

CALIFORNIA

## Most Angelenos back tougher building codes, restrictions on homebuilding in wildfire zones, poll finds



A Spanish immersion school destroyed in the Eaton fire, seen in March. (Sarahi Apaez/For De Los)



**By Liam Dillon**  
Staff Writer | [Follow](#)

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- A new poll of Los Angeles County voters shows significant support for strengthening building codes and restricting homebuilding in high-risk areas after January's Palisades and Eaton fires.
- Voters surveyed also favored boosting funding for fire protection, even if it increased taxes, and building more homes

in higher-density urban areas.

- More than half of those polled opposed increasing home insurance rates.

Overwhelming majorities of Los Angeles County voters support strengthening building codes and imposing greater restrictions on home construction in high-risk areas following January's devastating Palisades and Eaton fires, according to a new poll from the UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies, co-sponsored by The Times.

Eighty percent of those polled backed tougher building codes to make homes more fire resistant even if doing so added to costs. Seven out of 10 wanted more regulations to curb homebuilding in wildfire-prone neighborhoods.

"This is a huge event in L.A. history," said Mark DiCamillo, poll director at UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies. "It's having a major effect on what people think needs to be done in terms of making housing safer."

Almost 13,000 households [were displaced](#) by the two fires, which destroyed structures on 56% of properties in Pacific Palisades and nearly half of those in Altadena.



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March 9, 2025

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Even though implementing more robust building codes and restrictions on growth could affect Palisades and Altadena homeowners directly, voters polled in those communities supported both ideas by wide margins.

Backing for stronger building codes in the Palisades and Eaton fire zones, 85% and 82% respectively in favor, eclipsed support from those outside the areas. For homebuilding limits, 65% of voters in the Palisades fire zone were supportive, as were 61% of those surveyed in the Eaton area.

These two issues are weighing heavily in Tracey Alexander's mind as she decides whether to rebuild the home she lost in the Palisades fire.

Alexander and her husband have lived for nearly three decades in the Palisades' Alphabet Streets, a mostly flat residential area with smaller lots than in the hills. She said that she and all her neighbors would want to build back with more fire safe materials, but no one knew how much more expensive that would be. The other question she's wrestling with is more existential.

"Part of it is the economics of rebuilding," Alexander said. "Part of it is, 'Do I want to live in a fire zone?' That's something that is hard to analyze."

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State and local officials have yet to decide if there will be any building code changes for rebuilt homes. Current codes for new and rebuilt properties in high-risk fire zones [require significant measures](#), including ignition-resistant materials and multipaned or window upgrades.

The Berkeley IGS poll found broad backing for a number of policy ideas, including those that would increase taxes to pay for fire protection and build higher-density housing in urban areas.

### L.A. residents strongly support a variety of rebuilding proposals

Whether L.A. County residents support or oppose proposed ways to reduce the dangers of wildfires for residences and businesses:

#### As the region rebuilds, policymakers should prioritize assisting the low- and middle-income families displaced by the fires



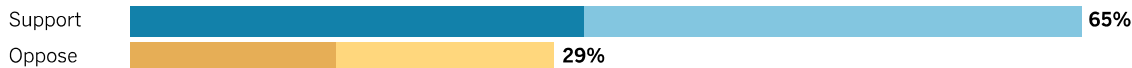
#### Strengthen local building codes to make new homes more fire-resistant, even if it adds to building costs



#### Impose greater restrictions on building homes in high fire-risk areas



#### Provide greater funding for city and county fire departments even if it means increasing taxes



#### Encourage the building of more high-density housing in urban areas rather than in suburban areas more prone to fires



#### Create a tax structure that requires people in areas of high risk for fire to pay more for public services



#### Allow insurance companies to increase their rates for fire insurance if this enables them to offer insurance for everyone



Berkeley IGS poll of 5,184 Los Angeles County registered voters, conducted online in English and Spanish from Feb. 17-26. Estimated margin of error is + / - 2 percentage points.

Hanna Sender LOS ANGELES TIMES

The most popular proposal, with 84% support, was for policymakers to prioritize assistance for low- and middle-income families displaced by the fires. Pacific Palisades had some of the highest home values in Los Angeles, and those in Altadena were above the county’s median. But that’s not always indicative of fire victims’ economic status. In many cases, homes worth more than \$1 million prior to the fires were purchased for less than half that amount decades ago. Additionally, [a quarter of the homes lost](#) were apartments, other multifamily housing or mobile homes.

Nearly two-thirds of voters polled wanted to provide greater funding for city and county fire departments even if that meant raising taxes. Voters were more evenly divided, 46% support versus 43% opposed, about the idea of creating a tax structure that would require those living in high-risk fire areas to pay more for public services.

**When rebuilding housing in the areas affected by the fires, which of the following two approaches do you favor more?**

Palisades Eaton Neither fire zone

**New fireproof standards should be required for new building construction**



**Homes should be rebuilt pretty much as they were before**



Estimated margin of error is + / - 2 percentage points overall and + / - 4 percentage points for fire zones.

Berkeley IGS poll

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“Right now, the priority for Los Angeles residents is fire protection,” DiCamillo said. “If they’re going to support tax hikes, that’s the area.”

To compensate for restricting homebuilding in fire-prone communities, county voters backed greater production of high-density housing in urban areas, with 55% support compared to 30% opposition.

The twin findings — restraining construction in riskier neighborhoods and promoting it in safer ones — mirror prior surveys.

A 2019 Berkeley IGS poll [saw support from three-quarters of California voters](#), including 79% in L.A. County, for imposing limits on growth in wildfire areas. A poll last year from the Los Angeles Business Council Institute [found 81% of city voters](#) backed speeding approvals for apartment buildings with some affordable housing near public transit and existing high-density, urban areas.

Most policy proposals did not see significant splits among age, race, gender or other demographic factors, though there were large partisan differences in the level of support for many ideas. Still, a majority of GOP voters — traditionally leery of regulation — surveyed also backed strengthening building codes and imposing more restrictions on development in high-risk neighborhoods.



POLITICS

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One policy idea that voters disliked in the poll was allowing insurance companies to increase their rates if it enables them to offer fire coverage more broadly. More than half of those surveyed were opposed to the idea, compared to 39% in support.

Insurance coverage has emerged as one of the highest-profile issues in the immediate wake of the fires. Last month, state Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara [turned down a 22% emergency rate hike](#) proposed by State Farm General, California’s largest home insurer, as the company and others have questioned whether they will remain in the state due to risks.

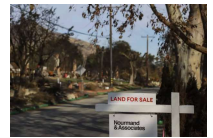
“I can imagine insurance rates are going to be near the top of voters’ minds when it comes to cost and affordability of living in California,” DiCamillo said. “That’s where the resistance really is coming from.”

The Berkeley IGS poll was conducted online in English and Spanish on Feb. 17-26 among 5,184 registered voters in Los Angeles County. The survey’s estimated margin of error is 2 percentage points, and larger for demographic subgroups.

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**Liam Dillon**

Liam Dillon covers the issues of housing affordability and neighborhood change across California for the Los Angeles Times.