



January 11, 2018

Dear Councilmember

Looking back on 2017, California has experienced one of the most destructive fire seasons on record and the largest wildfire in state history. Governor Jerry Brown told the *Los Angeles Times*, "This is the new normal" and the Los Angeles Fire Department has continued to warn that California residents will have to prepare for a never-ending fire season. In the City, fires are year-round. A greater alarm fire was called in Boyle Heights on Sunday, when a two-story wood sided structure with a raised foundation, burning on both sides, collapsed onto an apartment building.

Fire seasons are becoming longer, and fires are growing larger.

It is important to remember that weather is key to the greater fire threat due to hot, dry, and windy conditions. While wildfires are the most visible example, changing climate and increased population growth means we are more at risk and more fires are bound to come. A *Climate Central* (2016) study, found that the "Western fire season is now 105 days longer than in 1970, and the number of large fires and acres burned has increased between 300 and 600 percent," according to *Scientific American*. Tragically, 21 residents lost their lives in fires last year in the greater Los Angeles area, as reported by FEMA (2017).

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Moving forward, we need to prepare, and preparing means updating and improving upon the fire safety codes. While the Bel Air Fire of 1961 brought much needed Fire Safety Ordinance upgrades, greater standards, more fire safety measures, and investments in fire protections are needed. No building material can match concrete and steel's strength, safety, and long-term durability as well as sustainability. That is why requiring builders to use non-combustible building materials today can protect lives and property, and save untold costs; especially, when it comes to residential low to mid-rise buildings.

2018 softwood building material prices expected to reach record highs due to fires, hurricanes, and tariffs.

Canadian tariffs levied on one third of the nations' supply of softwood building material, and wildfires in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia, combined with hurricanes in the southern U.S. have driven prices to a 20-year record high. Softwood lumber supplies have tightened, which is predicted to negatively "impact the housing industry and the broader U.S. economy," as confirmed by the *National Association of Home Builders'* tax policy analysts.

As part of Build with Strength regular updates, you will find a partial list of recent fires in the City of Los Angeles that may have been prevented or compartmentalized, if fire treated wood and/or non-combustible materials had been used.

[STRUCTURE FIRE 01/07/2018](#) Boyle Heights, at 1516 E PLEASANT

Av; <https://goo.gl/maps/9X6iXJGzJzt>; This is a greater alarm fire. A large two-story wood sided home on raised foundation, well involved in fire with exposures on two sides, partial structural collapse towards the exposed building two story, center hall apartments on the south/west side of the structure which extended into the attic of the apartment building. Fire and firefighters continue to defend the exposure on the north/east side.

[STRUCTURE FIRE 12/15/2017](#) Hollywood, at 5537 W SIERRA VISTA AV; <https://goo.gl/maps/rjZviGgYnLg>; Garage fire exposing a 4 story pre-33 apartment building.

[STRUCTURE FIRE 12/18/2017](#) Hollywood Hills, at 7483 W PALO VISTA

DR; <https://goo.gl/maps/BUF7PEoRrEN2>; Fire showing in a descending hillside-home. 28 Firefighters extinguished a fire within a four-story descending hillside home (3 levels below grade); Crews arrived to find flames between the ground floor and the first floor below grade (sub-level 1) near a fireplace.

[STRUCTURE FIRE 12/18/2017](#) Hollywood, at 1208 N EDGEMONT

ST; <https://goo.gl/maps/d14nAwrcqBD2>; 26 Firefighters extinguished a small fire beneath a two-story fourplex found to be in the sub-floor.

About Build with Strength Los Angeles

Build with Strength Los Angeles is a collection of community based organizations and leaders that have come together to address this increasing problem. Coalition members in support of *Build with Strength Los Angeles* has grown to include:

Asian Americans in Commercial Real Estate (AACRE), California Black Chamber of Commerce, and Southern California Black Chamber of Commerce, Churches in Action, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), Temple Kol Tikvah, The Los Angeles Civil Rights Association, Los Angeles Shmira Civil Safety Patrol, Los Angeles Urban League, Los Angeles Housing Partnership, and the Southern California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Across Los Angeles, communities are calling out to the Los Angeles City Council and leaders to make the necessary changes to the building code.

For further information please go to *Build with Strength, Los Angeles* <http://buildwithstrength.com/spotlight-los-angeles/>. If you have any questions, please let us know by emailing melody@icjpr.com.

In the meantime, we hope you have a safe and fire free year.

Regards,

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