2019 to drive catalytic change to help partners solve their most pressing challenges. We work towards a vision where cities ensure that all residents, in particular, the most vulnerable, are safer, healthier and thriving in the face of everyday stresses and are able to withstand and recover quickly after shocks.

APPROACH

For seven months, from April 22 to November 22, 2025, Climate Resolve and Resilient Cities Catalyst conscientiously and equitably immersed themselves in the recovery landscape, learning from the full spectrum of those directly affected or involved in the response, rigorously investigating strategies that might aid the recovery from the Eaton and Palisades fires, and examining wide-ranging interventions that could contribute to reducing or eliminating impacts of future fire events in the Los Angeles area. This approach entailed performing firsthand interviews, attending and organizing events to learn from lively and exhaustive conversation,[2] meeting with fire survivors and visiting Altadena and Pacific Palisades to see the fire impacts personally, participating in recovery entities, and examining the full range of suggested actions by other agencies.

Climate Resolve had already been embedded in these communities, but this approach post-disaster allowed for better cataloging the comprehensive quantitative and qualitative landscape analysis of actors, impacts, and dynamics following the Eaton and Palisades fires, in the fire-effected communities and across Los Angeles. This approach was taken to ensure any recommendations that arose from this effort would accurately and appropriately reflect the lived experience and expertise of the plethora of actors already on the ground. The team used three approaches detailed below to build a strong evidence base for their recommendations.

Authentic Community Engagement & Entrenchment in the Recovery Process

The team went on site visits to Altadena and Pacific Palisades and held roundtables to learn from fire survivors and supporters. In early-August, Climate Resolve hosted a gathering of eighty Palisades residents at the Thomas Mann House in Pacific Palisades for an event called, "Wildfire Resilience, Recovery, and Return," creating space for a dialogue with residents to identify shared recovery priorities and long-term resilience strategies. In May, Climate Resolve also co-hosted an event with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York discussing the role of banking and housing in the recovery. In July, RCC hosted a BBC documentary screening and panel with community leaders and non-profits active in recovery to unearth key approaches for engaging philanthropy and encouraging investment in a more resilient recovery.

[2] See Appendix B.

The team participated in the *After the Fire* conference in Sonoma, the Resiliency Company's event in Santa Monica, and at the VerdeXchange conference in downtown Los Angeles, and helped partners facilitate a community meeting with fire survivors hosted by Resilient Palisades. In addition, Climate Resolve and RCC participated in numerous online calls and workshops to see the full spectrum of actors, approaches, priorities, and opportunities within the robust, but complex recovery space.



In addition to learning from those involved, the team felt it important that their engagement with fire survivors was not merely to understand their circumstances and perspectives, but to directly assist in their recovery as well. Climate Resolve's *Ready for Tomorrow* program aided the advocacy group, Resilient Palisades, to help develop and submit a successful proposal to the California Community Foundation's Wildfire Recovery and Resilience program. This effort is currently funding a community-led initiative focused on ecological restoration, soil bioremediation, and equitable workforce development to strengthen long-term climate and fire resilience in the region. *Ready for Tomorrow* also partnered with the Palisades Recovery Coalition to channel more funding from the FireAid program and other philanthropic support.

Climate Resolve served on Los Angeles County's Blue Ribbon Commission and in the BRC's Climate Action and Fire-Safe Recovery, as well as on the Department of Angels' Finance and Insurance Workgroup. Resilient Cities Catalyst worked with state partners through the global Mediterranean Climate Action Partnership to bring home lessons from abroad to augment local response and state policy improvements.

In Altadena, Climate Resolve proudly supports the Dena Hive Consortium, a coalition of local organizations established in response to the January 2025 wildfires. Consortium members include the Altadena Town Council, Altadena Bicycle Club, Altadena Farmers Market, Altadena Green, AltadenaWILD, Amigos de Los Rios, BASEstud.io, Community Compound, Community 3.0x, Council for Watershed Health, Hands in the Soil, Green Circle SGV, Los Angeles Boys and Girls Club, Outward Bound Adventures, and Soul Force Project. The Consortium is dedicated to strengthening community capacity, coordinating culturally competent outreach, and enhancing preparedness for equitable recovery and rebuilding.

Through strategic coordination, regular partner convenings, and grant development support, Climate Resolve hopes to build a sustainable framework for collaboration and funding readiness. These efforts are focused on addressing key post-fire challenges—including tree recovery, resilience centers, toxic soil contamination, displacement, and ecosystem degradation—while developing a scalable, community-driven model for wildfire recovery and long-term resilience in unincorporated Los Angeles County.

These efforts by the team are detailed not only to evidence their investment in a more equitable and resilient recovery for Angelenos, but to also reiterate the rigorously informed perspectives the team built to strengthen their recommendations. Most importantly Climate Resolve and RCC wish to uplift the many critical partners and actors they encountered during this process who have been deeply committed to rebuilding Los Angeles to the highest, best standard.

Establishment of an Evidence Base Informed by Deep Research & Post-Fire Analysis

As detailed in the limited examples above, a plethora of existing and new local and citywide organizations emerged following the Eaton and Palisades fires, to better advocate for survivors, address the needs of varying constituencies, and to fill gaps in the response landscape. Governments at the local, regional, and state level also responded with a variety of policies and initiatives to support emergency response and recovery.



While the majority of these actors responded in good will and brought much needed attention and resources to the problem, without a clear north star or obvious leader to direct efforts, they have contributed to an even more complex landscape to navigate in the recovery process. This robust, but disorganized response warranted a thorough, meticulous approach to documenting and analyzing the dynamics in Los Angeles, and through Climate Resolve's local knowledge and RCC's non-political stance, the team was able to effectively catalog the key players, local challenges, and proven practices that Los Angeles must adapt to their own context for a more resilient recovery.

By mapping the landscape of actors and identifying not only their support for a more resilient recovery, but also their ability to impact the response, the team can identify strategies for engagement, opportunities for partnership, and preemptive neutralization of roadblocks hindering recovery

processes. See Appendix B for the full interview list. Power maps of the four recommendations have been developed by the authors – albeit this analysis is confidential – but may be available on request.

Following the fires, expert stakeholder groups came together to research and recommend responses to recovery. These studies were written by government commissions, academic institutions, consultancies and organizations with different view focus areas around the Los Angeles wildfire recovery and response. Climate Resolve reviewed fourteen of the most prominent post-fire reports to collate their primary recommendations and align them with the team's emerging recommendations. Their alignment and evidence backing each recommendation can be found in the "Evidence from Reports" selection of each prospectus, and a complete analysis can be found in Appendix A.



By doing a global search of disasters over the last 30 years, RCC was able to identify 10 events with tangible lessons in recovery that can better support Los Angeles in its own process. Lessons from global disasters allow for more innovative idea generation, building on proven solutions to leapfrog recovery, and particularly, identifying aspects that may or may not be applicable given Los Angeles' unique context. Key themes that emerged included the importance of community engagement, multi-stakeholder collaboration, innovative funding models, and the integration of resilience standards in reconstruction efforts. The report also surfaces persistent challenges such as implementation delays, equitable resource distribution, and the need for long-term preparedness over short-term relief. More details and lessons learned across all disasters are detailed below.

Identification of Avenues to Finance a Resilient Recovery

To explore possible revenue measures to fund a long-term resilient recovery, Climate Resolve engaged George Yin, Joseph Guardarrama and Stephen Kaufman of Kaufman Legal Group. Their guidance was essential in understanding the options available to activists and local government. Larry Kosmont of Kosmont Companies, Mark Northcross of NHA Advisors and Nuin-Tara Key of California Forward further served as trusted advisors on how to best establish resilience districts. Through new polling funded by Denny Zane of MoveLA, we were able to obtain key data on public temperament related to resilience measures. PPIC and Megafire Action also performed polling which revealed opportunities.

RESULTS

Mapping Priorities and Influence of Key Actors in the Los Angeles Wildfire Recovery

In the aftermath of the Eaton and Palisades fires, the sheer volume of "interested parties" is overwhelming. We felt it necessary to examine this complex landscape, and identify which parties might support our recommended interventions and whether these parties are effective in their advocacy. Some actors may be enthusiastic champions of certain resilience measures but may lack political clout, while others may have significant direct power over the rebuilding process but are currently unconvinced, neutral, or opposed to climate-resilient rebuilding. In a comprehensive inventory and analysis four types emerged. (As noted previously, Power maps of the four recommendations have been developed by the authors – albeit this analysis is confidential – but may be available on request.)



High Support, High Influence actors represent those who are both enthusiastic champions of resilience goals and possess the direct power to ensure those goals are achieved. These most critical stakeholders necessitate active engagement and collaboration to secure commitments and expedite action.

High Support, Low Influence represents enthusiastic allies who lack direct legislative or financial power but are essential for mobilization and amplification.

Low Support, Low Influence actors represent those who are disengaged or marginally affected by the rebuilding process and possess minimal direct authority over policy, funding, or regulations.

Low Support, High Influence actors possess significant direct power over the rebuilding process but are currently unconvinced, neutral, or opposed to climate-resilient rebuilding. It is therefore vital to ensure these groups, who have the power to either block or severely slow down resilient rebuilding efforts, are engaged appropriately to ensure conversion or neutralization.

We also found a large number of players who land smack dab in the middle – individuals and institutions that are persuadable to support recommended actions but need a push.

Recovery Plans, Recommendations, and Their Alignment

The Plan Alignment tool synthesizes fourteen key reports published after the 2025 Southern California Wildfires and identifies six overlapping themes that consistently surface across the documents to better guide strategy development for philanthropies and other actors. These themes include prioritizing inclusive, equitable community engagement; resilient infrastructure and building standards; housing affordability and displacement prevention; strengthening emergency response systems; and streamlining permitting processes.

The resulting product includes a high-level overview of cross-cutting themes, a detailed catalog of philanthropy opportunities and strategic actions associated with each theme, and prioritized recommendations from all source reports. Together, these materials provide a clear, consolidated foundation for advancing aligned, evidence-based wildfire recovery and resilience efforts.

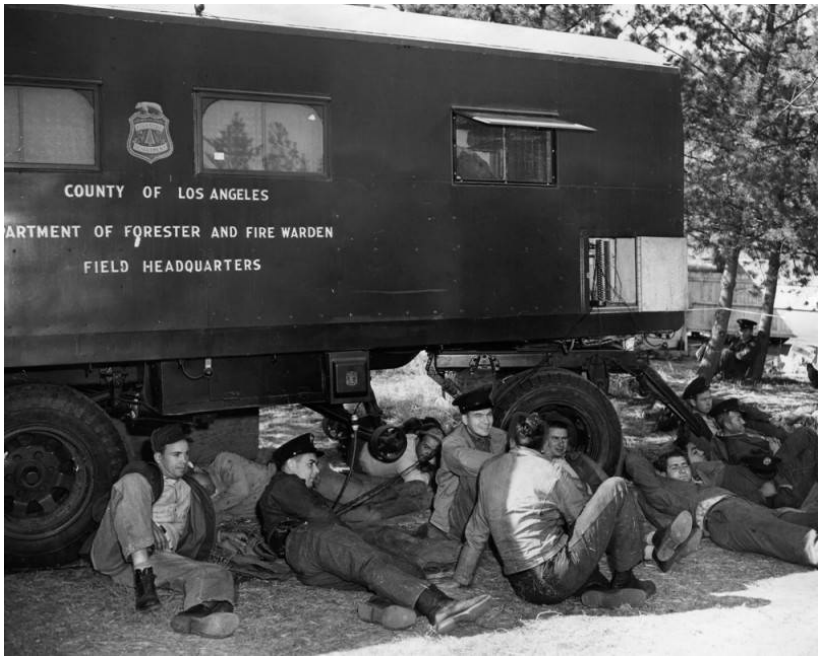
- **Community Engagement & Equity (13 of 14 reports):** Nearly universal agreement exists on the need for inclusive, equitable community engagement.
- **Infrastructure & Utilities (13 of 14 reports):** Thirteen reports address infrastructure resilience, with particular emphasis on power, water, and communication systems.
- **Housing & Affordability (12 of 14 reports):** Twelve reports highlight the critical need to address displacement prevention and housing affordability to ensure that rebuilt communities remain accessible to their original residents.
- **Building Codes & Fire Safety (11 of 14 reports):** Eleven reports advocate for enhanced building codes and fire-resistant construction standards as fundamental components of wildfire resilience.
- **Permitting & Approval Process (11 of 14 reports):** Eleven reports strongly advocate for streamlined, expedited permitting processes to accelerate reconstruction while maintaining safety standards.
- **Emergency Management (12 of 14 reports):** Twelve reports stress the importance of improved emergency response systems, including better warning systems, evacuation procedures, and inter-agency coordination.

Review the comprehensive analysis here.

Global Case Studies: Critical Lessons for Los Angeles

The Global Case Studies Report provides an in-depth analysis of various disaster case studies globally, surfacing practices with proven success and context specific takeaways for resilient recovery in Los Angeles. The presentation covers ten key case studies across various disaster types, including Nepal's Gorkha Earthquake, Tropical Storms in the Caribbean, Japan's 2011 Earthquake and Tsunami, Superstorm Sandy, Spanish Wildfires, Hurricane Katrina, the Campfire in Paradise, CA, Maui Wildfires, Manitoba Wildfires, and the Christchurch Earthquake. Each case study details the disaster, its damages, the intervention strategies, stakeholders involved, and the outcomes and outputs, concluding with key applications relevant to Los Angeles wildfire recovery. The report explores diverse recovery approaches, and several overarching themes and lessons learned emerged:

Seize the Opportunity to Make Lasting Change



- Leverage a post-disaster moment to think bigger through community-led design, long-term planning, and funding mechanisms to get more scaled and resilient rebuilding (Sandy 2013)
- Ensure the establishment of stable, permanent solutions rather than repeated emergency housing for frequently evacuated communities and prioritize rehousing survivors to prevent displacement by securing land for affordable and fire-resilient housing early (Maui 2023, Manitoba 2025)
- Mandate process-driven technical standards to rebuild and integrate them into all recovery funding, including wildfire resilient landscaping, forest management, and fire-resistant rebuilding and design (e.g. firebreaks, fire-resistant landscaping, rewilding, etc.), wildfire-prone retreat zones, and science-informed buyouts and rebuilding restrictions (Christchurch 2010, Spain 2012, Nepal 2015)

Create Governance & Financing Structures for Recovery and Resilience

- Explore a governance structure, like a unified recovery body with cross-jurisdictional authority and financial power, to not only more effectively coordinate long-term regional planning, and recovery for housing, infrastructure, insurance, and environmental rehabilitation, but also to reduce bureaucratic delays and competition, streamline aid, and overcome Los Angele's complex political dynamics, (Christchurch 2010, Caribbean 2007, Katrina 2005)
- Adopt surcharges or taxes (e.g. a ballot measure) for sustained revenue (Japan 2011)
- Create diversified, multi-donor funds to pool and deploy various funding streams more dynamically (Nepal 2015)
- Use California's scale and geography to explore risk pooling for a parametric insurance product and establish coverage that focuses on risk reduction and decreasing financial impacts long-term (Caribbean 2007)

Prioritize a Community-Centered Recovery Approach

- Frame disaster as a shared burden, with particular focus on mental health and survivor wellbeing, can help create better community cohesion (Japan 2011)
- Integrate inclusive community-led visioning and recovery planning with particular focus on affordable and resilient housing models (Manitoba 2025, Palisades 2018, Sandy 2013)
- Develop workforce training (homeowner or broader community wide) to create skilled labor jobs and support for home reconstruction (Nepal 2015)

The full report, with more details on each disaster case, can be found here.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The four proposed prospectuses represent recommendations for highest impact philanthropic support . These priority recommendations are presented in prospectus format, commonly used in philanthropy to facilitate quicker, targeted action.

Each prospectus succinctly introduces a concept and recommended action, highlighting points of alignment from external reports, expected impact, and an estimated notional budget for general cost, along with specific points of engagement and the associated cost for philanthropies.

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