

MOTION

PUBLIC SAFETY

“Building a Safer Los Angeles”

From time to time it is appropriate for the Council to review and update ordinances adopted in the past. The urgency to do this is compounded when those ordinances relate to public safety, and even more so when a natural disaster affects our City such as the recent wildfires.

In recent years, the City has made strides in enhancing the protection and character of our hillside communities, specifically our hillside single family home communities. Both in 2011 and again 2017 the City adopted stricter Baseline Hillside Ordinances to better ensure public safety in those neighborhoods. Though these ordinances addressed out of scale development and neighborhood character, the secondary effects ensure safer communities and better design that reduces risk during catastrophic events such as wildfires.

The City must ensure that our growing multifamily housing stock is being constructed safely with skilled labor, and is resilient in the face of growing threats from wildfires and other natural disasters.

In late 2018 the risk and devastation from wildfires was on full display throughout California. The risk associated with wildfires has grown exponentially in recent years. The frequency and intensity of these fires has made them a serious public safety risk. Their speed and intensity have created an urgent need to address their impacts.

Much of this increased risk comes from the growing impacts of climate change that has changed the ecological makeup of our forests and climatic shifts that have driven the region into drought year after year, as well as rapid growth of our urban-wildland interface.

Last year, two of the most destructive wildfires in California’s history occurred. The most impactful in Los Angeles, the Woolsey Fire was one of the most destructive in terms of property loss, and the Camp Fire was the deadliest fire to date in California.

These two fires only provide a small window into the devastation and reach of wildfires in Los Angeles and the state of California as a whole. In recent years the City and County have dealt with the Station Fire, the Skirball Fire, the Creek Fire, and the La Tuna Fire.

It is incumbent for the City to take action to minimize the fire risk and to better protect life and property. Much has been done to strengthen the Municipal and Building code for single family homes, particularly in high risk hillside areas. But more must be done to protect our growing stock of multifamily structures that are increasingly housing more Angelenos.

A tool exists to address increased fire risk in our dense urban communities and is already in place in the City’s Building Code, Fire District 1. However, Fire District 1 only covers a small percentage of the City, namely Downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood, to mitigate the risk of fire in its population centers. This overlay is enabling safer construction today. It is time to revisit this tool and expand its reach to ensure that it captures the changing and growing regional centers and neighborhoods within the City.



I THEREFORE MOVE that the Council instruct the Fire Department and the Department of Building and Safety, in consultation with the City Attorney, to prepare and present an ordinance 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 Fire Severity Zone and City's High Wind Velocity Zone as well as high density population centers with a population density of at least 5,000 residents per square mile.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Council instruct the Fire Department and the Department of Building and Safety, in consultation with the City Attorney, to update Fire District 1 to reflect population growth every ten years according to the United States Census as defined by the Office of Management and Budget.

I FURTHER MOVE that Council instruct the Fire Department and the Department of Building and Safety, in consultation with the City Attorney, to prepare and present an ordinance to require a Fire Protection Plan, as allowed under the Chapter 33 of the Los Angeles Fire Code, for all new and significantly altered projects over 150,000 square feet and/or 100,000 square feet if the building is over 30' in height, and make recommendations to ensure proper enforcement.

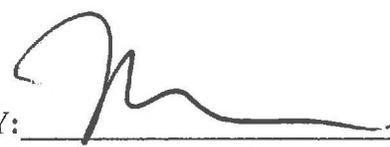
I FURTHER MOVE that Council instruct the Department of Building Safety, Planning Department, and Fire Department to provide recommendations to Council on how to ensure that top-quality, skilled and responsible construction practices are utilized and guaranteed for new multifamily and commercial structures within the high risk areas encompassed in Fire District 1.

PRESENTED BY


BOB BLUMENFIELD
Councilmember, 3rd District


MONICA RODRIGUEZ
Councilmember, 7th District

ORIGINAL

SECONDED BY: 

JUN 05 2019